

Profitable Business of Poultry Raising in America

This is the first of a new series of articles on practical poultry husbandry prepared for this publication by Professor Stoneburn, an authority of international reputation. These contributions will appear each week during the coming year, and the entire series will constitute a thorough, comprehensive course in poultry husbandry. Each installment will be complete in itself, each will treat of current activities in the poultry yard, each will be full of practical, dependable advice, which will serve as a safe guide to poultry profits.

We suggest that our readers preserve these contributions for future reference and use. A scrapbook containing the entire series will make a complete, working handbook, full of the latest available information on this important subject.

BY PROF. FREDERIC H. STONEBURN.

THE annual value of the agricultural products of America is so vast that it staggers the imagination. This country not only produces the foodstuffs required to support a population numbering approximately 100,000,000, but has a great surplus for export, and this is the basis of much of our wealth.

Agriculture has for its object the production of plants and animals, vegetable or animal products, which are needed by man, affording him nourishment and protection, adding to his comfort and pleasure. It is at once an art and a business, but as yet we can scarcely term it a science, though it is based upon the natural sciences. The successful farmer is the one who understands the working of the natural forces which are his allies or his enemies, and conducts his business with due reference to sound business principles. A good business man may be a poor farmer; a good farmer may be a poor business man. Real success, as measured by financial returns, is secured only through the adoption of the best methods of production, regardless of the crop grown, and due regard to the buying of supplies and disposing of the products.

Great Variety of Products.

Agriculture is rapidly becoming specialized. In the early history of this country, before our transportation facilities had been developed, the farmer endeavored to grow upon his own acres most of the supplies required by his family and his livestock. Now all is changed. We have truck farms, fruit farms, dairy farms, poultry farms, hog ranches and a great number of others. On an American table today one may find beef from Missouri, pork from Iowa, celery from Michigan, cheese from New York, potatoes from Maine, grapefruit from Florida, oranges from California, apples from Oregon, cantaloupes from Delaware, eggs from Pennsylvania, chickens from Jersey. Even the jams and pickles "that mother used to make" have been largely replaced by supplies drawn from the great preserving establishments.

Specialization makes for efficiency. When any man stops trying to do many things and concentrates all his thought, time and energy upon one, he is very likely to make a success of that. And since such a large number of intelligent men have of late devoted themselves to improving methods of poultry management and perfecting the various appliances required by the poultryman, this great and growing industry has developed at a truly amazing rate.

And the poultry industry is great—great in the value of its products—great in the support it affords to allied industries—great in the number of men, women and children from every conceivable walk in life, who find pleasure and profit in breeding and caring for our useful and beautiful domestic fowls. There are few, if any, agricultural crops which exceed in value the great poultry crop in America when we include in the figures the vast sums in excess of actual market value secured from the sale of eggs for hatching, baby chicks, breeding and exhibition stock. We often hear of "the billion-dollar poultry industry," and this is no exaggeration. From a small beginning, it has developed into a most important source of National wealth; from a neglected side-line of the farm to a business which commands the best efforts of a host of thinking, progressive people, and the hearty support of state and National Governments.

Though poultry keeping is regarded as being an agricultural spe-

cialty, it is not necessarily conducted exclusively on the farm. Of course, practically all farmers keep flocks of fowls, but untold numbers of dwellers in city, town and village in all sections of the country are actively engaged in this work.

Poultry Keeping Universal.

So it may be said that poultry husbandry is the universal agricultural specialty, one that flourishes everywhere, regardless of space, climate and other limiting factors.

There are many sound reasons for this general popularity. Among them we mention a few of the more important.

Primarily, poultry keeping is a most interesting pursuit. On the poultry plant there is a new round of duties each season, almost every month. Hence there is not the monotony about the work that is so often experienced in other lines. And at all times one is handling living things which with their useful qualities combine beauty and grace.

Poultry products are in constant

demand, and those of fine quality sell at very satisfactory prices. Further, they are concentrated and valuable, and so may economically be shipped to distant markets if necessary.

