

POULTRY

Edited by C. S. Gorline.

THE EGG.

The egg is the wonderland of nature. It is a body formed in the females of animals, birds, insects and fishes containing an embryo or fetus of the same species, which under unchanged environment will faithfully reproduce lineal antecedents. Change the environment, ever so slightly, and a variation will result. There are eggs so small that they may be examined only with a powerful microscope. The egg of the genus *Acarus*, the common mite of the poultry house, is no larger than a pin point. Then, there are eggs as large as the

head of an infant, notably that of the Great Auk and of the Ostrich. The eggs of birds and insects are provided with tough or solid envelopes that serve to retain the fluids until they have been absorbed by the fetus. The eggs of fish and some other animals are united by a viscous substance, and called spawn. Either is fitted by nature to reproduce the life intended and each is dependent upon the requisite temperature to reproduce the living being. Were a temperature of 32 or lower to prevail for a number of years, all animals and plant life would cease and the earth would be uninhabited. The eggs of fishes, reptiles, turtles and insects are covered with a tough fibrinous

tissue while the eggs of birds in normal condition have the fibrinous cover enveloped with a shell having an organic basis impregnated with calcareous crystals so arranged as to form a porous wall through the interstices of which oxygen may pass in and the poisonous carbon dioxide is drawn off while the chemical process of respiration is carried on during the early stage of incubation. Those who keep poultry occasionally find an egg minus the shell, or it may occur often. These soft shelled eggs may be the result of feeble vitality but it is more likely owing to lack of lime in the daily ration, such as crushed shell and bone meal. The shells of the eggs of some of the larger breeds of poultry such as Rocks, Wyandottes, Langshans, Brahmas, etc., often in winter and early

spring become so tough and hard that the chick is unable to break through and dies in the shell. Such tough thick shells may be softened by dipping in warm water at pipping time, but they will never at any time hatch well. These hard tough shells are the result of confinement and lack of soft food. Feeding green oyster shell will work a radical change in their texture. Where it is possible to obtain the shells of fresh oysters and grind them while green to feed to laying hens, there is no class of shell that will prove so satisfactory; the shell from them imparted to the eggs will not be brittle and will be tough and elastic so that they may be handled without fear of cracking in turning and at hatching time, will be found very easy for the chick to break through. They will however impart a dark color to white eggs giving to them the bluish tint of skim milk.

There is a vast difference in the shape of eggs. In the eggs of wild birds of the same species there is a wonderful likeness in size, shape and color. It is only in the domesticated species that extreme variation is observed. In color, especially will be noted much difference. Birds that habitually lay white eggs will some times lay brown or light brown eggs. We have seen eggs from both White and Brown Leghorns that were nearly as brown in color as the eggs of common hens. We have seen eggs from Brahmas, Wyandottes and White Rocks that were nearly white. Orpington eggs are usually of a rich red brown color but we have seen eggs from individuals of the same strain that were of a very light brown—almost white. Turkey eggs are generally brown, beautifully mottled with black dots, but in some instances the body color is nearly white covered with light brown specks. Duck eggs that are generally of a light pea green color are some times seen nearly white or dark brown. This variation in color is undoubtedly largely due to diet and confinement. Where birds are on a range with plenty of green food these color variations seldom appear—In size, eggs from the same breeds will vary more perhaps than in color. The eggs of Orpingtons and Brahmas are very large and long under normal conditions but when the birds are kept in close confinement without access to plenty of

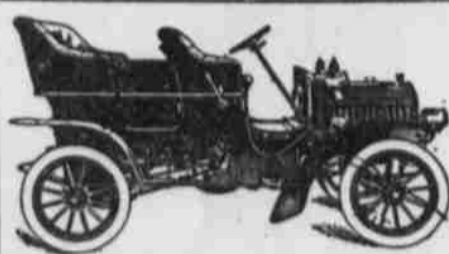
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