

Poultry Yard.

THE LIGHT BRAHMA.

An Article on the Merits of the Breed -
A General Purpose Fowl.

BY R. T. CAMERON.

The Light Brahma may well be called the shorthorn of the poultry yard, for it is the beef breed, if one may use the expression, among all breeds of poultry; no other variety is known to equal it in weight. The comparison might well be carried still further; for while the shorthorn is a beef cattle of the highest type, many strains of the breed are deep milkers. So, too, the Light Brahma is an example of productiveness in two directions, for it furnishes both a large frame, well covered with flesh, and a large number of eggs as well; for while it is generally considered that large size and abundant feathering are likely to be at the expense of egg production, it is certainly a fact that a Light Brahma hen will lay a large number of eggs in a year if rightly managed. It is just here that the trouble usually arises. Comparatively few people understand how to care for a flock of Brahmas so as to get the best results from them.

Like nearly all the Asiatics, this breed is naturally somewhat indolent, and inclined to lay on flesh, two points which, if not guarded against, will be sure to injure the egg production. Give a flock of Brahmas all they will eat three times a day and you may whistle for your eggs—but the Brahmas won't lay them. They will straightway proceed to get fat and lazy, and their eggs will be few and far between, and will, moreover, be very unfertile if one wishes them for incubating purposes. Now it does not follow that Brahmas must be starved in order to keep them laying—that would result in greater disappointment. They must be cared for in a way to make them exercise vigorously and still have plenty to eat. This may be accomplished by not feeding all the hens desire in the morning; and then, by feeding a little grain in a heap of litter, keep the fowls scratching all day long. At night one may safely give them all they can eat of egg-producing foods and send them to their roosts. Treated this way I have had Light Brahmas lay very nearly as well as Leghorns, which are so productive of eggs as to be called veritable "egg machines." A Brahma must be

made to work, where a Leghorn would work of its own accord, owing to its more nervous temperament. Being so well protected with feathers, and having a low pea comb, with a vigorous constitution, the Brahma is well equipped to furnish eggs in winter, when they are highest and in most demand for home consumption. The lighter and less heavily feathered breeds often suffer from the cold, and cease egg producing entirely. Brahma chicks are hardy from the first, and grow rapidly when judiciously fed. Brahma pullets have been got to laying in five months and eight days from hatching, which is something almost phenomenal, considering the size of the breed, though it is to be confessed that this early laying of Brahma pullets must be ever at the expense of size. An early laying strain of this breed must of necessity be smaller than the average Brahma. These birds have greatly improved since they were known as Brahma-Pootras. Their once long, ungainly limbs have been shortened, they are more compact and handsomer in shape, while in plumage they are well nigh the most beautiful of all fowls—their white coats set off with black tails, and hackles heavily tipped with black. The wings appear white when folded, but show much black when spread, while the undercolor of the feather should be dark if the distinct black points are to be preserved in breeding. Perhaps the best way for making light Brahmas return the largest profit on the farm is to hatch the chicks early—in February and March—and sell the cockerels for roasters in June, when the price for such poultry is high. The pullets should be laying by October 1, and should lay steadily all winter. I think no breed of fowls average so large eggs as the Brahma, and they are also very uniform in shape, adapting them to a fancy market trade.

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Lice and warm weather are pretty apt to come together, and the dust bath must be provided.

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