

A Weekly Page of Poultry Hints to You

Here is a Department Full of Bright Ideas For Readers of the Home and Farm Magazine Section.

Byron Alder, of the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station, furnishes a comprehensive article on the housing of farm poultry.

WITH the exception, perhaps of actual starvation of the fowls themselves, there is no other factor in connection with the keeping of poultry that will affect egg production and good vigorous growth so decidedly as poor or improper methods of housing. This circular sets forth some of the essentials of a good house for Utah conditions, and offers plans of three houses in which an attempt has been made to include these essentials. The ideas and plans presented here do not represent any one person's original work. They are a compilation of the work done on this subject by those who have preceded the writer in charge of the work at this station, and suggestions that have come from a study of the types of houses recommended and in use in different parts of the country.

The Colony or Stationary House.

There are two systems in common use throughout the country. The colony or free range system in which the fowls are kept in small flocks, housed in small movable houses, and the permanent yard system in which the fowls are more or less closely confined and the house is built in such a way, or of such material, that it is stationary. The colony system is admirably adapted to farm conditions where only from two to three hundred hens are to be kept. Where the fowls are kept in larger numbers than this considerable time is required to go from house to house to feed or gather the eggs. The advantages are, however, in being able to move the house from place to place about the farm or yard, thus giving the fowls fresh ground and pasture and utilizing space which at certain times could or would not be used for other purposes. The soil is less likely to become filthy and contaminated with disease. Where the soil on which these houses are kept is of a sandy or gravelly character, with good underdrainage, there is no need of floors in the colony houses, and the problems of cleaning and keeping the surroundings fresh and sweet are reduced to a minimum, since all that is necessary is to hitch a horse to the house and take it off a short distance to fresh ground, leaving all manure and filth behind. In winter the houses should be grouped more or less closely together in a convenient place and the soil banked up well around them before the ground is frozen too solid.

In the permanent house larger flocks can be handled with less expense and trouble, because of many conveniences that may be provided for the general management of a large flock. Exceeding care should be exercised in cleaning up the yards and houses, in keeping the soil sweet and fresh by occasional cultivation, and in preventing the spread of contagious diseases.

Whether the colony or the stationary house is used, the problems to be considered in planning the house are very much the same. These may for convenience be divided into four groups.

Health and Comfort of the Fowls.

Dryness—The first essential of the house itself to insure health and vigor, is freedom from moisture. Since the house must be kept dry it must be located in a dry place. A gentle slope to the south with a porous soil and good air drainage is ideal. In many places it will not be possible to get the ideal, so that some provision must be made to keep the moisture out of the house. A good floor well up from the surface of the ground is about the best we can do. A concrete floor, under which is placed a six or eight inch layer of fine gravel or broken stone, will keep out the moisture and will be more easily cleaned and kept in a sanitary condition than the dirt floor. Many prefer the dirt floor, however, because of cost, and if six or eight inches of dirt are placed on top of the stone after a thin layer of cinders or other fine material covers the stone, it does fairly well and will usually be dry; but the dirt must be replaced occasionally by fresh soil and the cost of keeping it in condition will soon pay

for the cement floor. In wet or damp surroundings evaporation is continually taking place, and evaporation is a cooling process, so that the temperature will be kept down. Then hen's feet will be wet and muddy. This means fewer eggs and many dirty ones.

Ventilation—Fresh air without draughts is the next important consideration. In the past warmth was the big object sought, and many houses were built with little or no ventilation provided for, or the openings that were provided caused draughts; now if we are not more careful in planning the house, the open front will be carried to the other extreme, as has been done already in some instances. No rule can be given as to just how much space should be left open in the front of the house, as that depends on the type of the house and somewhat on local conditions. One very important feature of all open front houses is that during the severe cold weather the other three sides of the house must be perfectly tight. To secure this these three sides should be constructed of matched lumber and lined either outside or inside, preferably the latter, with good heavy building paper. The double wall with a dead air-space is not necessary and is undesirable. It offers protection and a breeding place for mice, rats, mites, etc., and adds considerably to the expense of the building. In the hottest part of the

will give this protection and will not shade much of the floor space. It must extend as high as possible so that the sun will go to the back of the pen. The direct rays of the sun not only make the house warmer but keep the interior dry and are the best of disinfectants and germicides that we know. They aid materially in preventing disease. Very much glass space is undesirable, not alone because of the additional expense and breakage, but it is estimated that glass allows about four times as much heat to escape from the building as the ordinary board wall. In this respect it is not much better than the muslin curtain, and on sunny days the curtain may be raised to allow the sun's rays to enter without reflection in any direction.

