

# Notes for the Poultry Farmer

## Management of Pullets up to Laying Stage

**I**T is the care and attention which pullets receive up to the laying stage, apart from the inherited qualities of health, stamina, and production capability, that will make them into good laying machines. They are egg-producing machines, and, as everyone knows, machines which are working continuously must be given careful attention at all times.

No matter how good the breeding stock may have been, the quality of the subsequent pullets will depend on the rearing during the growing stage. Time and again it has been noticed that although the chicks have been purchased from reliable breeders the matured birds have been of poor quality, and often the breeding stock is blamed, whereas the fault rests with the rearer of those birds. It is obvious that good stock cannot be reared from poor breeders, but it is possible to rear poor stock from good breeders. In some cases this may be due to lack of knowledge, and it is with this in view that the following points are emphasised.

### Housing

It is necessary that good housing should be provided throughout the life of the birds. Any house used must be free from cracks in the back or side walls, well-ventilated, and have a good floor. Cracks in the walls, as well as bad ventilation, are often the cause of colds in a flock. As the young stock grow older, they need more and more fresh air, and it is this point which a great number of poultry-keepers either forget or ignore. Whereas they themselves make sure they do not live or sleep in stuffy quarters, they keep their stock in conditions which somewhat resemble a hot-house, and it is only natural that as a consequence the stock may be lacking in stamina.

Ventilation is, of course, controlled by climate to a large extent, but this fact need not prevent the poultry-keeper from having his house well ventilated. The space between the top

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plate and the purlin on the back wall should be open, except for wire-netting. If the prevailing wind is from the south, it is quite an easy job to baffle the opening, and thus prevent any wind blowing directly on to the birds. If possible, the front of the house should be open for three feet from the roof downwards. In the event of the prevailing wind being from that direction, it should be possible to shelter the front without interfering with the ventilation. If the house is built with the roof sloping from the back to the front, and carried out beyond the front wall for two feet, this will keep out most of the weather.

The best floor is concrete, but many poultry-keepers still use only a dirt floor. While the least desirable type of floor, providing it is kept dry it will probably be satisfactory until such time as some disease is experienced. The control of disease on a dirt floor is a particularly difficult problem.

### Perching

Pullets should be perched soon after they are six weeks of age. It is advisable to use perches which are 3 inches to 4 inches in width, to prevent, as far as possible, breast-bones becoming bent.

### Overcrowding

The majority of poultry-keepers find no difficulty in rearing a few pullets, but it is a different problem when it comes to rearing a large flock. The failure is then generally caused by overcrowding. A few birds well reared will give better returns than a larger number which have lacked proper attention. When pullets have reached the age of six weeks they will invariably do better if kept in flocks not exceeding one hundred, irrespective of the size of the house provided.

### Cleanliness

This is another point which should receive every attention, since the cleaner the house and surroundings are kept, the better the chance of rearing strong, and healthy stock. A damp or wet floor is an ideal place for certain disease germs to multiply, and

therefore every endeavour should be made to keep the floor dry. Although some poultry-keepers manage to escape trouble for long periods where their birds live under dirty conditions, once disease occurs losses are greater, and control more difficult to effect as compared with well-managed and clean farms.

### Feeding

It is difficult, and practically impossible, after the first few days, to over-feed young growing stock. They should be given as much food as they will eat without waste, for no matter how much food they are given they will not put on fat. However, do not allow food of any description to lie about the floor, as birds picking up such food may be eating something which will upset them, possibly because the food has become sour.

The food fed to young growing stock should be nourishing but not forcing, and therefore very little animal protein in the form of meat, meat-meal, or milk is required after about eight weeks of age until the commencement of laying. No matter what method of feeding is adopted, the food must be good in every way, as it is the food and not the method which counts. Do not make the mistake of buying cheap, poor quality food, as this is a policy of being "penny-wise and pound-foolish."

The feeding of poultry has been fully discussed in the "Journal of Agriculture" during the past year, and in consequence it is only necessary to refer to a good mixture for growing stock from eight weeks up to the laying stage.

**Mash:** 34 lb. pollard.  
20 lb. wheat-meal.  
25 lb. bran.  
15 lb. maize-meal.  
2 lb. dried milk.  
2 lb. meat-meal.  
2 lb. mineral mixture.

100 lb.

**Grain:** 60 lb. wheat.  
20 lb. hulled oats.  
20 lb. kibbled maize.

100 lb.

The mineral mixture may consist of one pound of fine salt and one pound of either steamed bone-flour or oyster shell dust. If the birds are found to be maturing too quickly, it is advisable to eliminate the milk and the meat-meal entirely.