

THE POULTRY INDUSTRY

Fowls are of value in proportion to their ability to produce meat and eggs. The basis of comparison in egg production should be not only on the total number of eggs produced but also the time of production; ten eggs laid in December or January are worth twenty in April or May. In Quebec the majority of eggs are produced from March to June, which is the season of low profits. The average Quebec farm possesses about sixty hens and the average Quebec hen lays about sixty eggs per year. It takes the value of about eighty eggs to rear and keep a hen for a year. If the average number of fowls per farm were raised to one hundred and if the average egg production per bird were raised to one hundred, the value of the poultry industry would be more than doubled. Under proper care and management such averages could be obtained easily and the majority of eggs should be produced from November to March, which is the season of highest prices and greatest profits.

Although about ninety per cent of the eggs crop is produced on the farms there are many village, town and city lots where fowls would pay well. Table scraps, kitchen waste, lawn clippings and other refuse material could be utilized to good advantage in producing eggs and meat which could be used as substitutes for the staple red meats.

BREEDING FOR EGG PRODUCTION

The breeds which have proven suitable for Quebec include Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Reds, Wyandottes, Orpingtons and in some cases Leghorns. Every effort should be made to maintain the best developed laying strain of the breed chosen.

The ability to lay eggs is inherited and it requires careful and consistent selection to improve production. The best layers are those with bright, full eyes; combs of medium texture; bodies of good size, good width between the pelvic bones, this test being applied at different times, and a soft, velvety feeling of the skin of the abdomen as the hand is placed between the end of the keel bone and the pelvic bones. In those breeds: Plymouth Rocks, Rhode Island Reds and Wyandottes, which normally have yellow pigment in the shanks, the colour becomes much paler after a heavy laying period. Good layers show no evidence of being lazy. They usually moult late in the season.

The birds which begin laying early in life usually make the best annual layers. Production in the pullet year is nearly always greater than in subsequent years, consequently the majority of the flock should consist of pullets. A number of yearling birds should be kept as breeders.

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