

POULTRY-KEEPING.

CARE OF THE YOUNG STOCK.

FEBRUARY can generally be regarded as a comparatively easy month on the poultry plant, nevertheless there are several important matters that demand close attention. Perhaps the most important is to see that the pullets are specially cared for, in order that they may produce their maximum egg-yield when high prices rule for this product at a later date. It is a mistake to conclude that because the young birds have passed the brooder stage they can be left to scratch for their living and generally look after themselves. They are now just as apt to get a setback—which will never be caught up—as at any stage of their development.

Only good sound grain foods should be fed—as much as the birds can eat at each meal without waste. Good short plump oats are an excellent food for growing birds, and when available should be included in the ration. It has the effect of keeping them steadily growing, while it tends to prevent the pullets from attaining maturity at too early an age. Green food, such as silver-beet, cabbage, rape, or finely chaffed succulent grass, clover, lucerne, &c., should be fed in abundance, while grit and charcoal should always be in reach of the birds to pick at. Do not fail to keep the drinking-fountains clean and regularly filled. Any neglect in this direction, and especially at this season of the year, will have an injurious effect on the birds.

Keep the quarters clean—the secret of preventing vermin making their appearance—remembering at all times that young stock in particular cannot be satisfactorily developed if compelled to sleep in dirty or lice-infested quarters. Where possible give the growing birds a good range, as confined or hothouse conditions do not tend to promote the development of healthy and robust stock. Of course, reference is now made only to the young pullets and cockerels intended for future breeding purposes. Cockerels intended for the table should have their exercise curtailed, as a free range does not tend towards rapid flesh-formation. Above all things, see that the accommodation is not overtaxed, as crowded stock can never give a good account of themselves. Clean, roomy quarters and a good range, together with liberal feeding, are among the chief essentials in developing young stock.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GRIT.

If fowls are to be maintained in a healthy productive condition it is essential that they be provided with an unlimited supply of grit. It is not generally realized that the lack of grit not only means a reduced egg-yield, but is also a frequent cause of liver troubles, crop disorders, indigestion, and consequent disorganization of the system. The chief function of grit is to assist digestion. It must be remembered that fowls have no teeth to masticate their food. This process is performed in the gizzard by muscular action and a grinding process, the food being ground between the grit swallowed by the bird and the walls of the gizzard. Thus, the harder and sharper the grit the better will it assist the grinding process. No matter how hard and sharp