

II. LICE.

According to Dr. Woods there are nine varieties of body lice affecting poultry, but as they all look more or less alike to the average poultry keeper, we will not attempt to describe each variety separately. Each of the varieties has some favourite part of the fowl's body which it inhabits in preference to other parts and seldom trespasses on the domain of the neighbouring varieties. There are two of the nine varieties which are exceptions to this rule, and which are known as wandering lice; they are common to all parts of the fowl, being found more abundantly on the skin of the abdomen, among the fluffy feathers. These wandering lice not infrequently leave the fowl to attach themselves to persons who may handle the birds, or travel from one fowl to another on the roost at night, and may even be found in the material or on the walls in badly infested buildings.

Lice do not, as is popularly believed, suck the blood of their victims. Their mouths are made for biting and chewing feathers and the scales of the skin. They are a source of much irritation to the fowl by their constant running about and scratching the skin with their sharp claws. Their presence will so worry a fowl and cause such irritation of the skin that the functions of the bird will be interfered with, and sickness may result if lice are in considerable numbers. It is also probable that these vermin carry infectious matter from sick fowls to well ones, and that they also may act as the intermediate hosts of worm parasites.

Lice may be rapidly spread through a flock by contact with lousy fowls; one infested bird being capable of distributing the vermin throughout a large flock. As the favourite seat of attack of the most common variety is in the downy feathers immediately about the vent, they may cause so much irritation and soreness as to result in indifferent or improper intercourse, and so result in infertile eggs. In young chicks they cause dumpishness, drooping wings, indifference to food, and if present in large numbers, may stunt or kill the chicks. Every adult fowl is more or less lousy, and we must not flatter ourselves that our fowls are free from them. It is a good rule to treat every fowl with suspicion, and examine it carefully for lice, as they are almost certain to be present in force when we least expect to find them. If you think a bird is not affected, carefully examine the feathers about her head, look under the large wing feathers next to the shaft, and then turn the fowl up quickly and examine the feathers and the skin below the vent; if your eyes and fingers are quick enough you will find them on every adult fowl you examine. The presence of one or two need not cause any alarm but if a large number are found means should be taken at once to get rid of the vermin.

Prevention.—One of the best means of keeping this pest down is the dust bath. The dust bath should be 'dust' in name only. Fowls will wallow and dust themselves more often and to better advantage if they are provided with a wallow of soft, easily friable, slightly damp earth. This should be provided for them out-of-doors in some sheltered spot in the summer-time and in one corner of the house in winter. When fowls are exercising freely and seem to frequent the dust baths, or wallow and enjoy themselves therein at frequent intervals, there will seldom be a dangerous number of lice present.

Treatment.—Dusting fowl with a good lice powder that contains a considerable percentage of tobacco dust is an effective means of getting rid of vermin, but it is too tedious to use where a large number are to be treated. A good liquid lice-killer is an efficient means of fighting lice, and is easily used.

Two good dusting powders can be made as follows: Add one-half an ounce of 90 per cent carbolic acid to a peck of freshly air-slaked lime and stir thoroughly; or take sifted coal ashes, one-half peck, four fluid ounces of any good light liquid lice killer,