

## POULTRY DEPT.

Conducted by S. Short, Ottawa

Frequently the question arises as to which are the best females to keep for winter laying. In weeding out sometimes it is either the hens or pullets that have to go for lack of room. Experience has taught the writer that the best winter layers are yearling hens that have moulted early and that were late-hatched pullets the preceding season. Next comes early-hatched pullets. As a rule the yearling hens will lay larger eggs. The late-hatched pullets rarely lay before the middle of winter. In any event, if yearling hens and pullets are available, they are likely to be more profitable than older hens. This applies to the heavy utility breeds such as Brahmas, Cochins, Plymouth Rocks, Orpingtons and Wyandottes. Hens two and three years old sometimes prove exceedingly profitable of such breeds as the Minorcas, Leghorns and Andalusians.

Care should be exercised not to overfeed the laying stock when they are first shut in their winter quarters or in fact at any time. Enclosed fowl will not get the exercise they have been enjoying when running at large and are more susceptible to crop binding and going off their food. Keep them fairly hungry for the first week and then increase allowances. By feeling their crops at night, a good idea may be obtained as to whether or not they are getting enough or too much. When feeding in the morning, a general inspection of the fowl may be made and any birds that appear mopey and indifferent about eating should be

caught and the crops felt to see if they have indigestion. If so, they should be put in hospital for a day without food and plenty of water. If no change has taken place, the bird should be treated by feeding with lukewarm water from a spoon and the crop kneaded until the contents are soft and the fowl returned to the hospital for another day. Usually one treatment of this kind will effect a cure.

Government authorities and others advocate the curtain front house as being the best adapted for this climate. Descriptions and plans tell us they are easily and cheaply built and results from fowl so kept are better than any other method. They are made with one thickness of boards so do not cost much. The curtain front is cheaper than glass and the fowls are better housed and appear healthy and lay better because the air is fresher. These statements bear some explanation. Any curtain front houses I have inspected and I have seen a good many have especially constructed sleeping rooms, double-walled and double ceiling, either sealed under the rafters or else a small loft made of slatted wood and the space between the slats and the roof stuffed with six or eight inches of dry hay or straw. The fowl, therefore, sleep in a warm and most comfortable sleeping apartment which I think is absolutely necessary for laying fowl. The curtain front is on the scratching pen adjoining which is sometimes very small and made of one thickness of first-class matched lumber so that there are no cracks or creases for the cold wind to get through. The fowl go out into these whenever they are disposed to scratch and dust themselves. On the whole the arrangements are good and very comfortable and better than some of the old time double boarded houses almost hermetically sealed and which admit no fresh air and are damp and deadly. These curtain houses seem specially suited to small combed fowl. I have not seen Minorcas or Leghorns kept under these conditions nor do I think the scratching room would be warm enough for them in zero weather for their large combs easily freeze and frost bites will stop hens from laying.

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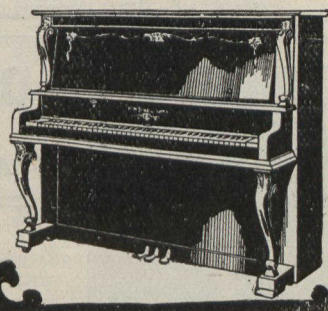
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