

POULTRY YARD

The Hen's Profitable Age

Prof. James Dryden, who is a Canadian boy, and a recognized authority in poultry, now at the Oregon Agricultural College, says: "It is a point in management that I wish to speak of here, one point in many that must be taken into account if poultry keeping is to be made a success. It is a question of the most profitable age of the hen. Poultrymen who have kept in touch with poultry investigations during the past few years are pretty well informed on this point but the importance of this subject is not yet generally appreciated."

The writer carried on for several years at the Utah experiment station a line of experiments with the object of determining the value of the hen at different ages for egg production. The same hens were kept year after year under similar conditions, and a record kept of production and of food consumed. These experiments proved that the hen is different from the cow which retains or improves her productivity with age. The first year was the most profitable and there was a gradual decrease in productiveness each succeeding year. It is safe to figure this decrease at 25 per cent. each year. With average price for food and for eggs it is not profitable to keep hens after they have finished their second year of laying. The first, or pullet year is very profitable; the second will give a satisfactory profit, but during the third year the egg yield will seldom pay for the food consumed.

These conclusions, of course, apply only when the eggs are sold at market prices. Fowls that have a special

value as breeding stock should be kept longer, but the notion that "the old speckled hen" is the good layer should not be cherished unless she is caught in the trap nest. The fact that she sings a joyful lay, paints her comb a brilliant red, and scratches a vigorous scratch, should not be accepted as sufficient grounds for commuting the sentence.

It is safe to say that our poultry keepers would be many thousands of dollars in the pocket by rigorously killing off the hens every two years and replacing them with new stock, with the exceptions noted above.—F. C. E.

Do Your Hens Pay?

It is always a satisfaction to know whether or not your poultry is on a paying basis. Many people find poultry-raising a profitable and pleasurable occupation. Keep a record, an exact record of your receipts and expenditures connected with your poultry, and find out definitely whether they pay; not at certain times of the year, when it would be hard work to make poultry unprofitable, but all the year round. Keep continuous records. Charge up every cent of outlay on the fowls, and credit them with stock and eggs sold at the actual price received.

And if it should be found, at any time, taken for the year, the proposition is a losing one, it is time for a thorough consideration of all the causes which contributed to that end. The records, if carefully kept, will show some facts which might not be so apparent otherwise.

The beginner is advised to watch every detail of the business, closely. It may be that the females are not from good egg-laying strains and, therefore, the desired success may be impossible with them. It may be that the feed is too costly and not of the

right kind to ensure either the proper development of the growing birds, or the greatest possible output of eggs. "The breed that lays is the breed that pays" is a well-worn axiom in poultry culture. But it has been demonstrated, over and over again, that a strain of any breed may be developed in the egg-laying habit to such an extent that were it alone of its breed considered, that breed might be well termed "The breed that lays."

But in the creating of an egg-laying strain, feeding has a great deal to do with the number of eggs produced. For instance, supposing you have purchased birds from a strain noted for its egg laying quality; if you were to starve your birds, or to feed them solely on corn, you would not get a good egg yield, no matter whether their ancestors for twenty generations before them had laid 200 eggs per hen per year. So we see that feeding has a vital influence in the production of eggs.

If your fowl do not "pay," your records will be of great assistance to you in locating the cause, and then it is "up to you" to remedy it.—F. C. E.

Poultry Pointers

Mix some "brains" with the feed, and you will get better results than if you mix their feed carelessly. Carefulness in feeding is essential in any kind of stock. The amount of food given the laying hens, or the hens that should lay, is an important matter. No fixed amount can be given, but it must be governed by the judgment of the operator.

Remember, the poultry business is like any other enterprise. It starts small and grows big. If you start on a large scale to gain experience, losses will be harder felt and discouragement is likely to follow.

One of the main essentials of every poultry-house is that it must be kept dry. Damp houses cause diarrhoea,

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canker, sore eyes, rheumatism and other troubles that all animals, as well as poultry, are heir to. The best way to keep the house dry is to give it plenty of fresh air by opening the doors and windows during the day. Supply fresh litter often. Build the house on a high, dry spot.

A flock of lively chickens in an orchard will pick up thousands of insects, worms and the eggs that hatch them. Scatter grain occasionally to encourage scratching.

One of the reasons why a small flock of hens does better than a large one is because table scraps form a large part of the small flocks' rations, and they are an evenly balanced ration.

Crooked breastbones in chickens are caused by the heavy birds roosting on poles and fences. The bones of the young birds are soft, and are turned to one side by pressing on the roosts.

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