

Care should also be taken to breed not only from birds which possess points indicative of purity of breed, laying-capacity, and undoubted constitutional vigour, but also from those laying a good marketable-sized egg—namely, 2 oz. or over in weight. In selecting a male to head the breeding-pen an endeavour should be made to have a bird with a maximum of constitutional points, and which is the son of a hen known to be a heavy layer of good-sized eggs. It is now generally conceded that the male bird is largely responsible in transmitting qualities for high egg-production. It is therefore well to make sure that he possesses a pedigree of performance in egg-laying.

It is not possible to say how many hens should be mated to one male, as this depends entirely on the vigour of the male and the amount of range available. On a free range good fertility of eggs may be obtained with one male to twenty or thirty hens, but the number of hens must be considerably reduced when the birds are under confined conditions. In the latter case six or eight of the heavy breeds and ten to twelve of the lighter breeds are sufficient for best results.

#### HOW TO FEED THE BREEDERS.

It will generally be found that better fertility of eggs and stronger chickens are produced from the feeding of grain to the breeders night and morning, mash food being eliminated from the ration. On no account should high egg-laying records be looked for in the breeding-pen. Thus meat, milk, or other forcing-foods should be fed with caution. At such a time birds cannot be over-supplied with green material, while crushed fresh sea-shell, gravel grit, and clean water should be within reach at all times. The aim should be to feed the birds well, while at the same time guarding them against storing up an excess of fat—a common cause of infertile eggs and the production of chickens that are difficult to rear. Having this in view, plenty of exercise is essential. Where a free range is not provided, exercise can be best induced by feeding the grain ration in deep litter in the house, whereby the birds are compelled to scratch for it.

The male should be examined frequently in order to ascertain if vermin are present. If these are found a good dusting with insect-powder will have the desired effect. Where it is found that he is not in a good breeding condition he should be taken out of the pen daily and given a good nourishing meal by himself. Very often a male is too attentive to the hens and allows them to get the bulk of the food, resulting in a rapid loss of condition in himself. An extra meal, as suggested, will do much to correct matters in this respect.

#### PERIOD FOR HATCHING.

For the main flock it will generally be found that from the middle of July to the end of August is the best time to have chickens of the heavier breeds hatched out, and for the lighter breeds from the middle of August to the end of September. It should be always remembered that it pays best to have the chickens hatched on the early side rather than on the late side. Besides