

# Poultry Yard.

## Selecting Birds for Show.

We need scarcely say that the selection of the birds is very important. The most prevalent mistake amongst beginners, when they are led to suppose their birds are good enough for exhibition, is to send as many as possible; many and many a mistake of this kind have we made ourselves, and almost impossible do we find it now to resist the temptation. It is some trouble to send birds that we know are good, and fairly worth a high price. We are apt to forget that besides a mob of a chance, breeders, any of whom may unexpectedly show specimens of commanding merit, there are probably at least half a dozen really careful breeders who will compete with us. In simple fact, the competition at good shows is now so severe that only the best birds of any man have a reasonable probability of winning; and hence the most experienced exhibitors usually show very few, except in cases where they enter a number of cockerels for sale. To do otherwise is to lose much money in entrance fees; and we would strongly advise the beginner to send only his best cockerel, and his best pair of pullets or hens, or both. It may be hard to determine which these are; and it is a great advantage in this respect to put the birds into the pens we have already recommended for other reasons, where they can be closely scrutinized. Under such an inspection, many hitherto unforeseen faults become apparent; and it will moreover be found that those birds which appear best as they run in the yard are not always the best-looking when in the pen. Every extensive exhibitor uses such pens occasionally to make his final selections, and for this purpose, for the close and deliberate study of their points apart from the bustle of a show, or for preparing as already described in view of actual exhibition, there can be nothing which will be of more vital service to an amateur. The pairs of hens or pullets more especially, should be scrutinized to see if they match; and we may add that matching in heads and breasts is perhaps the most important to secure, though any great difference in the color of other parts would be also fatal in good company. English fanciers are far more particular in this respect than American, on account of much keener competition; and hence a first-class "matchel" pair of birds is worth a large sum, perhaps four times as much as a single bird of equal quality. Thus, if a fine single pullet be worth £5, an exactly matched pair of equal merit would probably realize pretty easily £20, on account of their greater utility for show purposes.

In thus selecting birds, distinction must be drawn between faults which are nearly fatal, and others which are matters merely of comparison. Thus, a lopping comb would be fatal to a Hamburg, and so would a white leg; but marking is simply a matter of greater or less perfection. In Spanish, a red face would be fatal; but the extent of the white face is matter for competition. It is of course necessary to go occasionally to such shows as are within reach, that it may be really known what quality of birds have a fair chance of winning; and it may not be advisable always to send the best specimens to a small show, where the spare birds may be good enough to win, but rather to keep them back for a more important one some time after, when the very height of condition and appearance may be needed to give a reasonable chance of success.

A very experienced breeder—no other in fact than Mr. F. Wragg—has often told us that he likes his favorite cockerels to be "kept well under" by larger or fiercer birds till some weeks before showing,—not of course to be regularly thrashed, but sufficiently driven about to keep them always hungry for their food and intent upon it. Then some fortnight or three weeks before showing, he would put a bird by himself with a couple of old hens, and the effect was wonderful, "making a man of him," as if by magic. He would set himself up, and learn to show himself off and assume airs and style which no other treatment would produce. To the truth of this we can personally testify and the hint may be useful to others.

## Poultry Houses.

Success in poultry keeping depends very much upon the character of the premises the fowls are to inhabit; they cannot, any more than human beings, retain health and condition in unhealthy dwellings. The essentials to the health and well-being of poultry, so far as accommodation is concerned are few and very simple; but it is essential to see that they really are provided, in proper proportion to the size and number of the birds. Pure air, and shelter from wind and weather, are all that is required. Pure air, of course, implies both proper cleanliness and proper ventilation, and good shelter implies a retreat dry under foot as well as above which must also be open to the light, or the fowls will not resort to it.

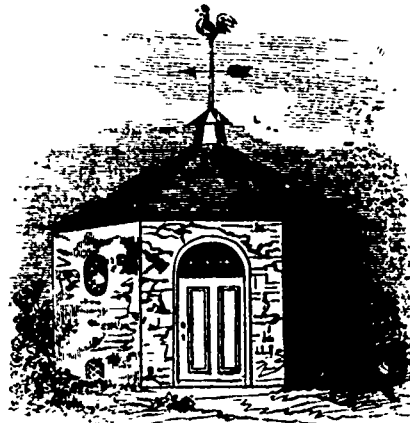


FIG. 1. MODEL POULTRY HOUSE.

The house itself as a rule should be set apart exclusively for the inmates to roost and lay in, and should not be more than large enough to comfortably accommodate them, too much space will only increase the liability to cold and roup in winter, on account of the difficulty of maintaining a proper temperature. Where a choice is possible, a south, or south-east aspect should be secured for the house and yard. But with hardy breeds this is not of so very much consequence. In the very severe weather in the winter season artificial heat will be beneficial, but where warming becomes necessary, the temperature should not be allowed to rise above forty or forty five degrees Fahrenheit, or the birds in all probability will take cold on the slightest exposure to the air and perish. Concrete, made with hydraulic lime, will make the best floor for the house itself, and sprinkled with sand or earth, is easily kept clean.

