

Raising Poultry in America---Making It a Profitable Business

Many experienced poultrymen contend that hen-brooded chicks are better, stronger and more vigorous than those grown in artificial brooders. This question is certainly open to debate, but it is undeniably true that hens will, under proper conditions, rear chicks of high quality and with a small percentage of loss.

The following contribution is full of helpful information regarding the proper management of the mother hens and their broods.

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IT IS an easy matter to raise a few chicks with hens, but an entirely different proposition to grow a large number through exclusive use of the natural method of brooding. This explains why the artificial method of brooding is used almost exclusively on most commercial poultry farms.

The time required to properly attend to a single brood of 15 chicks is not worth considering. But when one has 1500 chicks divided into 100 little flocks, scattered about over a considerable area, each demanding attention several times daily, the detail work demanded soon grows tiresome.

It is so much easier to attend to the same number of chicks in a convenient brooder house, or to three flocks of 500 each under colony brooders, that few poultrymen stick to the old method after they have reached a point where their flocks of chicks are really large in size.

Hen-Brooded Chicks Preferred.

This is not an intimation that it is impossible to grow many chicks by the natural method. In certain sections of the country, notably in New England, many poultry farmers who maintain very large flocks of fowls depend upon broody hens to hatch and rear all the chicks. But it will be observed that these men have studied the problem carefully and have provided the equipment which enables them to most conveniently and efficiently care for the hens and their broods. Unless some system is applied to this work, one need not expect to secure entirely satisfactory results. The more important details of management are presented below. In general, these apply to almost any poultry plant. Minor details may be changed to meet the peculiar conditions surrounding each particular case.

Proper feeding is of primary importance. This matter was fully discussed in a recent issue of this publication, and the points then brought out will not be repeated here. However, it might be well to state that the feeding problem is really simpler when the chicks are mothered by hens than when grown in brooders.

This is not due to any difference in the chicks, but rather to the conditions surrounding them. Each hen is usually given but a small number of chicks, and, as a rule, these small broods are permitted to have considerable liberty. In the brooder, from 50 to 500 chicks are kept in one flock and in many cases they are confined in yards of relatively small size. The hen-brooded chicks may, therefore, pick up much natural food, as worms, insects, fresh green stuff, and the like, and they further have the active assistance of the hen in finding these tidbits. The brooder chicks, on the other hand, must depend upon the attendant to supply everything which they need in the way of foodstuffs.

When feeding chicks with hens, especially where expensive chick feeds are used, it is advisable to provide a special feeding place for the youngsters, so arranged that the mother hen cannot get at the costly ration. Feed her on any ordinary grain mixture which is less expensive.

The disposition of the mother hen is also an important matter. Some hens are naturally motherly, kind and attentive to their broods, pleasant to manage. These will usually rear a large percentage of the chicks intrusted to them.

Others, with equally good intentions, are clumsy, stepping upon and crushing many of the chicks, still others are nervous and flighty or cross and quarrelsome. Such birds may more profitably be returned to the laying flock and their chicks given to the dependable kind.

Select Mother Hens With Care.

The observant poultryman can usually pick out the unsatisfactory individuals while they are incubating or very shortly after they are given chicks. And it pays to watch this matter carefully.

The construction of the brood coop is next in importance. It is most short-sighted policy to provide coops which will meet the requirements of the little families only when the most favorable conditions obtain. Far better design and build them in such a way that they will fully serve their purpose under the worst possible conditions. Then they will surely be satisfactory at other times.

Chicks, like adult fowls, require quarters which are dry, well-ventilated, light and sunny, and roomy. Further, they

must be protected against the attacks of the many enemies that beset them.

Dryness is merely a matter of careful construction. A cheap box may be made weather-proof by merely tacking on a covering of tar paper or roofing material. Board floors, especially when slightly elevated above the ground level, will prevent dampness from working up underneath.

Ample ventilation may be secured in a variety of ways. A small coop which is virtually open in front will always be well ventilated, while free from moving currents of air.

Make Brood Coops Roomy.

Possibly the greatest fault of the average brood coop is its small size. A coop 18 inches square will serve as a sleeping room for a hen and brood of usual size, but it is entirely inadequate during stormy days when the flock must of necessity remain under cover. When a thriving flock is confined in such small space for two or three days at a time, as in the case of rainy spells which so frequently occur during Spring and early Summer, the results will be noted in checked growth and general unthriftiness.

Since a well-built coop will give good service for many years and the saving of only two or three chicks will pay for the additional cost of a roomy coop, it is mighty poor business policy to make this structure too small for comfort and efficiency.

