

Long Island takes the lead, but there is one duck farm at South Easton, Mass., owned by James Rankin, on which as many as 10,000 ducklings have been raised and marketed in a single season.

What interests the reader of this, however, is to know why duck farms are numerous and profitable, while large "hen farms" are rare. That the hen can be kept a year with less labor than a duck requires, and consumes less food, is well known; but the duck has an advantage over the hen which places her far in the lead, and that is the rapid growth of the ducklings.

While a chick is slowly reaching a marketable age and weight, the ducklings are up and in market long before. In three months from the time the eggs are put in an incubator (for incubators are used on all large poultry farms) the ducklings are ready for market, and that, too, in the face of the fact that four weeks of the thirteen are required for incubation. This leaves only nine weeks for growth, but in that period the ducklings may reach four or five pounds weight, while the chick, with the advantage of only three weeks for incubation and with ten weeks of the three months for growth, will do well if it reaches a pound and a half. Hence a duckling will make more than three times as much meat up to the age of ten weeks as a chick.

The cost is the same per pound of meat produced in each case. It requires, on an average, about five cents worth of food to produce one pound of poultry (and that rule seems to hold for all classes and all ages), but it pays to produce the meat in the shortest time. Now, if five pounds of duckling can be produced in the same time required for a pound and a half of chick, it is equivalent to more than three crops of chicks, and though the duckling eats more food, it grows more rapidly, and the cost per pound of meat is the same.

Another advantage is, that the duck lays her eggs in the winter, or at a time when eggs for incubation are mostly in demand, and she will lay an egg every day if she is a choice duck and from a good laying strain, while the hen does not begin until later and is more uncertain. The eggs of the duck are also more fertile, and better hatches are secured. The young duckling has a good appetite from the start, is not very fastidious, and is subject to but few drawbacks; cholera, roup, and lice have no terrors for it. Give the young duckling half the care and warmth allowed the chick and it will be happy and grow fast.

The duckling thrives on a coarse, bulky diet. A mess of turnips, cooked and thickened with bran and meal, will be a delicacy, and all kinds of nutritious weeds, such as purslain, plantain, rag-weed and pig-weed, will be accepted readily. Ducklings can be removed from the brooders much sooner than chicks, and as soon as partially feathered they will thrive under a shed or any dry shelter, while the old ducks will snugly tuck themselves away for a good night's rest outside, with a north-east storm pouring down on them. This is something, however, we advise should not be permitted, as they give the best results with care.

A duck will lay as many eggs in a year as a hen, but she performs that work quickly and then takes a long vacation, while the hen will be dropping an egg occasionally throughout the year. For keeping the family in a supply long after the duck ceases, the hen becomes a favorite, though she really does not produce a greater number, if as many, in a year, nor does she

produce as large eggs as the duck. (1) But, as the duck has paid for herself in advance, she receives no thanks, and is considered a very unprofitable creature, while the hen receives all the credit and praise. If the duck would extend the laying period, she would give the hen a hard struggle for first place.

But all ducks do not weigh five pounds when ten weeks old. The ducks that are expected to give such returns are of the "blue blood" families. The favorite breed on the larger duck farms is the Pekin, which cannot fly over a fence two feet high, and thrives on dry land. On many of these farms there is no water except for drinking purposes, given in troughs, and the ducks seem to do as well as those that have access to a pond or other water privileges. The Pekins, though they thrive best when foraging for their food, are often kept in small yards. All the time and labor of raising the ducklings (spring ducks, but sometimes known as "green ducks") (2) is from February to June. (3) After that time there is but little demand, and only a few adults are kept for next year's laying.

TURNING PIGS INTO GOLD,

BY

SANDERS SPENCER.

There are few things which are considered so well within the ability of anyone as in the tending and feeding of pigs. On many farms it is still the practice to tell off the least competent of the labourers to look after the pigs, whereas it is held by many persons of experience that few animals pay better for attention than do litters of young pigs. There is frequently a difference of 3s. or 4s. per head on a litter of weanlings which have been properly attended to and those from a trip which have not been exactly neglected, but had to squeal for their suppers.

The first essential in pig keeping is that the attendant should have a knowledge of his duties and a desire to perform them. No great amount of book-knowledge is required, but the man should have a fondness for animals and possess a fairly equable temper, especially where boars are kept; firmness and kindness must be freely employed or the stock boar is sure to give trouble. These animals should be treated so that they have no opportunity to discover their strength. A man is perfectly powerless with a boar determined to have its own way when in the open. A considerable number of boars are rendered bad tempered by being treated as though they were so, the attendant invariably using a stick or fork shaft to keep away the boar whilst he places food in the trough, and the tines of the fork are not infrequently used to prod the boar with when the place is being cleaned out. Whilst it is true that care is not taken never to breed from a bad tempered boar, a good many boars which have the credit for being savage have had their bad qualities developed by want of care and sense on the part of the person who feeds and attends them.

These remarks will show that it is

(1) But the duck's egg, though we ourselves rather like it, is not a favourite with most people.—Ed.

(2) We speak in England of green geese, but always of ducklings.—Ed.

