

Birds that are starved ready to kill shrink 12 per cent. by bleeding and loss of feathers. We have figured frequently that the average profit per bird in three weeks' feeding was about 15 cents each; the above table shows nearly 13 cents. The profit would have been somewhat higher if all the birds had been fed at least two weeks.

DRESSING AND SHIPPING POULTRY.

All fowls should be fasted from twenty-four to thirty-six hours before killing. Where this is not done, the food decomposes in the crop and intestines, the result being that the flesh becomes tainted and does not keep well.

There are two methods of killing that are considered proper. One is to kill by bleeding. This method is considered to be the better one in the Eastern States and also in some parts of Canada. The other method is to kill the bird by wringing or pulling the neck. This is done by taking the chicken in the hands, stretching the neck, holding the crown of the head in the palm of the hand, and giving a quick turn backward, and at the same time a steady pull. This method was favored by the exporters of dressed fowls, but is not now, owing to the discoloration where the blood collects in the neck. Where chickens are placed in cold storage this is a serious objection. It is claimed by the exporters that the flesh will keep longer and will not be so dry as where the birds are bled. I prefer the former method.

After the bird is killed, plucking should begin at once. Care should be taken to keep the head downward, to allow the blood to collect in the neck. Where the birds are allowed to become cool before being plucked, it is very hard to avoid tearing the skin; and the plucking is much more tedious. The birds should be plucked clean with the exception of about two inches of feathers adjoining the head.

After the chicken has been plucked it should be placed on a shaping board, as seen in Fig. 36. The weight placed on the top of the chicken is used to give it a compact appearance. This weight may be of iron, as seen in the cut, or a brick may be used in its place. If chickens are hung by the legs after being plucked it spoils their appearance, making them look thin and leggy.

Many good chickens are spoiled by being packed before they are thoroughly cooled. Care should be taken that all the animal heat is out of the body before the fowls are packed. We always cool the birds at least twelve hours before packing them.

The chickens are packed in boxes as seen in Fig. 37. The box is lined with parchment paper; and, if the chickens are to be shipped a long distance, each bird is wrapped in paper. This prevents the chickens from bruising each other, and, at the same time, to a considerable extent, checks decomposition. Do not use ordinary wrapping paper, as it draws dampness, and will cause the chickens to become clammy, which makes them more or less unsaleable.