

The Houdan is a non-incubating variety, therefore a supply of broody hens or an incubator must be provided to incubate the eggs. The chickens hatch out easily and should be left at least twenty-four hours either under the hen or in a basket placed near the fire, or in a drying box of the incubator. After that time the hen should be cooped up in some warm sheltered corner, and the chickens given their liberty where they can have access to grass, except that for the first day or two and night a small movable yard should be drawn up to the front of the coop. This affords some protection against vermin, and confines the chicks until the early morning dews and damp have left the grass; for, even in chickenhood, the drier the Houdan can be kept, the better he will thrive. An unused stable or open shed affords excellent protection to the hen and early broods. Something of the description is usually at hand on most farms, which, if properly utilized, should give the farmer a great advantage over the amateur poultry keeper, who may have to incur the cost and trouble of erecting such accommodation.

As coops and runs or yards differ very much in size and shape, a short description of a pattern, useful to a Houdan breeder, may be interesting. The coop or house is 2 feet wide (inside measure), 2 feet deep, 2 feet high in front, and 1 foot 6 inches at the back; the front is barred, and slides quite out, and may be replaced at night with a shutter, in which a few large holes are bored at the top for ventilation purposes.

Dry sand or fine ashes should be thickly scattered on the floor, which should be thoroughly cleaned out and scraped at frequent intervals. The yard, or run, is detachable from the coop, but fits it exactly in width and height; it is 4 feet long, boarded 6 or 8 inches high at the bottom; the remainder and the top is covered with one inch mesh wire netting; further, a light cover for the top, made of thin wood, should be kept at hand in case of wet. These measurements may appear large, but they are adopted with the ulterior object of utilizing the coop and run during the moulting season, or while preparing birds for exhibition.

It would be invidious here to mention any of the many several excellent chicken foods in the market with which the chickens may be advantageously fed every two or three hours for the first week or ten days of their lives, subsequently a few grains of wheat, rye, or buckwheat may be added, and when they pick up the corn greedily the soft food or meal may be reserved for their breakfast, and grain given during the rest of the day. How much food, and when to give it, can best be learned by experience. Bear in mind, the great object is to feed the chickens just when they are hungry, and then to give no more than they will eat

readily. Take especial care no soft food is allowed to turn sour, and so set up a number of chicken troubles. A second valuable rule is to protect the youngsters as much as possible from wet and damp; a continual supply of fresh, pure water should in theory be the only water within reach of the hen and brood—it will be found difficult to carry this out in practice, yet strenuous efforts should be made to do so.

Water can be given either in open troughs or saucers, or in the ordinary earthenware poultry fountains acting on the vacuum principle; if these could be thoroughly well cleaned a great objection to their use would be overcome. Fortunately they are cheap and when foul may be smashed up into grit without serious financial loss to the owner. Zinc and iron vessels cannot be recommended, because through chemical action the water may become poisonous if impregnated with acid; this is unfortunate, for a most useful pattern to breeders of crested fowls is constructed in zinc; a small cup is carried some 4 or 6 inches from the body of the fountain, out of which the birds drink without wetting or damaging their crests. Whatever receptacle be employed fresh water should constantly be given, and every care taken to keep it clean and pure. This remark applies equally to the water supplied to adults or chickens.

A period in the chicken history has now arrived when the resources of the breeder are taxed severely—viz., the time when the cockerels should be separated from the pullets. Complete isolation of the sexes undoubtedly tends to increase size and prevent feather eating. If the isolation can be such as to place the birds out of sound as well as sight so much the better, but this can rarely be brought to pass. So soon as the cockerels begin to crow or show an amatory disposition they should be given a run to themselves, where they will dwell fairly peacefully unless a stranger be introduced, when not only will there be a combined attack on him, but often single combats arise, resulting in injury to the crests and comb. Moreover if the cockerels and pullets be separated, the trouble and annoyance caused by feather eating may most possibly be avoided, for the Houdan cockerels, like most crested breeds, seem to enjoy having their crest feathers picked and pulled by hens and pullets until their heads become a very unpleasant sight. The temptation to crest picking seems peculiar to that period in a Houdan's life when the feathers are coming through in the quills during the moult. When the crests are fully moulted out in all their beauty, fear need be entertained that they will be destroyed by the birds. The disgusting and vexatious habit is, doubtless, catching.

Although the chickens naturally absorb most of the breeders attention, the stock birds must not be forgotten