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Martin Johnson

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POULTRY NOTES

NOTES OF INTEREST THAT WILL HELP OUR READERS WITH THEIR MANY POULTRY PROBLEMS

BY POLK T. BRAMBLE
(Proprietor Bramble Poultry Farm)

The brooding of day-old chicks is the most important problem that confronts the raiser of poultry at this season of the year.

Young chicks that have never seen hen and will not see one until the are well grown are being taken out of incubators and consigned to mechanical mothers regulated and adjusted by the hand of man.

While it is true that the modern brooder has been so perfected that it regulates the temperature to a nicety and raises chicks better than any hen, yet it must be remembered that the actual temperatures which it maintains is set by human hands; the machine will do all that it is asked to do but man sets it and establishes the degree of warmth that it is asked to keep.

The question of temperature is of the utmost importance since young chicks suffer greatly if exposed to a degree of heat that either is not hot enough or else is too hot.

Many experienced brooder men adjust and keep the temperatures of their hovers in accordance with the behavior of the chicks under them; if the youngsters are seen to crowd toward the source of heat, more is given until the brood is seen to rest in a circle around the canopy and is heard to give that not of contentment that is so familiar to every operator.

We believe the best practice is to run the hover-heat in accordance with a thermometer which should show 90 to 95 degrees of warmth.

If the attendant is careless the heat may run way down because the oil is low or out or because an improper adjustment has been made or by reason of the lamp or stove pipe being dirty. In such cases the chicks receive a severe chilling from which they never really completely recover. Should the form of carelessness be to turn the lamp up too high or to build too big a fire or to set the thermostat too high the chicks will get a roasting if they cannot get far enough away from the heat and from this overheating consequences occur that are as serious as chilling.

Good brooders are equipped with devices that enable a careful man to regulate them with great exactness and the directions which come with each hover should be followed as implicitly as incubator rules.

Chicks must receive a temperature that is neither too hot nor too cold; sudden changes are dangerous and perhaps fatal.

In this connection we believe that many poultrymen are unjustly accused of supplying deceased chicks when in reality the whole trouble is due to improper brooding.

The chilling or over-heating of chicks is apt to bring on bowel trouble that is "tagged" at once as White Diarrhoea—and the shipper of these chicks is marked down as a man who supplying stock that has this disease.

As a matter of fact no such disease is present but the cause of the trouble is that the digestion of the little birds has been completely upset by the treatment they have received by the brooder operator.

Purchasers of chicks should pause and reflect their own actions before accusing a shipper of supplying stock that is not in all respects healthy; a brood of chicks of the greatest vitality and strength can be killed in a few days by improper brooding.

Fight coccidiosis with milk and sanitation. That milk feeding and a rigid program of sanitation are the two most powerful weapons to use in combatting this destructive disease has been demonstrated in experimental work at the California Agricultural Experiment Station.

For when buttermilk or some other form of milk was fed in large quantities, the California investigators found that the chick deaths were reduced to one-half and one-eighth of that in the infected groups which received no treatment.

Medicinal treatment showed no beneficial results. On the contrary, losses in some of the groups on rations containing different drugs were even greater than in the control groups.

To fully understand the control of this disease which has assumed alarming proportions in recent years, it is necessary to know something about its nature.

The cause of all the trouble is a very small parasite—so small that it cannot be seen with the naked eye. The damage is done when the mature coccidia burrow into the intestinal wall, especially in the wall of the caeca or blind pouches which lie one on each side of the lower part of the bowel and connect with the bowel about four or five inches from the vent.

Coccidiosis is known as a selflimitings disease. When the organism have done their work in the intestines, they change to the egg stage and leave the body in the droppings. If healthy chicks pick up coccida in this stage, the organisms will pass through the digestive tract without doing any harm.

But under several days of suitable temperature and moisture conditions, these eggs will mature into the infections or harmful stage. In this stage the coccidia hatch and begin their destructive work immediately upon entering the intestinal tract.

The disease is common to chicks of from four to fifteen weeks of age, but the greatest damage is done in the four to eight week period when 100 per cent of the chicks in an infected brood may die in but a few days.

Practically no loss of flesh can be noticed in young chicks because death comes so quickly. The birds droop somewhat, show lack of appetite, and stand with ruffled feathers. A diarrhoea may be present. The droppings are likely to be almost any color and often may be bloodstained.

Plans for treatment are as follows:

Plan One

Remove regular mash and feed following: 40 lbs. dry skim milk, 10 lbs. wheat bran, 30 lbs. yellow cornmeal, 20 lbs.ground barley.

Feed grain twice daily, but restrict amount to one-third or one-half of mash consumed. Provide an abundance of greens.

Add one quart of cod liver oil to each 100 pounds of mash.

Plan Two

Keep skim milk, buttermilk, or fed semi-solid buttermilk before the chicks all the time.

Remove all water.

Feed no mash.

Feed grain twice daily.

Provide an abundance of greens.

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