

scratching should be regularly removed. These little details, such as the regular forking-up and levelling of the litter and the addition of a little fresh material regularly, do not take up a great deal of time, but they all assist in keeping the birds interested and contented, which in turn means better results.

Nests and their Care.

The nests should be arranged in as convenient a way as possible, for they must be visited at least once or twice each of the 365 days during the year. In fact, the time involved in attending to the birds should be reduced where possible, and this can often be done when erecting the houses by placing doors, gates, and nest-boxes in the most convenient places.

The nests should be placed high enough from the ground that all the floor-space may be utilized as a scratching-ground, and it is advisable to see that they are deep enough that other birds cannot see those that are laying. Attention to this detail has a tendency to prevent vent-picking and cannibalism.

Though many hens like to lay in the same nests, it is advisable to provide one nest for each four or five birds, and plenty of clean dry nesting-material should be kept in each nest. Amongst the most popular nesting-materials are straw, straw chaff, shavings, sawdust, especially *Pinus radiata*, and sand, while quite a few poultry-keepers use shell grit. However, whatever material is used an ample supply should be provided, for much loss is occasioned each year from a lack of suitable nests and nesting-material.

Grit and Oyster-shell Grit.

A supply of oyster-shell and metal grit should always be within reach of the birds. It is well to provide separate boxes for each material, and so place them in the house that the grit will not get covered over with litter when the birds are scratching. By placing these boxes in the houses the grit is protected from the weather, for if grit, and especially oyster-shell grit, is allowed to get wet it is likely to get caked, and in such a state is not liked by the birds. Some poultry-keepers fail to appreciate the full value of a constant supply of fresh oyster-shell grit, but most successful poultry-farmers have found that it has paid them to keep this material always before their birds.

Insect Pests.

One of the chief essentials in good poultry management is to keep the house free of insects. When it is remembered that the third generation of one pair of red mite may amount to 120,000, and all this can happen in eight weeks, it is not difficult to realize how a few weeks' neglect could upset one's plans for a whole year.

For this reason every precaution should be taken to keep the perches, nests, and houses free of insects. The perches, nests, and, in fact, everything in the fowlhouse should be movable in order to guard against the ravages of insects. Once each week during the warm weather and once each two or three weeks during the winter months the perches should be painted with a good strong disinfectant. In addition, at least once each year the whole house should be thoroughly cleaned, washed, and disinfected.

Dust Baths.

As the natural way for fowls to keep themselves clean of insects is to dust in the soil, provision should be made for a dust-bath in all houses. A box about 3 ft. square and 1 ft. deep should be sufficient for fifty birds. Dry earth of a sandy nature is suitable for the purpose. It is well to renew this material regularly.

—C. J. C. Cussen, Chief Poultry Instructor, Wellington.