

Notes for the Poultry Farmer

Avoid Heavy Losses In Chick-rearing

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THE CHICK-REARING SEASON.— This all-important and busy season of the year has arrived. Upon success in rearing during the next few months depend the profits of next laying season, and for this reason every effort must be made to secure a maximum of success.

Unfortunately, there is a possibility of a certain number of poultrykeepers meeting with management difficulties and disease; for such poultrykeepers, immediate help is essential if losses are to be reduced to a minimum. The Department, therefore, wishes once again to remind poultry keepers that

help, as is required, may be obtained through the services of the Poultry Instructors stationed at the Department's offices in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

A further important point is that when serious losses occur among chickens, poultrykeepers are asked not to accept these losses without ascertaining the real cause of such mortality. Guesswork is dangerous and entirely unnecessary. A few birds forwarded immediately following death to the Superintendent, Animal Research Station, Wallaceville, will bring a full report and advice upon future manage-

ment free of charge. It is often difficult, and sometimes impossible, to ascertain the cause of death by a brief examination of chicks on the farm; brief examinations at home lead to guesswork, while a laboratory examination affords an accurate diagnosis of the trouble.

With all the problems of chick-rearing, whether of management or disease, **immediate action** is the most important factor in checking serious losses—a point which should never be forgotten. All too often officers of the Department are not called in until trouble has become acute and heavy losses sustained. Act early, act quickly, and prevent these heavy losses during the present season.

Management and Feeding of Chickens During the Brooder Stage

By L. COCKER, Poultry Instructor, Christchurch.

POULTRYKEEPERS should by now have completed their preparations for the coming chicken-rearing season. Much depends upon a careful preparation of the housing and equipment for rearing, and brooder houses and equipment should have been thoroughly cleaned and prepared to receive the first batch of chickens.

There is no better lesson in the art of brooding than that provided by a good broody hen. Her first care is to see that her brood is kept warm and comfortable. She will not let them stray too far, and will call them back for a "warm-up" at short intervals, and when food is available. If a brooder is substituted for a hen this same careful attention must still be given, and, with no hen, this responsibility rests with the chicken-rearer until the chickens are old enough to take care of themselves.

Warmth and Comfort

Modern type brooders provide excellent conditions for rearing, and if worked in a common-sense way with due regard for changes in weather, they can be relied upon to pro-

duce good chickens. Ample heat when the chicks are first put under the brooder is **essential**. No chicks straight from the incubator must be allowed to feel cold, and consequently crowd towards the heater. Have sufficient heat to allow the chicks to rest in comfort towards the edge of the brooder. Once the chicks are feeding well and become really active, the heat may be reduced with safety, but not before. A thermometer under the brooder will help the novice to be certain of a temperature of 85 degrees to 90 degrees F. at the start, but the experienced chicken-rearer will watch the chicks and their position under the hover, as their behaviour will clearly demonstrate whether the temperature is right or wrong.

To ensure comfort and to prevent chills, every precaution must be taken to prevent a floor draught. This is usually achieved by placing a metal, cardboard, or wooden guard about 8in. to 12in. high round the outside of the hover for the first few days. The guard is placed about 6 inches from the hover when the chicks are first put in, and is gradually moved further out as the chicks become established. This guard also prevents the chickens

from straying too far from the hover, and possibly crowding into corners when they have failed to find their way back to the warmth.

Fresh Air and Dry Litter

Although any form of draught is highly dangerous, fresh air is essential. The brooder house itself should be well ventilated, but a regular supply of fresh air under the hover is even more important. If this is not ensured the litter will quickly become damp, and the chicks will be subject to colds.

The bedding material under the hover, whether chaff or other material, should be turned over daily and removed as often as it shows signs of becoming damp or badly fouled with droppings. Damp floors and damp litter provide ideal conditions for disease, particularly coccidiosis. One of the main factors in successful chick-rearing is the maintenance of clean litter and clean equipment, and any neglect may easily lead to uneven growth and disease.

Overcrowding

Overcrowding must be avoided, as it causes more second-grade chicks or dead chicks than any other trouble. It checks growth and reduces constitutional vigour until the chickens are ripe to take any disease that may come along.