Virtually all night-prowling enemies will be baffled through the use of a tight floor and having all openings in side walls covered with close-meshed wire netting.

A necessary adjunct to the coop is a small run or yard which confines the hen while permitting the chicks to have their freedom. As a rule it is best to keep the mother at home until the chicks are well started in life, strong enough to follow her on the long journeys she will usually take if given her freedom.

Of course, the hen may be kept confined in the coop itself, but she will be more contented and keep in better condition if permitted to exercise in the open air and scratch and wallow in the dirt. Further, if permitted to get outside where she can survey the territory around her home, she will often save many chicks by sounding the alarm when danger threatens.

A very satisfactory yard may be inexpensively constructed of ordinary laths, by tacking these on A-shaped frames. The end next to the coop is left open, but both sides and the other end are inclosed with laths nailed on some three inches apart. In such a run the hen can see all that is going on, can take the exercise she requires, and the chicks may run in and out as they please.

In Europe commonly, and to some extent in America, the exercising yards are

dispensed with and the hens kept at home by tethering them to the coops, to weights or to pegs driven into the ground. A stout string of sufficient length is attached to one leg, the other end being secured as above. The hens very quickly learn just how far they can travel and they seldom, if ever, injure themselves by too vigorous pulling on their tether.

Cleanliness is also necessary. The coop floor should be cleaned at frequent intervals and coop and run moved to fresh ground every few days. It is always advisable to keep the floor covered with fresh, dry earth. This serves the double purpose of sealing up the droppings and making easy the work of cleaning.

An occasional coat of whitewash, or spraying with some good disinfectant are desirable in order to keep the interior in sanitary condition and discourage the activities of lice and mites.

These little pests will, if not checked, virtually ruin any brood they attack. The various kinds of body lice are best fought with good lice-killing powders or ointments. Hen and chicks should be carefully examined at intervals and vigorous treatment given as required.

The blood-sucking mites live in cracks and crevices in the walls and floor of the coop. Cleanliness and frequent spraying with powerful disinfectants will attend to them.

Growing Chicks Require Shade.

The chicks should be given access to plenty of shady places under low-growing trees and bushes, tracts of growing corn or other similar crops. By early Summer the scantly clad youngsters suffer from the rays of the sun, and if natural shade is not available, cloth-covered frames or heaps of evergreen brush should be provided. Piles of brush covered with pumpkin or squash vines make ideal shelters and furnish safe retreats against the attacks of crows or hawks.

The chick range should not be too thickly populated. Overcrowding is a most common fault and brings on a train of evils. Allow each brood plenty of space. You will grow more and better chicks under such conditions.

Frequently circumstances compel the chick raiser to grow many chicks on a limited area. It then becomes his duty to pay particular attention to the task of keeping the soil in good condition. This is best accomplished by frequent and thorough cultivation, using either the spade or the wheel hoe to turn the surface under and bring fresh earth to the top. Growing green crops are a big help, too. Patches of grass, clover or rape may be started under wire-covered frames, the latter being removed as soon as the plants have become thoroughly established.

Watch the water supply. The young-

this should be clean and cool. Access to a small stream is ideal, but unfortunately suitable brooks are not commonly found on poultry plants.

Let the fountains be liberal in size, wash them daily, set them where the sun's rays cannot strike them. A small box, with the open side turned toward the north, makes an excellent shelter.

Get the coop ready before the chicks hatch, with everything shipshape. After the hatch is over and the babies are thoroughly dried off, move the family to their new quarters.

Carry the chicks in a box or basket, the hen under your arm. Place the chicks in the coop, then introduce the hen. If the latter is first put in the coop she will usually be greatly disturbed while the chicks are being removed from the basket and she may crush some of them in her excitement.

Where several hens bring off broods at the same time the chicks may be "doubled up" if necessary and any surplus hens returned to the laying flock. From 10 to 18 chicks may be given a hen, depending upon her size and the season of the year. I have had very good success from placing three hens and 50 chicks together in small houses. Curiously enough, there seems to be less quarrelling under this plan than when two hens are kept in the same quarters.

Confine the chicks to the coop for a day or so, then give them their liberty. They will not wander far from home until they gain strength and experience.

Release the broods early in the morning. It is rank folly to keep them confined for many hours after daylight. One of the most successful poultry growers I have ever known made it an ironclad rule to let his chicks out just at sunrise.

Keep an eye on them during the day. See that they have plenty of feed and fresh water. Keep coops and yards clean. Close the coops up snugly at night. And watch the little chaps grow!

