

The Canadian Entomologist.

Vol. XLVII.

LONDON, AUGUST, 1915

No. 8

POPULAR AND ECONOMIC ENTOMOLOGY.

LICE AFFECTING THE DOMESTIC FOWL.

BY A. W. BAKER, GUELPH, ONT.

The lice affecting the Domestic Fowl are members of the order Mallophaga and are commonly called Biting or Bird Lice to distinguish them from the sucking lice of mammals. The name "Biting Lice" is applied because of the fact that the mouth-parts of the insects are fitted for biting. The food consists of bits of feathers and epidermal scales—the lice never feeding on the blood of the host save possibly where it may have dried around wounds. The injury to chickens arises from the irritation produced by the constant feeding and probably also to a considerable extent by the sharp claws.

The loss occasioned to poultry keepers through the attacks of lice is of course difficult of estimation, but it is certain that it is much greater than is usually supposed to be the case. The injury to chicks is especially great, proper growth being prevented through the restless activity of the bird. It is even quite possible that much of the mortality of small chicks is due directly to the attacks of lice. More mature birds are also prevented from making proper growth and egg-laying is doubtless checked to a considerable extent by the weakened and restless condition of the birds. Where setting hens are used there are often losses in hatching as a result of the abnormal activity of the bird. In addition to these direct losses birds as a result of their weakened condition are more susceptible to the various diseases to which poultry are at all times a prey.

One point which makes the biting lice of great importance as ectoparasites is that the whole life of the insect is passed on the body of the host. The female attaches her eggs to the feathers of the bird and each young louse escapes by pushing off a cap-like structure at the free end of the egg. The rest of the life of the