

Poultry Department

Conducted by Uncle Joe.

HATCHING CHICKS.

Many now have started hatching out more or less early chickens. In a great many localities there is a sort of competition as to who can produce the first tomatoes and the first chicks in the new year, and those who have already set down are by now seeing life moving. The early hatched chicken is always more troublesome than later on, but if well cared for, they pay for the extra trouble. The cockerels can be sold off early at a good price, and the pullets come on to lay and will often continue right through the fall and winter. If a large roomy coop is provided for the hen, and a good dry floor, there should not be much difficulty in doing a good part for the chicks. If the hen is not crowded, she can keep the youngsters proof against the cold, but if the floor is damp, or only the bare earth used, the cold and wet can strike right up into them, and the hen has no chance. Provide a dry covered run separate for the youngsters, and keep plenty of dry ashes down, for this can easily be replenished and raked over before it becomes foul. The food can be given in little troughs and removed as soon as they have had their fill. Give water or milk to drink, and let the vessel be so arranged that the chicks can only get their bills in it, thus avoiding wet, cold feet. Cut up finely any sort of green food that is handy—growing wheat, oats, rye, clover, kale, rape, or even turnip tops. For the first week feed every two hours from 7 a. m. to 6 p. m., giving them rolled or flaked oats at

each feed. After the first week feed a variety of cracked grain, corn, wheat, oats, and any seeds you happen to have, such as cane, peas, etc. Never feed them a wet, sodden mass of corn meal. If you must feed them corn-meal because "mother did," give it to them dry, mixed with dry bran and placed in vessels so it cannot be fouled or scratched out. The meal being dry, they cannot eat enough to hurt them.

The brooding coops for these early hatches should be located facing the south, and well protected from the north winds. Dry cold will not hurt; it is the wet and wind together that plays havoc with the early hatches. With the boarded floor and the front properly shut up, no vermin can get in, and while allowing for ventilation at the top of the coop, the rain should not be able to blow in. So have the roof well over the side all around. On all nice, warm sunny days, it is well to allow the chicks to run at large up in the day, keeping the hen confined to her coop.

Securing Fertile Eggs.

The problem of securing a large percentage of fertile eggs is of great importance to every poultry raiser. Their success depends on their ability to obtain them. This subject deserves a great deal more attention than it receives. It is very discouraging to set a lot of eggs, have the hens set on them three weeks and then in the end hatch only one or two chicks from each setting.

Eggs that are strong in fertility

come from strong, robust, healthy fowls and they hatch good, strong chicks. It must be remembered, that it requires the right kind of feed, good care and a knowledge how to select breeders to secure fertile eggs.

Of course the fertility of eggs depends a great deal upon the condition of the male. If he is not in good condition, or if he is allowed to run with too many females, the eggs are liable to be infertile. The male is half the flock, and should be in perfect condition.

The number of females that should be allowed to run with a male depends upon his age, vigor, the breed, and whether the birds are kept in confinement or on free range. A male that is in good condition ought to be able to take care of ten hens if a Plymouth Rock, Wyandotte or Rhode Island Red, and from fifteen to twenty if White or Brown Leghorns.

The male should be at least one year old and not much over two years old. One that was hatched in February, March, or April, will, if properly deared, will be in good condition for breeding purposes the next season. He should run with the hens only during the breeding season, so that his vitality will not be impaired. The females should be in the pink of condition and at least one year old. Pullets hatched in February, March, or April will be fit for breeders the following year.

It is a well known fact that eggs are more fertile in the spring and summer months than during winter. This shows that freer range and a variety of green food help in obtaining more fertile eggs.

Inbreeding is another cause of infertile eggs. Where it has been practiced a number of years the strain will at last "run out". The eggs will be weaker in fertility each year and

the fowls will be smaller each year. To have strong, robust, healthy fowls you must introduce new blood about every ten years into your flocks. Good sound grain should be fed at all times. Fresh water, charcoal, grit and if come-at-able oyster shells should be kept before them at all times.

The poultry house should be well ventilated, but no draughts, as an abundance of fresh air, is essential to health.

Question: "I have pullets which I will use as breeders the season now opening mated with a two-year-old cock, hatched in March and April, 1912, and are as large as hens, but are not laying yet. Should I force them for eggs, or allow them to lay in their own good time?"

"Would it be safe to use eggs from this pen for incubation as early as February 1, provided the pullets begin to lay this month?"

"Am told that first litter of eggs laid by pullets should not be used for hatching, but should wait until the pullet becomes broody and starts on her second litter. Do you think this the better plan, or could I use the first eggs laid?"

Answer: In regard to forcing your fowls for eggs, I would not advise you to feed condiments or stimulants of any kind. It would be safe to use eggs from this pen for incubation at the time you mention, and, in fact, at an earlier date if the birds begin to lay sooner. It is not necessary to lose the first litter of eggs laid by pullets. This "litter" idea exists largely in some people's imagination. The third or fourth egg after mating is likely to be fertile as well as all others laid after that, as long as the bird is in the breeding pen, and all such eggs are suitable for hatching.

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.....Cultivator
.....Gasoline Engine
.....Ensilage Grinder
.....Flour
.....Fanning Mill
.....Grain Drill
.....Grain Binder
.....Harness
.....Harrow
.....Harvester
.....Hay Forks
.....Hay Loaders
.....Hay Rakes
.....Heating Stove
.....Incubator
.....Manure Spreader
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Check Here

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.....Potato Digger
.....Potato Planter
.....Pump
.....Roofing
.....Sewing Machine
.....Seeds
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