

POULTRY DEPARTMENT.

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Poultry as a Business.

Very few keep poultry as a business. And of those who have large flocks, not many go at it in a business like manner. Writing on this subject to the Poultry Standard, Mr. James Shackleton says:

Heretofore, poultry have not generally been kept in a business-like way, except in a sense so by fanciers and breeders of standard birds for sale. Generally, the rest of poultry keepers do not in any sense keep fowls in a business way. It is up to everybody to do this, and it means the stoppage of all leakages, taking advantage of every possible improvement, working in all ways for the most there is in fowls. That cannot be done by considering any hen as good as any other hen, nor by hap-hazard matings, nor by hatching every egg because it is an egg, nor by rearing chicks so half of them die and the rest are not more than half the ultimate worth they might be. But all over the United States men are taking up poultry at least as a side line, men who have learned that to succeed well in any business needs strenuously, open minds, active minds, and absolute attention to details. They know well enough that go-as-you-please poultry keeping must be about as silly as go-as-you-please in any business. To my mind, these men, or some of them are likely to supply striking object lessons that others cannot well ignore. But these men are not the kind that will take any trouble at all to tell others how they succeed when they succeed, their point of view is that the other fellow must struggle up as they have done. That is the modern way of finding the men that can and will do things, and no better way is possible for that they look on such work as writings like this as a ridiculous waste of time, for they say the average person is asleep or half asleep and remains so. Do you want to be of the class of whom this may properly be said? Do you want to keep hens so they cannot lay more than half of what they should? Do you want to keep hens that cannot be made to lay as much as others? Do you want to hatch eggs that, even if fertile, cannot produce thrifty chicks?

If you wish to get started on the road to business poultry keeping, you have to consider the hen as a valuable bird, potentially capable of making more money for you from the same investment than any other legitimate investment there is more than is possible from any investment in dairy cows however well the cows be kept, however good as milkers the cows may be. Better than sheep or hogs, or any crop. This does not mean that the hen is to displace anything, but just that she shall be considered and treated as a valuable asset that it is beneath nobody's dignity to handle well. You will have to get trapnets, and use them. You will have to act intelligently in all that trapnets will show to you. You will have to learn what constitutes a good bird, male or female, and breed only from such. There is no other way than this, there cannot be any other way.

Then you have to revise all your ideas about housing fowls. They need fresh air all there is, and not to be shut up in tight houses winter or summer.

Why Hens Don't Lay.

That is a question that many poultrymen would be glad to have answered. Some one asked the question of the Rural New Yorker, and Mr. Cosgrove has something to say on the subject, but he does not profess to be able to answer it satisfactorily.

O. W. Mapes' article on page 47 is

decidedly interesting. That 1,372 hens and pullets in good health fed three times a day with an abundance of meat in the ration, did not lay an egg for six days in succession, is simply wonderful. It is twelve years since I began keeping hens on this farm; and the first winter we had only 17 hens, but they did not miss a day all winter, though three or four days we got only one egg. In the whole 12 years there has never been a day when we did not get an egg. I should be surprised, indeed, to go around my coops and not find an egg; it would be almost incredible, and I have less than one-third as many fowls. Mr. Mapes says: "Now, Brothers Cosgrove, Bildad, Zophar and Eliphaz, what is the matter?" The three last named gentlemen may understand just "what's the matter," but "Brother Cosgrove" freely admits that he doesn't.

Some very singular things happen in the poultry world. Here is one. An experienced poultryman, editor of one of the best poultry magazines in the country, relates in a recent number that there was a certain pen in which his hens would not lay. Removing them to another coop, he put in the hens from a pen that were laying remarkably well. These at once began to drop off and soon ceased laying. Taking this second lot out, he put back the first lot which were now laying finely, and they stopped laying at once. He could not see any possible reason for it, but finally had to submit to the fact that they simply would not lay in that pen. Mr. White once said in The R. N. Y., that "a hen does not have to lay if she doesn't want to." Most people go to work on the theory that they can compel the hens to lay, and feel dreadfully "put out" when they don't succeed. I have an idea that the personality of the attendant has more influence than many would think. The hens ought to feel contented and happy in his or her presence. Doubtless that is why some women are so successful with poultry. Their gentle and kindly ways invite the confidence of the birds. I have pullets that when on the nest laying will begin to talk to me as soon as I come in the coop, and continue to talk as I approach and pat them on the back and talk to them, and I admit that their conversation gives me more pleasure than that of some humans I occasionally hear. Not the least effort to get away, not the ruffling of a feather, but an evident pleasure in my company, manifested by the contented tone of their talk.

I have a boy living with me who is a born poultryman; he knows nearly every hen on the farm, can tell which rooster is crowing by the sound, and can catch any one I want with surprising ease. A few days ago he caught a young cockerel I was going to kill and have stuffed and roasted for next day's dinner. He was following me to the chopping block with the bird in his hands and I saw him bend his head down to press the bird against his face and heard him say to it, "Don't cry, you will be an angel by and by." Well, I was almost tempted to put the bird back in the flock. Now, I am afraid I haven't been of the least help to Brother Mapes, but I want to say that without doubt his article was comforting to a good many beginners whose hens did not lay, and who, perhaps, were getting discouraged. Now they will see that the same thing happens to the best poultrymen, and they will be encouraged to keep on.

Artificial Hatching and Rearing.

It may seem like too much repetition for us to publish so many articles on the subject of the use of incubators and brooders. Yet it is only by this method that we can impress its importance upon our readers. A writer, in the Inland Poultry Journal, gives one of the strongest arguments that we have ever seen:

The poultryman who has never operated an incubator should at this time begin an investigation of the subject and plan, if possible, to give a

first-class machine a thorough trial the coming hatching season. It is well to make preparation early and be ready for the spring work.

