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**CANADIAN NORTHERN**

**The Renewing of the Farm Flock**

Can the Problem be Solved by Developing a Long Distance Strain of Layers?  
"Poultry Jack," Wellington Co., Ont.

WHEN I was first starting into the poultry business a good many years ago I had it all nicely "doped out" that I would carry several hundred winter layers and that the entire laying flock should be changed each year. Like most amateur poultrymen whose previous experience had all been with a small flock, multiplying the numbers looked simple. One day in a city restaurant I found myself opposite one of the best known poultry authorities in the land. I submitted my plans to him with all the eagerness, plus the cock-sureness, of a good mathematician but somewhat amateurish poultryman.

"The first trouble you will be up against with a flock of that size will be renewing it every year," was the answer I received. "If you are going to retain the pullets for just one year you will have to have them all hatched out good and early as your early pullets will lay the eggs in their first winter to make the plan a profitable one. You will then be up against the problem of having a great many incubators running at once and a still greater problem of getting eggs enough in a comparatively short time to fill those incubators. I think you had better start a little easier."

**A Big Drawback**

Experience has demonstrated that the expert was right. One of the biggest drawbacks to success in the poultry industry is the problem of renewing the flock. The plan so often advocated of changing the pullets every year now appears to me to be almost impracticable on anything but a small scale. The plan so often questioned if it is the best plan. A flock of 500 layers would necessitate 500 new pullets each year. This would mean an average of 2,000 chicks hatched out in each year, of which would be lost in brooding or culled out, and then at least one-half of those left would be cockerels, which too often are raised at a loss. My estimate may seem high, but general experience, I believe will bear me out in stating that at least four times as many eggs must be hatched as the number of pullets required. Is not the fact that most egg producers would be glad to buy pullets at the price that they receive for their surplus cockerels a confession that it costs more to produce them to a broiler age than they will bring? The equipment required to breed chickens in such large numbers is an expensive matter. The money invested in brooders is used for only a short time each season. The brooding season too is a busy one for the poultryman and in multiplying the number of chicks he more than multiplies his difficulties. The development of a strain of fowl that would be profitable through a longer period of time and thus cover the renewal requirement to one-half or one-third of its present amount, would materially reduce the cost of production as well as the worry and hazard of the poultry industry.

**Work For Our Colleges**

So far the efforts of our agricultural colleges seem to have been to produce a strain that will lay the greatest number of eggs in the first year. The theory sounds well. It is that each hen is destined to lay just so many eggs in her lifetime and the more we can induce her to lay in her first year, the more profitable she will be. That would be all right were it not for the cost of renewing the flock each year and I believe that our agricultural colleges would be doing the poultry industry a least that section of poultrymen whose object is eggs, a more direct benefit

if they were to endeavor to introduce a strain that would lay well, for say three years. I am glad to say that some such work has lately started at the Utah Agricultural College and I would like to outline some of the results of their work, which I have just been reviewing in a bulletin from that station.

In this experiment there were seven flocks and their record for egg production runs all the way from one to seven years. The average productive life of the strain proved to be about four years. The average first year production for all flocks was 124 eggs. The average second year production was exactly the same as the first, while the average of the third was only one dozen less, or 113 eggs.

The Value of Long Distance Layers. Think what the development of such a strain as this would mean to the poultry keeper. It would mean the hatching of only one-third as many chicks each year, one-third as much incubator space needed, the difficulty of getting enough good hatching eggs at the right season of the year eliminated. In short with 500 laying hens it would mean hatching less than 700 chicks. The cost of rearing the poultry to laying age could be divided over three productive years, instead of all charged to the one year. Of course the receipts for old fowls would be lowered proportionately, but the loss would be more than compensated for in the reduced expense of renewing the flock.

The dairymen are doing their best nowadays to produce long distance cows. The cow that can make a good one-year record is preferred to the cow that makes a good seven-day record. The cow that can keep up her long distance work for two or three years is more valuable still. Poultry men could do just as well to take a leaf from the book of our wisest dairymen and develop long distance laying propensities. I would like to know if any such work has been done in Canada, in addition to that at the Utah Experimental Station.

**Facts About Hens and Eggs**

WHILE heavy laying is as a rule desirable, phenomenal egg records are not a guarantee of strong, rugged offspring. There must be a limit.

The hen that lays 150 eggs in a year is doing mighty good laying, and she is not so apt to break down early in life as is the one which is trying to "break the record."

Pullets and yearling hens that have done such remarkable work in their first season, are not so apt to do heavy work in the second year.

Extreme cold and extreme hot weather affect hen alike. The regular layers give the best sized eggs, while the spasmodic layer generally produces an assortment of sizes.

The size of the egg becomes smaller as the hen increases the number of her brood. So also does the color gradually change from a dark brown to a light color towards the close of the Hens.

There is not very strong fertility in the eggs laid by a hen that will produce from 30 to 50 eggs in succession. As a rule, hens that lay steadily during cold weather are indifferent hot weather layers.

The majority of eggs are laid between the hours of 9 o'clock in the morning and 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

Remember that full fed chicks are paying chicks. It pays big dividends to hurry their growth.

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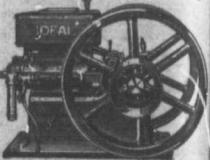
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