

AGRICULTURE

Quebec And The Poultry Industry

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That the poultry industry of Quebec is an important one is never to be doubted. It is developing rapidly notwithstanding the fact that everywhere throughout the country many farmers are giving but little attention to their fowl. In some sections improvements have been quite noticeable while in other sections the same old conditions prevail and things are as backward as ever.

One hundred fowls per farm and one hundred eggs per hen, should be the motto for Quebec, as far as poultry raising is concerned.

Poultry and Mixed Husbandry.

The system of mixed farming as carried on in the Province is ideal for the rearing of poultry. Quite a few poultry plants, where eggs and other poultry produce form the basis of returns, are quite successful. The returns from the flock should add materially to the income of the fruit-grower and the dairyman. The orchard makes an admirable run for poultry, especially growing stock. In the orchard, many insect pests will be destroyed and the manure from the fowls will greatly enrich the soil. By-products in the orchard and in the fields are converted into profit. Fowls are economical, and when a poultry department is carried on with other branches of farming a system of rotation can be adopted.

Until recently comparatively little attention has been given to poultry-raising in this Province, the industry having been largely considered as a side-issue of but little importance. There is money in hens but it takes a good man to get it. Most people, however, have the idea that for poultry keeping very little, if anything, is required beyond common sense and inclination; they think there is nothing to learn, no knowledge, or experience necessary, but simply to buy some land, build houses, and stock with fowls and the fowls will return money several-fold. The keeping of poultry is not different from any other business and requires a certain amount of knowledge in caring for the fowls. There have been many failures in the poultry business, especially when carried on as a business by itself and these may be attributed largely to one or more of the following conditions:

In the first place there is a great lack of appreciation of the value of the hens. The average farmer pays so little attention to his flock, that it is often not profitable. Moulting fowls are found on most farms and moulting methods are employed in caring for them. Probably the greatest fault with the average farmer's and poultry-man's way of raising poultry is neglect. Most of them know better but they don't care. The average farmer as a rule is rather indifferent and unconcerned about his small flock. He has no system in breeding, and does not practice selection to any extent.

Practically no attempt is made to improve the productive qualities of the laying stock. The most serious charge against the farmer is that he makes no efforts to conserve the vigor of the flock. The fowls are often kept on the same ground year after year and no special attention is paid to supply green food for the young stock. Moreover in many cases the chickens are infected with lice. Also many poultrymen give little attention to the question of proper housing. Inadequate disease through contaminated soil, lack of sanitation and over-crowding of the birds in damp, dirty, ill-ventilated houses, do a great deal to destroy the usefulness of the flock.

The above undesirable conditions may all be overcome very easily if the farmer will only take a little interest in his flock and will use ordinary intelligence in feeding, housing and raising his poultry. Failures are usually due to inexperience and to those who are about to start poultry raising, it may be said that one of the safest ways is to start in a moderate way and to learn the business thoroughly before much money is invested. Mistakes will certainly be made and different problems will present themselves for solution before success can be obtained in any extended way. The farmer is in the best position of all to make money with poultry; he usually has plenty of land, so that his fowls can be kept on sweet, clean soil year after year. He has plenty of room to give his plant a good location, he is generally in a position to house the fowls comfortably, and he can secure feeds cheaper than any one else. Also with the small flock on the farm it requires comparatively little time and attention to make it a success.

Better Stock.

