

Notes for the Poultry Farmer

Contributed by Officers
— of the —
Livestock Division

Making a Success of Incubation

SUCCESSFUL poultry farmers usually have a good general knowledge of the various phases of poultry keeping, but it is not uncommon to find some lack of knowledge in one of the various operations, such as incubation, brooding, feeding, or breeding. It is hoped, therefore, that for those whose weak point is incubation this article will supply some pointers which will be of assistance to them in improving their results during the coming hatching season.

It must be realised first of all that the health and condition of the breeding stock is of utmost importance. If the birds are overfat or are being fed too much protein it will have a detrimental effect upon the result obtained in hatching. Close attention must, therefore, be paid to the breeding pens.

Overhaul Your Machine

At the end of each hatching season the incubators should be thoroughly

cleaned and everything put away ready for the following season. If this is done there will be less worry and risk when it comes to setting the machine for the first hatch, quite apart from the fact that the machine will be kept in better order and hence have a longer life.

The whole of the incubator should, however, be thoroughly checked before it is started to ensure that all movable parts are in satisfactory working order, particularly the heating apparatus. Make sure that the ventilation system is free from cobwebs. Although many people do not realise it, a ventilator blocked with cobwebs makes a big difference to the hatching results. It is necessary to remove the top of the machine in order to clean the ventilator properly, which is done by taking out all the screws which hold the top down and then lifting it off completely.

It is a good plan to run some hot water and washing soda through the pipes to clean out any rust, etc., before

finally filling them. The first step in filling the boiler and pipes is to place blocks under the two legs at the boiler end in order to raise this end 3 or 4 inches, when the water may then be poured into the cap. If this is done and the water is poured in **without a stop** until the pipes are full there should be no air locks to cause any trouble. When the pipes have been filled, remove the blocks and make the machine perfectly level, using a builder's spirit level from end to end and from back to front. This is most important if satisfactory hatching is to be obtained.

Care of the Lamp

A new wick should be used each season in the lamp, and should be of sufficient length to reach the bottom. Once the wick has been cut and trimmed so that the flame is round and without peaks, further cutting is unnecessary. It is then only necessary to rub off the char each day with a piece of rag. Rub either to the left or the right each time, as this will ensure the flame remaining even. Once the height of the flame has been set, the regulation of the temperature should be done by altering the damper whenever necessary.

It is advisable to trim the lamp every day, and this operation should be carried out in the morning so that the flame can be watched during the day. This is desirable, as the flame is likely to become drawn and increase in size to some extent after the trimming has been done. Always refill and turn an incubator lamp after turning and cooling the eggs to prevent putting kerosene on to the eggs or egg trays from the hands of the operator. Another important point is to see that the gauge round the burner is kept free from fluff.

The incubator should be run empty for about a week to make sure that it is operating correctly.

The Eggs

All eggs used in incubation should be carefully selected for size, shape, colour, and texture. No egg should be used which is under 2 oz., which is the absolute minimum. See that the

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