



POULTRY

Timely Authoritative References to the Present Market Situation and Helpful Comment and Instruction in Caring for Young Chicks

By N. C. CAMPBELL, B.S.A.

THE annual Spring slump in price of eggs this year has been more noticeable than usual. Eggs have touched a slightly lower than common level in the rural places; the situation has taken some of the enthusiasm from the enthusiasts on poultry.

I believe, however, that if has not been so much the lower price of eggs as it has been the very much higher price of grains—wheat, oats, barley, and all kinds of mill-feeds—that has been responsible for the temporary abating interest in chickens. With war prices ruling for grain and feed stuffs one is much more inclined to count the cost. And this is well for one ought at all times to keep poultry—and any other kind of domesticated live stock—on a purely business-like basis where the cost is known and profits and loss accurately determined.

AN ULTRA MODERN METHOD

While eggs have tumbled in price, there can have been no complaint on the price of old hens and of other live poultry. I know of a good many progressive poultry keepers who sold their stock for the Jewish-Easter trade and got 16 cents a pound live weight for them right at their home place, the buyers looking after the shipping charges. This is quite the ultra-modern way to handle a flock of poultry now-a-days—have the pullets laying early in late fall and through the winter and the year-old hens starting in to lay early in January, so that by March 15th, or by the 1st of April, they have laid their best and it is really no sacrifice at all to sell all the older hens at this time for the very high price that they will realize live weight. Considering the cost of feed from this date on—at least this year—and the lower price of eggs (also that the old hens will persist in being broody and during such periods will not lay eggs) it is the acme of good business to be rid of them, live weight, at 16 cents a pound!

THE PRESENT SITUATION

While this year is not the most desirable season that one can imagine in which to carry through a very large flock of, say, 400 to one thousand or more hens, it is by no means a time to quit raising and caring for poultry altogether. Next year the situation is quite likely to be reversed it surely will be if many of the "spineless" short-seeing poultry keepers get "cold feet" entirely now, and throw over the business.

Small flocks and reasonably large flocks of poultry can still give a good account of themselves under good management. Much of what they will eat will otherwise go to waste, and, if kept just for one's use—to supply eggs and poultry for the home table, they will figure as a vital important factor in keeping down the cost of living. With beef and other meats at retail prices, almost prohibitive, it is mighty nice to have fresh poultry and eggs from one's own flock to use at home.

A PATRIOTIC DUTY

Then there is another side of the question this year. It is a patriotic duty, which we owe to ourselves, and to our country and the Empire, to produce as much as possible of available foodstuffs. You might think that your little flock of 25 to 40 hens can make but little difference; but think of thousands and thousands and even millions of such flocks—this is what we really have in this country—all producing poultry products primarily for home use, and you gain an appreciation of how really important a factor in the Nation's food supply even your little flock can be!

As for beginners: With eggs lower in price it is all the easier to get a start and gain desired experience with poultry keeping.

Chickens may be hatched to advantage any time this month and even next. For early winter layers you need to count on between five and six months to develop the chick to the mature pullet, ready to lay, provided she is of the right strain, and has been well reared on proper feed and care.

CHICKEN POINTERS

Granted that you have your chickens hatched or will shortly have them hatched, I wish to point out two or three points, seemingly minor, but which may put your success with the chickens all to the bad unless you heed them well. First of all, be in no hurry to feed the newly hatched chicks. I have dwelt on the point before, but it calls for emphasis again because it seems so hard a thing

for anyone to do to keep from feeding the fascinating chickens, newly hatched.

Nature has looked after her own abundantly in the case of the chicks and they can take care of themselves for four days or more without any feed that you may provide! The entire yolk of the egg has been enveloped within the body of the chick before it came from the shell; the chick must digest this yolk first, and if you feed it meanwhile you give its delicate little digestive organs a very heavy handicap indeed.

