THE SIMPLE LIFE

WITH THE POULTRYMAN

RHODE ISLAND REDS

OF ROYAL ancestry, but bred in a free American state, the staunch little red hen has become a great favorite, both with the business poultryman and with the fancier. The origin of this breed dates back more than half a century, yet Rhode Island Reds have come into general prominence only in comparatively recent years. But their sterling qualities have long been recognized and appreciated by the farmers who were responsible for their origin and their perpetuation. In fact, the Rhode Island Red was originated for business purposes solely, by the poultry farmers in the little state whose name it bears. Little Compton was its birthplace, and today it holds the place of honor with the sons and grandsons of its originators.

Tradition has it that the seararing captains brought to their home port the Yellow Cochin Chinas, the cockerels of which were "generally red." A little later came the Great Malays from southern Asia, a dark brown or reddish breed, the males of which were red, and were sometimes known as Red Malays. These red males were crossed upon the flocks of fowls on the farms roundabout the little seaport, thus laying the foundation for the Rhode Island Reds.

But these early breeders were after a business fowl pure and simple. They wanted a fowl that was vigorous and hardy, hence easy to raise, early to mature, giving a large proportion of meat, very productive of eggs, and withal a good hatcher and mother. These sterling qualities were ingrained into the breed in its infancy, and these qualities commend it to the business poultryman of today. The original object was not to produce a fowl of a certain type or color, or peculiar markings, but the best business breed possible. To this end, breeders were selected which most nearly met the requirements, and this continued selection, generation after generation, has ingrained into the breed the most practical qualities. The red color was an accident. The originators were not breeding for feathers, but for practical qualities, and they did not hesitate to infuse into their flocks any blood that would help attain their object. The Brown Leghorn was used to strengthen the laying qualities, and I was told recently by a prominent Rhode Island Red fancier that some of the poultry farmers in the original Red territory even now do not hesitate to introduce Leghorn blood into their flocks to increase the egg prduction, or that of some of the heavier breeds to give greater weight to their market poultry. From the fanciers' standpoint, this is almost a capital crime; but these farmers care nothing for fancy points, and have given to the world a breed of fowls that, for all-round business purposes, is hard to beat.

Here are some of the special claims made for them, which seem to be well attested:

They are active, great hustlers, and easy keepers, and withal easily confined.

The hens are prolific layers, and are claimed to be unusually good winter layers. The eggs are brown and of good size. Any extra feed is likely to increase the egg production rather than to be stored up as fat.

The fowls are very hardy and especially adapted to our northern climates. This is to be expected when we consider the place and circumstances of their origin, and it commends them to those who cannot give their poultry the most favorable care and conditions.

The hens are good sitters, though not so persistent as to be unmitigated nuisances when they get the fever. They are good mothers and very zealous in caring for and protecting their chicks.

The chicks, unless from strains that have been weakened by inbreeding or wrong methods of handling, are strong and vigorous, hence easy to raise. They grow rapidly, and the pullets come to laying age as early as the Leghorns.

As table poultry the carcasses are plump, with a long keel, which means an abundance of breast meat, with the bones small in proportion to their size. The color of the skin and legs is that golden yellow so attractive to the eye.

A story is told of one William Wyatt, a farmer who lived near Westport before the Rhode Island Reds had attained the dignity of a breed name. Mr. Wyatt raised beautiful strawberries as well as other products, which he sold to customers in town. Along with his other produce he marketed his dressed poultry. The color and general appearance were so attractive that he was asked as to the breed. His reply was that he knew no name for them, but he called them "Gilt-edged," and for many years this name was commonly applied to them.

But what of the Rhode Island Reds for the fancier—for the man who wants beautiful, showy birds, regardless of utilitarian qualities? Here is a fact that must be remembered; it is only within a few years that the fanciers have taken hold of this breed. The Single Comb Reds were admitted to the Standard in 1904, and the Rose Combs in 1906. Many of their most ardent admirers are recent recruits. There was considerable diversity of opinion, when the breed first came into prominence, as to shades of color, types, shape, and other points. The result is some complaint that all the birds do not breed true. But is there a breed of which this is not true? It certainly is the case with all breeds of comparatively recent origin, and only adds zest to the pleasure of breeding. It gives opportunity for the exercise of one's greatest skill in selection and mating, and herein lies the satisfaction and the triumph of the true fancier.

But a well-bred Rhode Island Red is a delight to the eye. Its shape is symmetrical, its outline pleasing. The rich, brilliant, glossy red of the males, of varying but harmonious shades, and the less brilliant but rich, even red of the females, certainly form a pleasing picture. No wonder the fanciers took them up, and no wonder that their popularity is increasing.

