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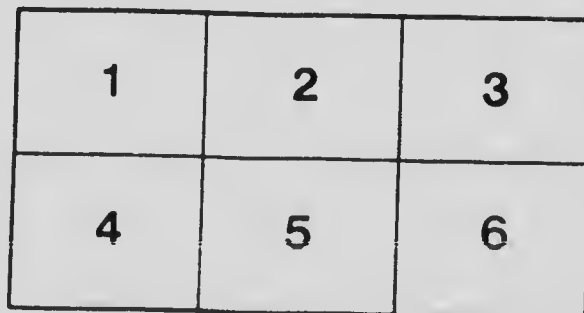
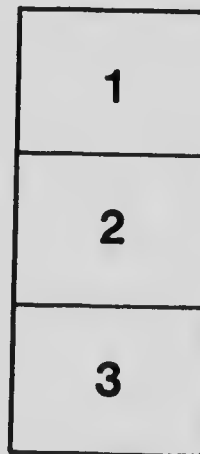
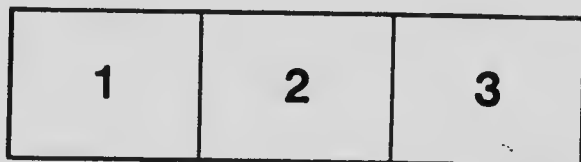
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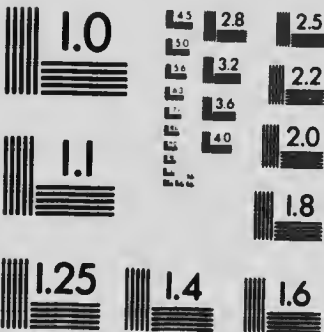
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EXPERIMENTAL FARMS.

J. H. GRISDALE, B. Agr.,
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F. C. ELFORD,
Dominion Poultry Husbandman.

POULTRY DIVISION.

THE MANAGEMENT OF GEESE

BY

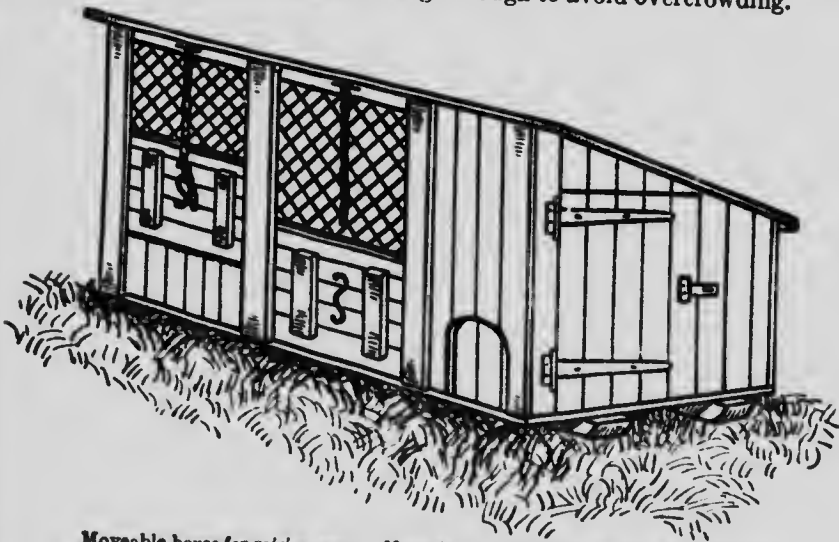
VICTOR FORTIER, Assistant.

The goose is one of our easiest and most profitable fowls to raise, and it should be bred far more extensively than it is at the present time.

Breeds.—The most popular breeds are Toulouse, Embden, and African. They grow very quickly and fatten easily. The common goose is not so profitable as it is smaller and consumes nearly as much food as the standard breeds.

Housing.—It is not advisable to house turkeys, ducks, geese and hens together as is sometimes done as they differ in their habits and require different treatment. The males of the various species seldom agree and frequently fight and sometimes one or more of the combatants are killed.

The house may be of simple construction, but it must be bright, clean, well ventilated, free from dampness and large enough to avoid overcrowding.



Moveable house for raising geese. Note slides in front for regulating ventilation.

The floor should be covered with litter which should be frequently renewed, or at least covered by an addition of fresh litter. Geese delight in cleanliness, it is essential to their well-being. A pond or stream is an advantage, but not absolutely necessary. Geese raised near a body of water are much better looking and more thrifty than others. Their feathers are of a finer quality and as the feathers are one of the products, this condition should not be overlooked.

Breeding Stock.—A gander will mate with several females. It is better to have as few males as possible in the poultry yard so as to avoid quarrels and fights as the ganders may waste their energy to such an extent that they may be useless as breeders. Geese should be mated early in the fall, for if the mating is delayed too long there is risk that females will not produce anything during the year. Goslings or yearlings are poor breeders; two-year-old birds are better and although geese may live to a great age, they are only in the best possible breeding condition at from three to five years of age.

Feeding Adult Birds.—Variety should be observed in feeding. Geese have a special liking for grass and green foods. They do well on all sorts of grain and clovers as well as on cooked vegetables or fruit. They must have a run of some sort but do not require a very large space. They may be kept in part of a field until they have eaten all the grass, then transferred to another part of the same field. Geese should never be pastured in seeded fields as they do great damage by eating the plants right down to the crown. They dig into the heart of the plant with their bill, which is toothed like a saw, and destroy vegetation. Their droppings, which are very caustic, burn the plants. They should not be left at large in pastures kept for farm animals.

LAYING AND INCUBATION.—When the goose walks around, holding straws or bits of wood in her beak, it is a sign that laying time is near. It is best then to provide her with a pile of soft straw in which she may dig and hide her eggs. The eggs should be removed as soon as laid so as to avoid chilling, but, one or two dummy eggs should always be left in the nest so that the goose may not see that the eggs are being taken away, as she would then go elsewhere.

