POULTRY NOTES

A SHORT ARTICLE ON THE BREEDING PROBLEMS—OTHER ITEMS THAT WILL HELP OUR READERS WITH THEIR PROBLEMS

By Polk T. Bramble

However other parts of the country go into the broiler business in large ways and make big sums of money, this is the time of the year when people in Kent and Queen Annes counties really raise their chicks and lay the foundation for their poultry flocks.

Many who own breeding flocks will have incubators operating and some already have chicks hatched. Next fall, all the poultry departments will be receiving letters asking why it is that pullets that are six months old show no signs of laying, just the price of eggs is high and they are confidently expecting to make a profit on their investment; also complaining of epidemics of colds, worms and various difficulties that try the souls of poultrymen. The proper time to answer all these questions is right now, or rather now is the time to take the necessary precautions to assure the diligent and careful poultryman a healthy, profitable flock next fall. Given a heathy, vigorous flock of young pullets and your troubles are practically over, because almost anybody can care for such a flock so that they will return a good profit on the investment.

It is well recognized that the hard spot in the poultry business is the successful rearing of the young. Many poultrymen who started raising chickens years ago and made all the mistakes and suffered all the trails and calamities that the old-time poultryman had to endure for lack of knowledge and equipment that is easily available today have finally arrived at a point where successful raising of a large percentage of the chicks hatched is a foregone conclusion. One of the best methods in use today is as follows:

Using a coal-stove brooder, of say 500-chick capacity, only about 350 chicks are placed under this hover, as it is never wise to sacrifice quality in a mad rush for quantity production, and it has been repeatedly demonstrated that it is possible to raise more really high-grade, quick-growing, worth while chicks out of the 350 than can be raised out of 500 chicks crowded into the same size brooder. In all probability, a greater number of chicks might be raised by starting 500 chicks than by putting in only 350, but a greater percentage of culls would be produced, and practically none of the brood would attain that extra size, vigor, stamina and pep which enable the superior specimens to cackle merrily through the laying season, totally unconscious of the existence of the various ailments that affect the less fortunate products of unsuccessful rearing conditions.

Each hover is placed in the centre of a room, of about 12x12 feet, with the stovepipe going straight up through the roof of the house, with a properly fitted cap on the pipe where it passes through the roof of the house to guard against fire and to prevent wind from blowing down the pipe, thus insuring a uniform draft for the stove. Another important item is that a good quality of coal be used, most poultrymen preferring chestnut coal for brooder stoves. A fire is started at least a couple of days before putting in the chicks, and if there is a suspicion of dampness about the house or if the weather is very cold at that time it is advisable to start the fire even earlier. Some litter is placed on the floor under and about the feed and water, while they are learning to eat and drink. When newly hatched chicks are allowed to roam all over the room, some of them have a tendency to go too far from the hover; and, as their legs are still rather weak, they cuddle down to take a rest before going back; and sort of forget where the hover is, or stay away too long and get slightly chilled; or fail to notice that there is a nice food and water supply in the world. Unfortunately, the hover cannot "cluck," to call them in. This ring is gradually extended until the chicks are four days old, when the ring is dispensed with entirely. The corners of the room should be rounded out to prevent the chicks from crowding into them.

In the circle outside the hover, and inside the chick guard ring are placed six hoppers, one foot square, which gives these 350 chicks twenty-four running feet of space, where they can eat. Every chick can easily get to the hoppers without crowding. Between the hoppers, five or siz small drinking fountains are placed. There are several good fountains on the market, but one of the most satisfactory in use consists of an ordinary quart Mason fruit jar, inverted in a pan just large enough to allow the chicks to drink, but so they cannot get into the the hover. There are several materials suitable for this purpose, small size wood shavings, cut straw or some of the prepared litters.

The thermometer is placed under the hover, one inch above the floor, at the place where the chicks are to sleep, and the fire regulated to produce a temperature of about 90 degrees at that position under the hover before the chicks are put in. The natural bodily heat of the chicks will quickly raise this temperature to about 92 degrees, which is correct for the first few days.

A very good device in use on some of our progressive farms is a baby chick guard. This is a long strip of wire fencing, about one foot wide, coiled in a ring entirely around the hover, leaving a space about two feet wide between this ring and the outer edge of the hover. This is long enough to lap about once and a half times around, so that it can be gradually extended into a larger ring, as the chicks get older and can be safely trusted further from the hover. To prevent cold drafts on their feet, this strip of fencing is lined with cloth. (A piece of stiff building paper can be used instead of the wire and cloth; but this has a tendency to break, especially if a little water gets on it; so the wire and cloth is really more satisfactory.) The object of this ring is to keep the chicks close to the hover at first, until they become accustomed to the cold air. Also this keeps them close enough to pan. This precaution keeps the chicks dry and also keeps the pans clean. These fountains require the most scrupulous care. thooroughly washing them every morning not just refilling, but actually scrubbing them bright and clean each day. In the hoppers we advise the use of a good commercial chick starter, fed according to directions. This mash is all the food the chicks get for the first week or ten days; and they keep themselves busy running from dry mash hopper to water fountain and back again to hopper. This gives them plenty of exercise, and they never stand still and gorge themselves, as the mash is so dry that they need a drink every few minutes. Also, inducing them to drink so much water keeps the mash soft in their crops, and prevents the food from packing into an indigestable lump. This method gets them off to a good start, and carries them through the first two weeks, which is a very critical period.

Scrupulous care and attention must be exercised if you want to be successful.

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