

Poultry Yard.

Bronze Turkeys.

This is one of the hardest of all breeds of the domesticated turkey, and when well cared for, for size and plumage has no equal. In early spring, perhaps, one of the finest sights in the barn-yard is the bronze gobbler strutting about in full plumage, varied and numerous in tints as the rainbow. Gobblers of this breed at nine months old, or at the beginning of the first breeding season, frequently reach the weight of 25 to 28 lbs., and hens 14 to 15 lbs. The second year will add to the weight of the gobblers six to eight lbs. and to the weight of the hens four or five lbs. A few gobblers will reach 40 lbs. the third year, and a few of the hens 22 lbs. Extreme weights are 45 lbs. for gobblers and 24 lbs. for hens. In the *American Standard of Excellence* we find the exhibition points, from which we extract the following:—"Neck, Breast and Back—Black, beautifully shaded with bronze, which glistens like gold in the sunlight, each feather ending in a narrow, glossy, black beard extending entirely across the feather. Under part of the body and thighs—Black, similarly marked to the breast, but colors not so rich or decided. Wing bow—Black, with a brilliant greenish orange or black lustre. Wing primaries—Black, barred across with white or grey—the more even and regular the better—with a warm edging of white on the outer web. Wing secondaries—Quills, black; outside web grey, narrowly edged with white; inside web dark brown, mottled or shaded with grey; the whole of the flight feathers may be edged with white, but it is rather objectionable. Wing coverts—Rich, beautiful bronze, the feathers terminating in a wide black band; the wing when folded having a broad bronze bar across it divided from the flight feathers by a glossy black ribbon-like mark formed by the ends of the coverts. Tail—Black, each feather pencilled irregularly with narrow bands of brown, and ending in a broad, greenish bronze band. HEN.—The entire plumage of the hen is similar to the cock, save that the colors are not so bright and distinct, and the edging of the feathers is more frequently white, or rather pale buff, than black. On the back, the edging is very narrow between the wings, and increases in width towards the tail, being about three-eighths of an inch on the coverts. On the breast the body of the feather is brown, ending with a narrow edging of white buff, divided from the brown by a narrow, glossy black band.

In rearing this breed, or indeed any other variety, almost everything depends upon the parent birds, yet in nothing are farmers more careless. The common practice is to sell off the heaviest birds in the fall of the year and at Christmas, and take the late birds of light weight for breeding. The excuse for this is, that the heavy cocks wear the feathers from the hen's back, and that heavy hens are more apt to break the eggs in the nest, but the real fact is that the old birds are sold off because they have four or five pounds more flesh upon them, leaving only yearling hens to breed from, a practice very objectionable. The turkey does not attain its maturity until the third year; and the largest, strongest chick can only be secured from mature parents. So common is the practice of selling off everything at a year old or less that it is almost impossible to get stock two or three years old. In purchasing breeding birds, cocks should not be less than thirty pounds, and hens sixteen to eighteen. Large, well-formed birds of perfect plumage will always produce good progeny, not only more beautiful to look at, but will bring much more satisfactory prices in the market and from the breeder. Good stock then is the first element of success in turkey breeding. With good stock and a fair share of attention, turkeys are not so difficult to raise, but with poor, weak stock,

and careless management the success will be limited indeed, as it ought to be. With good stock secured at the beginning of the new year, a variety of grain should be fed; occasionally some beef scraps may be given until March. If the weather is severe and the cock is disposed to cover the hens, it is better to feed more sparingly until the weather becomes settled and the danger of freezing eggs is over. Early chickens are desirable, but it is not worth while to risk too much to secure them. An old barrel placed in a bunch of evergreens, by the wall or fence near the barn, makes a very good nest, giving shelter from the rain, and affording the seclusion which the hen so much covets. A mature hen will ordinarily lay more eggs than she can cover. It is a good plan, therefore, to give the extra eggs to a common hen, and in a flock of a dozen or more turkeys, the sittings of two or three may be broken up to furnish eggs for the common hens to hatch. Several hens should be set at the same time, so that the chicks of two hens may be given to one mother. One turkey will take care of thirty young with as much ease as she manages half of that number. The hen that is released from maternal cares will very soon lay again, and hatch a second clutch. In setting the hens, they should not be near those that are to hatch later, or the latter will abandon their nests to help to take care of the young chicks that they hear near them. They are close sitters, when off the nest, feeding with great haste, and after a few days, show a strong desire to return immediately to the nest after feeding and dusting themselves; there are, however, times when it will be necessary to watch the hen and drive her back to the nest. They brood their eggs from the 27th to the 30th day, according to the surrounding temperature. As soon as the chicks begin to peep through the shell the mother makes it known by a peculiar plaintive sound. She will always hatch the larger part of her eggs, frequently every one. Sometimes the hatching goes on so rapidly that you will find a whole nest of chicks before you suspect the presence of any. There are many recommendations for the first food, but there is nothing safer or better than bread crumbs soaked in water or milk, or coarse ground Indian meal made into dough, and fed to them in small quantities, and frequently. In the first ten days they want careful attention. A good plan is to make a pen for the chicks of boards, about 12 feet long and 12 to 15 inches wide, into which the chicks may be put, leaving the hen free. They cannot then follow her, and when she finds they do not come to her call she will take up her quarters in the pen and be quite contented. If they are suffered to stray at this early age, they will get thoroughly soaked from the wet grass, and be likely to die. In all wet weather the mother and chicks must have shelter for several weeks. As the chicks grow they need an increase of food, and a greater variety may be allowed. They will eat anything that is good for their mothers, except the whole grain; but the size of the cracked corn may be increased with their growth, and after a few weeks they may be left to forage for themselves; but they should be brought home every night with great regularity. If this habit is formed early it will require very little to attend to them, as they will come home regularly every night. With a good range young turkeys will pick up insects enough to keep them in good thriving condition. Dry summers are most favorable for them, insects, especially grasshoppers, abound, and they lose no time in foraging. From June to September they will in the main take care of themselves, and benefit the farm by the havoc they make among the insects. If specially large birds are desired they should have extra feed as early as September. All kinds of grain are good for them. A mash made of boiled potatoes, Indian meal and skim-milk given to them warm is highly relished in the cool autumn mornings. At from six to eight months old the cocks ought to weigh from 18 to 24 lbs., and the hens from 12 to 15 lbs.

