

BLOOD testing of poultry for pullorum disease is now carried out in New Zealand on a considerable scale and involves a great deal of labour with large flocks. On this page A. C. Howse, Veterinarian, Department of Agriculture, Christchurch, describes an appliance for holding birds which can be constructed easily and cheaply.

WHEN testing their stock for pullorum disease New Zealand poultry farmers to date have remained content to spend long periods holding groups of fowls on tables by hand while blood is drawn from the birds' combs, but it has been apparent that some more efficient means of holding the birds would save considerable time and labour. A device for this purpose has now been designed and constructed with the help of Mr. Arthur Button, of Lincoln, a well-known Canterbury poultry farmer. When the appliance as first designed was tried in practice many modifications and alterations from what was originally visualised were found necessary. Mr. Button carried out the work of construction and made the alterations.

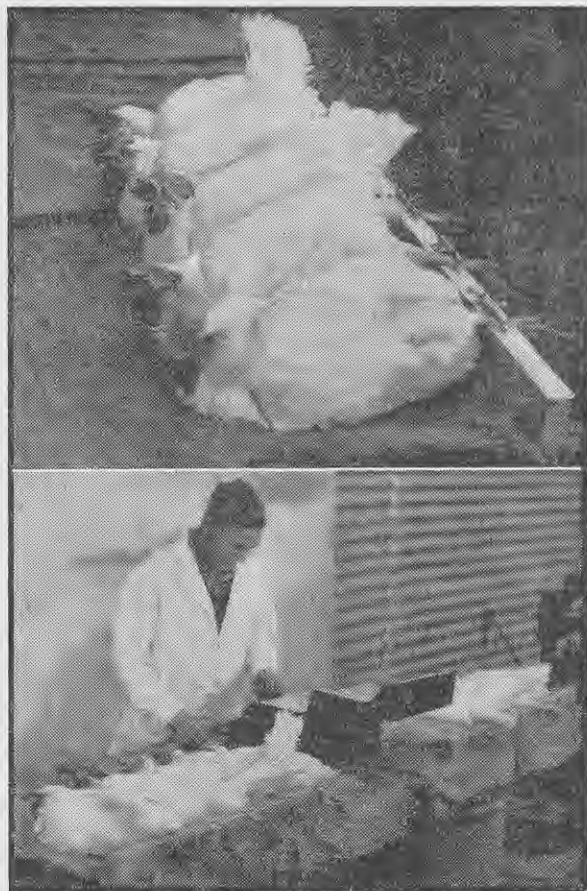
Birds to be tested lie on sacking on a trestle table such as has been in general use for blood testing in New Zealand, but their legs, instead of being held by hand, are slipped into notches in a piece of suitable timber and kept in position by small door bolts, such as can be obtained from a hardware store. Beech is probably the most suitable wood. A piece 3ft. long, 1½in. wide, and 2½in. deep will hold five birds. The notches, each of which holds both legs of one bird, should be ½in. wide and 1½in. deep, the centres of the notches being 6in. apart. Putting both legs into one notch has been found easier than getting each leg into a separate one. The bolt slips across the top of the notch above the legs and the bird lies slightly on its side.

The piece of wood is bolted to the table by carriage bolts held underneath by wing nuts. If the table is 8ft. long, the testing equipment can be arranged in the middle with a group of five birds on either side. The birds' necks pass under a piece of spring curtain wire, which is fastened to the table by small staples parallel to the bar of wood which holds the legs and about 11in. away from it. The wire should be fixed so that it is under only very slight tension.

Individual farmers may devise other means of holding the legs in the notches. Probably the simplest would be a wooden turn-button, but it has been found in practice that a bird frequently opens this while struggling and escapes. Spring clips screwed directly to the table were also tried, the bar of notched wood being dispensed with, but clips of the correct size and adequate strength could not be obtained. The bolt over the notch works well and is easily obtainable.

Using this method one person catches the birds, another puts them on the table and removes them, and a third performs the test. With a table holding ten birds one group of five is dealt with while the other is removed and replaced. There is no delay while birds are taken away and others brought up, as with the older method, and birds can be tested at the rate of 120 per hour without difficulty. Fewer people are employed than when holding is by hand, an important consideration in view of the difficulty of obtaining labour.

Device for Holding Fowls During Blood Testing



Upper—The birds lie on the table with their legs held by bolts over slots in the wooden bar and their necks under a length of spring curtain wire. Lower—The layout for testing ten birds at a time, with the operator and testing equipment between two groups. Below—The device in which the legs of the birds are held.

