

winter season. The public demands large birds, and is willing to pay for its fancy. There have been certain modifications, however, during the past year or two, and I think the public is beginning to realize, very slowly it is true, that the smaller birds are invariably finer in flavour than the very large specimens.

The great majority of purchasers, however, still prefer the big, heavy birds. This refers to all kinds of poultry produce, particularly turkeys and geese. The size determines in a very large measure the price, for while a turkey weighing under 12 lbs. may fetch no more than 9d. per lb., one turning the scales at 20 lbs. or more may realize quite double this. The same thing applies to geese, and the large birds not only fetch more money, but sell better. It is not so imperative for chickens and ducks to be large, but at the same time it is distinctly an advantage. The

demand at the end of the year is not so much for chickens and ducklings as for fowls and ducks.

The Killing Process

Upon the careful killing, plucking, and packing a great deal depends. It is no use going to the trouble and expense of fattening poultry unless these final processes are carried out in a very careful manner.

It is extremely important to withhold all food from the birds for at least twenty-four hours before they are killed. In the case of turkeys and geese thirty hours is none too long, especially if the weather is at all warm or muggy.

This starving is in order to empty the birds' system, for if they are killed while they have food in their crops or intestines the quality and flavour of their flesh is injured, besides which they do not remain fresh so long.

There are two methods of killing be-

tween which there is little to choose. The most common in the case of chickens and ducks, and the best under ordinary circumstances, is by dislocation of the neck.

Few people are strong enough to wring a turkey's or a goose's neck, and knifing them is thus necessary.

This is quite a simple process. The bird is laid on its back on a table, the mouth opened, and the point of a sharp knife inserted into the brain through the roof of the mouth. This pierces the brain, and death is instantaneous.

When killing by dislocation of the neck the operator holds the birds by the hocks and long flight feathers in the left hand; with the right he grips the back of the head between the first two fingers, and by a slow and backward pull he breaks the spinal cord.

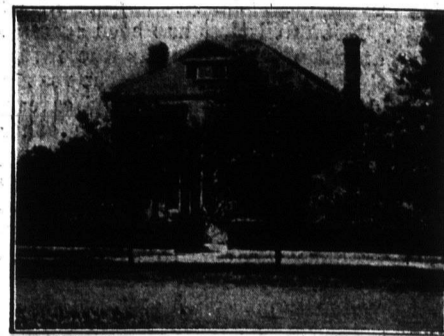
Plucking and Shaping

All the time the feathers are being

removed the fowl's head must be hung downwards in order that the blood in the body may drain away freely. Unless this occurs the flesh will be dark coloured and unsightly.

Plucking should begin as soon as possible, since a minute while the body is warm is worth five when cold. Not only do the feathers come out more easily, but there is less danger of tearing the flesh.

The feathers should be gripped firmly and given a sharp pull in the opposite direction to that in which they are lying. A slow dragging movement should be avoided. All immature feathers, known in the trade as stubs, should be removed, as they are unsightly. The



Residence of F. L. Davis, Neepawa, Man.

birds should be plucked clean, leaving no feathers save on the neck.

Nearly all kinds of poultry can be greatly improved in appearance by shaping, which should be done immediately plucking is finished, and before the heat has left the body.

A shaping board is necessary in the case of chickens; and this consists of two pieces of wood about 6 inches wide, nailed together almost at right angles, with end pieces. The chickens are placed within this trough, breast downwards, with the legs and wings tucked beneath them, and the head hanging over the front. On their backs a heavy weight is placed.

This gives the birds a square shape and adds greatly to their appearance.

Ducks and geese should be placed on a table, breast downwards, with a heavy weight on their backs. The chickens in the shaping board, and the ducks and geese on the table, should remain in this position until they are stone cold. It is not customary to shape turkeys.

Sending to Market

It is of the utmost importance not to pack poultry until it is quite cold. Probably more birds are damaged through the neglect of this simple precaution than through anything else. If the birds are warm when packed they deteriorate very quickly indeed, arriving at their destination flabby and discoloured, and with their value greatly reduced.

Although a little trouble, it pays to wrap each bird separately in grease-proof paper. The bottom of the hamper



Residence of Hon. J. W. Howden, Neepawa, Man.

should be well covered with sweet, clean straw, this again being covered with some softer material, such as wool-wool or paper, in order to prevent the backs of the birds getting damaged. The birds should be placed on their backs side by side, and the spaces between filled in with soft packing, which should well cover the breasts.

Care must be taken to prevent the birds coming into contact with the sides of the hamper. It is advisable to pack quite tightly to prevent the birds shaking about during the journey.

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