

As a general rule, a White Leghorn commences to lay at six months old, and the heavier breeds at from seven to eight months. To force to maturity is always a mistake.

THE BREEDING-PEN.

Another correspondent wants to know if it would be a safe course to put three roosters with forty hens in a breeding-pen. This method would be productive of satisfactory results if, providing a good range were provided and the management were sound, all the hens were of the one type. Then, nature's selection being at work, good vigorous stock would probably result. If, however, there be any variation in the type of the hens the results would be very uneven, and only a percentage of the progeny would be up to the desired standard. Mating birds demands great care on the part of the breeder. It is not always possible to bring birds together which will nick with each other, but the breeder can certainly bring about some improvement in type in the process of mating by using a female which is strong where the male is weak, or *vice versa*. Such safe methods of eliminating weaknesses and strengthening desired characters cannot be left to nature. They can be controlled by human will; and, indeed, the remarkable development of all our races of domestic stock is mainly due to man's interference with nature to the extent of selecting the animals he mates to secure a given ideal. Say you have a cock bird which is built just after your conception of what you require, but he is a little on the leggy side. He may be the best bird you ever owned but for this weakness. Would you not select hens to mate with him which are all low set, rather than putting leggy birds to him and thereby exaggerating what should be minimized? Few of the types which will have any influence in raising the standard are to be found even in the best flock in the country, and therefore the very greatest care should be taken in selecting the breeding-pens. It is a much-safer policy to have too few birds in the breeding-pens than too many.

THIS YEAR'S STOCK OF THE POULTRY PLANTS.

It is gratifying to be able to report that the young stock of this season on the poultry plants of the Department is of a very good standard. The progeny of the utility birds imported from Australia last year are particularly attractive. Certainly all the birds are not everything that could be desired, but it is never possible to secure the ideal aimed at all at once. For instance, the Black Orpingtons, of capital utility build and correct specimens of the breed, are a little more open in the feather than I would like. By next season, however, it is hoped this defect will be eliminated from the second generation by corrective matings. The White Orpingtons, while of a greatly improved