The greatest advantage of incubators, to the man who is earning his living from poultry, is the saving of time and money. An incubator of 300-egg capacity will do the work of twenty sitting hens. It will require but a short time each day to attend to it, but the labor necessary to care for twenty hens would amount to considerable. It would cost about one dollar to feed the hens for three weeks. While they are incubating the eggs they are losing time which should be spent in laying. After they have hatched the eggs it takes two or three weeks to get back in laying condition. This time also is wasted. The time when the hens are setting is during the spring months which is the very time that they should be producing eggs that would hatch fine chicks. A poultry fancier who has a small number of fowls will lose the best portion of the hatching season for producing eggs if the hens are permitted to sit.

The great convenience of incubators should appeal to all. With the incubator in a suitable room it is very convenient to attend to. It is not necessary to go out in all kinds of weather to attend to it every day when it is situated in the house. The great annoyance which comes from caring for sitting hens is done away with. If a number of hens are sitting in one place it is often difficult to have each hen return to her proper nest. Suppose that there were a dozen or two sitting hens in some one poultry house. Think of the trouble in caring for them, seeing that each returned to its own nest and watching that they did not remain off the eggs too long. In this particular the incubator has the great advantage.

When an incubator is used to hatch the eggs the chicks are brought forth free from lice. It is very difficult to keep the lice from annoying the sitting hen. In some cases the pests will drive the hen from the nest, and in some instances may multiply in such great numbers as to kill her. These are extreme cases, but even with the use of a good insect powder it is not possible to kill all the lice on the hen. When the chicks are hatched the lice begin at once to tax their vitality and thus render them liable to disease. The incubator hatches the strong germs and when the chicks are brought forth they are in a strong condition and are not weakened by the attacks of lice but are ready to begin the battle of life.

When a hen is given a sitting of eggs there is always an uncertainty as to the outcome; the hen may break them all. If only one egg is broken the rest are smeared up and the chances for hatching are greatly reduced. The incubator will break no eggs intrusted to its care. Whenever an incubator is filled the operator has the assurance that none of the eggs will be broken and the chances for a favorable hatch from the remaining ones thus greatly diminished.

The incubator is ever ready; the hen is not to be depended upon. If the poultryman desires to hatch eggs at any appointed time he should take no chances with broody hens. They may sit when desired but more often they will not. If the poultryman raises broilers he should get his chicks hatched early. Very few hens set in February when many eggs should be incubated. The incubator may be filled at any time and thus enable the poultry raiser to systematize his business.

With the incubator there is no dirty nest to clean, no soiled eggs to wash, no hens to dust with insect powder, nor is there any of the other many vexatious and disagreeable features which are synonymous with the words "sitting hen."

A hen should not be trusted with a sitting of high-priced eggs. Sitting hens frequently die on the nest, they often break eggs, and the lice which on them abound will endanger the life of small chicks. If a high price is paid for eggs the fancier should not

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take great chances by having them hatched by hens. The incubator will care for them much better than a hen, and they are not broken or chilled, and the chicks are free from lice.

The use of incubators keeps down the number of lice in the poultry houses. Examine a nest occupied by a sitting hen and see the number of lice in the nesting material. These lice multiply very fast and the nest affording splendid harbors for them makes it very difficult to reduce the number. If a poultry house has been occupied by a number of sitting hens during the spring months, when summer comes they will prove a formidable enemy.

The poultryman who engages extensively in the poultry business must have the aid of incubators. If he desires to sit fifteen or twenty hundred eggs it would take a very large number of hens. He might have trouble in obtaining a sufficient number to incubate that many eggs but if he did succeed in getting them the chicks would undoubtedly be hatched too late in the season. To care for that number of hens would require a great amount of labor and in general the result would be very unsatisfactory.

There have been many advances made in artificial incubation and there are now many machines on the market which are reliable. There are, of course, improvements yet to be made, but they have already attained a successful degree of efficiency.

That brooders should be used in connection with incubators goes without saying. They possess many advantages over the hen in caring for chicks.

When chicks are scarcely old enough to walk the old hen wanders far from the coop and fatigues them. She will also be out early in the morning leading the chicks through the wet grass and preparing them for an early death. This is not the way with the brooder. The chicks may be confined while the dew is on the grass in the morning.

The brooder has the same advantage over the hen as has the incubator. With it there are no lice. These small insects are great hindrances to poultry raising as they annually kill countless numbers of chicks. Therefore they should be kept down to the lowest number possible, and one of the greatest aids in this is the incubator and brooder.

With brooders the chicks have some place to go in time of danger. When a rain comes up they will return to it. When chicks are very young they should be confined in a small pen surrounding the brooder. This pen may be gradually enlarged and when they are of a sufficient age it may be removed altogether. They will by this time have learned to return to the brooder in event of rain.

With the brooder one is not compelled to chase an excitable hen around in order to confine her and the chicks. It is not necessary to remain out in the rain to capture the hen and chicks and return them to their coop.

The brooder saves time and money for the poultryman. One brooder will accommodate fifty or seventy-five chicks (I never place more than this number in one brooder) while it would require three or four hens to care for them. If the brooder is caring for the chicks the hens will be producing eggs. It would require much more time to care for three or four hens than for one brooder. With the brooder, all the chickens could be fed at once, but not so with the hens. Three or four coops would have to be cleaned if the hens cared for the chicks, but the brooder alone would have to be cleaned if the other way was adopted. Where there are a large number of fowls raised each year it would require a great deal of labor to care