

# POULTRY FROM A PRACTICAL STANDPOINT

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NOTE.—Mr. Gilbert is nothing if not practical and experimental. He will from his rich store of information on the subject of "Practical Poultry" give Review readers each month the result of his experience for the past thirty years. He will be glad to answer questions or afford information on any particular subject.

THE old maxim says that "In many counsellors there is wisdom," so in the expression of different opinions on the same subject in your column, some good will surely follow. On the subjects of "Rations and proper quantity to feed," and "The proper housing and management of the laying stock in winter," much has already been aptly said and I hope much more will follow. On the subject of "Winter laying houses," Mr. E. C. Parker, a well-known breeder of Compton, Que., writes to me as follows:

Compton, Que. May 17, 1903.

Dear Sir,—I have been a subscriber to the Canadian Poultry Review for several years and take great interest in reading your monthly articles. There is just one thing on which we differ, and that is, in winter laying houses. I believe you advocate warm houses, but I like cold houses much better, for several reasons, one of which is, that I have never been able to get eggs from hens that were kept in warm houses during the winter. I find that hens will not go outside and take exercise, and get too fat, and some are sure to die from this cause.

I build my houses wind-proof, but make no attempt to have them warm. The hens feather out better, lay well all fall and winter, and are perfectly healthy. The very coldest weather never seems to affect their laying, whereas a very cold snap will always stop some of those that are in warm places, which are always more or less damp.

I have no ventilators, which only make the houses draughty, but

open the windows every day, even if it is twenty-five below zero, and my houses are always dry.

The single comb Minorcas take it with the rose comb birds, and very few of them have their combs frozen. I got more eggs from hens kept in this way during November, December and January than any other months in the past year.

I think the chief cause of pullets and hens not laying in fall and winter is because they are too fat. It is natural for all birds, and animals of many kinds in cold climates, to lay on a large amount of fat in the fall to keep them through the winter. Hens are no exception to the rule. My opinion is that they do not start to lay until the cold weather of December and January takes this fat off. In very cold weather, I give them snow instead of water, because the water freezes their wattles.

You would hardly believe the amount of cold, a good strong single comb Minorca hen will stand without freezing her comb. Twenty degrees below won't touch them, if they have not been baked in the fall.

You have probably read the articles in the R.P.J. proving corn superior to wheat as an egg food.

Now, I find wheat very much superior to corn, both as to eggs and also the health of the hens. If I feed my hens corn the way I feed wheat and other grains, they are sure to get indigestion and die, if I don't give a dose of oil and change of food. I lost several hens last winter from feeding corn.

Very truly yours,

E. C. PARKER.

A general complaint, is that of poor results from February and March eggs, both by incubator and hens, as hatching mediums. Non-fertility of eggs does not seem to have been so much the cause, as weak germs. The following extracts from letters show how general was the experience. It will be noticed that no attempt is made at explaining the cause.

Mr. John McCaughan, of Carp, Ont., writes on April 25th, that he had a hot-water machine of sixty-egg capacity. His first hatch was in March. He tested the eggs on the seventh and fourteenth days, removing all clear and doubtful eggs. Six birds came out, five more died, fully formed, and the remainder at different stages of development. Second hatch, only four came out, five more died in shell, of full size, and twenty-five were partially formed. Remainder were removed clear, when tested. He wanted to know what was wrong.

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Mr. E. C. Parker, of Compton, Que., a letter from whom is given elsewhere says, that the first hatch he made this year was the first of February and was a splendid one, all the eggs coming out and few chicks dying. "I sent the chickens, at the proper age, to the St. James' Club, Montreal, and their quality gave great satisfaction. Since this hatch I have not had a decent one, all the embryos ceasing to make progress apparently after the ninth day."

Similar letters were received from correspondents in London, Ont., and other points.

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From hens which have laid steadily all winter, we would not be surprised to find a certain percentage of the germs too weak to hatch a robust chicken, until the hens have had a run out. But men have written, making the same statement, whose hens did not lay in the winter. January eggs seemed to have done well, while February and March eggs gave unsatisfactory results. With us January was a comparatively mild month, but we had heavy snow-falls and cold weather in