

Profitable Business of Poultry Raising in America

Hundreds of millions of chicks are hatched in America each year by the natural process of incubation. But there is no doubt that millions of eggs are spoiled and wasted which would have hatched had the poultry growers paid more attention to the care of the sitting hens.

Success in this line depends upon using eggs of the right kind, and dependable hens, plus careful work upon the part of the attendant. By following the instructions given below the best of results can be secured.

THOUGH the incubator is being steadily improved and yearly growing in popularity, the good old way of hatching chicks by hen power is still mighty popular. On most large poultry plants, it is true, the "wooden hen" is depended upon almost exclusively to bring out the annual crop of chicks, but since the greater part of our poultry products comes from the vast number of small flocks maintained on general farms and in the back yards in towns and villages where the natural method of incubation is largely practiced, it is quite evident that the machine cannot entirely supplant the mother hen.

There is an honest difference of opinion among poultrymen as to the relative value of hen-hatched and machine-hatched chicks. However, it will be noticed that the advocates of the artificial method do not claim that chicks so produced are superior to those hatched under hens, but merely that they are equally as good, and so the owner of a flock of naturally incubated chicks can feel sure that these are as good as could be produced from the eggs used.

Hatching Equipment Simple.

It is a simple matter to set one or two hens and care for them during the period of incubation. It is quite another matter to successfully manage any considerable number of sitters and satisfactory results can only be obtained through providing the simple equipment required to keep them under control and carefully looking after many details of management. Unless this is done, one may expect to have many exasperating experiences and submit to the loss of many valuable eggs and chicks.

Broodiness is a normal characteristic of all domestic fowls, and is most common during the Spring months, the natural breeding period of all birds. In certain breeds of poultry, as the Leghorns, this desire to incubate has largely disappeared. Hens of the non-sitting breeds are usually nervous and flighty, easily "broken up" and usually unreliable sitters. For this reason they are not to be depended upon for this important work. On the other hand, the Asiatic breeds and certain of the American breeds are most persistent in their desire to rear a family, and these are most popular among poultrymen who use hens to do the hatching.

At this season of the year the broody hen is much in evidence. In every flock will be observed individuals which are showing the symptoms in varying degrees. It will be noticed that they remain on the nest after laying and object to being disturbed. Presently they begin to cluck occasionally and shortly they remain on the nest at night.

At this point the poultryman should take action. If he proposes to make his hens lay and let the incubator hatch the eggs, he should at once break up the broodies so they will speedily begin egg production again. If he proposes to set some hens, he should select those which promise to be most faithful and protect them from disturbances and break up the fever in the nervous individuals; which would be troublesome if given a clutch of eggs to hatch.

This breaking-up process is simple if it is used in time. The very first night the hen remains on the nest, instead of going to roost, is the right time to take care of her. She should be at once placed in the broody coop or yard, and in the majority of cases, she will soon be ready to resume her duties as a part of the laying flock.

The broody coop may be made entirely of lath or wire netting or simply a box with slat or netting bottom. It should be suspended above the floor so plenty of air may circulate through it, and within sight of the laying flock. In such quarters the most obstinate sitter will soon demand her freedom, so she may rejoin her active sisters, especially if she receives plenty of egg-making food and but little corn.

The breaking-up yard is another

popular scheme. This is merely an inclosure containing shelter of some kind, having roosts but no nests, and tenanted by a number of cockerels. Within a very few days after being placed in such a yard the broodies may be transferred to the laying flock, completely cured.

The selected sitting hens should be left in their accustomed quarters until they have ceased to lay and the desire to sit has become fully established. Then they should be transferred to the nests prepared for them in separate quarters, where they will not be disturbed.

Where any considerable number of hens are set, some special building or compartment should be given up to their exclusive use. This should be well ventilated and reasonably dark to insure comfort and contentment.

Aside from the nests, but few furnishings will be required. Receptacles for food and water and a dusting place of liberal size complete the list. The latter should have a good supply of fine earth in which the birds may wallow when liberated from their nests.

Preparing the Nests.

