

How to Fatten Chickens

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Now that the regular season for selling off the farm chickens is here again, a few words of advice in regard to the right method to follow in fattening them should not be amiss. Already we have seen quite a large number of poorly finished and improperly killed and dressed birds put on the market this season. Just a few days ago a shipment was received by one firm that was so thin and in such poor condition that it was returned immediately. The chickens were so thin that the dealer said "they had breast-bones like regular razor blades." There is this year no excuse whatever for birds of any kind going on the market in such a condition. Feed is plentiful and cheap and market poultry so far at least has kept well up in price. We will, however, in a few weeks be due for a slump in prices, but even then well fed stuff will bring good returns.

The average farmer has an idea that fattening chickens will not pay or that the few roosters that he has to sell do not make it worth while to go to the trouble of making a crate for them. Let me say that any farmer who has twenty or more cockerels that he wants to sell as table poultry will find it to his advantage to make a crate or two and feed them for a few weeks before he sells them.

Material for Crate

In regard to the cost of making a crate, I would like to give the following list of material together with its total cost. For each crate, which is 6 feet long, 16 inches wide and 17 inches high, outside measurements, there will be required four pieces 1 x 2 x 72 inches. These go on lengthwise forming the four corners of the crate. Eight pieces 1 x 4 x 14 inches will give the cross pieces required for the top and the bottom, and eight pieces 1 x 2 x 13 inches will do for the uprights. This material will be for the frame of the crate. Arrange the cross-pieces and uprights so as to have three compartments. Four ordinary four foot laths sawed into four equal lengths should be tacked on the crosspieces for ends and partitions. Five other laths will be required for slats for the front of the crate. Place these a little over 2 inches apart. Each lath will give three 16 inch pieces and five of these are required for each compartment. The centre one of these five must not be nailed on to the frame as it is to slide up and down for a door. One more lath should be sawed in 8 inch lengths; two of these will be required for each door, one at the top for the slat to slide thru and one at the bottom for the slat to fit into. This represents all the woodwork of the crate. Next take 1 inch mesh wire, 30 inches wide and 6 feet long, and tack it to the bottom of the crate, allowing also half of it to come up the back of the crate. Use small stout staples and tack one in every third mesh of wire. Draw the wire tight so as to prevent much sagging when the chickens are standing on it. Any old boards or bags will do for covering the top of the crate. A trough can be made out of one half or three-eighth inch lumber.

During the last few weeks I made sixty of these crates and they cost me about 77 cents each for material. On the

farm waste lumber could be used and the cost considerably reduced. But when the crates are to be used for a number of years, good material should go into them. The wire netting in the bottom is cleaner than using slats; the latter collect or hold more of the droppings than the former. A crate of this size will hold from twelve to fifteen cockerels.

Type for Fattening.

In order to make the most out of fattening work, the chickens should be put in the crates at about four and a half to five months of age. A short legged chicken, deep and wide in body, or of the low and blocky type, will make the best gains. A short stout beak, full face, bright eyes, short neck, short wide back and fine strong bone in the legs are all indications of a good feeder. The "crow bill" chicken with a hollow face, sunken eyes, long neck and back and a narrow body on long legs is always sure to be a poor feeder. The difference between these two types of chickens in the way they make use of their food is so great that the farmer should know of it. In one personally conducted experiment twelve Buff Orpington cockerels of the former type required only a little over



Commercial fattening, showing arrangement of crates

breeds will be all right too, in fact any chicken of the right type will do well in the crate. Pullets will make even better gains than cockerels, but of course we strongly condemn the all too common practice of selling pullets from the farm for table poultry, they should be kept for winter layers. Old hens and old roosters are not a paying proposition in that the carcass is not valuable enough per pound. Old hens as a rule are fat enough anyway. Old roosters are too cheap and it costs too much to get a pound of increase. Fattening work should be started as early in the fall as possible, especially with the early-hatched chickens. Best prices will be realized before the general poultry crop begins to move.

How to Fatten.

When putting up a lot of cockerels they should be dusted first with lice powder and then put in the crates and not fed for twenty-four hours. This gets them accustomed to their new condition and they will then get a good start. Many a careless feeder falls down here, by putting them in the crates and feeding right away. A good plan is to have the room in which you fatten quite dark, thus keeping the chickens in a quiet

finer the feed is the better. Whole grain will never give satisfactory gains as it takes too much energy to digest it and the chickens enclosed in fattening crates without exercise cannot make proper use of whole grain, so do not attempt to fatten with it.