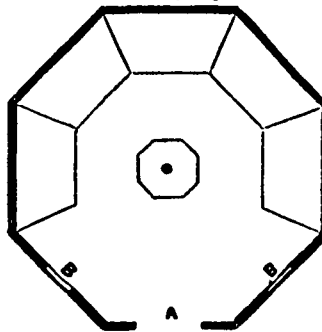


FIG. 2. PLAN OF POULTRY HOUSE.

The perch should be near the back wall, as near as will not damage the tail of the cock when at roost, but the height and size will vary according to the breed. For Cochins, Brahmans, Creves, or Dorkings, the perch should be a pole, five or six inches in diameter and not more than one foot from the ground. Other fowls can roost higher and the perches be smaller in proportion. The nests should be on the ground, except for small varieties, and may go in any convenient position where the manure cannot drop into them. Cleanliness in the house itself is very important. All the droppings should be taken away at least twice every week, which is easily done with a house-maid's dust pan and a small scraper, or a

board may be laid under each perch, and scraped at due intervals. A daily cleaning is best of all.

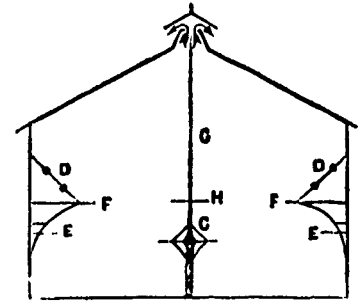


FIG. 3. SECTION OF POULTRY HOUSE.

In an early number of the CANADA FARMER a design for a poultry house is given, differing in arrangement from those usually constructed, which we now reproduce, believing it to be an improvement in several respects. The form of the house is octagonal, as greater internal space is comprised within the same extent of wall than afforded in the square form. Figures 2 and 3, show ground plan and vertical section with entrance door in one of the sides *b b*, the windows with entrance doors for fowls beneath, *c*, feeding box, *d d*, roosts, *e e*, nests, *f f*, floor. The roof is supported by a central pillar, *g*, and may have a latticed opening at the top for ventilation. The centre pillar is by far the best plan of supporting the roof, for if horizontal beams are used the fowls will unquestionably perch on them. The advantages of this arrangement are obvious. The nests being conveniently placed on the ground underneath the broad perch, need no top, whilst they are also well shaded, to the great delight of the hen. The shelf may be scraped clean every morning with the greatest ease and comfort, on account of its convenient height, and should be slightly sanded afterwards; whilst the floor of the house is never polluted at all by the roosting birds. For Cochins or Brahmans, the perch may be dispensed with, and the shelf in floor littered with straw, shaken up every night, and renewed when necessary. This arrangement of house, allowing as it does of the nests being placed immediately under the perch, gives a greater amount of floor space than any other, and also keeps the fowls from all upward draughts of air; but daily attention in this case becomes absolutely necessary, to keep the shelf from becoming foul and infested with vermin.

## Early Chickens.

It is now time for those who want to have early chickens, and particularly those who are raising any of the pure breeds and expect to send their chickens to the fall shows, to make up their breeding stock for the coming season. If your breeding hens have been running with cocks of some other breed, or of mongrels it will not be advisable to set any eggs that have been laid under two weeks from the time of separation. But if the hens have been running with cocks of their own kind, no such period of probation is needed; and if they are put into light, dry, and warm quarters, where they can bask in the sunlight, and have plenty of food and water, they will commence laying very soon, and the eggs may be set at once.

It is a mistake commonly made at this season of the year, to put too many eggs under a hen. Seven or nine are enough for the largest hen; for if she is so fortunate as to cover them all, and not allow the outer ones to get chilled, she will not be able to cover her chicks well during the long cold nights of spring. It is particularly essential at this season of the year that both food and water and a dust-bath be placed where the setting hens can have convenient access to them, for a very short exposure at this season chills the eggs.

Chickens that are hatched in February and March can be raised with a little extra care, and their fine size and appearance more than repay it. They should be kept in a warm and light place, and fed often. They must be fed early in the morning and late at night, or the long time which elapses between sunset and sunrise will more than counterbalance any gain that can be made during the day.

By setting a candle down in front of the coop at eight or nine o'clock in the evening, and throwing down food on a dark-colored board and calling them, they will soon learn to leave the hen and come out to feed; and by following this plan for a couple of weeks, the troublesome period may be bridged over, and the chicks started out in the spring thriving finely.—*National Live Stock Journal.*