A poultry plant may be established on a very moderate investment. At the start the beginner may, and usually should, be content to work with a few fowls which will require but little land and house room and a small amount of time. As experience is gained and profits warrant, the extent of the operations may be increased until one's whole attention is given to the business.

Quick Returns on Investment.

The returns on the investment of time and capital are secured quickly, and the products are distributed over the greater part of the year, insuring a steady income. In many agricultural lines one is compelled to wait for a long period before any returns begin to come in, and frequently the entire crop is marketed at one

time, and there is no further income until another harvest is gathered.

The work is healthful and not particularly hard. In fact, it may be performed by people of either sex. This does not mean that the poultryman has little to do, but rather that his duties are seldom of a character which might be termed hard labor.

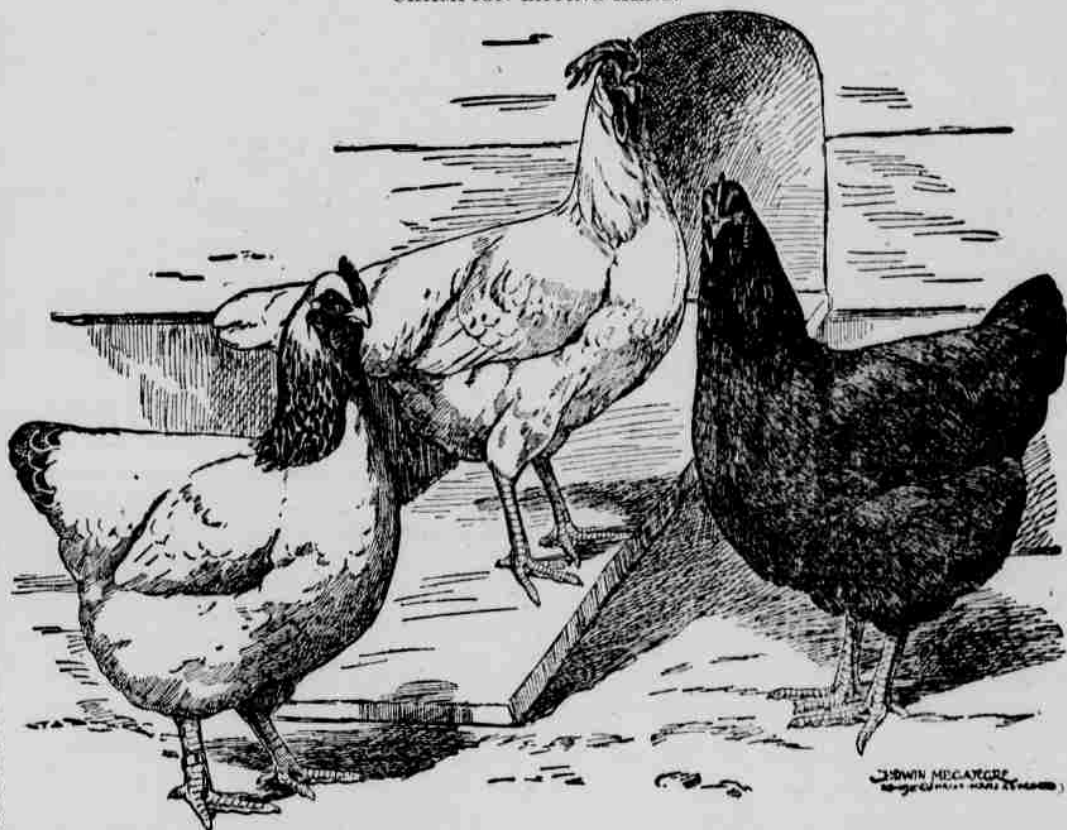
Properly managed, a flock of poultry rapidly increases the fertility of home place or farm, thereby enhancing their value and making possible the production of larger crops. Many run-down tracts of tillable land have in this way been improved and made valuable.

