

Getting Rid of the Loafer Hen

There are a great many hens in every flock that do not lay enough eggs during the year to pay for their feed and care. There are a number of causes for the existence of these loafers, some of which can be eliminated. Age, breeding, constitutional vigor and persistence in laying are factors that account for the difference in the laying qualities of hens. If it were possible to keep only the good layers, eliminating those that do not lay, and also all of them as soon as they have passed the period of usefulness, one of the big problems in poultry raising would be solved.

It is possible to lay down a set of general rules by which to get rid of the low producers, but it is impossible to have these rules apply to all cases. While breeding and selection are very important, the proper care, management and feeding play an equally important part. Therefore, the success of the summer culling will depend to a large extent on the proper housing, feeding, time of hatching and the general management of the flock throughout the year.

TIME TO CULL

The information in this circular can be made applicable to flocks in Manitoba between July 15 and October 30. It is at this time that the birds are in such condition that the difference between the high and low producers can most easily be seen.

SELECTING THE LAYING HEN

In order to lay well, a bird must have a sound body. She must be vigorous and healthy. Vigor and health are shown by a bright eye, a well-set body, an active disposition and a good circulation.

Further, the bird must be free from physical defects, such as crooked beak, exceptionally long toe nails, eyelids that overhang so that the bird cannot see well, scaly leg, or anything else that would keep her from getting an abundance of food.

A laying hen has a big appetite. In order to lay well, a bird must consume a large amount of food. For this reason the intestines of a laying hen are large and roomy. This will mean that the abdomen will be expanded, showing a large capacity.

INDICATIONS OF LAYING

Body Changes—A hen that is laying has an enlarged abdomen, due to the greater size of the intestines, ovary, and oviduct. The body is V-shaped; that is, deeper at the back than in front. The