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POULTRY NOTES

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WONDERFUL SUCCESS AT POULTRY RAISING OF MR. AND MRS. H. M. BAKER, OF KENT COUNTRY

BY POLK T. BRAMBLE
(Proprietor Bramble Poultry Farm)

When Fulton stemmed the strong tides of the Hudson and Fields laid the Atlantic Cable and Marconi flung messages over waves of ether, and all the other countless inventors and benefactors of the race gave their life work to mankind, they each did more than merely successfully complete the thing which they sought to do, because they showed the world that a certain thing, thought before to be impossible, could be done. By so doing they pushed forward the progressive spirit of the race and what they did became an incentive for others to accomplish things worth while.

The other day we visited the turkey farm of Mr. and Mrs. H. M. Baker, of Quaker Neck, Kent County, and saw for ourselves the wonderful success these people have made with an industry which had heretofore been considered hazardous and unsatisfactory. What Mr. and Mrs. Baker have accomplished others can do also, providing they put into the business the same amount of initiative, the same amount of energy and the same amount of intellectual effort.

The "Rural New Yorker," one of the leading agricultural papers of the country, in its last issue published over a page article from the pen of Mrs. Baker on the subject of turkey raising, in which Mrs. Baker tells how she has performed this wonderful accomplishment. Mrs. Baker has consented to our publishing this interesting article, which should be read by every farmer in the county and then saved for reference.

Mrs. Baker's article is as follows:

Brooding with stoves.—Nearly two years ago The R. N. Y. published an article on our management of turkey poults with turkey hens for mothers. During the past season of 1927 all of our poults had brooder stoves for mothers, and I would like to tell just how we managed them. Seven years ago I concluded that turkey theories, as worked out by our scientific men in our agricultural colleges and elsewhere, did not produce "the goods" did not as a matter of fact raise turkeys—and so I began working out a turkey raising theory entirely different, keeping in mind the habits and life of the wild turkey, and allowing Nature to do her share in the work. I feel well repaid for my daring, because for seven years success has been greater each succeeding year, regardless of weather conditions. Perhaps my greatest success was when my husband joined me in the work two years ago. Today we have a thousand fine young turkeys that have never seen the parent stock, raised from 40 hens and four gobblers. I call them "the orphans."

EXCELLENT RESULTS. — We have raised 90 per cent. of our hatches, and would have done better, I feel sure, had we had sufficient equipment ready. What we lost were weaklings and from accidents, and we have had no sickness of any kind in the flocks to date. It was our original intention to brood half of our hatches under turkey hens, as heretofore, and half under brooder stoves. However conditions over which we had no control compelled us to brood all under brooder stoves—for which we are now thankful. Never again would we go back to the turkey hen for a brooder. It is just as easy and far more satisfactory to care for 100 poults under a stove hover as it is to care for one mother and 20 poults.

INCUBATOR HATCHING. — We kept three separate blood lines. Eggs from the three pens were hatched separately in incubators, and the poults were wing-banded on being taken from the incubators. In this way we can tell at a glance at the wing band from which flock a poult came and when it was hatched. For five years we have been hatching all of our turkey eggs in incubators, because we feel that we can take better care of the precious eggs than the turkey hens can during the very changeable weather of the early Spring. A chilled egg, while it may hatch, will undoubtedly produce a weak poult, and a weak poult is not much to start with. So I prefer to guard the eggs carefully in incubators where they are not affected by weather conditions. Our observations are that incubator-hatched poults are more uniform in size, larger than hen-hatched poults, and certainly stronger. I attribute the strength to the fact that the poults are left in the incubators until the morning of the fourth day after the hatch begins gradually reducing the heat to about 100 degress. During that time they are living on the yolk of the egg they have drawn into their bodies (as Nature intended,) not getting food they should not have, getting their strength by resting after the exertion of picking out of the shell, and thereby making strong poults to start with. And in my judgment, a strong poult is a pretty tough little creature. I do not run the incubators at as high a temperature as for chickens' eggs, turn the eggs at least twice a day by hand, being careful that the points of the eggs are not tipped up, cool the eggs once a day, never dash water into the incubators, and aim to have the hatch begin the twenty-seventh day, not before. Nature intended a turkey's egg to take 28 days to hatch, and when they hatch at 25 and 26 days I consider the poults premature, and any little premature creature is not quite fully developed and therefore is delicate. My average hatch for the season of 1927 was 67 per cent of the total eggs set, and 89 per cent of the eggs left in the incubators after candling. The eggs were not selected, all sizes and shell textures being set.

