OUR POULTRY DEPARTMENT

ITEMS OF INTEREST THAT WILL HELP OUR READERS WITH THEIR POULTRY PROBLEMS

BY POLK T. BRAMBLE

The two local hatcheries still continue to keep a steady stream of baby chicks pouring through the local post-office and add to the activities and progress of the section. It is quite likely that the two hatcheries combined have hatched over a million and a quarter chicks this season. These two hatcheries combine quality with quantity, and we seldom hear of a poultryman that has lost any great number of chicks produced by either of them.

There is a great deal of interest in the [illegible]er plan of all-mash feeding. Thre[illegible] states have already perfected plans which they believe have given satisfactory results. The Wisconsin and Ohio all-mash rations are very simple, the Indiana ration more complicated.

The all mash ration may be used for baby chicks, growing stock and laying hens. The question is often asked as to whether or not one can change hens used to the laying mash and scratch grain way of feeding to the all-mash system. This can be done, but the best time would probably be in the late summer and fall when they would be laying least. It is hardly possible to change them from the older way to this new method without interfering with production, at least for a time. The best way is to begin with the baby chicks and accustom them to all-mash feeding and then they are conscious of no change when they are ready to lay.

But feeding an all-mash ration does not mean that we fill baby chick troughs with mash to last a week and forget about them, because chicks must be taught to eat what they need, and they naturally like to be attracted to their food. It is best to put out some fresh mash each afternoon for baby chicks, if not oftener. Also, as the chicks grow older, the grains are fed granulated, rather than powered.

Another point that confuses some times, before one has thought about the reason for it, is that there is much less animal protein called for in the all-mash formula than in those for ordinary laying mashes. This is because all the grain fed is in the mash, this mash making the entire feed for the flock, whereas before, the chickens ate about two-thirds of their ration, the grain part, from the ground and the mash had to carry a great enough protein content to balance that.

All-mash feeding is recommended because it helps prevent contamination by parasites and parasitic organisms that are in the litter and on the ground where grain used to be fed. Along with it are other food elements used to enable the poultryman to keep his young chicks confined to easily cleanable houses for a much longer period than used to be thought possible without bad results. Two things seem almost indispensible for this, one of them milk in some form and the other cod liver oil. Of course, chick have always needed green food.

Everybody and everything seems to be happy and full of life in May. The hens are laying and cackling, the little one are so full of energy. Everything is moving serenely.

For hatching by hens especially, we like the month of May fully as well as we do April. It is a more natural season for chicks. The weather is more steady, and there is practically an everyday life outdoors for the little ones. Grass and insects are plentiful, the little crops are full and hard by night, and how the chicks do run and exercise the live-long day.

I find that chicks hatched in May grow so rapidly when they are properly cared for that they mature about the same time as do those brought out a month earlier.

The secret in growing strong, liveable young stock is range. Where this is possible, even with summer hatches, the chicks fairly shoot ahead. Where free range cannot be had, the youngsters must be taught to scratch and thus exercise for their grain. Exercise and fresh air perform wonders in healthful growth. A plentiful supply off nutritious grains and tender green food must be provided for chicks reared in limited quarters.

In May there is a demand for broilers that will weigh from one and a quarter to two pounds each, when dressed. Choice stock commands the best prices. What is known as a fancy broiler is one having a short head, deep and full breast, small comb, short body, deep and plump, short back, broad and flat shoulders, short legs, and stout thighs. The color of the legs and skin should be a rich yellow color.

It is hardly possibly that all this may be attained in a flock, but it is advisable to sort the carcasses according to qualifications, and ship in separate packages.

It has been set down as a good rule, in calculating the weight of the broiler when dressed, to deduct twelve per cent the live weight. There will be exceptions, but as a general thing the guess will be a very close one.

This month duck raisers secure the better prices for green ducks weighing about nine pounds to the pair, dressed.

When dressing ducks it is profitable to save the feathers. It will require the feathers of ten ducks to weigh a pound. It is good business to save the feathers of all poultry. The feathers of five chickens will weigh a pound. To have a pound of goose feathers will need four geese. The feathers from dry-picked turkeys command a better price than those from fowls which have been scalded. The market for feathers is usually in late Fall, during the winter, or in early spring.

The best prices for green ducks are obtained about May 1, and the lowest from July 1 to September 1. It requires about 40 dressed duckings to fill a barrel for shipment.

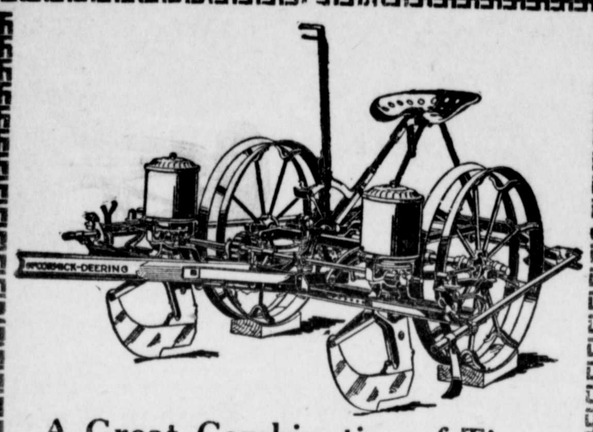
In dressing ducks, the head and upper portion of the neck should remain unpicked, and the legs and feet intact. In some markets the feathers are alowed to remain in the first joint of the wing and on the tail. It is best not to ship birds to market which are not cleanly dressed and look attractive. Poorly prepared carcasses command poor prices.

Laying is generally done at night or early morning. The eggs are dropped at random on the floor of their sleeping quarters, or wherever they may happen to be. Ducks have no use for nests.

This is the month in which the grain mixture in changed for the breeding turkeys. Lessen the quantity of corn and wheat and increase the oats. About this mixture—1-3 corn and wheat and 2-3 oats. With a good laying mash and a quart of liquid buttermilk for every dozen breeders, the first hot weather does not call for much corn in the ration. Of course, they are having either good pasture or regular supply of green food.

White Plymouth Rocks are a favorite and have the whitest plumage, naturally, of any of the white birds. White Rocks also have better combs than the other varieties, and a better natural flow of feathers, the males, particularly, being splendidly furnished in the tail. There has been a tendency in this variety to oversize in some strains. This should be avoided for the reasons stated above as regarding the Barred variety.

In putting together a pen of White Rocks avoid the specimens with creamy plumage, and also those that do not carry good yellow color in the legs and beaks. Just as good white birds as are made can be bred with splendid yellow skin, and much birds are eagerly snapped up on the market stands.



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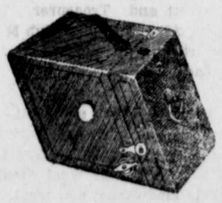

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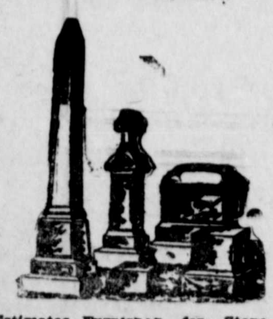

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