

RECORDING CHARACTERISTICS OF POULTRY . . .

the back toe on the other leg. The web may be slit with a pair of scissors or a knife instead of using a punch if desired. Here again recording presents no difficulties, time and conscientiousness alone being involved.

Egg Production

Egg production may be recorded or measured for individual birds or for a flock. Individual layers may be recorded by the use of trap nests where a number of pullets or hens are run in a flock. Each bird carries a numbered leg band and eggs are credited to the bird's number on specially designed sheets. An alternative method is to have a series of single pens—one for each layer, or even two layers per pen where a light- and a heavy-breed bird are run together, the difference in the colour of the eggshell denoting which bird has laid.

Trap nesting involves considerable labour, particularly during the flush season of production, and it can be recommended only where full advantage is taken of the information gathered. Trap-nest sheets afford far more information than merely the total of eggs laid during the period for



A poultry toe punch and the 16 combinations of marks which are possible with it.

which the birds are recorded. Egg sequences, winter egg production, moulting periods, and broodiness are some of the items about which trap-nest sheets can supply valuable data to the breeder. The value of individual pullet-year egg scores will be referred to when breeding programmes are discussed.

The recording of egg production for a flock of layers is simple and requires little labour. A card, sheet, or egg book and the will to record daily the number

of eggs produced by a flock or house of birds are the only requirements. The recording of egg totals daily and the addition of these into a total at the end of a period require little effort, but the method of interpreting the results needs more thought. Quite often the average number of eggs per bird is calculated on the basis of the number of birds laying during the year, dead birds and culls being deducted from the number at the start of the season. However, the average which gives a true picture of the performance of a flock takes into account mortality and culling, and this figure is obtained when the total number of eggs produced is divided by the original number of birds in the flock. This is known as the hen-house average and is the figure by which the real economic value of a flock may be measured. It includes the good and the poor producer and also reflects the great economic value of liveability in the birds in the flock. Flock-house or hen-house averages compared year by year present a true picture of ground gained or lost. They are also a means of measuring the value of a male bird where the first stages of progeny testing are carried out.

Approximate averages based on total eggs produced and the number of birds left at the end of a laying season may look well, but all too often they are highly misleading as to the economic value of the stock.

It is recommended that any production figures recorded should be kept for a maximum period of 48 weeks and for the same period each year for comparison purposes—for example, March 1 to January 31. Every producer is faced annually with finding room for the current season's pullets. Culling starts, flocks are broken up, and houses are amalgamated to make room for these annual replacements, and the keeping of accurate egg tallies by houses or flocks becomes impossible. Therefore it is better to choose a reasonable period for accurate recording and to use the same period each year, whether it be 40, 44, or 48 weeks. Accurate data can then be kept and compared year by year to measure progress.

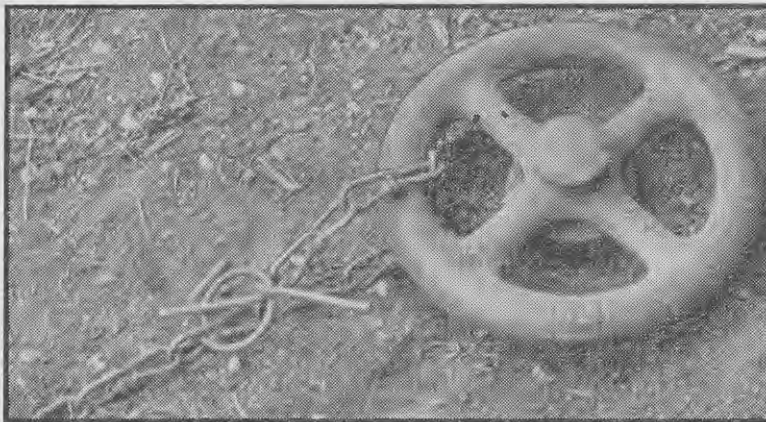
Mortality

Many producers would receive an unpleasant shock if accurate figures about losses from day-old birds until the final disposal of stock were recorded on their farms. In any progressive programme of breeding such figures are essential in measuring the value of a strain of birds or the breeding worth of a male bird. They are of greatest value where the cause of death, more particularly in adult stock, is known in each case, but this is rarely practicable for the average breeder of poultry.

Nevertheless, where a serious attempt is being made to improve the economic value of a flock, records of losses of both young and adult stock are essential. The method of recording such mortality may be comparatively simple and designed by the breeder to meet his own requirements.

A Dog-chain Fastening Which Will Not Tangle

DESPITE their value on the farm, many dogs are not adequately sheltered, and the methods by which they are attached to their kennels often leave much to be desired. Frequently a dog is seen with his chain so completely wound about an old stake, derelict farm implement, or broken-down kennel that freedom of movement is impossible. Such treatment is not conducive to good manners and obedience.



The illustration shows how by the use of discarded implement parts Mr. A. V. King, of Clydevale, Otago, is able to tether his dog securely by its kennel and allow the maximum amount of freedom. A dog attached to such a device cannot become "hung up." The swivel ring is some 6in. in diameter and revolves on a bolt 18in. long driven through it into the ground. Between the ground and the lower surface of the wheel is a washer 2in. in diameter and 2in. thick, which acts as a bearing and enables the wheel to revolve smoothly.

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