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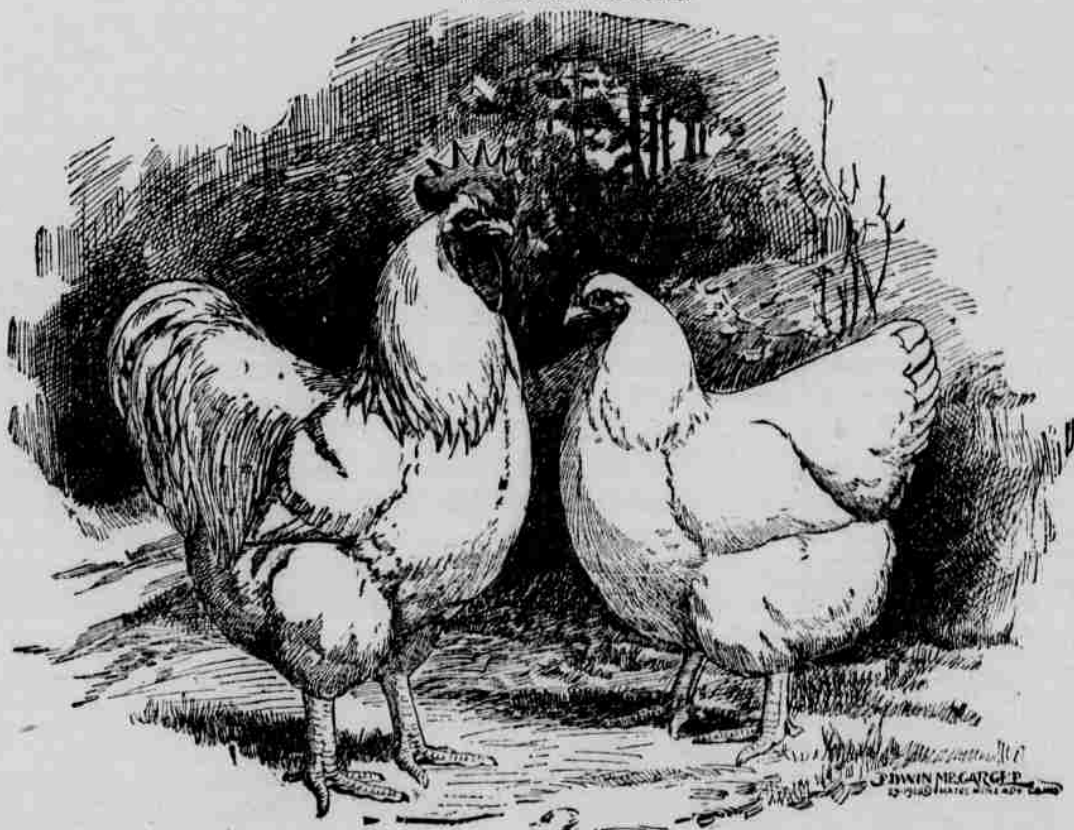
Modesty.

It must not be supposed that because the Kaiser quoted Shakespeare—"To be or not to be"—in his original manifesto, His Majesty is a good Shakespearean. The contrary may be surmised from an incident which occurred at a lunch at one of the Berlin embassies.

An English diplomat was discussing some big affair of the moment with a lady. "As our immortal William has observed," the diplomat remarked, "There is a tide in the affairs of men that, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

The Kaiser looked puzzled. "That is quite true," he is said to have acquiesced, "but I don't remember saying it."—London Tit-Bits.

WHITE ORPINGTONS.



The Orpington is an English general-purpose fowl, first produced in 1886, and generally introduced into America a few years later, after it had been brought to a fair degree of perfection. The white variety is pure white in plumage, with white or pinkish-white beak and shanks. Males weigh 8½ and 10 pounds; females, 7 and 8 pounds, according to age. The hens are very satisfactory producers of brown-shelled eggs, and stock of all ages makes excellent table poultry. The breed was originated by the late William Cook, who produced several distinct varieties. Mr. Cook first produced this new fowl some 30 years ago. The black variety was the first to appear, followed at short intervals by other varieties, as the new kind grew in popularity.

Some breeders hold that the white variety is a sport from the black. Many white varieties of other breeds have so originated. Others believe that Mr. Cook used entirely different blood, combining that of the Black Hamburg, White Leghorn and White Dorking. But whatever its ancestry, the subject of this sketch is a true Orpington in shape and general characteristics. It is certainly deserving of the consideration of all classes of poultry-keepers, whether operating a commercial plant, maintaining a backyard flock or interested in breeding show stock.