(3) Ducks are good up to the end of September, but from August 20th should be stuffed with sage and onions.—Ed.

very desirable to purchase a boar from a herd in which attention has been paid to breeding from good tempered animals, since this quality is desirable in the sow as it is frequently necessary to enter the sty where she is farrowing. In cold weather, many young pigs are saved by this attention, which it is impossible to render if the sow is bad tempered, as if no actual harm is done to the attendant the litter is frequently so upset that the pigs get trodden on, the flow of milk is interfered with, and the warmth and comfort which the newly born pigs require are denied them. They soon begin to show the result of the cold striking them by becoming lethargic, or they worry the sow by their continual shrieking which soon ends in death. It is always advisable, if it be possible, for a would-be purchaser of breeding pigs to go and see what he buys—see the parents and the general stock of pigs on the place. Too many persons imagine, that all that is necessary is to write to some one who has won a few prizes and order of them the pigs required. No greater mistake is made. Nothing is easier if a person has money than to win prizes, unless it be to insert a glowing advertisement in a paper. If the advertiser has sold a pig or two to some nobleman's bailiff, so much the better, as these pigs can be described as "marvellous" even if they have proved the veriest brutes in the breeding and show pen. Our advice is never to buy a pig in a poke, unless from a breeder who has for years had a reputation which is worth the keeping. Another point is that it is not always the best pig which costs the most money, but nothing is gained by attempting to beat down the price asked for a good animal; by so doing you get a pig of less value, as a breeder having good animals and a good reputation seldom reduces his price to secure customers.

In purchasing breeding pigs it is necessary to consider the market in which the produce will have to be sold. If the object is to breed pigs to sell off the sow, one cannot well have the parents too big and growthy, providing that they are not awkward in their movements or so long in the back as to render them likely to become weak and to lie on the little pigs. The longest pig is liable to be coarse in bone, bent in the legs, and weak and round in the ankles; avoid such; it is bound to be a helpless brute and to soon require the butcher's knife to cure its complaints. A sow of this description is frequently a bad mother; she will produce small litters, rearing only a part of them, and these will be almost certain to inherit the weaknesses of their parents. As with horses so with pigs, there are good pigs of all colours. There is, however, in some districts a considerable prejudice in favour of the pig of the colour to which the residents are most accustomed. It is found at times that new introductions are not altogether a success, but this may, and does, most frequently arise from the fact that the specimens brought in are not the best of their breed. They may have been bought of some who have purchased pigs and with them won prizes, but this fact does not ensure either the quality of the pigs or their suitability to the new district. So many pigs are now-a-days bred only to win prizes that the show and not the utility points are the first consideration with many persons. That it is easy to combine these two qualities has been proved. No stronger proof of this need be furnished than that successful show herds have been drawn upon year after year by purchasers from

well high every country where pig breeding is carried on successfully, this proving that it is more the breeding than the breed of pigs bought.

In selecting the boar or sow much the same points must be sought. The boar should, of course, have masculine character which will be noticeable in the greater development of parts, such as the neck, &c., but each should have a wide forehead and a bright intelligent eye; the neck should be muscular, but not fat; the shoulders well laid and narrow on top (the neck and shoulders are worth only half as much for the bacon curer's purpose as the ribs); the chest wide; the forelegs should be outside the body and the ribs well sprung, so that the important organs of the body—the lungs and heart—will have plenty of room to work; the ribs should be deep, without that tightness round the girth; the flank thick, this being a sure indication of lean meat, particularly in the belly part; the hind quarters long and wide from the hips to the tail, the hams wide and well let down, or as some persons describe it the hind legs should not be split up and the second thigh deficient; the bones solid or flinty, not porous, the latter indicating softness of flesh and too great a proportion of fat; a thin papery skin is associated with want of quality in the meat; a good coat of soft hair is necessary, constitution of and firmness of flesh are generally then also present; the hair should be straight, as curly hair frequently accompanies coarseness of flesh, as it does too great a proportion of fat.

One of the most important points in the breeding pig is its ability to get and rear large litters of healthy pigs. There is no quality more hereditary than this, as it is a sure indication that there is stamina, and that utility has been studied by the breeder. It is by no means unusual to find sows which farrow large litters, but the pigs are uneven and the sows bad milkers and sucklers. These are two of the worst failings in a brood sow. In purchasing a young sow select one with a fair quantity of teats, evenly placed and neither coarse nor ill shaped. A sow with a coarse udder may look like a heavy milker, but this does not follow; it is more frequently an indication of coarseness. Some of the best brood sows are those whose udders make the least show; when the sow is not suckling the udder appears to waste away, and except from the slightly increased size and length of teat some persons would imagine that she had not reared any pigs. It must not be forgotten that, with pigs especially, the bad qualities of the parents are as hereditary as the good ones, and are more likely to be observed in pigs which have not for a time been bred for certain good qualities. In fact, in the breeding of pigs, too much has been done to chance or to the production in pedigree herds of those fancy points which are worse than useless. This may be considered rather strong language, but it is used advisedly and with a firm conviction that it is warranted.

Various opinions are held as to the best time at which to begin to mate breeding pigs. We believe in early maturity, and this shows itself in the ability of certain strains to reproduce their species early in life; a well-kept boar or yelt should be fit to be mated when eight months, so that the first litter arrives when the dam is about a year old. It is a good plan, if the litter is large and the sow a heavy milker, to allow the pigs to remain on her until they are ten weeks old, feeding the sow well the whole time, or, if it