Every farmer, on the average, could well keep 100 laying hens and these would require but comparatively little more attention than the 50 or so birds now kept. More important than increased numbers however is first to get better stock. Nothing pays as well as pure breeds and the farmer should improve the productive qualities of his laying stock by introducing pure blood as soon as possible. I do not advocate discarding it with pure bred stock, but certainly a pure bred cock should be used on the breeding stock from year to year. In this way, the quality of the flock is gradually improved. If it is convenient, however, to get rid of the mongrel at once, it would be advisable. Farmers, as a rule, should keep pure bred fowls as they are much more profitable than mongrels or even cross-breeds. There are two classes of fowls with which the farmer is chiefly concerned:—First, General purpose breeds, and second, Egg Laying breeds. In the general purpose class, there are such breeds as Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds and Orpingtons. All of these breeds are good layers, and are also

good table birds; they combine egg and meat production, and usually lay well in winter. In the Plymouth Rocks, the Barred and the White Wyandottes are the most popular of all the Wyandottes. There are also the Single Comb Reds and the White and Buff are the popular Orpingtons. The Orpington is a white fleshed bird while the other three are yellow fleshed. All these are popular market fowls, are hardy and profitable.

In the egg laying class we have such light breeds as the Leghorns and Anconas. These are typical egg laying machines and are bred especially for egg production. Of all the Leghorns, the Single Comb White is kept more than all others put together. The Ancona is practically a Mottled Leghorn. They are good broiler producers. The breed which a farmer should keep will depend largely upon his nearness to the market, and what the market demands. The ruling price of eggs and poultry will also decide whether he will give his chief attention to egg production or to the production of the eggs and poultry flesh. The egg laying breeds produce good broilers while the general purpose breeds produce excellent roasters. As far as the eggs are concerned, the general purpose breeds usually lay brown eggs, while the egg laying breeds lay white eggs.

The most important of all, as far as pure breeds and mongrels are concerned, is that pure breeds are able to transmit their desirable qualities to the next generation. This, mongrels can never do definitely. At any rate on many farms, haphazard methods of breeding are employed with the result that the farmer does not know what to expect from his breeding stock, and takes whatever he gets. The value of any breed is estimated, not by the eggs it lays nor the value of meat produced, though these qualities are valuable, but the breeding value of that breed is most important. Pure breeds transmit these egg laying and meat producing qualities with more certainty than do mongrels or cross-breeds; also a pure bred flock will usually give a more uniform product in eggs and dressed poultry than the flock of mongrels. The price that a fowl brings, over and above its eating quality will depend upon its breeding qualities, that is, whether or not the bird has the power of transmitting that quality to the offspring. Neither mongrels nor cross-breeds can do this, so that we must depend upon pure breeds.

There is still another feature about the poultry industry of Quebec. It is this: that a great many farmers and poultrymen are keeping old hens which should have been killed off at the end of their two years. Under average conditions, the egg production of a hen decreases about 25 per cent each succeeding year, and many old hens on farms are simply eating

their heads off. Laying fowls are not usually profitable after two years.

Better Method of Breeding.

Another great need is better methods in breeding poultry. There are very few farmers, who are adopting any system in breeding. Practically, no selection whatever is made, and naturally there is very little improvement in egg production. Vigorous selection should be adopted every year, and the farmers should breed only on two-year-old hens.

from the best fowls of his flock. Particular attention should be given to the male birds, seeing that they are well developed, fully matured, vigorous cocks with plenty of constitutional vigor. In female, all weaklings, undesirable birds, and poor layers should be constantly weeded out. The farmer cannot traspas his flock very well, but he can select from the standpoint of vigor every year. Best results are obtained by using cockrels on two-year-old hens.

The question of the construction of a poultry house, and the question of giving free range to stock are two important factors in maintaining vigor. The poultry house should be inexpensive, comfortable, convenient, dry, sanitary, and provided with plenty of fresh air. Fresh air is one of the most important things for laying stock. It is surprising how much cold a hen will stand providing the house is kept dry. Many farmers are fortunate in being able to house their fowls in comfortable houses which are often built inside of the barn or as an adjunct to the cattle or horse stable. Here the fowls do very well, particularly in winter. The trouble, however, is to keep the house dry. This trouble may be overcome by leaving the front of the house open, if there is one thing which is needed more than any other, as far as housing is concerned, it is to provide the fowls with fresh air at all times.



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