The nest boxes should be roomy. Small nests cause much discomfort to their occupants, induce restlessness, and this in turn results in much breakage of eggs. They should be so constructed that the hen may step into the nest. If the boxes are deep and the hens compelled to jump down on the eggs, many of the latter are sure to be broken.

Each nest should be fitted with a door, which may be closed at will, thus keeping the occupant under control. Where open nest boxes are used and a number of hens sit in the same room, there is bound to be much fighting; some hens will remain off the nest for too long a time, two hens will frequently crowd on one nest, leaving another uncovered and unsatisfactory results are bound to follow.

It is unquestionably the better plan to remove the birds daily and permit them to feed and exercise for a reasonable period, but keep them confined to the nests the rest of the time.

I have experienced much satisfaction from the use of trapnests for sitting hens. The hens may be released at any convenient time and the traps adjusted. As each sitter returns to her nest, she automatically locks herself in and the others out, and many of the dangers attending the use of the open nest are thus overcome.

For nesting material nothing is better than hay or straw cut into rea-

sonably short lengths. Earth may be used as a foundation, and this should be shaped before the other material is added.

The nest should be saucer shaped. If flat, some of the eggs may roll out from under the hen. If the cavity is deep, the eggs may pile up and be crushed. Attention to details of this kind pays.

The hens should be removed to their new quarters after dark, as they are less likely to object than when transferred during the hours of daylight. For the first day they should be permitted to sit upon china eggs or discarded eggs from other nests until they have shown their willingness to attend to business. Then the valuable eggs may be safely intrusted to their care.

The number of eggs given each hen is regulated by her size and the season of the year. While cold weather lingers, an average hen should satisfactorily cover 10 to 11 eggs. In ordinary Spring weather she will care for 13, while in the warm season she may be given 15.

It is always well to set several hens at the same time. When the eggs are tested at the end of the first week it may be found possible to give all the fertile ones to a smaller number of hens, thus permitting one or more to be returned to the laying flock or reset on other eggs. Again, at hatching time, the broods may be doubled up and several sitters released from further duty in connection with the chicks.

Feeding the Sitters.

The sitters should be kept upon a hard grain ration, but this must be given in liberal quantity. Probably the best plan is to provide grain hoppers of generous size and let the birds eat all they wish. Corn and wheat are staple grains. Mash mixtures of any kind are to be avoided. Green food may be given, sparingly, but not in sufficient quantity to induce looseness of the bowels.

Grit should also be available, and, of course, clean, fresh water in abundance.

Each day as the hens are released from their nests, the latter should be carefully examined for cracked and soiled eggs, and any troubles corrected. Very few hens will soil their nests if they can avoid it, but when they are confined the greater part of the day, more or less trouble of this kind may be expected. However, it is most essential that both nesting material and eggs be kept clean, and this must be looked after daily.

The sitting room should also be kept in sanitary condition. The droppings should be removed each day, never permitted to become mixed

with the earth or litter or scratched into the food and water supply.

Sitting hens are the prey of lice and mites and should be fully protected against these pests. The nests should be treated before being used and the hens themselves dusted with some good lice-killing preparation several times during the period of incubation. There are several excellent lice-killing powders on the market, and Persian insect powder may be depended upon to do this work thoroughly.

Eggs Should Be Tested.

It is advisable to test the eggs twice before hatching time arrives and remove such as are infertile or contain dead germs. Those which remain are thus given a better chance to hatch.

When the chicks begin to pip their shells the hens will stick closely to their nests. This is a most critical time, and the poultryman should carefully watch his charges until the hatch is over. Before any chicks have actually hatched the hens should be removed and encouraged to eat their fill, then kept confined.

As a rule it is poor policy to disturb a hen which seems to be carefully attending to her duty at this time. But some individuals get excited when they hear the youngsters peeping, and may do considerable damage through trampling them or even picking them. Under such conditions a transfer should be made, the flighty hen being replaced by one of the quiet, motherly sort.

If the nests are properly constructed the chicks may safely be left with quiet hens until the hatch is completed. But if loss is feared the babies may be removed and tucked away in padded baskets or boxes and kept in a warm place until moved to the brooding coops.

