

In the Poultry Yard

Good Soft Food Mixture

If fowls are kept in runs the year round the breakfast should always be of soft food. A good mixture is half sharps or pot meal and half-ground oats or barley meal; the former may be increased to two-thirds, which makes the mixture come a little cheaper. As a change, instead of the latter, give biscuit meal once or twice a week; biscuit meal is far cheaper than it used to be, and, given in the proportion of one-third to two-thirds sharps, it is really an economical feed.

Danger of Roosting in Drafts

See that the birds do not roost in draughts. Maybe the position of the perch can be changed. Unfortunately, they are generally placed over the trap-door by which the birds enter. How many poultry keepers think of the effect of cold air on the skin of the fowl? Yet, if the birds roost in a draught the feathers are blown aside and the cold air falls directly on the skin, and the effect of this cold round the abdomen and egg-producing organs cannot be a good one.—Feathered Life.

Cheap Clover Cutter

A block with a smooth end, and a sharp hatchet or big cut-throat knife, make a clover cutter that is better than none. Cut the clover fine and boil it, using it as one-third the bulk of a mash. For the rest, use equal parts of cornmeal, ground oats and bran, with from half an ounce to an ounce of beef scrap to each hen, the whole slightly salted and fed warm. Keep the hens exercising all the forenoon by scratching for hard grain scattered amongst straw, clean litter, etc. Give the mash at noon, and all the corn they want at night. So fed, the egg basket will not disappoint you.—M. G. Flint.

Proportion of Hens to Cocks

When mating up a breeding pen, one must be guided, as regards the number of hens to run with a male, by the time of year, the age of the birds, and the variety. In the case of large breeds of the Asiatic, Orpington, or heavy American type, it is not advisable to run more than four or five hens with a cock in the early part of the year, and old cocks of the Brahma-Cochin type should only have three or four hens. Later, when the weather is milder and the birds are more vigorous, the number of hens in Orpingtons, Wyandottes, etc., may be increased to six or eight. With breeds of the smaller type, such as Leghorns, it is generally safe to run six or seven hens with a vigorous young cockerel early in the season, and later on the number may be increased to ten or twelve. In a large run, a cock may also run with more hens than in a smaller one.—B. in Feathered Life.

Preparations for Winter Layers

COMFORTABLE HOUSE ESSENTIAL

If we want winter eggs we must begin the season before to prepare for them. One of the first essentials is a comfortable house for the fowls. It does not necessarily need to be a high priced elaborate affair, but one in which they can keep warm and dry, be plentifully supplied with fresh air and not over-crowded; one which lets the sunshine in, free from dampness. If the hen house has two apartments, with a door between, so much the

better. Then one of the rooms can be used for roosts, the other for feed and exercise. At night when the weather is very severe the door can be closed between the apartments and curtains drawn before the windows, which will add much to the comfort of the fowls.

The scratching shed is good, but not absolutely essential, especially if the hen house is so located that the hens can run most of the time in a barnyard well protected from the wind.

THE PERCHES

The perches should be so arranged that the hens are on a level. One of the best arrangements that I know is a frame made of inch lumber with strips nailed crossways, 18 inches or 2 feet apart, for perches. This frame is hinged to a 2 x 4 strip on one side and rests on some suitable support on the other. This can be easily lifted and fastened out of the way when the hen house is cleaned. The size, of course, must be adapted to the size of the hen house, which if large may require several of these frames for convenience in handling. Thirty-five feet of roosts will comfortably accommodate 50 hens. Dropping boards are generally good, but we do not all have them, and yet manage to get "lots of eggs" in the winter. If the roosts are just laid across saw-horses there is danger of mites hiding under them. But a handful of coarse salt placed just where the perch comes in contact with the saw-horse is very discouraging to mites.

THE NESTS

If possible have the nests in a separate room from the roosts, for unless they are so constructed that it is an absolute impossibility the hens will persist in roosting upon or in them and that makes no end to the work of cleaning. The opening to the nest need not be more than 6 inches, but the nest itself should be 12 to 14 inches square.

DUST BATH NECESSARY

Do not forget the dust bath; it is a cheap luxury and will go far toward keeping the fowls free from lice and mites. Any ordinary box obtainable at the grocer's will answer the purpose. It must be kept dry, filled with road dust or garden soil (which must be secured in dry weather, before freezing), to which should be added from time to time a liberal allowance of sulphur. Some use wood ashes in place of dust.

The hen house can be made much warmer if the walls are thin by lining sides and ceiling with tar paper. The floor may be of brick, stone, cement, dry earth or coal cinders. The latter is preferable, especially if you are unfortunately possessed of a damp house. Fill in the damp hen house

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a foot with cinders and they will always be dry on top.

THE WINTER LAYERS

Next, the individuals of the flock itself should be considered. The winter egg-producer should be hatched early and fed for a regular, strong growth through the summer. Young stock wants food for bone and muscle, not corn or other food that keeps them "hog-fat" all the time.

At the beginning of the winter season such birds should be thoroughly moulted, and with a new coat of well matured feathers should be in prime condition for winter laying. Next to these should be the one-year-old hens that were exceptionally good layers as pullets. Older hens than these, or immature or inferior pullets should be fattened and disposed of at once. It matters not so much what the breed; if treated right any of them will do fairly well from egg-producing strains. Don't bother with them if they are not, for you will certainly lose your time, feed, temper, and probably your faith in the hen if you depend on poor stock for winter eggs.—Cora N. Porter.

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