When the breed was first attracting general attention, some were breeding a variety with pea combs (probably the same are still bred) and an effort was made to have this style of headgear adopted officially; but the Rhode Island Red club would have none of it. As now bred and recognized by the Standard, there are two varieties—the Single Comb and the Rose Comb—alike in other particulars. Some of the breeders of the former claim that they are the better layers. Why this is so we are not told. An amateur's choice would likely be governed by his liking for either the rose or single comb as a headpiece.

In size the Rhode Island Red is practically the same as the Wyandotte. The standard weights are: cock, 8½ pounds; cockerel, 7½ pounds; hen, 6½ pounds; pullet, 5 pounds. We often see specimens exceeding these weights, but these give a bird of good size for table purposes.—F. H. Valentine, in Country Life in America.

SHOULD BE WELL HOUSED WHILE MOULTING

There is no time in the year when the poultry yard looks less attractive than during moulting, and poultry-keepers are liable to lose interest in their fowls at this season, because of their unproductiveness, inactivity, and unsightly appearance. The birds look dull, ragged, and in many cases almost bare of feathers, and the runs are untidy and repulsive with cast feathers which have blown into the corners and lie strewn about the walks like Autumn leaves which herald the approach of winter. But there is no time at which the poor birds require more care than when in moult, and everything which can be done ought to be done to improve their condition and promote the rapid growth of new feathers.

When hens are moulting, it is of considerable importance that they shall be well and comfortably housed. They do not need to be closely shut in nor is it advisable that they should be allowed less air in their houses than at other times; but hens which roost in comfortably warm houses generally moult earlier and better than those which moult in open sheds or in the branches of trees, and, as I have already said, early moulting is, of all things, most desirable. But it is still more important that suitable day shelters should be provided. The roosting house, of course, is rainproof, unless it is a very poor one indeed; but it is of little use to protect fowls at night if they are allowed to become thoroughly drenched with heavy showers in the day time, and in the moulting season. The feathers which are dropping out have a tendency to accumulate in the corners of the houses and to form a haven for insect vermin; but it does not take any great time to sweep them up and burn them or consign them to the manure pit every day. All ordinary precautions must also be taken to keep the houses free from vermin, and these may include lime washing of the walls and perches, frequent cleaning of the floors and the free use of air-slaked lime upon them, the renewal at regular intervals of the litter and nesting materials.

WATERING THE CHICKS

Fill a basin level full of pebbles a little smaller than hen's eggs; then sink the basin in the ground, leaving the rim an inch above the surface, and fill with water. The chicks can run all over this without getting their feathers wet, they cannot possibly push each other into the water, and they can drink between the pebbles. It is easy to clean, and it keeps the water cool for several hours.

SOFT SHELLED EGGS

Soft shelled eggs are frequently caused by the hens not getting enough lime, which is the chief constituent in the shells of the eggs. The best way to supply this element, so necessary for the laying hen, is in the form of bone meal or oyster shells. Oyster shells, ground up fine, should always be kept for the pullets and hens when the laying season begins, says the "Agricultural Gazette." Wheat is universally accepted as being the best single grain for chickens, and the kitchen scraps and meat should balance this ration (give the right proportion of protein and other materials) very well, especially when the poultry are out in the open, where they can pick up worms and get grass and other vegetable matter to eat.

THE LAYING STOCK

Laying stock should be kept active and fairly hungry, yet at the same time, supplied with a sufficiency of "force-giving" foods, with which to enable them to maintain a regular egg supply when the egg is most in demand. The constant production of eggs is naturally a great strain upon the system. The exact amount of food to be given one fowl at a particular time is hard to define, since so much depends on the breed, conditions of life, season and so forth. The poultry-keeper must learn to determine quantity for himself, taking the appearance and activity of his birds for a guide. Laying stock especially should be kept continually on the "go," and unless all rush eagerly forward for each meal their owner may be pretty sure they are getting too much.

HENS TOO FAT

Hens being too fat is a very common cause for soft-shelled eggs being laid. Over-fatness causes a number of troubles, among the commoner ones of which is a laying of eggs before their time. If this inability to retain the egg until it is fully developed is due to over-fatness, the remedy is to cut down the feed, especially the fat-producing feeds. Sometimes there are other causes, and the hen is temporarily weak and unable to retain the weight of the eggs she is carrying. The best treatment is to put the hen alone in a warm and good-sized coop, where she can take a little gentle exercise, and feed light. Be sure that the hens are getting enough lime in the form of ground bone or oyster shells.

