

Government of the Province of Saskatchewan

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Suggestions for Poultry Keepers

ON

FATTENING CHICKENS

There is unlimited scope for the furtherance of the poultry industry in Saskatchewan.

It is an undoubted fact if we are to expect a reasonable margin of profit in poultry keeping, the safest course is to combine the fattening or fleshing of the chickens with the business of egg producing, in other words, the "utility purpose fowl" can be made a paying proposition.

As a rule, the farmer who appreciates a well cooked, well served and tender chicken on his own table is also the man who knows just exactly what kind of bird is required for the public and it will pay him to exercise that same care in preparing the birds for market.

Fattening the Chickens.

The simplest way to fatten chickens is to place them in a crate made for the purpose. A crate 6 feet long, 14 inches wide and 20 inches high is divided into three compartments and four birds are confined in each. All slats are placed lengthwise of the frame except those on the front which are placed upright and two inches apart to enable the chickens to feed from a trough placed in front of the crate. When the cockerels are placed in the crate they should be thoroughly dusted with a good insect powder.

(Plan and detailed description of a fattening crate can be had on application to the department.)

The Feeding Rations.

To be confined to the limited area of a crate is quite a change from having the run of a farm. For the first week therefore the birds must not be overfed, and it is advisable to administer half rations at the outset, increasing the quantity till the birds consume all that is placed in front of them without showing signs of sickness.

The following meals are recommended:

Fine oatmeal siftings.

Finely ground oats and barley mixed in equal quantities.

Finely ground oats (coarse hulls removed), or

Two parts of oats, one of wheat and one of barley, grinding them up as finely as possible and sift out the hulls.

Ten pounds of meal used with seventeen pounds of milk, sweet or sour, skim milk or buttermilk, will mix to the consistency of thin porridge and should be prepared twelve hours before feeding. It is then in a state to be easily assimilated by the birds and the acidulation of the milk keeps the birds in good health and makes whiter flesh.

The food should *not* be left in the feeding trough for more than half an hour.

Grit should be served once a week at least.

It is during the second week that the greatest gains are made and it seldom pays to fatten after the fourth week. It may be said, therefore, that "time is of the essence of the contract."

Starving before Killing.

Trade requirements demand that both drawn and undrawn birds shall be starved for a period of at least thirty-six hours before killing. During this period up to within eight hours of killing the birds should have plenty of fresh water to drink.

Killing.

Wholesale dealers prefer the birds killed by the arteries in the mouth being cut and the brain pierced by sticking through the roof of the mouth.

Plucking.

The muscles of the bird contract as the flesh cools, which explains why plucking is more difficult if done when the bird is cold. Some people object to plucking while the bird is warm. There may be an occasional twitching of the muscles but if the operator has properly killed the bird there is *no* sense of feeling.

Scalding for plucking.—This should be discontinued; the method is obsolete and less money is obtained for the product.

Dry plucking.—This is the correct method and when done carefully the flesh is attractive. The dealer will stipulate whether he desires a row of feathers left round the neck.



Properly shaped chickens, breast up and breast down.

Shaping.

The appearance of the bird lies chiefly in the hands of the producer and it is natural for the dealer to wish that appearance to be attractive. On completion of plucking and before the joints become set, fold the legs and wings closely to the body and place the bird breast down in a "shaping board." This board may be made of two pieces of 1 by 6 inch lumber nailed at right angles. A two or three pound weight is then placed on the top of each bird—an ordinary building brick is suitable for this purpose. The bird is left in this position until thoroughly cooled, when an attractive appearance is the result of shaping.



Chicken in the shaping board.

Packing.

Whenever possible the birds should be marketed in a suitable shipping case. As an illustration, a case for twelve birds weighing (plucked) from three and one-half to four pounds each would have its inside measurements in inches as follows: 23 3-16 by 16 5-8 by 4 5-16, and the thickness of wood being 7-16 in the sides and 9-16 in the ends.

These cases should be lined with parchment paper cut to size, each case holds two rows of birds, and they are put in place with backs down and heads extending across the case.

The case should be marked indicating which cover is to be removed so that the *backs* of the birds will be exhibited in the dealer's window.

(*Note.*—If you have not a satisfactory local market for chickens fattened and prepared in this way, communicate with the Department of Agriculture, Regina, some time in advance, if possible.)

When fattening poultry it is well to remember that:

"The egg laying strains are not so suitable for fattening.

"The chickens should receive all they will eat twice a day *after* the first week.

"Sour milk whitens the flesh and keeps the birds healthy.

"Birds should be killed by bleeding and should receive nothing but water for thirty-six hours previous.

"The birds should be dry plucked before becoming cold and should be placed in the shaping board.

"Cleanliness is as important in handling dressed poultry as it is in handling cream."



Comparison in breast and thigh development.



Birds in fattening crate.