POULTRY

The Production of Table Fowls

The great demand for chickens and the high prices obtained for fairly good birds, makes poultry raising a very profitable branch of farm industry and one deserving more attention than is usually given it. Even now we find exposed for sale in our markets a large proportion of badly-bred and carelessly fed birds, which are unsatisfactory to the consumer and therefore fail to yield to the producer the best possible returns.

WHAT IS A TABLE FOWL

Experiments point to the Plymouth Rock and White Wyandotte as being among the best adapted for the production of table fowls, not only for their excellent qualities, but because, like the Shorthorn, either breed is easily obtainable, and it is pleasing to note that the predominating blood of our farmyard poultry is to some extent of these two choice breeds.

Both are suitable, as they are hardy, handsome, quick to mature, good feeders, and, in short, the best of general purpose fowl. Like all stock, success with poultry is only obtained by good management, varying, of course, according to the surroundings. Birds on a good run require the least care and attention.

The hen house is very important. Individually it will have to be arranged as circumstances permit, but it should be free of all draughts, should face the sun, be fairly comfortable, and the floor should be well covered with suitable scratching material. Perches can be arranged to suit the breed you have and suitable nests provided.

If wishing to raise chickens for the table, I would proceed as follows. Take about twelve hens, with a cockerel or pullets with a cock bird, as this is a good mating to produce, under proper care, the hardiest progeny.

Too many hens with a male bird sometimes results in weakly chicks and unless the young ones are vigorous and healthy they will never develop into a fine table bird.

The earlier the chicks are hatched the larger they grow, still a good table bird may be obtained from a hatching any time in May, if on a good run.

It is very important to keep the hen house clean. Whitewash it, thoroughly clean the nests and perches to insure freedom from lice, a pest which retards the growth of the chicks and if not closely watched for will cause disaster to the young flock.

In this country, for the local market, a fowl possessing yellow or white skin and legs, weighing about five lbs., is considered a good table bird. On the farm it is an easy matter to get these with fair treatment, and this weight should be reached at between four and five months old. I have had birds weigh seven lbs. when only five months old, and if good stock is procured and cared for properly, they should easily be made to weigh six pounds in the same number of months.

During the last year I had a great demand for chickens, selling all I had (farm raised) at good prices from Indian Game and common hens. While the pure breeds I have mentioned are, in my opinion, the best for the farmer to raise, being all round good fowl, still it is admitted that Indian Game are among the best of table birds, but are as yet but little known to the people. If farmers would only interest themselves to produce table birds of good weight and quality, it would greatly increase the demand. At present the chickens one sees for sale, are as as rule, decidedly below par. W. A. H.

York County, Ont.

Feeding of Chickens for Table Use

In season our Ontario markets are glutted with an inferior class of chickens. They come from mongrel stock and are generally small, lean, poorly dressed and uninviting. The prices obtained for this class evidence the necessity for adopting improved methods in production, thereby turning out a more desirable table fowl for the consumer and a more profitable one for the farmer. In beginning it is wise to study the market to be supplied, find out as nearly as possible what is wanted and with that end in view select a good strain of the most suitable breed and breed intelligently. Seek to grow the bird so that when fattened it will be heavy, having a plump breast and a large proportion of tender flesh and not an undue amount of oily fat. The required color of the legs and skin, together with early maturity, are characteristics to seek for.

Often for certain markets the best results may be obtained from the first cross of two breeds. In following this plan intelligence is a requisite in order to produce the bird sought after.

Hap-hazard cross breeding is sure to deteriorate the progeny. Among the best breeds for table use are the Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Dorkings and Orpingtons. In breeding keep the desired end in view, so that the dressed fowls will all be the same color, shape, size and quality, and aim to have the best in the market catered to.

Early chicks bring the highest prices. Select the best, plumpest and most robust young hens for laying stock. One male bird of ideal quality should accompany every ten hens. These should be kept vigorous and healthy and given plenty of exercise. For setting purposes discard all eggs that are irregular in size or shape or over ten days old.

Large numbers of early (or late) chicks may be successfully hatched in an incubator of a reliable sort and reared in a modern brooder. Divide the brooder into sections, allowing the chicks to be placed in small lots of not over twenty. This will prevent overcrowding and thereby decrease the percentage of mortality. Do not feed the young chicks for twenty-four hours after the first are hatched. Then remove to the brooder, which must be kept about 90 degrees the first week and then gradually decreased.

Hard boiled eggs crumbled, bread crumbs and oatmeal in limited quantities, fed often, will constitute the ration for the first few days. Supply grit, plenty of earth or fine litter to scratch in and drinking water, in such a way that the chicks will not become wet. At two days old finely chopped onions may be added, also small seeds, scattered in loose earth to encourage scratching. In two weeks scant feeds of green cut bone and meat, with occasional additions of boiled potatoes, cut cabbage, lettuce, green or steamed clover hay may be given. After three weeks, feed liberally of a mixture of bran, cornmeal and finely ground oats, damped with skim milk. Never allow a chick to become stunted, but do not gorge or over-feed. Never feed sloppy food. Encourage exercise, supply grit and keep surroundings thoroughly clean.

In about eight weeks the chicks should be ready for broilers. For roasters or stewing, however, they should have freedom at least three months, and then be closely confined and fattened for three weeks. Give all they will eat three times per day of the mash formulated above. Clean the troughs of what is left after each feed.

The closer we imitate natural conditions in chicken rearing, the better. Success is achieved only by persistent effort. I. W. N.

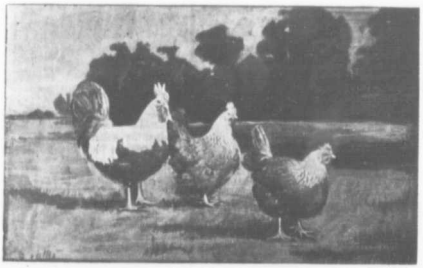
Brockville, Ont.

Delicate Chicks

If a chick is very delicate it is better to kill it immediately. But it sometimes happens that the chicks will not be all that they should, and yet will be much too good to slaughter wholesale. For these, empty out all the drinking vessels over night and see that they are quite clean. In the morning scald some skim milk and when it is cool enough give the chicks all that they can drink. Sometimes they will drink until their crops are quite full, but I have never found any ill effects follow. Next, dig out all the loose litter that you can find in the horses' or cows' mangers and spread it around the coops. It will be full of grass seeds and they will be busy all day hunting over it. Give plenty of sand and sharp grit. Dust with insect powder in case of lice, and put a lump of camphor or camphorated chalk in the water besides. Give only dry food, fine oatmeal for very young chickens and wheat and cracked corn to those that are older.

(MRS.) OCTAVIUS ALLEN.

Ganges, B.C.



Grey Dorkings—A Good Table Type