

Brooding and Rearing Chicks

*Nothing responds so well to good feeding and proper care
as a flock of little chickens*

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The problem of successful brooding and rearing chickens is probably just as hard if not harder than that of hatching. So much of a chicken's growth and development seems to depend on the condition under which it is kept that it sometimes appears as tho food and environment had even a greater influence than breeding itself. In looking over and handling upwards of 2,500 farm chickens during the last six months, it would appear that such was the case. A chicken that has been well looked after from hatching time until maturity will, if taken at the right age, go in a fattening crate and make good gains, whereas one that has grown up without proper care, and attention will not respond, no matter what time it is taken or what kind of treatment is given. A chicken's life period is seldom longer than three or four years, and the period of maturity is, roughly speaking, five to six months. Compared with a hog, sheep, cow or horse, this is a comparatively short maturity and life period. The comparative rate of gain in proportion to the original body weight is far greater in chickens than any other class of stock. A newly hatched chick weighs about one and a half ounces and at ten weeks of age, with proper care, it will weigh twenty-eight ounces. This is eighteen times its original weight, which is more than any other farm animal makes. In this respect a chicken might be compared to a high geared machine and other stock to a lower geared machine. From this we gather that anything that stops the running of this high geared machine will prove more disastrous than in the low geared one. This is what actually happens. Lack of care and poor feeding will show far quicker in a flock of chickens than in other animals, and the harm following is greater and harder to correct than in other kinds of stock. The results of this can easily be seen in the ordinary run of farm chickens. A person familiar with chickens could go to any produce dealer and look over the live poultry as it comes in from the farmers and pretty nearly tell what kind of poultryman each individual farmer is.

The system of brooding chickens will depend on whether or not artificial methods of incubation are followed. Many farmers, even when they use an incubator, prefer to raise their chickens with hens. Personally, if I had my choice I would far sooner hatch them with hens and raise them with the brooder. If I were going to use the natural method anywhere I would use it for hatching in preference to using it for brooding. It takes almost as much time to look after one hen and her chicks as it does to look after a brooder, to say nothing of loss by trampling to death, trouble with lice, and the hen straggling thru the wet grass with her brood. In a brooder the chicks are always under control, and with proper care there is but very little danger of the lamp burning or anything else going wrong.

Convenient and Simple Coop

The majority of farmers rear their chicks with hens, and the instructions given herewith will be for the benefit of those rearing either with hens or brooders. The photograph shows a convenient

and simple type of coop for rearing chickens with hens. It has a wooden floor separate from the coop, making it rat or vermin proof from below. The lower part of the front has a slatted frame thru which the chickens can run in and out at will. This frame is removable and is taken out as soon as the chicks are big enough to run at large with the hen. A board of the same size is placed in front of this slatted frame at nighttime to keep out rats, weasels or other enemies. It is held in place by a button at each end. The upper half of the front is a wire frame, which is also removable; the wire is one inch mesh. If at any time the hen and chicks are to be caught this wire frame is removed and thru this opening a person can reach them all quite easily, providing the lower board and



A cheap portable colony house for rearing chickens, made out of two piano boxes.

frame have not been removed. The coop can be moved to any place desired, and if properly made will last many years. Of the many different types of coops used this has given me the best satisfaction. Only one hen should be placed in a coop and the coops should be far enough apart to prevent chicks from straying to the wrong coop, there to be pecked to death. By placing them a short distance apart there is very little trouble with the hens fighting after they are allowed to run out. Then, too, after the hens leave the chicks there is not the danger of overcrowding some of the coops by the chickens leaving some of them and all crowding into one. Cheaper and also serviceable coops can be made out of dry goods boxes, barrels and so on. Where farmers wish to raise chickens with a

brooder, it is best not to purchase an outdoor brooder but simply buy a hover and lamp complete and build a portable colony house. An outdoor brooder will cost almost as much as a colony house and hover, and will never give as good satisfaction. The majority of outdoor brooders have not the room for the chicks after they are four or five weeks old without overcrowding. During rainy weather the brooder is too crowded. Later on when the chickens are large enough to roost they have not the room inside, so they roost on top of the brooder. From start to finish there is trouble with overcrowding.

When rearing on the portable colony house and portable hover system there is no danger whatever from overcrowding. The hover is placed inside the house, heated up to proper temperature and the chicks placed under it—usually upwards of a hundred to each hover. When buying a hover get a round one, so that there can be no crowding into corners and smothering. A good practice is to put a low inch mesh wire around the hover about a foot away from it all the way round so as to prevent the chicks from straying away from the heat and dying from exposure in a corner of the colony house. After they are three or four days old and know where the heat is this can be removed, and they can be allowed the freedom of the entire house. After they are a week or ten days old they should be allowed to run outside in a small wire pen or run about a rod square. When the weather is quite warm the chicks could be allowed to run outside on the third or fourth day. When they are two or three weeks old the wire run can be taken down and the chicks allowed free range. This method of handling them works out very satisfactorily with a hundred or a few thousand chicks. The portable colony house can be moved to any part of the farm at any time by simply shutting up the chicks and hitching a team to it and taking it where you like. The chicks are put in here from the incubator and housed in it until the cockerels are old enough to kill and the pullets ready to go to the regular poultry house. There is no danger of overcrowding. As soon as the chickens are old enough to roost they get on top of the hover. It can then be taken out and roosts put in. During wet or rainy weather the chicks can be kept inside—at least as long as they are too small to stand much in the way of wet weather. All things taken into consideration this system is superior to the outdoor brooder.

The photographs show the method of yarding the chicks, which is followed until they are old enough to have free range. A colony house can be made out of old lumber or piano boxes. It should be large enough to accommodate upwards of a hundred chicks, and roomy and high enough so that a man can clean it out quite easily.

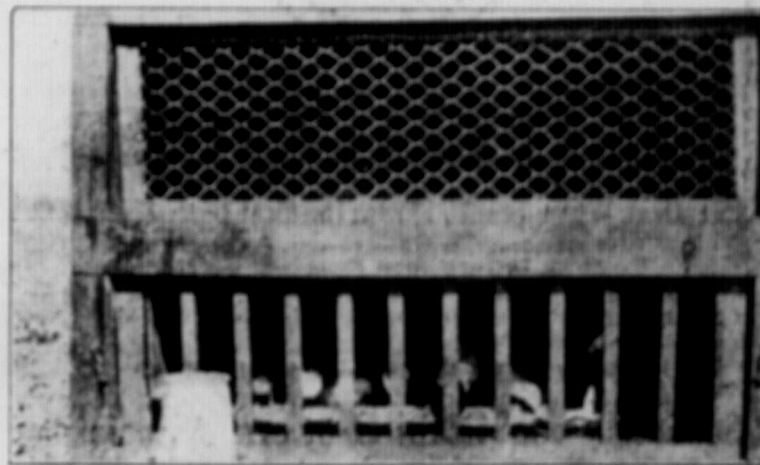
Insulate with Straw

The temperature of the hover should be between 100 and 110 degrees F. when the chicks are put under it. Cut straw, chaff, shavings or sand should be on the floor, and have it about an inch to two inches deep underneath the hover. In this way it

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White Leghorn broilers eight weeks' old being fed off for market.



Coop for rearing chicks.