

season. On the other hand, the late-hatched chicken can scarcely ever be depended on to lay before the late winter or early spring, except, of course, when it has been specially cared for and is the descendant of an early-maturing strain. The object must be to have the pullet commencing to lay in April and go right through her first laying season without moulting.

To secure a good winter egg-yield not only must the pullet be brought out at the right season of the year, but in addition it must be properly fed and managed from the time it leaves the shell and throughout all stages of its development. Special care is necessary with the pullet just before or after it has commenced to lay. The treatment must be uniform in every respect or disappointment will be met with at a time when dear eggs are expected. The pullet should be placed in its winter quarters well before the laying-period commences, in order that it may get over the fretting stage and feel at home before being called upon to lay. A change of food or quarters will usually upset any laying flock, but this applies in double force where the young pullet is concerned, having the effect of putting the bird into a premature moult at a time when eggs are most desired. Not only does the maintenance of the one diet often prevent a false moult, but it encourages a bird to attain its maximum production. That laying-birds require frequent changes of diet is one of the theories which sadly fail when put into practice. The truth of this is borne out by results obtained at egg-laying competitions, when the one class of food was used from start to finish.

Of course, practically any old hen, even when subjected to indifferent treatment, will lay in the spring and summer months, the natural breeding season for bird-life. In the case of the pullet, however, although she may be bred to lay in winter she will not produce her artificial product unless everything is in her favour. In short, the birds should be provided with conditions resembling as far as possible those that prevail in spring and summer time. The house must be roomy, with an open or partly open front in order to secure the admittance of fresh air and sunlight to all parts of its interior. Care must be taken that there are no cracks in the back or side walls to let in a cold draught—a most common cause of colds, the forerunner of roup. The floor of the house should be at least a few inches above ground-level, in order to keep it dry, as a wet cold floor does not tend to promote winter laying. Have the floor well covered with scratching-material, such as straw, &c., in which the whole-grain food should be scattered. This will induce the birds to exercise and keep busy, an essential for the maintenance of good health and vigour.

Referring again to the importance of not subjecting the pullet to any sudden change when entering her productive season, it may be mentioned that even suddenly changing the class of litter used will sometimes have an undesirable effect on the egg-yield. I have seen flocks of pullets go right off laying from no other cause. Any contemplated change in this respect should be introduced by degrees. Another important point in handling the pullets is to have the birds so tame that the attendant can go among them without frightening them. In this connection more eggs will be gathered if the care of the birds is left to one person. Keep the quarters sweet and clean—the secret of preventing vermin from making their appearance.