FATTENING CHICKENS

A well fattened chicken is a luxury on the farmer's table, as well as a source of profit that is not to be slighted in considering the revenue from the resources of the farm, says the Metropolitan and Rural Home. There are ways of fattening poultry known to the special dealer in birds for market purposes that might be followed by those who handle chickens in smaller numbers with equally good results. Many of the chickens sold in our markets have been fattened by "cramming" for some weeks before they are killed. The manner of doing it is very simple and might be followed by anyone who would take the trouble to procure the simple apparatus necessary for the purpose.

The large breeders who fatten their chickens by cramming buy them up from small breeders a short time before they are ready to begin the fattening process. At first the birds are often fed from troughs in the usual way for a week or two, using what food the fattener's experience suggests as the best for the purpose, ground oats and skim milk being one of the combinations preferred by many of those who are getting their chickens ready for the grand final cramming process. When the chickens have gained all the weight they are likely to put on by this method of feeding, the cramming machine is then put in operation. This is a contrivance having a pump worked by foot and arranged so as to cram the food into the crop of the chicken. The person holding the chicken has his hands free for handling the bird, the pump forcing the feed through a tube into the chicken, which is made to take all that it will possibly hold at that time.

The mixture that is forced into the chickens may be of any variety that seems advisable to use if the experience of the farmer has taught him that it is good for fattening purposes. A combination that is very successfully used for the purpose is made of equal parts of fine corn meal, oatmeal, shorts and barley meal. This is a feed that makes a fat that is evenly distributed in streaks through the meat, making it sweeter than where it all forms on the intestines, where it is all wasted so far as it affects directly the flavor of the meat.

Some crammers use the milk and oat meal feed for cramming, as well as for the preparatory diet; others add to this a portion of white corn meal; again some successful fatteners use shorts and corn meal mixed with water instead of milk, adding a portion of meat meal three or four times a week. Another mixture recommended is ground oats with all the hulls sifted out, one-third finely ground corn meal, one-half wheat middlings and the rest of flour. A little meat scrap or fat may be added to this; the food being mixed with boiled milk of some kind, either skim milk, buttermilk or ordinary sour milk being used. This must be well boiled and the food mixed with it into a dry mash smooth enough to pass through the crammer.

After feeding, the birds must be kept very quiet and in a shed that is as little lighted as possible; they must not be allowed to fret, nor to run about nor exercise vigorously in any way. They are to be encouraged to lay on fat and to do nothing that will prevent their gaining this as rapidly as possible. The weight of a lean bird can be doubled in a surprisingly short time by this process, and those that buy up birds for the purpose of fattening them in this way can more than double their money in the time that they take to fatten.

Cramming is a common practice in many parts of England and France. Certain buyers there have men who go about for them and buy up the poultry raised by the small growers. These sell them to the dealer who does the fattening for market and so makes the largest profit in the undertaking. It is surprising how cheaply chickens can be bought up even in this country by the dealer who gets them from the remoter places of persons, largely the women on small farms, who raise them to sell to the first buyer. The method of cramming is very simple and might be followed by anyone who would take the trouble and go to the comparatively small expense of procuring the apparatus needed for the purpose. The machine can be operated by anyone after the first trial, and the time consumed is money gained as quickly as it could be made in any other farming venture.

There is really no reason why the person who raises chickens in a small way, should not take advantage of the contrivance for fattening them and gain the added profit that comes from bringing to market chickens that are of the highest quality, well fattened and ready for the table.—The Maritime Farmer and Co-Operative Dairyman.

POULTRY RAISING MADE EASY

Perhaps there is no subject more practically important to the farmer's wife than her poultry, for with the eggs her hens lay she is not only expected to furnish most of the luxuries for the table and other small "notions," but very often to clothe her husband and children as well. The question often asked but seldom satisfactorily answered is: How can an ordinary flock of hens, with only average surroundings and conveniences, be kept at their legitimate occupation, winter and summer, and not go on strike when most needed? I have had considerable experience with this subject, some of it rather expensive, too, in the way of foods, powders, egg producers, poultry journals, and with nearly every variety of breeds, and I have found that a system and attention are worth more than all things else in egg production. Combining the experience of others with my own observations, I have formulated a system that, with my own flock of hens, as well as others, has produced probably the best results obtainable under ordinary conditions. Any breed, high or low, will do, but a good breed will do better than a bad one.

Now for my formula, which combines a food, medicine and egg producer in one. To three gallons of boiling water add a quarter of an ounce of common salt, a teaspoonful of cayenne pepper and four ounces of lard; keep stirring until the ingredients are thoroughly mixed. While yet hot stir in a meal of oats and corn ground in equal proportions until a stiff mush is formed. Then set away to cool. Feed every other day, first warming slightly if it is winter time.

