

Cost of Keeping Hens.

Farm and Ranch gives the figures of the cost of keeping hens and the best methods as follows:

Taking the hens as the basis—as the capital invested—the question of profit hinges on her utility, the amount it costs to feed her, and the number of eggs she can be made to or induced to lay in a year, or any given period of time. We are sure that this question is not taken very seriously by farmers, because they seldom give their hens any particular care or attention, and in a great many cases do not feed them at all, except in the non-productive winter season.

Still, the whole question of poultry keeping hinges right here, for no one would care to engage in a losing enterprise. There must be something tangible about it—something like a foundation to it, and the chances to gain by it through work and time devoted to it by those who are in earnest, seeking to solve the problem favorably, to their financial betterment.

To give facts that are of any value to others, a person can only fully and truthfully recite personal experience. The writer, as most of our readers know, is a keeper of poultry, and has had much to say on the subject in these columns, and in other papers of similar class, for a period of twenty years. And yet, our experience is limited, and we stand open to conviction, and ready to learn from others now. But while this is true, we are able to say we know there is profit in poultry keeping, because we have made it pay, and on practical lines, as well as with pure bred fowls in the fancy egg and poultry trade.

And now to the facts of personal experience in the question of profit: And in this summary, is not taken into consideration the production of the hens, as to whether they should be raised or purchased—taking the ground that in point of value they represent in themselves their cost of existence to their keeper, that they can be disposed of at any given time for what it cost to produce them. With this fact settled, the question of profit is narrowed down to the single one of the cost of food and the value of the eggs produced.

In counting the cost of food in our personal experience, we charge up every item excepting that of green food in spring, summer and autumn, for we raise it ourselves, outside of our chicken yards, and feed to them of a morning while it is fresh and crisp. We raise Essex rape, oats and wheat sprouts for this purpose, and as neither requires any cultivation, the cost is a mere trifle. It may be that during the season that grows this green stuff, the fowls and chicks get all the bugs, insects, etc., that they require. But during the cold season green cut bone is fed to them three or four times a week, and on those days the grain ration is cut down correspondingly. The meat and the bone ration is much more necessary for the hens in cold weather to keep them laying than the green food is at that season. On the other hand, in the mild season, the meaty ration can be dispensed with to a

great extent, if the green stuff is freely supplied.

We feed our hens grain—corn, oats and wheat mixed, twice daily, and the green food, or cut bone, as the case may be only one time on the days when they are supplied with either. And while the cut bone ration may be omitted every other day, the green food should be given freely in season. The Essex rape, which produces a large, flexible leaf, becomes in this way one of the chief articles of the hen's diet, and not a mere relish, for they eat of it more heartily, and it strongly colors their droppings. It is a most excellent egg producer. This system is followed in keeping hens yarded where there is some grass, but which is of such a wiry nature that its only value consists in its being a harbor for bugs, etc., which the hens catch of a night and morning.

We find that we can keep our hens in thrift and profitable laying condition after this system, at a cost of \$7.00 per hundred, monthly; or \$84.00 per hundred annually. And under these conditions they lay an average of 150 eggs per hen during the twelve months. The price will average, taking the year round, 18 cents per dozen, although in the early springtime, it is nearer 30 cents a dozen than the average price named. An easy calculation will show that the value of the eggs laid by each hen in a year is two dollars and a quarter, while the cost of her keeping is about eighty-four cents. This is on a market basis. Of course, if a man has a fancy trade, and is getting a dollar and a half a setting for his eggs in the hatching season, and gets three settings from each hen during that time, the profit from the hens is several dollars each. Our purpose in this article, however, is to show we can make and do make it pay on a market basis.

A friend tells of a real tragedy in poultry life. A hen "stole her nest" in the manger of an unused cow stable. The manger was tightly boarded all around, and so high that the chickens were not able to get out. As no one happened to go in that building for several days the poor little chicks starved, and the hen could do nothing but jump in and out, clucking in helpless misery, so long as a chick remained with life enough to peep. It is best to make sure that there are no out-of-the-way traps of this sort accessible to the hens.—Rural New Yorker.

Setting a Hen.

A correspondent of the Poultry Standard tells his method of setting hens, as follows:

Of a choice I would prefer hatching with an incubator, but oftentimes one wishes to set a few eggs either from some other breeder or from a special mating and then the hen is brought into play. My theory (and practice) of the proper way to set a hen is as follows:

First the place. Any shed or sheltered spot, if the weather is sufficiently mild. If early in the season, and cold, a good, warm coop or cellar. For a nest I prefer a box such as two dozen quart cans of tomatoes are packed in. Nail a three inch strip of the cover across one side of top and turn the

box down on its side. This prevents the nest material from being scratched out, and allows the hen to step into the nest without jumping on the eggs. For nesting material, use either cut straw, baled shavings, sawdust or hay or straw free from seeds of grain. If you have any hayseed or grain in nesting material and your sifter is the least uneasy the first thing you know she will be up and scratching for those few grains, and incidentally breaks several or all of your eggs.

