

CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM.

REPORT OF THE POULTRY MANAGER,
MR. A. G. GILBERT.

(Continued.)

BREEDING PENS MADE UP.

The breeding pens were made up at the following dates :—

Breed.	Num. in Pen.	When Mated.
Wyandottes. . . 1 cockerel, 5 hens		Mar. 12
Plymouth Rocks. 1 do	9 do	do 18
Black Minorcas. 1 cock	6 do	do 19
Black Hamburgs. 1 do	7 do	do 19
White Leghorns. 1 do	15 do	do 21

The male birds remained with the other breeds not mentioned, all winter.

Two sittings of eggs of the following breeds were purchased for the purpose of introducing new strains, viz., white Leghorns, Wyandottes, Plymouth Rocks and Andalusians. The chicks from these eggs with two or three exceptions were strong, vigorous and well marked. The majority of them are now used as breeding stock and with equally well-bred males should give good results.

As in previous years, the sitters were placed in comfortable nests, some on the damp earth of the cellar and others on a dry board floor of an upper compartment of the main building. The report of 1890, page 209, contains full particulars as to the proper management and treatment of sitting hens. Before giving the sitter valuable eggs it is better that she be placed on a nest made of short cut straw, and well dusted with carbolic acid disinfecting powder. Three or four china eggs should be placed in the nest and the sitter allowed to remain on these for two days. The valuable eggs should then be given to her. The probability is that the disinfecting powder has meanwhile driven away vermin that might have been on the hen, and she will sit with

comparative ease and quiet, which she could not do if annoyed by lice. Many sittings of valuable eggs are lost every season from the lack of the necessary attention to the sitter.

DRY BOARDS *versus* DAMP GROUND.

The experiment of placing a certain number of eggs on the damp ground and dry boards, with a view of ascertaining hatching results from the dry boards. The following will show the number of chickens obtained by the different methods :—

When Set.	Number of Eggs Set.	KIND OF SITTER.	Number of Chickens Hatched.
<i>Dry Boards.</i>			
April 21..	13	Brahma.....	6
do 24..	13	Black Russian ..	8
do 29..	13	Cochin.....	6
May 1..	13	Plymouth Rock..	6
do 2..	13	Mixed hen.....	5
do 4..	13	Plymouth Rock..	3
			34
<i>Damp Floor.</i>			
April 18..	11	Coloured Dorking	8
do 18..	13	Wyandotte.....	8
do 18..	13	Buff Cochin	11
do 18..	13	do	7
do 18..	13	Plymouth Rock..	7
do 30..	13	do	10
			51

In the eggs placed on the dry boards there were a number of chickens which had attained to full size but had died, apparently unable to break through the thick integument enclosing the chick inside the shell, and which was unusually dry and tough. In other cases the egg shells seemed to be dried on to the dead chicks so as to make it difficult to separate them, and the best way to do so was to soak both the chick and shell in warm water. It seemed as if it would have had a beneficial effect to have sprinkled the eggs with luke-warm water some time previous to the hatching period. The absence of moisture seemed to have had an injurious effect.

It may be interesting as another experiment to place eggs on the dry boards and sprinkle them occasionally during the hatching period.

TREATMENT OF THE YOUNG CHICKS.

After hatching, the chickens were allowed to remain in the nest for 18 or 24 hours, so as to become thoroughly "nest ripe." Their first meal consisted of stale bread soaked in milk and squeezed dry. This was continued for nearly a week, with dry bread crumbs for a change. As the chickens grew, a more substantial mixture of shorts, cornmeal and bran was fed, lightly at first and more frequently afterwards. It is most important that the chicks should be fed lightly but often. They should never be allowed to remain hungry for any length of time. A neglected chicken will never make a good market fowl. Full instructions as to the care and management of growing chickens will be found in report for 1890, page 212.

PROGRESS OF THE CHICKENS.

The chickens grew rapidly, the Plymouth Rocks and Wyandottes making the most rapid headway, as follows :—

Plymouth Rocks.

Four Plymouth Rock cockerels, hatched on the 12th of May, weighed, on 21st of August following, 3 lbs. 14 ozs., 3 lbs. 8 ozs., 3 lbs. 8 ozs., 3 lbs. 5 ozs., respectively.

On the 7th of October the same birds weighed 6 lbs. 8 ozs., 5 lbs. 14 ozs., 5 lbs. 6 ozs., 5 lbs. 2 ozs.

On the 23rd November, 7 lbs. 4 ozs., 7 lbs. 2 ozs., 6 lbs. 14 ozs., 6 lbs. 12 ozs.

On the 5th December, 7 lbs. 8 ozs., 7 lbs. 4 ozs., 6 lbs. 12 ozs., 6 lbs. 12 ozs.

Wyandottes.

Four Wyandotte cockerels, hatched on the 8th of May, weighed, on the 21st of August following, 3 lbs. 13 ozs., 3