It is highly essential to give your hens a variety of feed, but don't change too often. Don't feed them slops. Keep them in prime condition. A poor hen will not and cannot lay. Let them have plenty of exercise and room to scratch every day in the year, if possible. Keep the poultry houses and roosting places free of litter. Don't allow the fowls to crowd too much. Give plenty of good, fresh air. Change the nests now and then, and fumigate. Remember lice and disease originate in filth. Here is an excellent formula to kill lice: Mix one gallon of coal oil with four ounces of carbolic acid and put the preparation on roosting places. Whitewash the inside of the coops and houses occasionally. Put the whitewash on hot, mixed with a little carbolic acid.

Pure cayenne pepper, as used in the first formula given, is an excellent preventative of disease, and also stimulates egg production.

The common red pepper is a good substitute; so is the black variety. Feed green stuff the year round.

AROUND THE FARM

STORING GREEN TOMATOES

JUST as soon as the average date of the first killing frost approaches in the latitude in which you live, gather all the green tomatoes, big and little, and sort them over, putting the fairest and largest in one lot, and the smaller and inferior ones in another. Put a large crumpled newspaper in the bottom of a clean wooden box (a cracker box is best, because it has no resinous odors, such as a pine box gives out, that may be imparted to the fruit), place a layer of the large tomatoes upon the paper, leaving a space of say an inch between; then put on another layer of crumpled newspaper, pressing it down carefully into the interstices and around the edges, so the tomatoes may be kept from contact and from the air, and so on, layer upon layer, with crumpled newspapers between, until the box is full; tack a cover on, so that neither mice nor chickens may attack them, and set the boxes in yourn barn or some dry, cool place, such as a fruit or root cellar. If placed in a barn they should be shielded from severe cold with hay or straw, until the weather gets too cold for their safety, then they must be stored in a frost-proof but not too warm place, as heat, of course, will ripen them too rapidly.

If they are kept thus, at a cool and even temperature, somewhat above freezing, the time of their ripening may be delayed until or beyond New Year's. This may be called putting them in "cool" storage; but if put into cold storage, with ice, and an exact, even, cool temperature maintained, their time of ripening can be lengthened out almost until spring.

It will, of course, be found necessary to examine them from time to time, to remove ripe or decaying fruit. I have put them up some years, wrapped each one separately in pieces of paper, but this makes the examination more difficult, as each tomato has to be unwrapped to ascertain its condition.

Selling the Ripe Ones

The larger ripened fruit should bring a good price in market, in midwinter. They should be wrapped separately, or two together, not touching each other, neatly, in square pieces of clean unprinted newspaper, and packed in boxes or crates. Put the fruit in on edge. The contrast in color of the brilliant red of the fruit with the white paper, when this is partially removed, will be found very pleasing and attractive.

BENEFICIAL EFFECT OF SUNLIGHT

One of the principal speakers at the recent British Dairy Farmers' Conference at Derby laid great stress on the beneficial effect that sunlight has upon milk. This is in keeping with the latest scientific investigations which go to prove that light is the best germicide of all. This principle should be applied in a practical manner by giving dairy cattle as much sunlight as possible. Milking should take place, wherever the conditions will permit of it, out of doors, and when the cows are obliged to be housed, their quarters should be well lighted and well ventilated. The old-fashioned cow-house was generally of a dark and dreary type, difficult to keep clean, and that it was directly provocative of disease can hardly be doubted (says Farm Life). The scourge of tuberculosis from which cattle suffer at the present day is an inheritance due, to a very considerable extent, to the cow dens—they were not worthy the name of cow-houses—of the past.

PULSE OF THE HORSE

The pulse of the horse may be counted and its character may be determined at any point where a large artery occupies a situation close to the skin and above a hard tissue, such as a bone, cartilage, or tendon. The most convenient place for taking the pulse of a horse is at the jaw. The artery is located immediately in front of the heavy muscles of the cheek. Its throb can be felt most distinctly just before it turns around the lower border of the jawbone. The balls of the first and second or the second and third fingers should be pressed lightly on the skin over this artery when its pulsations are to be studied. The normal pulse of the healthy horse, says the Agricultural Gazette, varies in frequency as follows: Stallion, 28 to 32 beats per minute; geldings, 33 to 38 beats per minute; mare, 34 to 40 beats per minute; filly, two to three years old, 40 to 50 beats per minute; foal, six to twelve months old, 45 to 60 beats per minute; foal, two to four weeks old, 70 to 90 beats per minute.

Do not let the feet of the road or work horses get hard and dry during the dry weather. Avoid hoof lotions. Water is best and safest and is natural.