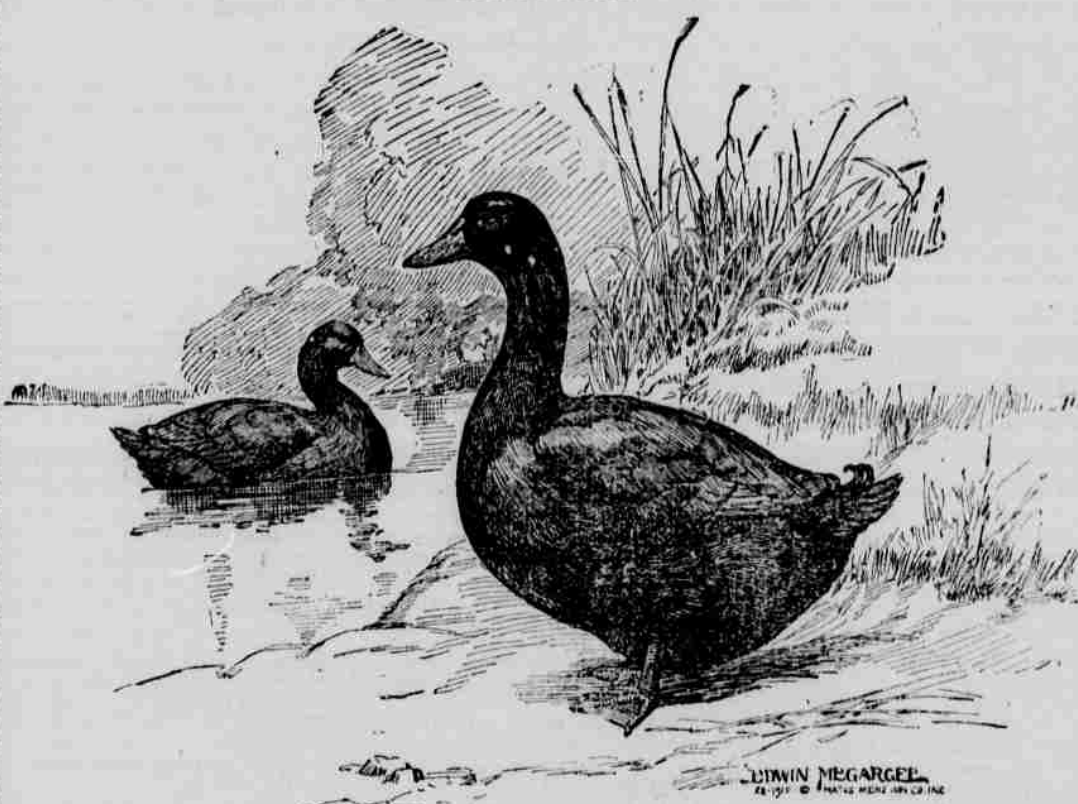
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The Call of the Wild.

I know a place where the fern is deep,
And the giant fir waves high,
And a rocky ledge hangs dark and steep,
And a laughing brook leaps by,
And it's there to be with a soul that's free

From the street's discordant jar,
With a blanket spread on a cedar bed,
And the voice of the world afar
I know of a pool in a leafy dell
That the wary trout love best,
And a timid trail to the chaparral
Where the red deer lie at rest,
A night bird's call when the shadows fall
And a cougar's eerie cry,
A silence deep, and a dreamless sleep
Under the open sky.
—Leslie's Weekly.

CAYUGA DUCKS.



These ducks were first produced nearly a century ago in Cayuga County, N. Y., from which the breed takes its name. It is said that they were first produced by crossing mallard and wild black ducks, and that the blood of the Black East India duck was introduced later. The color is lustrous, greenish-black throughout. Males weigh seven and eight pounds, females six and seven pounds, according to age. These birds are very hardy, are easy to raise and carry a large quantity of fine-flavored flesh. While this breed is not used on commercial duck farms, it is an excellent one for the breeder who wishes to keep a small flock of attractive water fowl and breed a few young ducks for the home table or to supply a retail trade. The quantity and quality of the flesh will offset the disadvantage of a few dark pinfeathers and black shanks.