

THE POULTRY YARD

Scrubs vs. Pure Breeds— Selecting Breeders.

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There are certain things that hold good in any stock you select, whether pure-breeds, cross-breeds or grades. The two things that I wish you would not get away from are (1) constitution, and, (2) good health. I have raised a great many prize birds and I attribute my success largely to the fact that I never would let pretty feathers pull me away from a good strong constitution. I mean by constitution, a bird that has good form, room for good lungs, good heart and good digestive organs, and they must have good health. Selection of birds is very important. What do you want a bird for? What is the object of breeding? Select the bird that has the qualities you wish. What do we mean by breed and variety? Breed is a race of fowls, members of which maintain distinct characteristics which they possess in common.

I am going to talk about two classes of poultry. (1) General Breeds, and, (2) Egg Breeds. General Purpose Breeds—Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds and Orpingtons. Egg Breeds—Leghorns, Minorcas, Anconas, Spanish and Hamburgs.

Breed is a broader term than variety and includes variety, Plymouth Rocks, for instance, have the breed name Plymouth Rocks. There are several varieties of Plymouth Rocks, the White, Barred and Blue. All of these Plymouth Rocks possess the same qualities in common, same size, shape, style of comb, color of eye, color of skin, but differ in plumage. Size and shape determine breed, the color determines variety. All of the General Purpose Breeds are similar in make up and are the farmers' favorite, and if you wish to get a breed that will hatch and raise its young, from its own eggs, you will select one of these breeds. For egg production you take one of the egg producing breeds above mentioned.

Egg breeds are not adapted to general purpose. Their business is to lay eggs and do not invest in these birds expecting them to hatch and raise their own young. A Leghorn hen's business is to lay and she is so busy laying eggs that she is not expected to keep house and take care of the family.

Color is a matter of taste. Take the breed possessing the quality you want and then take the variety suiting you best. You can get most of these in any color you wish, with

the exception of Rhode Island Reds. The comb determines the variety of Rhode Island Reds, one being rose comb and the other single comb.

The following story is a good one in regard to color: "Uncle Sam, what is the best chicken?" Scratching his head he said: "De white 'uns is de easiest to see on the roost, but the black 'uns is de easiest to hide when you catch 'em."

Some people in the country object to the very white chickens on the account of hawks and owls and thieves. Nearly all wild animals, or those that have survived, are those adapting themselves to the color surrounding them. The white chickens are the easiest to breed, yet this offers an objection to them in some sections. The Brown Leghorn is preferred to the white on that account. Most of the egg farmers in the north and east use White Leghorn females. The large meat breeds, Brahmans, Cochins and Langshans, are good chickens, but are not adapted to General Purpose Breeds.

The question may arise, "Shall we keep pure-breeds, mongrels, or common stuff?" I am pretty well acquainted with the poultry conditions in the country, especially in the Southern States, and I do not know of a single instance in my knowledge where a man has made a success of the poultry business to any great degree where he has used common stuff or mongrels. I would just as soon try to go bear hunting with a bird dog as to go into the poultry business with common, dung-hill stock.

In addition to furnishing produce for a Baltimore house, we were furnishing fresh eggs daily, paying us 10 cents above market price, but the demand grew so great on us during the hatching season, that we were compelled to put in some common eggs to help supply this egg trade, but we found a very small per cent of the eggs from common fowls were fit to sell as first class eggs. We did not get the same value for our feed. We only tried that once and then abandoned the mongrel hens, and the next year we closed out the grade hens because we got better results from pure-breeds. There is no mongrel or common chicken that will compare with egg-producing breeds, because these breeds have been bred for centuries for egg production, and you can get more eggs from them.

Compare the size of the eggs of the egg breeds and general purpose breeds. The Minorcas and the Spanish lay the largest eggs of any of the breeds. The Leghorns, well-

bred, lay about as large eggs as the general purpose breeds. All of the general purpose breeds lay brown-shelled eggs. It is some shade of brown and the egg breeds lay white eggs, so if your market calls for a white egg you will perhaps need an egg breed to get it. If your market calls for a brown egg, you will need the general purpose breeds. Some say that this is all foolishness, and that eggs are all alike, but if you are in the poultry business instead of fooling away time trying to convince your customers as to what they should have or want, you had better just give them what they ask for. The pure-breeds, as compared to the cross-breeds and grades, have a chief advantage in uniformity. To get highest price for anything on the market you should have uniformity. They are uniform in size, shape and color. I have been told that it makes no difference what color the eggs were. By putting white eggs in cases by themselves and brown eggs in cases by themselves, we got two cents more on the dozen just because they looked better, and it is the same way with the chickens, either dressed or in a crate. If they are uniform in size and shape and have the same color of skin, they will bring a better price per pound than the mixed product. With the pure-bred you can count on what you are going to get, but in breeding common stock you really don't know what to expect, except that you don't expect

to get very high grade or good quality.

In regard to the raising of pure-breeds, we are sometimes told that we may have to sell our pure-breeds at market price, and it is a fact that you will sell high class stuff at the market price, but if you are breeding mongrel stock there is one certainty—you will never get more than the market price for them. If you have common stock it is not wise to throw it away, but it may be utilized.

I made a little experiment in breeding common stock and grades and I was able to find a common hen that did not seem to have any improved blood in her at all. She weighed about four pounds. With her I found one of these little roosters that is a nuisance around the place. He weighed a little less than the hen, but we got more eggs from her and we mated her with a large pure-bred Barred Plymouth Rock male, and these eggs were all hatched at the same time, and I have a slide of three of that group. Little one represents pure mongrel strain and the other represents a cross of the Plymouth Rock male on the common hen. The point es-



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