

POULTRY.

Turkeys.

SETTING THE EGGS—EARLY TREATMENT OF THE POULTS.

One should not be discouraged if a great number of turkeys are not raised, for even the average number, ten young ones from each old bird, gives a very high percentage—over two hundred per cent.—on the capital invested and the outlay for food. So that even less than the average increase is profitable, and most thoughtful farmers will agree with me that the insects, grasshoppers, etc., destroyed by turkeys in their wanderings, to say nothing of their fertilizing powers, will repay the cost of their keep.

At the present date (April 15th) very few turkeys have begun to lay. They should not be too highly fed, and if a successful season is expected the old turkeys should be large, strong and healthy, and should not be closely related to the male bird. At the present time plenty of range is essential, and roomy nest boxes provided in sheds, or perhaps a little straw in unused coops in the orchard or under evergreen trees will soon be taken possession of to furnish nests for the first lot of eggs. At this season they seldom show any desire to go a long distance to conceal the nests. The eggs should be gathered as soon as possible after being laid, so they will not get chilled, and should be kept in a cool, not cold, place. Those who have studied the construction and constituents of eggs, tell us that eggs should not be turned every day, nor turned at all, nor handled any more than is necessary, but be kept in a box or basket where the air is pure, and covered with a cloth; also that they should not be kept longer than three weeks before setting, though they may hatch if kept even longer. However, I should expect stronger and more lively turks if they were not kept any longer than two weeks, and I set just as soon as I get sufficient of them and sufficient hens to cover them, as I always want at least fifteen to twenty turkeys to go with one old turkey. I usually set about three Plymouth Rock hens on seven to eleven eggs each. These hens should be persistent sitters, and have nests in a room where other hens will not disturb them. My ideal nests for sitters would be a row of nest boxes about two to four feet from the ground, and having a door to swing downward to form a shelf in front when open. Through the front of this door I should like a strip of wire cloth to give plenty of air and a little light to the sitters. When this door is closed the rats will be excluded, as they will steal the newly-hatched birds if possible to get at them. The nests should be made of clean straw, and the day before setting the eggs the hen should be sprinkled with insect powder. To do this effectually, one can hang her to a nail, feet upwards, the feathers then open, and powder can be dusted all through them. A dust bath in the room also should be provided. By the time the eggs are set the strong odor of the powder will have escaped and will not effect the germ. Once a day during the hatch I open the nest doors and feed corn, and also give a supply of fresh water. A room where there is not much hammering or pounding may be best, as we are told one year an entire hatch at the O. A. C. was destroyed owing to nailing of sheeting in the incubating room. If the hens at first are not inclined to leave their nests for food, I place one hand beneath them and carefully lift them from the eggs so that none of the eggs may be broken or disturbed more than necessary. I usually leave them to feed, dust, etc., for about an hour, and return to see that two have not taken one nest, or to replace any that have not gone back, and to close the door until another day. As a rule, hens are not so good as turkeys to mother the young poults. While I depend on Rocks to do the hatching of the early chicken, I also depend on having a broody turkey in four weeks after the eggs are set to act as a mother for them. Last year the eggs did not hatch very well, and I had not nearly the required fifteen to put with an old turkey, so I let the first lot remain with a Rock hen and succeeded in raising them all, but they cast in their lot with a later flock of turkeys when it was time to wander through the fields. I find they are better as foragers and less exposed to parasites when raised with the old turkeys.

A few days is all that is necessary for the old turkey to be broody, though, of course, one cannot quite regulate such matters. I like Rocks best as sitters, and we thus keep the turkeys laying three or four weeks longer. She should be treated with insect powder a day or two before the turks are expected, and when the hatch is completed, all should be put in a roomy coop which is enclosed by a ten-foot square pen. The bottom of the coop should be covered lightly with sand or gravel to form the first meal of the young turkeys. A small heap should be placed in the pen, also one of dust and a fountain of skim milk or water. If the nests have been rat proof, the young ones should be left there until twenty-four hours old, otherwise it is safer to remove them before night to the coop. I have never had a turkey refuse to adopt the young ones, and my most successful lot was twenty-nine hatched by three hens and put in this manner with one old turkey. She succeeded in raising twenty-six to maturity. One died from unknown causes, and two were stolen by hawks. This year I intend to try hatching in incubators and raising some in brooders.

Middlesex Co., Ont.

GYRA.

The 15c. Hen.

BY H. T. OLDFIELD, B. C.

