

HOW TO RID A HENHOUSE OF MITES

BY

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In the warm weather there are frequent inquiries as to why hens stop laying. In some cases the hens have laid very well all season, but suddenly the egg yield begins to fall off and sometimes ceases entirely.

It is useless to expect a flock to lay equally well at all times. A flock that has laid heavily during the winter will generally slow up towards the middle of the summer and when they begin to moult, but when the egg yield drops rapidly until it practically ceases without any apparent reason, suspect vermin.

RED MITE.

Of all the many varieties of vermin that infest fowl, the Red Mite is the most troublesome. Unlike the ordinary hen louse, they are not, as a rule, found on the fowl, neither are they killed by dusting, as the ordinary body louse is; these pests breed very rapidly especially during the hot weather, usually in cracks containing filth or in dirty nesting material. They are not red in colour as is popularly supposed, but grey; it is only after they have come into contact with the fowl and have become filled with blood that they appear red. The young mites are white and have only six legs, but after casting their skins, which they do several times, they have eight legs. The cast skins may be seen like a white powder around the perches, this often being the first indication of the presence of mites. They are able to live and reproduce for months without animal food, the first food of the young probably being filth or decayed wood. They thrive best in dark, dirty houses, and have been found to exist in houses the following season after the fowl have been removed. They usually attack the birds at night, but are sometimes found on laying hens and they frequently drive broody hens from the nest. They pierce the skin with their needle-like jaws and suck the blood, after which they retire to the seclusion of the cracks and crevices of the roosts, nests or other parts of the house. They will bite man or other animal, causing severe irritation, but they never remain on them for any length of time.

REMEDIES.

If the fowl are not doing well and on examination are thinner than they should be, a sharp lookout should be kept for mites. At night they may be seen either on the fowl or running along the perches; in the daytime examine the cracks and crevices of the roosts and walls closely, or lift the roosts and examine the places

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