

Profitable Business of Poultry Raising in America

Proper breeding, hatching and brooding of chicks are most important, but the best flock ever produced may be ruined by un-intelligent feeding during the first month. What, how and when to feed baby chicks is the theme of the following timely and practical contribution.

WHEN a chick emerges from the shell it is an insignificant little creature, weak and helpless, of little value. But when we remember that the little chicks are our future laying or market birds, that their future usefulness is largely determined by the care they receive in early life, we realize how important it is that they be properly fed and managed to the end that they may be able to do their best work for us at maturity.

It pays to "fuss" with the chicks. The old adage "as the twig is bent the tree is inclined" applies with great force here. We can give the youngsters a husky start which means profitable maturity, or we can stunt them and thus prevent them from ever being of much account.

The feeds and feeding methods used during the brooding period are most important. It is not necessary for the chick-grower to possess a profound knowledge of chemistry in order to successfully mix his chick ration, but he should use a reasonable amount of common sense, study the problem and adopt those tested methods which best fit into his general plan of poultry plant management.

The Old-Time Plan.

Some one may say that it is possible to raise mighty good chicks on absurdly simple rations and point to the mixture of cornmeal and water which is so commonly used as the staple chick food in the country districts.

But circumstances alter cases. On the general farm where such feeding methods are most in vogue, the chicks are usually hatched rather late in the Spring after insect life has become abundant and there is plenty of fresh, tender green stuff. As a rule the chicks are cared for by hens and are given their liberty, wandering at will about the farm buildings and grounds, finding a great amount of food of many kinds. Under such conditions it is possible to raise very good chicks on cornmeal "dough." The writer has done this.

But when chicks are reared in large numbers, especially where the yarding system is used, they are prevented from finding much food and the attendant must supply virtually everything they need. If there is any failure here, if the ration is incomplete or one-sided, proper growth and even development will hardly follow.

Growing chicks need plenty of food, since scanty feeding is responsible for slow growth. Their ration should include grains in variety, mineral matter, animal food and succulent greens. Due regard should be given the proper proportions of each class of ingredients, the idea being to supply materials for building muscle, bone and feathers. Further, the ration should be palatable and in such physical form that the youngsters can eat it readily and digest it quickly and thoroughly. Each of these points has a decided bearing upon results.

Among the grains, the most valuable are corn, wheat and oats, together with their by-products, as bran, middlings, gluten, etc. Millet, peas, rice, kafir corn and other grains are also useful to a certain extent.

Bone in some form, green cut, granulated or finely ground, furnishes the material for building the skeleton. Finely crushed oyster shell is also commonly used, and grit is a necessity.

Beef scrap, fish scrap, meat meal, blood meal, granulated milk and skim milk are all useful animal foods. In some sections where hearts and livers of meat animals are available at low prices, these are extensively used, being thoroughly boiled and chopped before feeding.

The greens are fed primarily for their tonic effect upon the digestive system, as they contain but comparatively small amounts of nutrients.

Fresh green grass or clover, lettuce, rape, sprouted wheat or oats are all excellent. These should be

cut into short lengths and fed before becoming wilted or heated.

Cracked and Ground Grains.

Some few poultrymen feed the grain portion of the ration in the whole and cracked forms exclusively, but the accepted practice is to supply a part of it in a mixture of meals and by-products. This mash mixture may be given either dry or moist. In many cases it is baked in "Johnny cakes," which are crumbled and fed dry or dampened with water or milk.

It is an acknowledged fact that more rapid growth can be secured through the use of the moist mash, but there is greater danger of bringing on digestive disturbances than when the dry mash system of feeding is used. Broiler growers who force their chicks and sell them at an early age, use the moist mash quite generally, but in the case of those who carry their birds to maturity the dry mash system is generally preferred. Either will prove entirely satisfactory if properly used.

Fortunately, for the convenience of poultry producers, there are a number of very satisfactory proprietary chick feeds on the market. These include cracked grain mixtures, mash mixtures and growing feeds. The former may be had for both baby chicks and those which are partially grown, the difference being in the degree of fineness.