After deciding on which hens you are going to use (of course they are already broody) give each specimen a thorough dusting with some good lye powder, or paint the inside of the old nest on which she has been sitting, with a good, strong lye paint and leave her on long enough for the fumes to destroy all the lice. Then quietly, in the dark of night, lift Mrs. Biddy gently in both hands, grasping her about the body, clasping both wings close to her side. Carry her carefully to the new nest box, in which you have already placed four or five warmed china eggs. Place her ladyship directly in front of the nest and gently push her on the nest. Usually she will accept the invitation and quietly settle down on the "Affairs of the East." When you see her snuggle the eggs well under her and settle close down, you may be pretty sure she will stick. Don't trust her yet, however. Gently turn the nest to the wall, leaving space enough for her to breathe, but not enough to get her head out. Leave her all the next day, and about dusk turn the box around and offer her food and water a few feet away from the nest to see if she will come off of her own accord. If she don't, gently lift her off and let her feed and dust. Then quietly send her back to the nest. If she goes on readily or of her own accord, leave her for several hours, and then replace the china eggs with the ones to be hatched, turning her to the wall again as before.

When one has ten or a dozen hens sitting at once, I find this is the ideal way of caring for them. There is no mixing up of nests, and getting two on one and leaving one nest unoccupied, as is often the case when several hens are sitting in the same room, with opportunity to leave their nests (and return) at their own volition. I find it does not take any longer to do this way than to let the hens nest where they will, and you are sure then that your hens are where you left them. Of course, sometimes you will have broken eggs, and then the regular routine of cleaning nest and removing same, and washing eggs in luke-warm water, must be gone through with. Be careful though when washing eggs, that there is no draught of air passing over them, as too rapid evaporation of the moisture applied will chill the eggs. As soon as hatch is off, place the hen and her chicks in a new nest away from the other sitting hens, first greasing the heads and vents and under the wings of the chicks and dusting the hen once more with powder. This keeps the chicks away from the other hens, preventing loss of chicks already hatched, and worry to hens still sitting.

Drudgery Don't Pay.

A regular contributor to Farm and Fireside does not believe that drudgery and farm work are necessarily synonymous. It is unquestionably true that farming requires a great deal of hard work, and, in many cases, long hours seem almost unavoidable. Yet it is also true that many farmers are learning to do their work in fewer hours. It is certain that any one who overworks and gets up in the morning feeling more tired than they did at night, is overworking and will not do as much in a day as one who stops in time to get the really needed rest.

I know hundreds of farmers who are so keen after dollars and cents that they not only push their help twelve to sixteen hours a day, but themselves even longer. Such farming does not pay. If one has to drudge every hour of daylight to make a profit it is high time he changed his methods or quit. Farming pays very well for the capital invested if it is carried on intelligently, and it is not drudgery.

The man who is making a slave of himself is not farming right, and the sooner he changes his methods the better. If every farmer would try to improve his ways of doing his work in every way possible, and every farmer's wife would do the same, there would be a mighty change for the better all over this land, and that quickly. And the only way a man can improve is by working his brains—working a few hours less with his hands and thinking and planning a few hours more with his brains.

Two Nice Puddings.

Banocroft Pudding.—Cream four tablespoons of butter and one cup of sugar and add one well-beaten egg. Sift one and one-half cups of flour with one-half teaspoon of salt and one teaspoon of baking powder. Add one-half cup of the flour to the first mixture and beat thoroughly, then add the rest of the flour and one-half cup of milk, alternately. Finally beat one-fourth of a square of chocolate into the batter and bake thirty minutes in a moderate oven.

Sauce.—Beat two eggs until very light; then add one cup of confectioners sugar and one cup of thick cream. Beat until the whole is the consistency of whipped cream.

Custard Pudding.—An excellent rule for custard pudding is this: Beat until very light the yolks of six eggs and seven tablespoons of sugar. Pour slowly on them a quart of hot milk, in which is a small pinch of salt; fill buttered custard cups with the mixture, set in a pan of hot water and bake until set, then draw to the door of the oven and quickly dot the surface of each custard with currant jelly, raspberry jam or other favorite and convenient substitute; cover with a meringue made of the whites of three eggs and a tablespoonful and a half of powdered sugar. Brown lightly.—Good Housekeeping.

W. W. Miller, of Sanford, says he cut 400 crates of celery off three quarters of an acre of ground and sold it on the platform for \$2.25 per crate, last week. This was the first celery grown by Mr. Miller.—N. Y. Produce News.

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