

There seem naturally to be two seasons of the year when hens lay ; early in the spring, and afterwards in the summer ; indicating that if fowls were left to themselves, they would, like wild birds, produce two broods a year.

Early spring-hatched birds, if kept in a warm place and fed plentifully and attended to, will generally commence laying about Christmas, or even somewhat earlier. In cold and damp this is not to be expected, and much may, in different seasons, depend on the state of the weather and the condition of the bird.

It is a well known fact, that from November to February (the very time when we want eggs the most) they are to many a bill of expense, without any profit. To promote fecundity and great laying in the hen, it is necessary that they be well fed on grain, boiled potatoes given to them warm, and occasionally animal food. In the summer they get their supply of animal food in the form of worms and insects when suffered to run at large, unless their number is so great as to consume beyond the supply in their roving distance. I found it advantageous, in the summer, to open the gates occasionally, and give the fowls a run in the garden and in the field adjoining their yard, for a few hours in the day, when grass-hoppers and other insects are plenty. I had two objects in view ; one to benefit the fowls, and the other to destroy the insects. It will be found that the fecundity of hens will be increased or diminished, according to the supply of animal food furnished.

Hens moult and cast their feathers once every year, generally commencing in August and continuing till late in November. It is the approach, the duration and the consequences of this period, which put a stop to their laying. It is a critical time for all birds. All the time that it lasts, even to the time that the last feathers are replaced by new ones, till these are full grown, the wasting of nutritive juices, prepared from the food for the purpose of promoting this growth, is considerable ; and hence it is no wonder there should not remain enough in the body of the hen to cause the egg to grow.

Old hens cannot always be depended on for eggs in winter, they scarcely being in full feather before the last of December ; and then, probably may not begin to lay till march or April, producing not more than twenty or thirty eggs ; and this is probably the cause of the disappointment of those who have supplied themselves at the market with a stock to commence with, and get few or no eggs. As pullets do not moult the first year, they commence laying before the older hens, and by attending to the period of hatching eggs, may be produced during the year. An early brood of chickens, therefore, by being carefully sheltered from the cold and wet, and fed once a day on boiled potatoes, warm, with plenty of grain, and occasionally a little animal food, will begin to lay in the fall, or early in winter.

TREATMENT OF HENS.—Here is a timely item, containing a valuable hint to poultry keepers. An uncredited paragraph in an exchange says :—"two flocks of hens were compared. One laid eggs almost all the time. The other laid scarcely any. On examining their treatment the following differences were found to exist ; the former had a warm cellar to roost in during the winter ; the latter roosted in a stable where the wind blew in. The former had a fine place in an open cellar for scratching among ashes, lime, and earth ; the later scratched in the manure heap, or in the stable where the cows were put out. The former had plenty of good water, with milk, etc. ; the others had no drink except what they could find. It can be seen, we think, why one flock laid eggs generously, and the other did not."—*Canadian Agriculturist*.