It seems to be more or less a fault in human nature that those tasks are more often neglected that are a little out of our way, or are a little difficult to get at. There is no animal around the yard that responds more quickly to kind, sympathetic and regular treatment than does the hen. The poultry house should not be located, as it too often is, after all other buildings, sheds and yards are planned, and then find that there is room out behind the barn or some other out-of-the-way place for the chicken house. Much of the work in caring for the fowls is done by the women or is not done at all, and therefore, the house



LAKENVELDER FOWLS.

The Lakenfelder has not as yet been accorded a place in the American standard of perfection, but in Europe it has received general recognition by poultry organizations. It is striking in appearance, much like a White Leghorn, with velvety black tail and hackle. The breed originated in Germany and is most valued for the production of white-shelled eggs. It is said to be hardy and a great forager, picking up much of its food if given a wide range. Adult males weigh about five pounds; females, four pounds.

summer an opening may be provided in one of the other sides, providing it is not located so that a draught would strike the fowls while on the perches.

Pure Air Required.

While reasonably cold, pure fresh air is to be preferred to warm impure air, yet it should not be forgotten that it is the purity of the air and not the low temperature that is desired. The more surface there is exposed in the walls and roof of a house the greater will be the loss of heat, other things being equal. For this reason it is not desirable to extend the walls higher than is necessary to allow sufficient room in the house for the attendant to move about freely without continually bumping his head. The greatest vigor and production cannot be secured if the fowls are required to breathe impure or very cold air. Early spring condition, when we have our highest egg production, should be the air in this regard both winter and summer. Plenty of fresh air with a moderate temperature, and good, clean, nutritive food brings high production in eggs and meat.

Sanlight, the third essential for healthful, vigorous stock must be provided for in a good chicken house. For this reason the open front has become very popular and the house should always face to the south. The opening should not be too low or the snow and rain will drift in and dampen the litter, and the fowls should be protected from the cold wind while at work on the floor. Two to three feet from the ground to the bottom of the opening

and yards should be readily accessible to them. All gates, doors and other fixtures should be made as simple as possible, yet securely fastened and easily operated. There should be plenty of room to get inside the building. The nests, feed hoppers, etc., should be easily reached, so that cleaning and refilling is made as easy as possible. It is sometimes advisable to arrange the nests so that the eggs may be gathered without going into the house.

Protection From Vermin.

The house should not be located close to the grainery, barn or other buildings where grain is stored that afford breeding places for mice and rats, to prey upon the fowls. The building should be made as tight as possible to exclude all such enemies. All nests, perches, etc., and the interior surface of the house itself should be as smooth and free from cracks and unnecessary corners as possible. The internal fixtures should be solid, yet easily taken out to clean and disinfect.

Many who have gone into the business of poultry raising have failed because of the lack of consideration of this factor in connection with the poultry houses. It is necessary of course to make a building as permanent and substantial as the local conditions demand, yet buildings of this nature need not be elaborate in construction or of expensive materials. Except, perhaps, in special cases, the cost of the house should not exceed one dollar and a quarter for each fowl that it will accommodate when complete. This is not

given as a rule, but to indicate what we should expect in this regard. To illustrate further, the total cost of a colony house should seldom exceed thirty dollars, and it will accommodate under usual conditions about fifty hens of the smaller and forty of the larger breeds, making a cost in the one case of sixty cents per hen, and in the other seventy-five cents per hen.

By following the ideas suggested above, a number of houses could be planned that would no doubt be entirely satisfactory.

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