

Poultry Chat

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THE time has come to us Canadians for national service, in every sense of the word. The government commands it, every man, woman and child should spring into action and "do their bit," remembering always what our brave boys in Flanders are doing for the empire. We cannot all grow fields of yellow grain, but we can produce "something" in this time of need, dig up gardens and grow vegetables, or turn the city or village lot into a run of some chickens, and produce eggs for the family needs. Feed is high, too high for any profit in poultry "a critic protests," but my practical experience proves that even at the present price of feed profit can be made from the small urban flock of a dozen hens or less. Household scraps and waste will furnish at least one third of the food needed for such a flock of fowls, and the fresh eggs soon pay for the feed grain that must be purchased. Any chickens raised in this suburban poultry run can be safely counted "a real

profit" poultry keeping, when facts and figures are jotted down daily, is most interesting and instructive.

In England where women are toiling so wonderfully, it is now a general thing for ladies to keep small flocks of their favorite breed of fowl, wherever there is room; even within a few miles of London new-laid eggs were worth \$1.00 per dozen during the winter months, in London some of these English women are becoming expert poultry raisers, most enthusiastic over the merits of their respective flocks. When a person learns that these energetic women are also performing all their own domestic duties in war time, as well as keeping chickens, we in Canada, who boast of our pioneering can surely do as much on our broad western farms, there is simply no excuse for buying eggs and poultry, yet how often the only eggs used are from the nearest store.

Better days are coming however, and instead of importing eggs as Manitoba and the west has been doing right along,

we shall foster a fine export trade to England—the market of the world. The federal government are most anxious to encourage urban poultry keeping and have worked out a scheme whereby pullets, well matured and ready for winter laying, can be secured in the fall through the various poultry associations in the country, a minimum price being charged for them at time of delivery, the latter part of October. Orders for these pullets must be placed during April and the early part of May with the local poultry association, and a small deposit paid to cover number of pullets needed. The Winnipeg Poultry Association will do all in their power to further this scheme of the federal government. The Dominion Live Stock Branch is prepared to send a representative to look after the transportation and placing of the pullets to any section of Canada, where 300 pullets or more are ordered. Arrangements will be made with farmers and local breeders for the hatching and rearing of the pullets. The whole scheme looks good and practical to me, and should bring forth splendid results. I presume customers will have the good sense to order

pure-bred stock when given a golden opportunity like this.

The Boys' and Girls' Clubs of Manitoba are again organized and have got down to business in earnest, fully 14,000 strong. In poultry raising alone these clubs have done wonders. On hundreds of farms the pure-bred chickens raised by the young people are taking the place of the old time farmyard scrub fowl. In 1916 the Boys' and Girls' Club reared 20,000 chickens. This year the extension service of the Manitoba Agricultural College are only sending out pure bred eggs to new clubs formed this spring. Bulletins on poultry raising are sent out to all club members from the college, and the young folk are acquiring an expert knowledge, which coupled with practical experience is invaluable. At the Headingly annual show, last September, the fowls shown by the Boys' and Girls' Club of Headingly were better matured and superior in many ways to the display of fowls exhibited by farmers.

I was very interested recently in a nine-year-old hen, a motherly looking brown fowl, who certainly does not show her years. She belongs to Mr. Barrat, of St. James, and is far too much of a pet to be done away with. "Granny" knows enough to vote, has always laid eggs, and brings up a couple of families each season. The day I saw her she was as pert and spry as a hen as any yearling, spying out a suitable place to make a nest in the stable, crooning a little lay as she scratched along. Mr. Barrat gave me her history, explaining how she was the beginning of his present beautiful flock of pure bred Barred Rocks. As a large market gardener, he could not tolerate a hen around the place, but nine years ago "Granny" then a little brown pullet was given to his little girl, so of course he had to fix up a pen for her in the stable. By spring she was taken pity on, in her loneliness, and given two or three companions, who laid eggs and flourished. He experienced a change of heart as far as chickens were concerned, and to-day he is a real fancier, chickens having the first place in his affections.

A hen in the States, "Lady May" has beaten the world's record in egg laying; for 92 consecutive days she laid an egg announcing each egg with a shrill cackle of joy, then she rested one whole day.

The best previous record was 85 eggs laid on consecutive days.

During this month of May rearing chickens successfully is the most important matter in the poultry yard. Personally, I prefer to rear chickens with the mother hens, even when incubator hatched, finding this method the easier and safer way. However, some breeders prefer a good brooder which in May should be placed in one of the regulation colony houses. In this climate the colony house is not warm enough to rear April chicks. May is our best time for chicks. Set machines and hens the latter part of April and you will get more chicks hatched than earlier in the season, with a minimum of labor in caring for them. I suppose "overfeeding" is perhaps the greatest stumbling block to beginners. "little and often" is the rule for young chicks, and no food at all until they are about 48 hours old, especially important is this precaution in an incubator flock. The first four weeks is the critical period, start the chicks off with bread crumbs soaked in milk and squeezed dry, or plain crumbs and fine sandy grit, or give them a good chick-feed for three or four days, then some rolled oats as a change, adding cracked wheat in a week's time. If the chicks are with the mother hen there is no hurry about water, give it to them when three or four days' old, but I notice incubator chicks are much more thirsty, no doubt, because brooders get rather too warm at times. I am careful about giving milk when the birds are less than 14 days' old, unless the milk is made into curds, then it is a fine food and safer than meat scraps. Buttermilk is splendid when the chicks have passed the danger period, even then, buttermilk bought from city creameries I am somewhat afraid of. Here again the mixed farmer scores when he wants to raise poultry, he has pure milk and buttermilk to feed up to keep it from going to waste, as well as screenings, small wheat, etc. The mixed farmer, therefore has far the best chance to make money from his poultry yard. Green grass is an essential to the proper growth and health of chickens.

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