The first meal should be one ounce of the dry mixture per chicken. Add to this about one and a half ounces of buttermilk, this should make it the right consistency. Feed twice a day at as near regular intervals as possible. The second, third and fourth meals should be the same amount as the first but, after that, the feed fed each meal should be increased at the rate of three ounces to every twelve chickens. The rate of increase depends, however, largely on the chickens. A good rule is to feed so that at the end of the first week of fattening they are on full rations, which may be any where from twenty-eight to forty ounces per meal for twelve chickens. Never leave any feed in front of them longer than half an hour, either clean out the trough or remove it. Grit may be given once during the fattening period, but no water will be required for drinking. If necessary dust again with lice powder at the end of the third week. Three weeks of fattening is usually the best practice; after that it takes too much feed as a rule to make a pound of increase. The second week is usually the best time for gains. When it comes to finishing off the chickens, a little tallow may be added to the mash; three or four ounces to every crate once a day is quite sufficient. This tends to make a whiter carcass. Oats or oat feed and milk have a tendency to produce a white fleshed carcass, and corn and beef scrap, if the latter is fed, will produce a yellow fleshed carcass.

In fattening chickens there are two lines of profit, or at least two chances upon which the feeder may work. In the first place he works to increase the weight by feeding, and in the second place he improves the quality of the carcass as a whole, thus obtaining a better price. The amount of profit depends largely on market conditions, but the average farmer should get three cents a pound more live weight for the carcass after it is fattened than before. This spread on a chicken weighing four pounds going into the crate and gaining a pound and a half would leave him at ordinary market prices a nice little profit. Three to four pounds of grain are required to get a pound of increase in the ordinary run of farm cockerels.

As a means to getting better prices for their farm chickens we would urge the farmers to fatten properly before marketing. In most cases the first attempt is successful, but of course some fail to make the gains while others fail to get the price they thought they should have. The art of fattening is not learned in a day. The best feeder is the careful, painstaking person who studies the crate of chickens as so many animals. The one who has learned what to feed, how to feed and when to feed by actual experience is the one who today would not think of selling a lot of spring chickens without first properly fattening them.



A home-made fattening crate, showing slatted front and partitions. Also wire bottom and back. Cost 77 cents complete with trough.

two pounds of grain to make a pound of increase against a little over seven pounds required for twelve roosters of the same breed, but of the latter type.

There is but very little difference in breeds except that the Leghorns, Minorcas and other egg breeds will not make good gains when fattened in the crates. They are too active and nervous to do well under the crowded conditions. Any of the heavier breeds if taken at the right age should make good gains in the crates. Crossbreds of these

condition and in a place where they get used to conditions at once. A darkened room also prevents any vices like feather pulling and fighting.

One of the best feeds to use is two parts of oats, one of wheat and one of barley, finely chopped and hulls sifted out, adding buttermilk enough to make a batter that will pour nicely. Two parts of Victor oat feed, one of corn chop and one of low grade flour also makes a good ration, altho it is more expensive than the ordinary farm ration mentioned above. The

Farm Experiences

BOARDING HARVEST HELP

The question of accommodation for the hired man or for the extra help which is needed during this time of the year, is one which is felt, both by the farmer himself and the man, to be one of very great importance, and should be dealt with in such a way that it would be helpful and comfortable for the man or men, and convenient to the employer. A man who is not made to feel at home will not be so likely to give as good satisfaction as if he was treated hospitably. On the other hand, a man can be treated too well and instead of giving his employer his best work, he will take advantage of having been given one liberty and will take two. However, if I was going to work for a farmer, I would expect

him to show some interest in my welfare, and altho perhaps he could not give me as good lodging as himself, yet at the same time he would prepare for me a room or make provision for my sleeping quarters in such a manner that I would receive a good rest, so that I might give him the benefit of my best work.

I am a farmer in Saskatchewan, and this is the way I have of providing for my men. They have the privilege of choosing for themselves whether they will have a room in the house or in the tent. The tent is a square one, 12 by 12 feet, and it makes a good room for two or three men. Usually they prefer the tent, and of course all their baggage is placed in it, as well as all the necessities of a bedroom. In the fall of the year when it gets colder, they can

have their choice of sleeping in the house or in the granary. Perhaps the name granary does not sound very hospitable, but my portable granaries are made with good flooring, double boarded and shingled, so that they are very comfortable for dwelling purposes, and nine times out of ten they pick on the granary, because they like to have a place which they can use as they desire and have any of their friends in for a chat without disturbing the boss and his family.

They have the privilege of reading all the leading papers of the Dominion, of which I am a subscriber, as well as free use of my small library, which is comprised of educative books as well as fiction. On Sunday they have a chance of attending church with the rest of the family, and Sunday evening is spent in

singing with us. They are always allowed to take their meals with the family, and the usual topics of the day are discussed, as well as the unavoidable jokes which are passed around the table. Of course there are some men who would take advantage of a position like that and would shirk their work because of some story which they wanted to conclude, but if the farmer does his duty towards his men, all he can do is to send those kind on with some good advice about their behavior. I believe that a man should be properly cared for, and if the farmer can build a permanent building for the hired man, he will find he has done something which will keep a good man on the place.

PRAIRIE FARMER