

While the menace of fireblight is still on hand, no risk should be taken in this regard; all prunings should be carefully collected and destroyed by burning, in preference to the practice adopted by many orchardists of placing the prunings in or under the shelter-belts adjacent to the orchard. This is always dangerous, from many points of view, and should be avoided.

—*J. W. Collard, Orchard Instructor, Auckland.*

POULTRY-KEEPING.

CARE OF THE YOUNG STOCK.

It may be reiterated that if only profitable stock are to be reared all chickens should be hatched out during the next two weeks at the latest. Chickens brought out later will never return even a fair profit over their keep. Present indications are that foodstuffs, particularly wheat and its by-products, will reach a high level of value by the time this season's stock reach a productive stage. This, together with the fact that the average price of eggs has been gradually declining, is sufficient to indicate that the present aim of poultry-keepers should be to secure quality of stock rather than numbers alone. It should never be forgotten that a better return will always be secured from a small flock of early-hatched birds than from a large number late-hatched.

Not only must the chickens be hatched early, but in addition they should be given every opportunity to make healthy development. This implies liberal feeding from first to last. Plenty of good grain is necessary, but an ample supply of succulent green stuff is of equal importance; indeed, young stock will never thrive to the best advantage unless this is provided with a free hand.

Before the chickens are removed from the brooder every care should be taken to make the houses fit to receive the young birds. Where the quarters intended for the chickens have recently been occupied by adult stock they should be thoroughly cleaned and sprayed with a good disinfectant, as there are few houses that are quite free from vermin. Do not allow the chickens to huddle in the corners of the house when first removed from the brooder, or the mortality may be great. The corners should be rounded off with fine-mesh wire netting. In addition, a temporary hover made of sacking or similar material should be provided for the chickens to sleep under. This will give them the seclusion which they naturally look for after leaving a closed-in brooder; but at the same time it must be arranged in such a way that the birds can secure an ample supply of fresh air.

The chickens should not be allowed to sleep on a hard floor, as this is apt to cause crooked breast-bones; the floor should be well bedded down with perfectly dry straw. Grass hay should never be used for this purpose, as it is apt to heat and bring on a sweated condition of the chickens, with serious results. The chief trouble caused in this way is an inflammation of the veins. It first makes its appearance in the hock-joints, which become discoloured; then a gangrenous swelling follows; in a few days the wings become affected in a similar manner, and later the neck and head swell. At this stage death is not far off. There is no cure for this trouble; it is merely a question of prevention. Do not overcrowd; provide ample ventilation; keep the floors clean and dry; and check everything that tends to create a moist atmosphere. Wherever possible a piece of fresh ground should be provided for the growing stock. This is one of the secrets for their sound development.

Do not allow chicks of different ages to run together. Some people even go so far as to allow the young birds to run with the adult stock. This is a serious mistake. It is useless taking every care of the chicks during the brooder stage and then placing them at such a disadvantage. Few old birds are quite free from vermin. Incubator chicks, if given careful management, should go right on to maturity without having to fight parasitic life; but exposing them to probable vermin infection by forcing them to run with old stock and on stale ground is obviously all against their attaining desired size and sound constitutional vigour. No care and attention is too good for the growing birds.