Our Poultry Corner

If you have some things you do not understand in connection with your poultry and want some information, state your case briefly and to the point, writing on one side of paper only, and address it to THE MONITOR PUBLISHING COMPANY LIMITED, we will submit it to Prof. Landry, and when his answers are received we will publish them withholding your name if you so desire it.

BREEDING FOR EGG PRODUCTION

Those wishing to keep chickens only for egg production would do well to select an egg breed like the Leghorns, Hamburgs or Anconas. The Leghorns are probably the best of these. There are many varieties and sub-varieties in this breed, but the White variety stands out in a class by itself. These are just as good egg producers as any and besides they are almost the ideal broilers. The Leghorn is a bird of graceful curves, alert, active, hardy and prolific. They have no standard weights. They are brobably better summer layers than winter layers as they are somewhat sensitive to weather conditions. Cold weather, long continued, will check egg production more in this breed than in the general purpose breeds, but on the other hand they also respond quicker after milder weather comes on. Where summer eggs are the chief consideration, together with a breed adapted for broiler production, we cannot do better than recommend the Leghorns.

The Anconas are a Leghorn-Minorca cross and are but little grown in this are very similar to the Leghorns. The are very similar to the Leghorns. The Hamburgs are a rounded and plumper bird than the Leghorn, but they are rather difficult to raise through their first few weeks of existence. The Minorcas have nothing to recommend them to the ordinary farmer. The old time Minorca might have been a fairly good chicken, but the present day Minorca with his long narrow body, long legs and lack of constitution has very little to recommend him to any one but the straight fancier. His constitution and egg producing qualities have been spoiled almost entirely by trying to breed to fancy qualities only.

The meat breeds are too slow to mature to be of much use in this country. The large amount of feather growth on the feet also goes against them, especially in the early, wet fall and spring months when they are liable to freeze their feet. Small flocks may work out all right, but for an average size farm flock they would require too much care and attention. For crossing on other breeds the Brahma is probably the best. Crossed with Barred Rocks they make pretty good roasters and excellent capons. However there is no special need to go into detail about the qualities, type and so on of these breeds as they are hardly adapted to farm requirements.

What we have stated about various breeds are facts as we have been able to gather them during the last twenty-years of experience in farm poultry work, working on large poultry plants. We have endeavored to give an impartial summary of these observations not on the basis that we know it all and this is the final word, but rather that we came to these conclusions gradually and that as the years go by and wider experience is gained, we may from time to time make further observations and draw further conclusions in regard to the qualities of the various breeds of poultry.

In breeding for egg production the farmer should select his best winter layers and mate them with an active vigorous male bird that grew quickly and matured early. The hens should of course be selected not only for heavy production, but also for vigor and vitality. If the hens are rather large and oversize a medium sized male will do, but this averaging up has to be taken into consideration. It is best to discard hens that are very much undersize because there is always a tendency in the offspring to deteriorate in size year after year, if such birds are used promiscuously.

Under farm conditions it would be worth while to take 15 or 20 of your best layers, or hens that are laying in December and January and separate them from the rest of the stock and trap nest them. In this way the best layer could be found and her eggs marked and her cockerels kept for breeding purposes the next year. I firmly believe that the average farmer has in his flock the nucleus for a heavy laying strain, only he does not know where she is. The cockerels from this heavy laying hen should then be mated back again to the next winter's heaviest laying pullets and the following winter in his second year back to his own pullets, using his son which should be from the heaviest laying pullet, to mate back to the yearling hens. This is the best method of breeding and selection I know of and if a farmer is fortunate enough to own a flock of pure breds to start with he can soon build up a heavy laying strain of his chosen breed. Where mongrels are used to start with, pure bred males should be purchased the first year or two until the flock becomes uniform as to size and color and then this method of breeding and selection should be followed.

Our own experience in this line of breeding has been this, that with the use of the trap nest for identifying heavy layers and breeding from them only the production was raised from an average of 139 eggs a year up to 167 from the 25 best layers. Inbreeding was followed and later on line breeding and selection will lead us to we shall see as the years go by. If we give due consideration to the importance of having only strong vigorous and healthy birds to breed from we are satisfied that the question will work out all right.

Investigation work has shown that heavy laying is transmitted by the male birds and therefore farmers generally would do well to use male birds from recognized laying strains. Such birds can usually be purchased at two to three dollars each whereas males from exhibition stock very seldom sell for less than five dollars.

It is often claimed that for better results yearlings hens should be mated with cockerels and yearling males with pullets but it is difficult to state that such will always be the case. Personally, I believe that environment, method, kind of food fed and general care play a bigger part in the results, providing that the pullets and cockerels are mature, than any special way of mating. As a rule though the yearling hen produces a larger chick, fluffier and apparently more vigorous than the pullet for the simple reason that she lays a bigger egg. If pullets are mature, healthy and vigorous I would expect, other things being equal, to get just as strong chicks from them as from the yearling hens.

