POULTRY

Cheapening Egg Production

THE cost of egg production has soared with the cost of feed and labor, but the cost of feed at least can be greatly lessened by the exercise of greater intelligence in the selection of the feed and greater care in the management of the poultry. In making up the winter ration, therefore, cheapness should be more than ever a factor taken into consideration. First of all, there is that feed which is grown on the farm. Grain fed near where it is grown has less of the labor element in its value and is therefore cheaper, but of the various grains grown on the farm, some are cheaper than others and hens are not so discriminating but that they would welcome feeds that will not bring the highest market prices. Screenings and inferior grains, frozen wheat, shrunken barley, or buckwheat, are suitable.

To supplement these waste cabbage leaves and mangels may be given, for hens enjoy a little succulence as well as do dairy cows. Waste clover or alfalfa leaves are always welcomed and are relished either dry or steamed. One hundred hens will eat from a peck to a bushel of these leaves in a day. To nothing on the farm can surplus milk be fed to better advantage and a little of this daily, along with the table scraps, will go far toward taking the place of the meat scrap, of which the present prices are so prohibitive. Abundance of grit helps to save the feed bill by assisting in more complete digestion.

Care saves the feed, for with good care and housing, even the cheapest feeds may give better results than higher priced grains when poor care is given.

Care of Breeding Stock

STRONG fertile eggs are desired during the hatching season, and in order to insure that the eggs be strong and fertile, it is necessary that stock be carefully attended from the time of their selection in the fall. Healthy, vigorous birds with abundance of vitality that will spend the winter in storing up reserve energy which may be thrown into hatching eggs, are only secured as the result of careful selection, supplemented by careful wintering. Clean, dry quarters with plenty of ventilation and sunshine are necessary for good health. Good water and air drainage are both necessary. Dirt floors are probably the best if the soil is suitable, but on damp land cement floors well covered with soil or sand are most satisfactory. Small flocks usually give better satisfaction than large ones for breeding purposes. Fresh air and sunshine are even more important with breeding stock than with layers. The open front, cloth front or combination of glass and cloth, seem to give the best results. Openings should always be located so that the sun may reach every part of the house at sometime during the day and provide an abundance of ventilation without draft in all kinds of weather. "Sunshine is the best disinfectant and fresh air the best tonic."

The house should be so comfortable that stock will not care to go out during the day, but provision should be made that breeding stock may go out of doors whenever they desire. This ensures the taking of sufficient exercise. A sheltered run outside with plenty of litter in the house for them to scratch in will encourage egg production.

Less protein is required in the feed of breeding stock than in that of laying stock, but otherwise the feed should be about the same. A larger proportion of whole grain and a lesser amount of beef scrap or other animal food is required. Green foods should be given in abundance, mangels being one of the best. A hundred birds will consume a ton of mangels in a winter. A little clover hay in the litter where the birds will pick the leaves off, proves a valuable addition to the ration. Milk, and preferably sour milk, is the greatest of all poultry foods. Better egg production, higher fertility and hatchability and stronger chicks may be expected when it is fed. Remove from the breeding pen any birds that show signs of sickness or weakness. Quality in eggs means more and better chicks, less labor and more profit.

Working Out the Problems

By Michael K. Boyer.

SELF-RELIANCE is an important factor in the poultry business. There are a great many people in this world who, while they can accurately carry out the orders of others, are unable to help themselves in cases of emergency. They have no self-reliance. The moment that a problem confronts them they must seek advice. Such men rarely ever succeed in business. Poultry culture not only needs a large bump of self-reliance, but it calls for men and women who can plan the work and help themselves. There are men born to be slaves, just as there are men born to be masters.

Problems arise almost daily which call for careful thinking and experimenting, and at times they tax a man's ability, often upsetting his generally good nature. The first duty is to endeavor to get at the bottom of the trouble, and try to ascertain the cause. A little careful work will often accomplish this. Make every effort to solve the enigma. Then if unsuccessful, it is time to consult some expert.

It is necessary that good poultry books be carefully read and studied, and that before entering upon the work, a good working knowledge be obtained. But books can only teach the rudiments; it remains for personal application to work out the problems. The business calls for brain work. It not only suffices to read and study, but actual work must be done—practice makes perfect—and then time, money and patience will be saved.

As a rule, the beginner starts with a certain breed, and before he has time to thoroughly become acquainted with it, he forms a new attachment. The booming, tempting arguments given by some new arrival so enamures him that he makes a change, and this changing he keeps up until he has come to his senses, ultimately realizing that success can come only by sticking to one breed and one system. He should work out the problems and stick to the work.

The beginner, too, needs to investigate the breeds, and the effects of certain food for his stock and his climate. Breeds that are profitable in some places are unprofitable in others. There are bills-of-fare that with some folks are ideal, and with others are a failure. All this must be carefully studied and experimented with. The same advice would apply to the mechanical part. The directions for running incubators might be effective inland, and disastrous at points along the coast. Certain styles and ideas in housing might be all right in one section of the country and all wrong in another. And so one could continue to enumerate. The point is for the beginner to first book himself with what knowledge he can glean from experts, and then apply that instruction to his locality, his conditions, his finances, and his previous experience.

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