THE FIRST FEEDING

You can safely wait forty-eight hours anyway, and better for seventy-two hours, after hatching, before feeding the chicks. Then start them off with water—from a fountain, so that they cannot bodily get into the water and suffer therefrom, and give pin-head oatmeal, or dry bread crumbs. You may feed some granulated hard-boiled eggs if you have them to spare; also cracked wheat, or screenings.

Be careful to feed only a little at a time, and feed often—five or six times a day for the first week; then out to three times a day by the time the chicks are a month old. I like the hopper method of feeding—having the feed so far as cracked grain, grit, and dry chopped stuff is concerned, before the chicks in hoppers—sort of a free lunch counter to which they may go and help themselves at all times. For watering I prefer a simple little fountain made from a salmon can and a saucer. Simply punch a hole in the side of the can, say three-eighths of an inch from the top, and fill the can with water, put saucer face down on top and turn all upside down and you have a very suitable convenient little fountain that will protect the chicks from getting wet.

INCUBATOR CHICKS

For your incubator chicks I recommend you to follow closely the suggestions and instructions given you by the manufacturer. Most manufacturers of incubators and brooders get out quite elaborate books of instruction on raising poultry. I advise you to send for these.

If your chickens are hen-hatched, do not let the hen run at large with them. Tie her or keep her confined in a suitable coop, and do not let the chicks run through the wet grass in the early morning. Keep guard against having the chickens exposed to rain from any thunder storm that may come up quickly. It is sure destruction to them if they get soaked with cold rain.

At all times make war against lice—a healthy louse on a chicken—especially if on the chicken's head—will make a very unhealthy chicken, indeed, if it does not kill it.

TREAT FOR LICE

The old hen mother is almost sure to have some lice. Treat her for lice anyway. Use some of the handy prepared louse killers to be had in big packages at your dealers and, as well, keep the coops clean,—you may spray or paint them with coal-oil—and if mother hen can have access to a dust bath, all should be well.

Cats are not to be trusted generally near very young chickens. Rats are very fond of such prime young delicacy, so look out to keep them out of reaching the chicks. Crows, hawks, skunks, weasels and dogs need also to be guarded against.

FRESH FORAGE FOR CHICKS.

If you find it possible, give the chickens the advantage of some freshly dug ground on which to forage. You might sow some seeds, clover or grains of any kind, so that these, on sprouting, will furnish tender young green feed for them to pick and eat. You can trust the young chicks—without the mother hen—to run in your garden, amongst and between the rows of corn, potatoes, and the other garden truck. They will capture and eat many bugs and worms, and they will experience ideal conditions there under which to grow so fast as almost to astonish you.

By all means do not attempt to raise young chickens on old dirty ground where hens and chickens have been year after year for many years,—and, if you can, keep them off of a tough old sod, which will provide them with but little of use to them.

FASCINATING INTEREST

Quite aside from any momentary advantage that comes from keeping poultry, I like to be with the chickens and with the hens because of their fascinating interest. I believe this is why so many women engage in poultry keeping.

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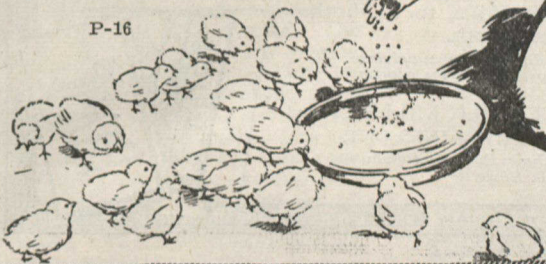
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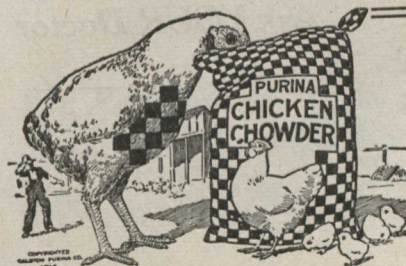
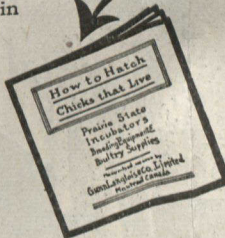
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