The period of usefulness of the male from a breeder's point of view usually extends over the second year. The number of females to be mated with a male for best results decreases year after year. The number of females to go with one male depends somewhat on the breed. In the egg breeds one male to every 15 to 25 hens is about the right ratio; in the general purpose breeds one to 12 to 15 females; and in the meat breeds one male to 8 to 12 females. These rations may vary with some individuals. A specially active vigorous male in the lighter breeds will often fertilize the eggs from as high as 35 hens and in the general purpose breeds as high as 25 hens. Usually on the tenth to the fourteenth day after the male is put with the females the eggs will be quite fertile.

On the third day some of the eggs may already be fertile if the hens are in full laying. After the males are separated the eggs will commence to show a decrease in fertility, covering a period of 14 to 20 days and even then an old egg might still be fertile. But generally after the fourteenth day eggs may be guaranteed non-fertile if sold for market use. The practice of using alternate males has a tendency to produce higher fertility in the eggs. Using one male a day or two and then changing off to the other one is a common practice. It is however, hardly practical for the farmer to follow this as it requires considerable labor at a busy season of the year.—M. C. Herner, Professor of Poultry Husbandry, Manitoba Agricultural College, in the Grain Growers' Guide.

SWAT THE ROOSTER

In marketing the hens don't forget 'His Lordship." Just as soon as the breeding season is past his usefulness is gone. He is a drone. He is not only a non-producer—he is a positive menace.

He is costing the farmers of Canada thousands of dollars every year. A fertile egg will spoil rapidly in hot weather. If all the eggs produced in Canada after the first of June each year were infertile there would not be the necessity of sending millions of them to the dump as has been the case in the past.

Little chicks should be protected from cool, damp, surroundings. Nothing is more detrimental to their health and more certain to bring heavy mortality than to let them out in the wet grass early in the morning.

Select eggs for hatching uniform in size. Extremely small eggs or exceptionally large eggs should not be used.

The Farm

BREEDING AND RAISING DRAFT HORSES.

The Profitable Type.

(Hon. A. B. Etter, Amherst, N. S.)

Thirty years ago in Nova Scotia, 2,400 pounds was considered a good weight for a pair of draft horses, and a horse that weighed fourteen hundred pounds was considered too large and clumsy for any kind of work. Today all this has been changed. A team of 2,800 pound horses is considered too light to take to the lumber woods and pairs of 3,000 pounds or over are in demand and prices that are very remunerative to the producers are being paid in order to get them. This makes the question of production an important one and a few words of practical advice may be helpful on this point.

The first thing necessary is a good brood mare. A mare to produce heavy draft stock should be sound weighing no less than 1,400 pounds a good worker, and free from vice and sired by a pure bred horse of the type that you wish to breed from her. Such a mare should be mated to a pure bred stallion of a different strain of the same breed as the mare, and should have all the qualities you wish to produce, as well as being at least two hundred pounds heavier than the mare. In this way you breed up both in weight and quality and should have an offspring equal to your expectations. If you should be disappointed, change the sire when you breed again.

When the colt is foaled, begin to make its acquaintance at once Handle it from day to day, and before it is a month old put a halter on and with careful treatment you will have no trouble in leading it anywhere, for it will have confidence in you. At four or five months of age the colt should be weaned. Its feed at this time should be bran, mashed oats and carrots, or turnips, in all from four to six quarts a day, together with all the good sweet hay it will clean up. A good piece of rock salt should also be put in the manger. Give it plenty of exercise and above all watch for worms or lice for these will ruin any colt. Lice are caused by poor condition, heavy coat and want of proper care and exercise. Worms are caused by poor condition, swamp grasses, frozen and dead grasses, too many roots and want of proper exercise. A colt that has worms will have sometimes a poor appetite and at other times a ravenous one, the stomach will be greatly enlarged, breath feverish, coat rough, staring, harsh and matted, the animal will lose flesh and often become a total wreck, ending in death.

Keep its feet trimmed, so that it will stand level on them and see that its toes are not too long. If this is attended to, there will be practically no danger from side-bone, ring-bone, spavin or any of the other well known blemishes.

When the colt is eighteen months of age, he should be harnessed alongside an older horse, and then with his mate which should have been sired by the same horse and trained in the same way as himself. In this way, a well-matched pair in performance and disposition will be secured.

A small amount of light work should now be given the pair each day, and through this growth and development are likely to be quite rapid, so that, at the age of two and a half years, their weight should be over 2,600 pounds. With plenty of light work, but not enough to tire them, this pair will mature into fast walkers, good workers, with good dispositions, and will enjoy their work becanse their muscles have been progressively developed to meet their needs. At four years of age the pair should weigh about 2,800 pounds, and at six years they should weigh from 3,000 to 3,600 pounds. Their price at this age, if they are well matched and look alike, should be anywhere from $700.00 to $1,000.00. This looks like a good paying return, for, from the eighteenth month, the pair have been earning more than their keep, that is, on the average, from the time they were first put in harness up to their sixth year. Of course it is not every pair of colts that will turn out as well as these, but this is the type to aim after, and practice coupled with perseverance is the only road to success.

