



## **Continued Interest in Healthy Diet Drives National Egg Month**

*U.S., worldwide egg consumption continues to rise as good news increases about nutritive benefits*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**COLUMBUS** – May is National Egg Month, when Ohio’s egg producers remind consumers about the world’s “most perfect food.” Their message? Eggs are a good choice all year-round.

While many consumers choose eggs because they are inexpensive, convenient, easy to prepare, versatile and tasty, there’s more to eggs than meets the palate. That’s good news for Ohio egg producers, who provide more eggs than any other state except Iowa.

### **A healthy choice**

Experts attribute the trend to better awareness about healthy eating and research that sheds new light on the nutritional benefits of eggs. Eggs are sometimes called “the perfect food” because they have only 75 calories, yet are a source of high-quality nutrients. Eggs provide 13 essential vitamins and minerals, including vitamin D – an essential aid in absorbing calcium needed for bone strength.

As a high-protein food, eggs pack a value that is unmatched by any other food. Specifically, eggs have a “protein value” of 94 percent. That benefits children, seniors and other adults trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

For children, eggs lend versatility to a healthy diet, even for finicky eaters. Scrambled, fried, hard-boiled – there’s usually at least one option that kids like. Nutrient-dense breakfasts including eggs have been shown to help children focus and perform better in school. They also help to reduce snacking on less nutritious and more calorie-laden foods throughout the day. Eggs also are an excellent source of choline, a nutrient considered essential for normal fetal/infant brain development and for memory, even later in life.

For Ohioans watching their weight, eggs also are a good choice. Lower-carbohydrate diets, such as the South Beach diet, rely heavily on eggs. Almost carb-free, an egg delivers a serving of high-quality protein. Paired with dozens of other low-carb ingredients, eggs offer the diversity, nutrition and great taste dieters need to stay the course.

Eggs are one way Americans can stay strong as they get older. Macular degeneration – a leading cause of irreversible blindness – is a concern for Ohio’s seniors. Lutein and zeaxanthin found in egg yolks may both reduce the risk for cataracts and help prevent macular degeneration. After age 50, humans are less able to assimilate protein, although they need more of it to remain healthy. That requires a higher total protein intake without boosting calories.

### **A Commitment to Safety**

Ohio’s egg producers take that commitment seriously and have put in place strict standards and programs to ensure the eggs consumers eat are safe, nutritious and of the highest quality. In 1996, Ohio’s egg producers joined forces with the Ohio Poultry Association, the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Department of Health and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish the Ohio Egg Quality Assurance Program.

The program was created to minimize the risk of salmonella enteritidis (salmonella) in eggs. It enhances the safety of Ohio-produced eggs, while maintaining consumer confidence in the quality of the eggs they buy.

Ohio is one of only 10 states to have a formal egg quality assurance program, which is a voluntary industry effort, outlines stringent guidelines for the production, processing and transportation of eggs. It provides step-by-step procedures for egg producers to produce, pack and sell the highest quality, freshest and safest eggs possible.

### **An economic boon**

In Ohio, egg consumption is particularly important as a significant part of the state’s agricultural economy. Eggs produced in Ohio have a retail value of more than \$607 million. The industry employs more than 5,000, with an annual payroll exceeding \$50 million. Ohio’s 27 million laying hens and 10 million pullets (hens too young to lay eggs) further help Ohio’s farm economy by consuming millions of bushels of corn and soybean products each year, said Jim Chakeres, executive vice president of the Ohio Poultry Association.

“Our producers work hard to provide a healthy, quality, inexpensive and nutritious source of protein,” he said. “They contribute to their communities and to the state’s economy. So, it’s satisfying to see the benefits of eggs now recognized both by science and the buying public.”

During May – and every month – Ohio consumers have every reason to take advantage of the high protein value and broad nutritional benefits eggs offer. For more information and for delicious recipes featuring eggs, visit [www.ohiopoultry.com](http://www.ohiopoultry.com).

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