Feeding Fowls.

Where there is a family, and consequent consumption, there are many auxiliaries, such as bread crumbs, groats that have been used for gruel, etc. But it must be borne in mind that these are in the place of other food, and not in addition to it. When this can be had, other food should be diminished. I am not an advocate for cooked vegetables, except potatoes. Boiled cabbage is worse than nothing. In fact, it must be borne in mind, corn, either whole or cracked, is the staple food, and the others are helps. Do not give fowls meat, but always have the bones thrown out to them after dinner; they enjoy picking them, and perform the operation perfectly. Do not feed on raw meat; it makes fowls quarrelsome, and gives them a propensity to pick each other—especially in moulting time, if the accustomed meat be withheld. Hundreds have purchased birds, above all Cochon Chinas, on account of their great weight, which, being the result of meat feeding, has proved a real disease, incapacitating them from breeding. Where proper food is provided, all is not accomplished; it must be properly given.

No plan is so extravagant or so injurious as to throw down heaps once or twice a day. They should have it scattered as far and wide as possible, that the birds may be longer and healthier employed in finding it, and may not accomplish in a few minutes that which should occupy them for hours. For this reason every sort of feeder or hopper is bad. It is the nature of fowls to take a grain at a time, and to pick grass and dirt with it, which assist digestion; but if, contrary to this, they are enabled to eat corn by mouthfuls, their crops are soon overfilled, and they seek relief in excessive draughts of water. Nothing is more injurious than this; and the inactivity that attends the discomfort caused by it, lays the foundation of many disorders. While speaking of food, it may be observed, that when, from travelling or other cause, a fowl has fasted a long time—say 30 or 48 hours—it should not be allowed any hard food. For the first three hours it should have only a small portion, say a teaspoonful of sopped bread, very wet, so much as to serve for food and drink. If the bird appears to suffer much from the journey, instead of bread and water give bread and ale.—*Cor. Mich. Farmer.*

Dressed Poultry.

In order to obtain the highest price, poultry must be well fattened and dressed and packed in a proper manner. In the first place never send inferior, half-fattened fowls or turkeys to market. Poultry should be killed by bleeding in the neck or by cutting off the head, but never by wringing the neck. They should always be dry pickled, and if the feathers are plucked before the bodies are cold, this is easily done, but on no account should poultry intended for market be scalded, as the skin is sure to be broken and the value is lessened full one-third. As soon as the birds are picked the heads should be cut off and the blood thoroughly drained from the neck, which should then be wiped dry. The tail and wing feathers should always be removed, the entrails drawn, the wings of turkey clipped. The birds should then be put in a dry, cool place, until thoroughly cold. In packing, use clean barrels or boxes, lining the sides and ends with paper, but never use straw as it creases the poultry besides leaving more or less chaff that injures the appearance of the birds. Always fill your packages closely to prevent the poultry being moved about.—*Prairie Farmer.*

The Pouter Pigeon.

In the "Columbarium" of John Moore, published in 1735, the descriptions of the English pouter there recorded are almost identical with those now held by the best fanciers. They are five in number, namely; 1, length of leg or limb; 2, length of feather; 3, slenderness of body; 4, size and carriage of crop; 5, color. Their general formation or structure, may be further explained as follows: They should have a large and rotund crop, narrow girth, and long pinions, the points of which should meet over the tail, but by no means should they cross each other, for when such is the case the birds' butts or shoulders become prominent, and so detract from the apparent size of the crop and slenderness of girth. This defect is oftentimes noticeable in birds that are heavily feathered on the legs or vulture-hocked, and as a consequence generally lose that long stride and important bearing which is so attractive