

The Poultry-Yard.

DUCK RAISING A PROFITABLE INDUSTRY.

Duck raising has been developed within the last ten years into a flourishing industry, in the United States.

Artificial incubation and brooding, combined with judicious feeding, have been instrumental in the development of the industry, machinery has enabled the duck raiser to accomplish his ambition of being able to place his stock on the markets when prices are the best, and also of raising large numbers of birds in a limited space of time. The season for raising ducks is about six months—from February to July.

Duck raising may well be recommended to our farmers as a profitable source of revenue; and by a careful attention to the work, as knowledge increases, the scope of the industry may be extended; there are quite a number of farms in the States that are devoted exclusively to raising ducks, averaging from 5,000 to 20,000 ducks as an annual output. Some idea of the proportions of the business may be had from the fact that as high as three tons of feed are used daily by a single raiser during the busy season.

The profits are the very best, and good incomes are made be made when once the business is thoroughly mastered. But it is not my intention to advise our readers to jump imprudently to the conclusion that these results can be easily obtained. Duck raising is an arduous task; one that requires an apprenticeship and absolute knowledge of the business before success is reached. Those who have been successful in raising ducks have learned the business much as one does any other vocation. The beginner should start modestly in a quiet way and increase his plant as his knowledge of the work increases. The average farmer has all the facilities for raising a goodly number of ducks, and may, with a little outlay, add considerably to his income. It is not at all necessary that ducks should have access to water, to be raised successfully; they grow and thrive as readily without. There are successful plants where thousands of ducks are raised that have no water, save that which is given them to drink. (1)

(1) The Aylesbury duck-men never allow the ducklings to enter water. They often get 10 s. (2½ dollars) a couple for them in the London market.—Ed.

A duck plant should be located on a line of railroad near to and in direct communication with the city markets and not too far from the station. Almost any location will do for the plant and worn out land, that can be bought cheap will do as well as the richer and more fertile land costing many times as much. Sandy soil is to be preferred. The buildings should be arranged to secure good drainage and be convenient to each other that labour may be reduced to a minimum. The labor attached to raising poultry is an item that is overlooked by many, and the cost of it reduces very notably the earnings of the plant. Every department should be so located as to economize the time of the attendants. The incubator cellar should be convenient to the brooder house, the brooding house to the growing house and pens and these to the killing house. The feed house should be located conveniently to the brooder and growing-houses and the breeding pens. The task of feeding the growing stock four times a day, and the breeding stock twice a day, is no small one.

Watering is also to be thought of and arranged for. Houses for ducks are simple affairs, they do not require furnishings of any kind, but be built plainly though comfortably.

A duck is differently constituted from a hen and must be cared for under different conditions. The hen needs warmer houses and drier surroundings than does the duck. A duck does not mind the cold, if she can keep her feet warm; cold feet will affect a duck as a frozen comb does a hen, retarding laying and inducing disease. The feathers of a duck are almost impenetrable and will withstand almost any degree of cold. Again, a duck cannot stand the amount of confinement in a house that a hen can, she is more restless in disposition and is given to ramble in a greater degree than is a hen. Indigestion is not so prevalent with ducks as with chickens; the ducks' ceaseless motion aids the digestive organs and keeps her generally in good health. The food of the duck is both vegetable and animal in nature. In the wild state, it gathers its food from brooks and marshes consisting of flag, grasses, small fish, water insects, etc. When the birds are raised in confinement this diet must in a measure be imitated to get the best results. The three different methods of feeding ducks are:

1. feeding ducks for market (ten weeks old);
2. feeding young ducks to be kept as breed-