

Seasonable Hints.

If all arrangements are not now complete for the winter care of the fowls the poultry-keeper has been neglectful of his duties—all broken windows repaired, door fastenings made secure, all cracks closed that would allow drafts to reach the fowls, the floors well littered with dry leaves or cut hay or straw; a dust-bath of fine, clean dry sand fixed in a sunny corner; a stock of sharp gravel laid in, and the other little et ceteras that each fancier may consider necessary for the comfort of his pets, and for his own convenience in attending to them.

When the fowls are free from colds or roup they are better if allowed out in the runs during the day, when the weather is fine and the ground dry; but in hot weather, or when the ground is covered with snow, the house is the best place for them. But they must not be allowed to spend the time in-doors in idleness or mischief. Keep them busy. Scatter the grain among the chaff or leaves on the floor, and make them scratch for it or starve, especially the old birds. Feed those sparingly that are over moult and are not laying. The late hatched chicks, especially the cockerels, must be well fed until fully fledged. Give them corn, but make them work for it.

The hens that moulted early and the early hatched pullets should be laying now. Feed these generously, and do not neglect giving green food and material for making shell, such as old mortar and broken oyster shell. The feeding of cooked animal food should now be commenced and be kept up regularly all winter—the quantity small, but given frequently. Fix comfortable nests in secluded places, and collect the eggs frequently. The neglect of these provisions lead to egg-eating. If the hens are kept busy scratching for wheat and the eggs in the nests are not exposed to their view, they will seldom acquire this most provoking habit, which is very difficult to cure.

Examine the adult hens to see in what condition they are. It is surprising how rapidly hens, of the Asiatic breeds will put on flesh after moult if fed liberally. The hen that a few weeks ago was a mass of bones and pin feathers may now be found too fleshy for good laying and breeding. If found to be fat they should be put on short rations—say of oats or barley, and be made to scratch for it,—and given all the water they will drink. No matter what the object is in keeping poultry—whether pleasure or profit—it must be borne in mind that fat fowls, except for the table, are *always* unprofitable. They will not lay well nor breed well, and they are much more subject to disease than those in merely good condition. This would seem to be a simple point to remember, but it is seldom given the consideration it ought to receive.

While you have the fowls in hand, see if there are any lice on them. If there are, lose no time in exterminating them. Dust insect powder well down to

the roots of the feathers in the fluff and under the wings. Two or three applications at intervals of a week will pay them, and if the roosts are saturated with coal oil one a fortnight during the winter, there will not be much further trouble from this source.

The present is the time to select and mate up the breeding stock. This is the most important work of the fancier, as on it depends his success. He who puts a number of hens and a cock together, and is satisfied because they are of the same variety that he is doing the work of a *breeder*, makes a great mistake. He will never gain success—unless by pure accident, and then it will be only temporary, as he will not know what produced it.

The *breeder* selects his stock with the object of attaining certain results in shape and feather, in the progeny, and estimates his success by their attainment. Mistakes and failures may occur, but they will bring lessons with them that will point the way to success. At the present day the demand is not for birds of pure blood only, but for birds of pure blood having the beauties and peculiarities of the breed they belong to well developed. He who can produce the greatest percentage of birds of this class, year after year, is the *best* breeder. Mate with an object always. Try to prevent the defects of the male from being transmitted to the progeny, by mating with females free from similar defects—and *vice versa*. Remember that the male influences the progeny of all the females with him, while each hen only influences her own. The male, therefore, is the most important and should always be the best to be had.

As last season was a very unfavorable one for the raising of early chickens, causing much disappointment to those who aspired to have well-developed birds at the fall shows, there will be a greater desire than usual for early chicks this winter. As a rule in this latitude there is little gained by commencing hatching operations before the middle end of March. With the aid of incubators and artificial mothers there should be little trouble in getting the chicks out and reared, but it is the experience of most of those who have tried it that chicks so raised are loose-feathered and wanting in stamina, and that the gain in size is not worth the expense and trouble. On the other hand, chicks raised naturally during cold weather are apt to be stunted, but if brought through will be of sturdy constitution and compact feather. As a rule the best chicks seen at our Fall shows are March and April hatch, and at our Winter shows April and May hatch. Those who have not the very best facilities for rearing chicks in winter should not attempt it. The cost in time, money and anxiety is very great, and the results very seldom proportionate.