

pullets that do not start to lay until July ever repay what it cost to rear them, and their keep. The rearing of a large number of good pullets successfully is a highly specialized business that requires a great deal of experience, close attention to every detail, and one must ever be on the watch for any sign that indicates unsuitable environment, especially night conditions. The overcrowding of laying-houses has often been the cause of poor egg-production, false moults, or colds amongst stock.

Some poultry-keepers are under the impression that by placing an extra perch in a house that suitable accommodation is being provided for extra birds, but such a practice does not always prove successful. A house 20 ft. long by 20 ft. deep is large enough for 100 laying hens, and one 14 ft. long by 16 ft. deep for 50 birds; in other words, each bird should be allowed 4 sq. ft. floor space. Experience has shown that where less than 4 sq. ft. are allowed each bird the results have not been as good as with the larger space.

When a house is overcrowded it is almost sure to become damp, and dampness in laying-houses must be avoided at all costs. It is well to remember that birds spend a good deal of their time on the perches; therefore, conditions in their roosting quarters must be such that plenty of fresh air is available and a dry atmosphere is provided.

There is a growing tendency amongst successful poultry-keepers not to run more than fifty laying hens together. A little overcrowding during any one stage may not be very noticeable, especially to the inexperienced person, but if the same mistake is made each year there is sure to be a gradual deterioration of the general quality of the flock. Now that the hatching season is here again it is well to consider the great advantage of hatching only the number for which there is ample accommodation, and of aiming for quality and not quantity.

Colds.

A careful watch should be kept at all times on the stock for the first sign of colds. If dust or dirt is seen adhering to the nostrils of a bird it is usually safe to say that that bird is suffering from a cold, and it should be separated from the rest. If possible, the cause should be found: the cause is often compelling young stock to roost in crowded or badly-ventilated houses, and such conditions should of course be corrected. The mouth and nostrils of the affected bird should be washed with warm water containing one teaspoonful of common salt to a quart. The secretion should be removed from the nostrils. If the sides of the head under the eyes are gently massaged before and after it is washed, the secretion is loosened.

For a poultry-keeper living near the sea fresh sea-water is of value for bathing a bird's head if a bird is suffering from a cold. After the mouth and nostrils have been washed as suggested, it is advisable to disinfect those parts with a solution of half hydrogen peroxide and water. All affected birds should be given Epsom salts, about one teaspoonful to each three birds. This can be given twice in a week by being dissolved and mixed in the mash.

Natural Incubation.

September is looked upon as the best month of the year in which to hatch out chickens, especially those of the light breeds. Though many farmers may find it difficult to get broody hens until a little later, every effort should be made to get all chickens hatched before the end of October at the latest, as late-hatched stock does not do well.

Where only a few clutches are required, and if one is not altogether satisfied with the production from the stock on hand, it will be sound economy to spend a few shillings on the purchase of a sitting or two of eggs from a good strain. It will be found that there is as much difference between the laying ability of pullets hatched from stock that have been bred for egg-production and the mongrel-bred pullet as there is in speed between the average hack and a thoroughbred horse.