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Poultry Chat

H. E. Vialoux, Charleswood, Man.

February, the month of conventions of all sorts, as well as the big Winnipeg poultry show, is not any too soon to make real preparation for the spring work of incubation and chicken raising. Doubtless we are all guilty of "counting our chickens before they are hatched," but preparedness in the poultry yard will aid materially in the success of our season's work. First, the breeding birds should be carefully selected—color, shape, a fine straight breast bone, a bright eye and alert habits denote a good breeding bird. Do not have them too fat, and better results, "more eggs and better hatches" will be obtained from mother hens that have not laid heavily during the cold months. If first class pure bred cockerels or cocks have not been secured, pay a visit to the nearest poultry show and learn all you can about your favorite breed. Perhaps the prize birds may be beyond your purse. If so, the owner usually has some for sale at home of the same strain and can supply a good cockerel at a moderate figure. Build up your flock by introducing good blood; male bird is half the flock and breeding will always tell. The day of the scrub fowl is past and gone; our young people in the boys' and girls' clubs will have none but the best these progressive days in the poultry world. Feed the breeding pens with screenings or good mixed grain, vegetable matter and grit, with water to drink and buttermilk as well, if obtainable. Buttermilk is a grand thing for chickens of all ages, a fine egg producer, and better than green cut bone for fertility. Of course, the whole success of the spring work must hinge on the fertility of the eggs set. Fresh air, clean quarters, with plenty of exercise indoors in deep litter until an outdoor yard can be used, will help secure fertile eggs.

Do not give much soft mash during the breeding season. A cockerel mated to one and two-year-old hens, and a cock mated to the young, well matured pullets should give good results in fertile

The news in a local paper that a petition to raise the bounty on coyotes is to be presented to the provincial government is very pleasing to an old chicken farmer, who has written many letters in years past to Ottawa asking this very boon, i.e., "an increased bounty on the head of the miserable coyote" that has annually diminished the profits of Western poultry keepers. The suburban poultry keepers near Winnipeg are taking this step and it is earnestly hoped their efforts will meet with success. The coyote is the one real menace to successful chicken and turkey farming in all of our Western provinces.

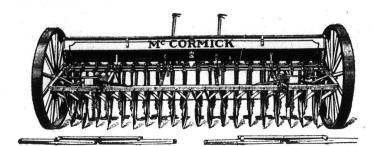
In the future all eggs shipped to commission merchants in Winnipeg are to be officially tested before being passed into the trade of the city—a commendable idea for the shipper, as well as for the consumer. In the past the testing was done in a haphazard way. In some of the commission houses the city man could not be sure of the freshness of his breakfast eggs, and on the other hand the farmer was sometimes credited with more "rots and leaks" in his case of eggs than was fair.

Before spring opens all odd jobs such as a thorough cleaning of the incubator and brooders should be seen to; chicken coops can be overhauled and repaired, and new nest boxes made before the rush of farm work comes on. If at all possible have a brooding house somewhere in stable or barn arranged with proper nests for the sitting hens, where they can do their bit in peace and quietness. The best of hatches will more than repay you for the trouble and work involved. The daily task of caring for a dozen or more sitting hens in a proper compartment is a small matter compared to chasing about the farm attending to broody hens in holes and corners from the stable loft to "under the bed," a favorite incubation corner in early Manitoban days. Incubation will be my theme next month.

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