

One of the most important foods for young growing stock is green-food, as this supplies many of the minerals and vitamins required for good growth. It should be fed liberally, and in a young succulent condition. Silver beet, spinach, chou moellier, cabbage, lettuce, young green oats, lucerne, watercress are all suitable for this purpose.

Health

The birds should be watched closely at all times so that any change in health may be attended to immediately, and if possible checked before it goes too far. Generally it is through either ignorance in not being able to identify the trouble or carelessness in not obtaining help that diseases are allowed to get a hold. If prompt corrective measures were applied immediately, the spread of disease among poultry in the Dominion would be considerably lessened.

Apart from disease, the birds should be watched for body lice, which cause irritation, and loss of body condition. The best remedy is full strength nicotine sulphate applied in a small trickle along the centre of the perches just before roosting time. The heat of the bird's body releases poisonous fumes which kill the lice. Any eggs present, are unaffected, and it is necessary, therefore, to repeat the process after an interval of ten to fourteen days, in order to kill off the lice which have hatched out since the first treatment. It is advisable to wipe off any dust from the perches before applying the nicotine sulphate, as dust will cause the liquid to run off the perches.

Red mites which may be found during the day in cracks in the wood or under perches where they rest on their supports, also lower both the health and condition of the birds by suckling their blood at night. These may be destroyed with a blow lamp, or by painting infected places with a mixture of two-thirds creosote and one-third paraffin. It may be found that more than one application is necessary, and this point must receive particular attention during the warm summer months. If this is done about once every two months during the summer and every three months during the autumn and winter, it is unlikely that there will be any trouble with these parasites.

Pullets will also do better and be in a better condition to commence the laying season if they are de-wormed about a month before they commence to lay. It is a good plan to treat all the birds regardless of whether they appear to have worms or not. The birds are dosed with nicotine sulphate after they have been starved for 24 hours. The nicotine sulphate is added to a wet mash at the rate of one fluid ounce for every 100 birds, together with half a pound of Epsom salts. The salts should be dissolved in the water used to mix the mash, and then the nicotine sulphate poured into the water, and the whole agitated, and

tipped straight into the mash and mixed up. If the water is not agitated the nicotine sulphate will float on the top and cause an uneven distribution. When feeding this mash, use only one-quarter of the usual quantity fed, and place it in troughs of sufficient length to allow all the birds to feed at once. Do not be alarmed if the birds appear to be knocked out after eating the mash, as nicotine sulphate is a powerful drug. Complete recovery occurs shortly after dosing, and no losses need be anticipated. Do not give any other food until all of this special mash has been eaten.

Note.—Be careful when using nicotine sulphate, as it is a deadly poison, and death will follow an over-dose.

Grading and Culling

In many instances people do not cull their pullets, either because they cannot be bothered or because they think that a pullet, no matter what she is like, is a good layer. On every farm, no matter how good the management, or how experienced the manager, there are always culls among the pullets, and in cases of poor management these might be as high, or higher than 200 in every 1000 pullets reared. Only birds of good constitution are profitable, and any that are stunted in growth or are deformed in any way should be culled. Strong, healthy Leghorn pullets have bright yellow legs and beaks before coming into lay, while their general appearance is bright and alert. Those with pale legs, and an anaemic appearance are lacking in constitution, and

are unlikely to make profitable layers, and should therefore be culled. Stunted or weedy birds are a menace to the rest of the flock, as they are generally the first to start an epidemic such as colds or worms.

Throughout the growing stage, pullets should be continually graded and culled. This is a safeguard against outbreaks of disease, and a flock of unevenly-grown pullets at the beginning of a new laying season.

Free Range

Young stock may be reared intensively with satisfactory results, but much depends upon the birds receiving an ample supply of green-food. It is a fact, however, that those raised on free range, or with access to good grass-runs, invariably make the best birds, not only in appearance but in stamina as well. Even under these conditions additional green-food should be supplied. A satisfactory method is to place the birds in small colony houses which can be moved whenever it is considered necessary, or whenever a fresh batch of pullets are put into them. These houses should be built to accommodate not more than 100 pullets at six to eight weeks of age, and should be large enough to house them until it is necessary to shift them to their permanent laying quarters. Close watch should be kept on these birds, as overcrowding often occurs as they get older, and increase in size. This is a common fault, and one that does much harm to pullets every year.



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