BROODING AND FEEDING.—The poults were brooded the same as chickens are brooded, except that we had more ventilation than most people use for chickens. The thermometer at the edge of the hover registered 100 degrees the first few days, and then the heat was gradually reduced to 80 degress at two weeks. The poults were given sour milk for their first meal, from glass jar fountains with four-pointed bases. I find these simple fountains the best for the infants, as they cannot get into them and become wet. The poults were then started on the regular mash they get all during their growing period, moistened with poultry cod liver oil and water. It is a mistaken idea that they need hard-boiled eggs and rolled oats to attract their attention in order that they may be taught to eat. I consider it harmful to start them that way, because hard-boiled eggs and rolled oats are not a balanced ration, and it is also difficult to get them to eat the balanced mash ration when they once learn the other. A healthy poult does not need to be taught to eat, it just naturally does it. If Nature had wanted poults to have hard-boiled eggs she would not have provided that the poult draw the raw egg yolk into its body for its first nourishment.

RESULTS WITH COD LIVER OIL. —In previous years we have used many raw eggs to moisten the mash with, but this season we had few eggs and many poults, and as we knew that cod liver oil contained vitamin D that the egg yolk contained, we substituted the oil for the eggs. We have been very much pleased with the results, and expect to feed it again next year. We have given it to our breeders in former years, and felt that it helped to produce strong, fertile eggs, but this year was the first time we have fed it to poults. I have read several poultry bulletins where it advised the feeding of cod liver oil to chickens from the third week— not before. We fed it to our poults in the very first meal, and I consider it far more valuable the first three weeks than after that time. We continued to feed it throughout the growing season, and to date have fed over 80 gallons.

GENERAL CARE.—At a week old, if the weather was right, we allowed the poults to go out on the ground in a small yard connected with the runway of the brooder house and enclosed by a fine mesh wire one foot high. Just as soon as they had learned how to get back into the house we took the wire down and allowed them the run of the yard the brooder house was in, which was about one acre to a house. We had five small brooder houses. I think it most important that the different sizes be kept separated until they are open on all four sides.

SOUR MILK AND BUTTERMILK. —If poults are allowed clabber or sour milk at all times for the first two weeks they will fairly live on it. No roof. These open roosts are their permanent roosts. A wild turkey never roosts right out in the open, but selects a well-protected tree. All of our roosts have roofs, although just as soon as they were accustomed to the house roosts, which was usually around six to eight weeks of age, we taught them to go on outside roosts, open on four sides, but with as lots that are allowed to run together. Our earliest hatches were weaned from heat at five weeks, small portable roosts were placed in the brooder houses in place of the stoves, and at least two months old, and then there should not be more than three weeks difference in the ages of the the exclusion of the mash, which we consider essential for them. So for the first two weeks we give them sour milk or clabber about three times a day, and then only for short intervals. We do the same with water. After about two weeks we try to keep clabber, or sour milk, or semi-solid buttermilk before them all the time. We are most particular about water, and keep their water containers always filled with fresh clean water. When they are about a month old we place a little covered hopper containing hulled oats (oats with the husks removed) and whole wheat where the poults can help themselves at any time. At about two months of age we add a little whole corn, gradually making the mixture one-third of each by September. During the warm weather they will eat more oats and wheat than corn, and we cater to their appetites. We feed yellow corn, and never any new grains. They have are about two weeks old, allowing them to run in and out at will. I cannot believe it hurts a turkey to get its feet wet, in fact, I think they enjoy it. But we all know that the lungs of all poultry are in the backs, and I do think their backs should be protected when they roost outdoors. That is why all of our roosts are covered, although open on all sides. We do not believe in coddling the poults with too much heat, and we gradually break them to a fresh air living. We protect the infants from cold winds, which they seem to dislike very much. The fact that we have had no disease of any kind in this flock of a thousand, tells the tale whether or not they are healthy and vigorous. On October 22 at a week less than six months of age, we had gobblers that weighed 27½ lbs., and pullets that weighed 16½ lbs., and they are still growing. Our earliest hatch this year took place on April 28.

TRY COMMON SENSE.—My message to people in the East who would like to raise turkeys but who are fearful because so many bulletins and papers keep telling them that it cannot be done any more in the East, with success, is to go ahead and try, and to do the opposite of everything they have previously done in their 5-ft. lightweight fencing, and the holes for the light poles that hold the

(continued on page six)

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