

is capable of universal application, and, not unlike all other things connected with poultry-keeping, local conditions must always be taken into account.

PROSPECTIVE BREEDING-HENS.

The next breeding season is certainly far off, but nevertheless no time should be lost in selecting the best hens for future breeding operations. If the best specimens are to be secured the selection must be carried out before the general moult sets in. At this time certain signs manifest themselves indicating laying-capacity and constitutional vigour. These signs generally vanish as the moult sets in, and are not easily observed again until towards the termination of the following laying season. The signs include late moulting, tight feathering, bright prominent eyes, clean face (often the head being devoid of feathers), deep abdominal development, with fine texture of skin, well-developed crop, and an active businesslike appearance. These points should be combined with breed characteristics, and, above all, the birds should conform to the standard weights of the breed they represent.

As the birds are selected they should be carefully marked and placed by themselves, preferably on a free range. They should not be forced for egg-production. Such birds should receive a plain ration and be kept in a healthy but not overfat condition, and otherwise given every opportunity to recuperate after their exhaustive laying season. It must be remembered that they have the moult to go through, which is in itself a considerable drain on the body. This must be made good before the laying season, as if the birds are to leave highly desirable progeny they must have the necessary vitality inseparable from good health when called upon to produce eggs for reproductive purposes.

When considering the birds that are to be kept for future breeding purposes it is a good plan to have trap-nests, so that birds which lay small eggs may be discarded and their places taken by better stock. The matter of small eggs is becoming a serious one, especially in view of the fact that they cannot be exported to the same advantage as, say, the 2 oz. product. There is no better way of raising the standard weight of eggs than by eliminating from the breeding-pen birds which lay eggs of an undesirable size.

DEAR EGGS.

During next month the majority of the adult hens will be preparing for or passing through the moulting process. It is therefore a time when the pullets must be depended upon for the main egg-yield. Obviously the pullets should be provided with every favouring condition if a maximum of dear-season eggs is to be produced. Of course, they should now be settled down in their permanent winter quarters, and the management they receive should be as uniform as possible. Changing the birds from house to house just when they have commenced to lay, or are on the point of laying, is apt to bring on a premature moult and a loss of winter eggs. Any sudden change of diet is also apt to have this undesirable effect; any change should be made as gradually as possible.