When ready to set some ten to fifteen eggs should be put in the nest which should be almost flat, placed on the ground and spacious, so that the sitter may be quite comfortable, and in a secluded place where she will not be disturbed by any one. It is also better to keep the gander away during sitting time as he might disturb the goose and annoy the person in charge.

While sitting, the goose should be given pure water, grain and green food. Some breeders, during the first few days, carefully lift the goose from the nest to make her eat; in doing so care should be taken to see that no egg is retained under the wings. When she leaves her nest to feed, etc., she covers the eggs with down, feathers or with bits of straw.

Hatching takes about forty-eight hours. Experience has shown that it is best to let the goslings break through the shells unaided. By helping them there is danger of fatally injuring them; through the membranes being prematurely ruptured, bleeding to death may easily take place.

REARING.—Goslings should be removed one by one, as they hatch, so as to prevent the mother from leaving the nest before the hatch is over. They should be placed in a basket, lined with cotton or wool, or in a brooder.

When hatching is over give the goslings to the mother who will watch over them with great care; the gander may then be allowed with the mother as he helps her and protects the young ones very tenderly.

Although goslings are very hardy, they are very susceptible to cold or rain while young. It is best not to let them out for a few days and do not let them wander far from the buildings before they are two weeks old so that they may be put in, in case of rain.

The gander watches carefully over the mother during the whole time of brooding and shows the greatest solicitude for her. He is a very devoted father, taking great care of the young ones, protecting them and defending them with energy. When the hatch is off, the gander, who, at best, is not very conciliating, may become quite dangerous; he sees enemies everywhere and attacks all who come too near his young family. Sometimes he attacks children and being very strong he may cause them serious injury; therefore it is necessary to keep them away. Sometimes the goose is also very aggressive at that time.

CARE.—During the first few days, goslings should be fed bread crumbs, bran, shorts, cooked mashed potatoes, mixed with milk, chopped eggs, vegetables, lettuce, dandelion or other succulent green food.

When the birds are fairly strong, at about two weeks of age, they may run at large with their mother, but care should be taken to avoid exposure to rain, dew or the hot sun. A goose may lead as many as forty goslings. When they come in at night they should be given a little food as mentioned above.

Artificial rearing is successful.

FATTENING.—Fattening takes about a month. When they come in from the field those that are to be fattened should be given such grains as buckwheat, corn, oats, etc., and water containing a little meal or shorts. Raw chopped beets are also very good. This preparatory diet should be given for about a fortnight.

Young geese from six to eight months old fatten easier and better than old birds. They may be fattened in crates or in pens, the same as chickens. They should be confined in a small, dry, well-ventilated pen which should be kept dark so that the birds will remain quiet. During the first week, oats are given three times a day in small troughs; after the meal the troughs are taken away so that the geese may sleep and digest peacefully. After eight days of this, boiled potatoes and ground grain mixed with curdled milk should be added; five or six days later a little corn or barley flour may also be given. When the meal is over, give a liberal supply of water, milk and water or whey with a little bran or shorts added, for drinking. Towards the end of the fattening period cramming may be resorted to, but it is not absolutely necessary for the finishing of geese.

KILLING.—Geese are killed by sticking in the roof of the mouth with a sharp knife, a quick motion severing the arteries and penetrating the brain. Pluck with care to avoid tearing the skin which, in a very fat bird, is very tender and offers little resistance.

PRODUCTS.—The products are the flesh, the feathers and the down, which is very valuable.

In some districts breeders follow the practice of plucking their geese and ducks twice a year. The usual method is to pluck at moulting time. The last plucking should be done in time so that the feathers may grow again before the cold winter comes. The feathers are ready to be plucked when they come off easily. If not picked at that time, they would drop off and be lost. On the other hand, if picked too early they will not keep well. Feathers and down should be thoroughly dried and kept in a dry and cool place.

Never pluck the flank feathers which hold the wing as the latter would drag on the ground, detracting from the appearance of the bird and tiring him.

Goslings should not be plucked before they have passed the critical period of their youth, that is, before the wings fold over each other on the rump.

Geese which have just been stripped of their feathers should be protected from cold. Keep them under shelter when it rains and do not let them go to the water.

SEXES.—When just hatched, goslings of the Embden breed are gray or bright yellow on the back; the former are generally females, the latter males.

It is fairly easy to tell the sexes in adult birds of all breeds; the male is a little larger than the female and his cry is shrill while that of the female is harsh; the neck is a little longer and a little thinner in the male than in the female; the cheeks (between the eye and the jaw) are less prominent but the posterior part of the upper mandible, which is generally of orange colour, up to the skull, is more prominent than in the female. As two indications are better than one, it is best to inspect the sexual organs which furnish absolute proof. In the female the sphincter or muscular tissue closing the anus, is folded and sinuous when stretched with the fingers; in the male, on exerting a light pressure over the same place, the penis soon appears. It protrudes more quickly in warm weather, and in a mature male.

DISEASES.—Geese are like ducks, subject to certain diseases, most of which, however, can be avoided by proper handling and clean surroundings.

VERTIGO.—The bird drags his wings, turns in a circle, falls to the ground, throws his head back and has convulsive motions. Bleed at the vein under the wing or on the membrane of the toes. Throw cold water over the head; put on half diet; give herbaceous food or bran moistened with milk.

POISON.—Geese are sometimes poisoned by eating henbane or water hemlock in which case they fall flat upon the ground. Give twenty centigrams of lime in a half tumbler of warm water.

Issued by direction of the Honourable Martin Burrell, Minister of Agriculture,
Ottawa.



