

FATTENING CHICKENS.

The selling of lean chickens is wasteful, to say the least. Much more interest is being taken in this branch of the industry year by year, and in districts where buyers discriminate in prices between the well finished and thin chickens, the progress has been very pleasing. There are many buyers who now pay a premium for good chickens. The demand for home consumption has increased to such an extent that the supply falls far short, and more than one wholesale dealer in our large cities is fattening the thin chickens sent to market. Some of the dealers have plans for buildings, which they purpose erecting this year, where they can fatten thousands of birds weekly. They know that the farmer or grower can do this work better and more cheaply, but if he will persist in sending lean chickens to market, and the consuming public demands fat chickens, some one must supply the demand. Some dealers have been trying the proposition in what might be termed a small way during the past two or three years. The business has, as I understand, been profitable, even where the milk was brought in by express, and a high rental paid for the building used. Surely if the dealer can buy all the raw materials from the farmer or grower, and make a profit, the producer should do as well or better.

There is ordinarily from three cents to seven cents per pound difference in the price paid for well fleshed or fattened birds, to that paid for birds just off the range or fields. This means a difference of from fifteen to thirty-five cents on a five pound chicken, depending upon the quality. Not only does the feeder make upon the gain made while the chicken is being fattened, but the original weight is increased in value by the improvement in quality. There is always a market for goods of prime quality, and the poor quality goes at begging prices, when the supply is great.

It is not difficult to produce good chickens. Like other lines of live stock, the scrub sort are not desirable. Good thrifty cockerels, either pure-bred, crosses or grades of such breeds as Rocks, Orpingtons, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds, Game, Dorking, etc., make economical gains. It is usually not very profitable to feed Leghorns, Minorcas, or birds of similar character. These breeds make medium broilers, but rather poor roasters. The birds usually make the greatest gain when about three to four months of age, or at a weight of three and one-half to four pounds. Should the market demand a chicken of more than five and one-half pounds in weight, then it will be required to allow the birds to range longer, and the gain (in our experience) will be hardly as profitable, unless the price paid is higher, at least one cent per pound.

The average birds make the most economical gains during the first two weeks of feeding. It seldom pays to feed much longer than three weeks or twenty-four days, after this period the added gain is not sufficient.