

THE DIET OF DOMESTIC CREATURES.

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THERE are people who think that a domesticated creature can adapt itself to any kind of food without any evil results, but this is the blunder of a not sufficiently trained or thoughtful mind. The production of maladies not previously prevalent may be often traced to an artificial—*i.e.*, unnatural—system of feeding. A bad, injudicious, and forced diet contributes its share in the production of disease, especially of a visceral nature. This is particularly noticed in *crammed* Poultry and *cayenne fed* Canaries. The injurious effects arising from improper nutrition are not sufficiently recognized, if they were, most of the so-called cheap foods placed on the market would be promptly tabooed. Impairment of nutrition creates a suitable and fruitful ground for the development of disease.

A *never varied* diet is a *wrong* diet. The selection of the most natural and health promoting materials should be the aim of the feeder. Notwithstanding the keen competition in canine and ovine food manufacture, Kennel and Poultry men are now awaking to the importance of using the best and most suitable article. "Dietaries ought never to be estimated by the rough weight of the constituents without distinct reference to the real nutriment in these as determined by physiological and chemical inquiry." The effects of food on the animal economy is, therefore, a subject of great importance, whether it be applied to man, animals, or birds. According to Letheby, the various alimentary substances made use of by man and animals contain at least four classes of constituents, each of which, he says, performs its own assigned function in the living animal economy. If the substance contains nitrogen it seems most fitted for the nourishment of tissue, and has been called plastic or nitrogenous; if it is deficient in nitrogen, and has an excess of carbon or hydrogen, it appears to undergo combustion in the body, and is called a non nitrogenous or a respiratory element of food (hydro carbons), if it is fatty in its nature it performs the double duty of maintaining animal warmth and of assisting in the assimilation of nitrogenous compounds, and lastly, if it is saline in its quality it goes to build up the solid textures of the animal frame, and aids the important work of carrying new materials into the system and old or effete matter out of it. Health, we are taught, cannot be maintained if the food of man, animals, and Poultry does not contain these several constituents.

Regularity and naturalness are most important points in connection with dietetics.

No doubt exists in my mind as a professional man that the peculiarly artificial state in which domesticated creatures, notably dogs, Poultry, and various other birds are now kept has very much to do with the development and aggravation of disease and the shortening of life.

Irritant, indigestible, and imperfectly prepared food should be avoided. Retarded digestion gives rise to flatulence and dyspepsia. Post-mortem examinations frequently reveal decomposition of long-retained food in the stomach, which may be due to an abnormal condition of the latter, but more often to the nature of the diet, and the incapability of the stomach to digest it. It should be remembered that whole grain is the most natural Poultry food, as is flesh that of carnivorous animals, and that a continual pultaceous diet does not sufficiently exercise the functions of the digestive apparatus and stimulate the gastric secretion. If, therefore, the dietary circumstances under which disease is encouraged be taken into consideration, and well directed hygienic measures be more fully pursued, better health to the domestic creatures will follow, and pecuniary advantage must accrue to the owner. I cannot conclude this article without allusion to what I must designate a peculiar stretch of imagination on the part of Mr. Cook in his extraordinary remarks concerning rice. In specifying the peculiar characteristics of a food agent, accuracy is most essential. It is one thing to assert, another to prove. It must be a marvellously rotten cloth that swollen rice would burst, and a singularly abnormal crop that it would rupture. To accomplish such a result, it would be necessary that *excessive* fermentation and generation of gas should be established, whereas it is a well known chemical fact, that owing to the small quantity of gluten which rice contains, it is capable by itself of only an *imperfect* fermentation, and for this reason cannot be made into bread unless mixed with wheaten flour. Rice is nevertheless a peculiarly valuable food, not only for the human family, but for Poultry, especially in hot seasons, whilst it is also a valuable diet in relaxed bowel complaints. Rice is not tied loosely in a cloth for culinary purposes to prevent it when cooked bursting the enclosure, but to allow the necessary expansion of the grain. There are grades of quality in rice as in other dietary articles, and I have only once more to assert the *best* is the *cheapest*, whether given dry or boiled, and too much of it as of any other good thing *can* be given; but the crop of a chicken does not retain water long enough to swell the dry rice and give rise to the extraordinary effect assumed by Mr. Cook, for an assumption it most assuredly is.—*Poultry*.