I heard, not long ago, a person speak of his fowls as 15c. hens, and on asking him what was his meaning, his reply was, "Well, they only lay when eggs are down to 15c." If I had not been afraid of insulting the person, I should have told him that he must be a 15c. feeder, which surely must have been the fact of the matter. It's the same with fowls as with anything else. No man can make a profit in any branch of stock-raising without he gives it suitable care.

So many people are afraid of overfeeding their fowls and getting them too fat to lay. I think I am safe in saying that the majority of fowls kept to-day are not sufficiently fed to keep them in proper laying order. I claim that fowls with a free range will not get too fat for laying, however much they are fed. I speak from experience. I once kept a flock of fowls alongside some grain stacks which the wind had blown over. We cleared up the grain as clean as possible, but there was sacks of it lying on the ground which we could not gather up. The fowls were simply running over the grain for weeks. I kept them supplied with water and roots, and they kept me more than supplied with eggs. I never before knew fowls to lay so well.

Many people feed their fowls only twice a day, and claim it to be best. Well, that's a matter of opinion. I feed three times a day. Some poultry-keepers say, to keep a hen in good condition for laying she should never have a full crop during the day. I do not agree with it. When I feed my fowls half a breakfast they will mope around as if waiting for more, and, on the other hand, if I feed a good breakfast it gives them vigor to get out and get a move on and hunt for grubs and grit, which is all we can expect them to get, unless they are running over a grain field in the fall.

The Incubator.—Somebody said, "The Incubator chick is free from vermin, therefore is stronger, and if placed in a first-class brooder it will continue to thrive, and a hundred can be raised with less trouble than a dozen under an old hen," but it does not sound feasible in my ears. It seems to me that when a man has fertile eggs sufficient to fill up an incubator he must have a good many sitting hens. I have no incubator, but am not going to run it down, for I have had no experience with one. I hatch all my chickens under hens, have a flock of about 250 laying hens, and can always find sitting hens when required. I set them on tobacco leaf on the ground, and am never troubled with vermin on the chickens. I set from 10 to 20 hens at a time, giving them 15 eggs each. When they hatch I select the best mothers and give 25 chickens to a hen. Each hen has a separate coop. That way, you see, four hens and four coops will take one hundred chickens, and give a very little trouble. The coops I made myself out of half-inch stuff, lumber being cheap here. My coops cost me about ten cents each.

The worst part of the business is, we have no market in Victoria, and a man has to run around and get private customers for his produce or be sat on by the middleman, but I am thankful to say, after three years' hard work, I have a nice lot of private customers. I stamp my name and address on the eggs with a rubber stamp, and guarantee them. I believe there is more money in poultry than in any other stock according to money invested, yet I think few farmers make as much provision for poultry-raising as they do for other stock. An estimate of \$2 as a clear profit for each hen is no uncommon limit if they are properly cared for, but 15c. attention won't do. It just depends on the care and attention. Give 15c. attention and you will get 15c. hens, and scarcely deserve it; but give \$2 attention and you will get your \$2 hen, and well deserve it.

H. T. O.

Cross-bred Poultry.

To the Editor FARMER'S ADVOCATE:

In your valuable paper I have noticed several times articles on cross-breeding of pure-bred poultry. In January 2nd number there is given the results of different crosses made at the Central Experimental Farm. Perhaps a few words from a farmer's experience in crossing pure-bred fowls will not be out of place. My first experience was a cross between a pure-bred Plymouth Rock cockerel and pure Wyandotte hens. The results were very satisfactory. The cross took the color markings of the Plymouth Rock, the rose comb of the Wyandotte and the full breast of the Wyandotte. The cockerels looked to be as large as a fair-sized turkey, and the hens were at least one-third larger than either of the pure-bred stocks; the hens were just as good layers as either of the original stock, and were very much admired by the neighbors, so much so that I sold all I had, parties taking the cockerels in preference to the pure-bred, although I tried to persuade them to take the pure-bred, and even offered the pure-bred cockerels at only 25 cents each more than I asked for the cross-breds. The birds gave every satisfaction to those who purchased them. The same year I crossed a Wyandotte cock on a White Leghorn. The result was a bird not quite as large as the Wyandotte, but larger than the Leghorn, a fine rose comb and a full breast, and such layers! I crossed on these crosses, using a Wyandotte cock, and the result, a larger bird than the cross, but not quite as large as my pure-bred Wyandottes. I have one of the cross yet, the rest I sold. The hen I have is the first to start laying in fall, and the last to leave off. As she is easily coaxed to sit in spring, I consider her a valuable bird. I have always had trouble to get my Wyandottes to sit in

spring, as they prefer to lay all winter and on till last of June before they think of sitting, and some have laid all summer without offering to sit; but our cross-bred can be coaxed to sit in spring, so I look upon her as a very convenient bird.