In many cases these feeds can be purchased at a lower cost than similar home-mixed feeds of the same kind can be made, especially where small quantities are used. When buying the poultryman should not be influenced solely by price. Baby chicks eat so little that a few cents' difference on each bag of feed is of trifling moment. Quality should be the first consideration at all times. Avoid those feeds which contain heated or moldy grain, weed seeds and other trash, or are loaded with grit. Use such as are properly

screened and contain a variety of clean, sound, sweet grains.

Satisfactory Chick Rations.

To those who wish to prepare their chick feeds the following mixtures may be recommended. These have all been thoroughly tested and have given very general satisfaction:

Ration No. 1.

Scratch grain (finely cracked and sifted)—	Pounds.
Cracked wheat	15
Cracked corn	15
Pinhead oats	10
Cracked peas	3
Broken rice	3
Millet seed	3
Mash mixture (finely ground, thoroughly mixed)—	
Pounds.	
Cornmeal	20
Wheat bran	10
Wheat middlings	10
Ground oats, sifted	10
Gluten feed	5
Fine beef or fish scrap	10

Ration No. 2.

Scratch grain—	Pounds.
Cracked wheat	25
Cracked corn	20
Pinhead oats	20
Cracked peas	5
Millet seed	5
Moderately fine beef or fish scrap	5
Mash mixture—	
Pounds.	
Wheat bran	10
Cornmeal	5
Ground oats, sifted	5
Gluten feed	2
Wheat middlings	3
Fine beef or fish scrap	5

Obviously it is important that the grains be cracked fine so the baby chicks may eat them readily. After a few weeks whole wheat and ordinary cracked corn may be used and something of a saving thus effected.

There are as many different methods of feeding as there are feed mixtures. The writer has had excellent success through following the plan outlined below:

Supply no feed of any kind until the chicks are at least 36 to 48 hours old. Too early feeding may bring on a train of evils.

Shortly before the chick breaks

the shell and tumbles out into the world it absorbs into its body that portion of the yolk which has not previously been used. This supplies all the nourishment required for two or three days and this should be largely used before other food is given.

The first meal may consist of a small amount of the cracked grain mixture, oatmeal or rolled oats, or bread crumbs mixed with a small amount of hard-boiled eggs. With this give a little fine chick grit or oyster shell.

Some poultrymen feed grit alone at first, but this is somewhat dangerous in the case of chicks which are permitted to become hungry before feeding. Under such conditions they frequently fill their crops and intestines with the shining particles and considerable mortality will follow.

One should see to it that every chick in the flock has ample opportunity to partake of the first meal or two. It often happens that the stronger individuals will hustle out and eat and then if the food is removed the more backward ones have no opportunity to secure food until the next meal is served.

Feed Chicks Regularly.