CARE OF HORSES' FEET

(Hon. A. B. Etter, Amherst.)

The proper care of horses' feet is one of the greatest problems that confronts the breeder of light harness or heavy team horses. The problem, however, should be dealt with in a practical manner, and the first principle is to make the feet level, and the second to have the horse shod with shoes that fit his feet. To make the foot level, the hoof should be of the same depth on the outside as the inside, and the toe and heel should be of a height so that when the horse is standing on a level floor, with his feet at proper angle to the limbs a line drawn down the front of the leg to the top of the hoof at the hair will strike exactly the centre of the foot, and if extended to the bottom of the foot, two-thirds of the hoof at the floor will be to the front of this line and the other third behind. This shows that, if the toe is too high, the line of leg will strike the floor farther back. On the other hand, if the heel is too high the line will strike towards the toe and the leg will have the appearance of going straight into the foot. A well-proportioned foot for a horse of ten hundred pounds' weight is one having a toe three and one-half inches long for the front feet, that is the distance from the hair to the front of the foot at the toe, while on the hind feet the length of the toe should be an eighth of an inch less. The hoof generally grows the faster on the outside of the front feet and on the inside of the hind feet. This defect in the front feet will cause the horse to toe out, striking his knees when going fast and likely to hit his ankles when going slow, and in the case of his hind feet being high on the inside will cause them to stand close together and interfere, and if a pacer, the horse will cross-fire when going fast. The remedy for these defects lies largely in having the horses's feet level.

PROPER SHOEING

(Hon. A. B. Etter Amherst, N. S.)

Perhaps the most important matter in shoeing is to have the feet shod so that the horse will not become lame. Contracted feet are mostly caused by using shoes that are too small. Often a foot is contracted in one quarter only. This is caused by the hoof being higher on the opposite side, and tramping on the lower side drives that quarter in. The proper shoeing is to make the shoe flush with the hoof all around the foot, and if the foot is narrow, make the shoe higher on the inside on both quarters. Begin on the one-third distance from the heel and shape the shoe so that the top side—the side next to the foot—will be higher up into the foot by levelling the inside of the shoe about one-eighth of an inch at the heel and lessening as it comes to the third distance of the shoe as before mentioned. If only one-quarter is contracted, make the shoe so that it will only spread that quarter. When the horse wears a shoe like this the hoof will spread and become wide and round at the heel, which is the natural shape for a horse's foot.

Another kind of defect is the flat foot. Probably the best way to deal with a flat-footed horse is to make the shoe large enough to fit the foot that is, to keep the shoe out flush with the hoof, and particularly so on the quarters. Often small shoes are put on large feet and then the wall cut away to make the foot fit the shoe. The shoe thus bearing on the sole of the foot, the horse immediately becomes lame and the foot becomes diseased, ruining the animal and sometimes causing his death. And this was done because the horse was thought to have had too large feet and smaller shoes would make them look better. These defects and conditions are often found in roadsters as well as heavy draught horses.

In regard to scratches, if the horse is properly fed, given bran mashes when required, and properly shod, he will not have any scratches to bother him, for there will be no heat in the foot or leg to cause them.

NEW POTASH FERTILIZER.

Necessity, it has been said, is the mother of invention, and we have no better example of this than the efforts scientists are making at the present time to find new artificial fertilizers to take the place of the ones which are not attainable on account of the war or which have become so high in price that they are practically unbuyable by the ordinary farmer.

For many years, even before the war cut off our supply of potash, scientists, in the United States had been experimenting to see if they could not find some source of potash in their own country which would be able to compete in chloride and sulphate of potash produced at the Stassfurt mines in Germany. They found that by fusing feldspar—a mineral which is very plentiful both in the States and Canada—with lime at a temperature of 1,500 degrees Fahrenheit, the potash in the feldspar was rendered available. The cost of treatment is so high, however, that unless some commercial use is found for the by-products of the fusion available, potash cannot be produced cheaply enough to complete on the market with that exported from Germany at normal prices.

CUT THE CLOVER EARLY

It is the rule on many farms to let the clover crop turn brown before it is cut. This may add a little to the weight, but it detracts from the feeding value.

Hay must smell sweet and have a good color in order to be rated first-class. Over-ripe clover is dusty, woody, and smells like tobacco. This may be pleasing to the owner, but to the cow's uneducated taste it is not. Properly cut clover will retain its green color even after being thoroughly dried. A ton of green sweet smelling hay is worth two tons of that which is over-ripe.

Clover when allowed to turn brown in the field gets brittle and most of the blades powder and are lost in the hauling. There seems no good reason why farmers fail to transfer their clover from the field to the hay mow in a condition which will be acceptable to the animals and profitable to themselves.

Mill feeds are always cheapest about harvest time. Many dollars can be saved by co-operative buying at that time.

A good road between every farm and market is a reasonable and worth-while proposition.