Eastern Assiniboia

J. B. POWELL.

Care and Management of Sitting Hens.

Owing to the lateness of the spring we cannot look for a large percentage of our eggs to hatch, so that it is not likely that any of us will be able to get as many real early chickens as we would like. After the weather grows milder, we must give our breeding birds all the liberty possible, and begin setting eggs as fast as we can. The eggs will soon become more fertile, and the two remaining requisites to successful chicken hatching are, the kind of hen we use for setting, and the way we set her.

First, then, the kind of hen: We are firm believers in gentle treatment of all live stock, and our poultry as well as our cattle, sheep, and horses should become accustomed to being handled somewhat. The lighter breeds of fowls are too nervous to become trustworthy sitters even under gentle treatment; but the heavier varieties when treated in this way will make, with very few exceptions, good hatchers. Never set a fat, clumsy hen, as she will be certain to break eggs and trample chickens to death. Now, as to her treatment:

Have a comfortable place set apart in which to set your hen. It must not be connected with the poultry house at all, because sitting hens in the poultry house are certain to bring vermin. Then again, no laying hens should be allowed to disturb the sitters. In this hatching room provide a good dust bath and food and water. Close it so that the hatchers cannot get out of it. We have set a dozen hens at once in a place 20' x 30', and had little or no difficulty, although you must try to avoid quarrelsome hens. For nests use shallow boxes well filled with earth slightly hollowed and nicely shaped on top and covered with chaff or cut straw to the depth of an inch or two. We use earth, not for any special virtue there is in it, but because it is solid and will keep its shape. The box should be filled to within a couple of inches of the top so that the hen does not have to step down any distance to get on the nest. Place the nest in such a position that it is partly hidden. Put refuse tobacco or insect powder in the nest before setting the hen.

When a hen becomes broody, allow her to remain on her own nest for a day or two, then take her at night, dust her thoroughly with insect powder, and place her where you wish her to sit. Have her nest filled with china eggs. If she keeps the new nest for a day or two you may remove the china eggs and place those selected under her. Keep fresh, clean water and grain where they can get it at all times. Dust all sitting hens with insect powder several times during the three weeks, giving a careful dusting on 19th day of incubation, putting some in the nest at the same time. Every possible precaution should be taken to see that there are no lice to trouble the young chicks. Lice destroy more chickens every year than all other diseases combined. It will be best to set several hens at a time, so that on testing out all clear eggs at end of a week, you can set some on fresh eggs again, thus saving time.

J. E. MEYER.

Waterloo Co., Ont.

The Influence of the Male in Poultry Breeding.

There is a considerable difference of opinion, even among acknowledged authorities, as to the length of time during which the influence exercised by a male bird while running with a flock of hens affects their fertility. Dr. H. B. Greene writes upon the subject:—"The answer to this question must be somewhat conjectural. A male turkey by one act fertilizes all the eggs (or, rather, the greater portion) that the hen lays during the season. But with the fowl, pheasant, grouse, and partridge, my personal opinion is that one successful coitus will fertilize a batch of eggs numbering as many as the hen would lay to form a nest and hatch. In the case of the fowl there is no reason to suppose that as many as twenty could not thus be fertilized. Certainly, twenty ova are frequently attached to the ovary at the same time, of different sizes and stages of development.—Exchange.

Fowls in Confinement.

If poultry confined in yards could be well managed, they would pay better than when given a range; but to give a small flock proper attention would cost too much labor. When one keeps a flock for pleasure, the labor is bestowed without regard to cost, but on the farm the case is different. When birds are confined they learn vices. They begin to eat their eggs, and pull feathers from the breasts and bodies of one another. This is due to idleness. If idleness can be avoided, the fowls will not learn vices. Fowls in yards become pets, and they are fed by every member of the family. As the hens soon learn to recognize their friends, they run to the attendant upon the first sound of approaching footsteps, and the result is that they are given food frequently, because they are supposed to be hungry. Their crops are always full, they become lazy and fat, having nothing to do; then, like all other idle creatures, learn vices. There is no point more essential to learn in keeping fowls in yards than that of when not to feed. All know when to feed, but to have the courage to withhold food is the most important requisite in the management.