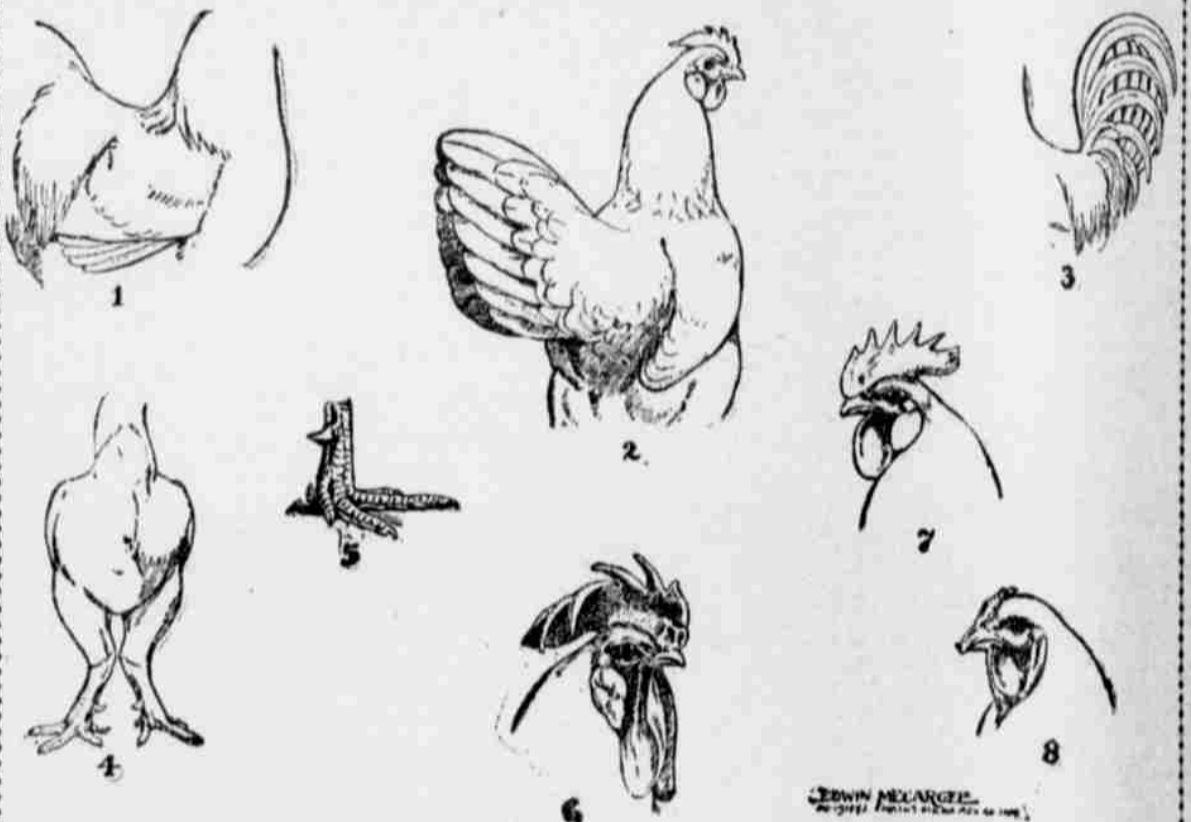
After a day or two the feeding may occur at regular intervals, in quantity sufficient to give each chick a reasonable amount, always avoiding the danger of overfeeding. Four or five meals daily is the rule for the first two weeks.

Wherever possible supply sour milk from the very start. Sour milk is probably superior to sweet milk in its effect upon the chicks. It is easier to be sure that the milk is always sour than that it is always sweet, and the lactic acid in the sour milk is a great aid in overcoming the dreaded white diarrhea which is the cause of the untimely death of such a vast number of chicks under three weeks of age.

If there is a sufficient supply of

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COMMON PHYSICAL BLEMISHES OF POULTRY.



In the most carefully bred flocks occasional specimens will be found which are physically imperfect. Some of the more common blemishes are shown above. Certain of these do not necessarily injure the fowl for strictly utility use—as the "squirrel-tail"—but all are objectionable in exhibition specimens of most breeds and would cause the faulty specimen to be disqualified in the showroom. Careful poultrymen, particularly fanciers, refrain from using in their breeding pens all birds which show such defects, since in most cases these are inheritable. The defects which debar from showroom competition are shown as follows:

1. Slipped wing—Wing not folded closely or held in correct position. Indicates weakness or injury.
2. Wry tail—All fowls may throw their tail to one side occasionally, but when it remains in this position at all times it is due to malformation of the body.
3. Squirrel tail—Tail held so high that it inclines toward head, projecting beyond a perpendicular line, extending from junction of tail and back. A show disqualification in many breeds, as the Leghorn, etc. Commonly found in utility flocks.
4. Knock-knees—A serious deformity to be avoided in both fancy and utility fowls. More commonly observed in males, especially of the long-legged and heavy breeds.
5. Duck foot—The hind toe, which should extend back of the foot, carried forward.
6. Lopped comb—Single comb lopping over instead of standing upright. A show disqualification in single-comb varieties, save in the case of Mediterranean and Dorking females. This condition often occurs temporarily where birds are out of condition, the comb returning to its normal position when health and strength are restored.

This figure also shows thumbmark in comb, wrinkled earlobes and wattles. Exhibition defects.

7. Side sprig—Small growth on side of comb. Show disqualification in all single-comb varieties.
8. Cross bill—A most serious blemish.

There are several other defects which cannot be illustrated. Among them are crooked backs and crooked breasts. These may be detected by handling the birds.

In the showroom judges are particular to look for stubs or small feathers on the legs and toes of clean-legged varieties. If these are found, or evidence that they have been removed, the specimen is disqualified.

There are also color disqualifications, varying with the breed and variety. The exhibitor of fancy fowls must know all these or his chance of winning prizes will be very small.