But there are disadvantages as well, and the prospective poultryman cannot afford to ignore these. The work, though not heavy, must be properly attended to every day. On many poultry farms the owner must work long hours, seven days in the week, especially during the busy season, when chicks are being hatched and reared. Many persons chafe un-

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Increasing Laying Capacities of American Hens

CHAMPION LAYING HENS.



These layers made wonderful official egg records in public laying competitions recently held in America. The Rhode Island Red, at the right laid 251 eggs during the year. The White Leghorn, center, produced 282 eggs. The Columbian Plymouth Rock, left, made a new record of 286 eggs. These figures are accurate, having been secured through the use of the trapnest.

BY EDWIN MEGARGEE.

THE total egg crop produced each year by the hens of America is valued at hundreds of millions of dollars, and this on an average production of from 70 to 80 eggs per layer. If this average could be doubled, it would add tremendously to our National wealth. Many students of the subject are convinced that the yield per hen can easily be considerably increased, possibly doubled, as soon as our poultry keepers adopt better methods of feeding and managing their flocks and pay closer attention to breeding.

An output of 80 eggs per bird may yield a profit on general farms where the fowls receive but scant attention and rustle for most of their food. But on commercial plants, where the cost of feed, labor, interest on the investment and other items of expense are considered, a flock of 80-egg hens is not profitable. This fact is becoming generally realized and business poultrymen everywhere are making a determined effort to "speed up" their layers.

Egg production depends upon two distinct factors—heredity and environment. Until very recently American poultrymen have emphasized the latter and paid but scant attention to the former. That such a course is shortsighted must be apparent at a glance when we take into consideration many important facts which have been brought out during recent years.

Careful investigations conducted at certain of our agricultural experiment stations and the experience of a small group of progressive poultry breeders have clearly shown that the

tendency toward high production is inherited, and that this characteristic may be fixed and intensified through the application of intelligent methods of breeding.

From the available evidence one is safe in reaching the following conclusions: A hen that inherits a tendency toward low egg production will hardly make a satisfactory record, no matter how carefully she is housed, fed and cared for. A hen that inherits a tendency toward high production cannot do her best work unless properly handled. Therefore, maximum production is to be secured only through the use of both factors in combination.

Intelligent breeding must be based upon a knowledge of the performance and pedigree of the individuals used as breeding stock. This is as true in the poultry field as in other lines of livestock production. In the poultry yard such knowledge is secured through the use of the trapnest and a complete system of toe marking or handling of the various individuals so they may be positively identified. Such work takes time, but it brings results.

Public laying competitions, first instituted in America in 1911, have done much toward interesting the public in the laying capacity of individual hens. Poultrymen are now valuing their birds because of unusual laying ability quite as much as for perfection of form and color, the strictly fancy or exhibition points.

What is the maximum number of eggs a hen can lay in 12 months when all conditions are favorable? This is an open question, but the

number is much larger than formerly believed possible. A few years ago we considered the 200-egg hen a marvel, but the number of such layers is now so large that they excite but little comment.

The accompanying illustration shows three hens that have made most satisfactory yearly records at laying competitions in the East. The Rhode Island Red, bred in Pennsylvania, laid 251 big, brown eggs. The Single Comb White Leghorn, an English bird, produced 282 eggs in 1912-13. This latter figure was exceeded in 1913-14 by the Columbian Plymouth Rock, the property of a New Jersey breeder, who set her mark at 286 eggs.

But the Northwest has defeated the world in the production of the champion hen. The first 300-egg hen of which there is any record was produced at the Oregon Agricultural College Experiment Station. Her record was 303 eggs in her first 12 months of laying. A year later there were a few records mentioned equalling or exceeding this, by private breeders, but there are no records equalling that have been made at public institutions or under official supervision of some kind. A record of 286 eggs was made at the Missouri State Competition last year.

These notables in the poultry world possess many characteristics in common, as abounding strength and vigor, physical activity, tremendous appetite and little tendency toward broodiness.

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