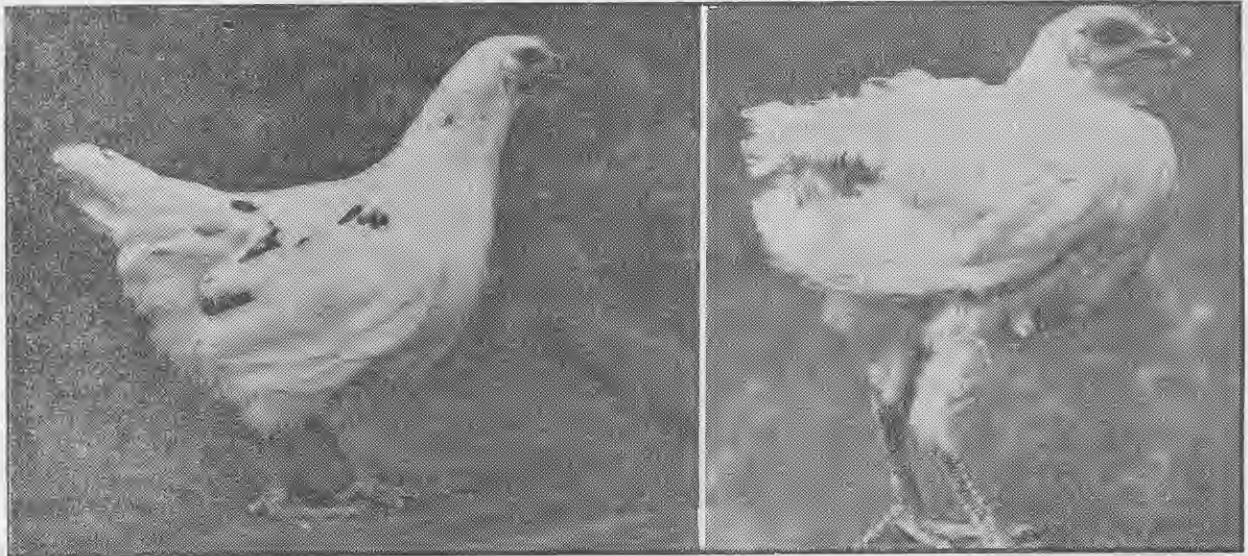


SELECTING PULLETS FOR THE HOUSEHOLD POULTRY FLOCK



[Fraser Niederer photos.]

A contrast in crossbred pullets. Left—An Australorp-White Leghorn cross with good depth of abdomen which is a promising sign. Depth is measured from the socket of the tail to the rear end of the keel (breastbone). Right—A very poor type of crossbred pullet with cut-away abdomen and poor feathering. Such long-legged birds are usually slow in developing and low in laying ability.



[Fraser Niederer photo.]

A backward 4-month-old Australorp pullet with pale, dry skin on face, sunken eye, and slow feathering on head and neck. Such a bird should be culled out.



[Fraser Niederer photo.]

This White Leghorn pullet is almost 4 months old. The extreme length of face and beak, eye very high in the skull, baldness, and dryness of skin all show that prompt killing will save food and money.

on the day of hatching. If the chicks are bought locally, they should be culled immediately they arrive and the culls taken back to the supplier. If too many appear to be culls, or if some mishap seems to have occurred to the chicks in transit, the buyer should communicate with the supplier immediately and refuse to accept the chicks.

Culling must be continued all the time. A watch must be kept for weaklings, but, in addition, regular periods should be set aside for special culling. After the day-old stage the chief times for culling are when the birds are 4, 6, and 8 weeks old, then at 3, 4, and 6 months.

Signs of Good and Poor Birds

Examples of both excellent and un-economic types are illustrated with this article. In brief, the good type has a rugged head, alert eye, healthy appearance about the face, short, strong beak, long back, deep front and abdomen, sturdy shanks, and strong frame. The feathering and pigmentation of legs and beak are also evidence, but breeds vary in these respects. Weakness is frequently shown by an elongated head and beak, shape and position of eyes, uneven feathering, and length of legs and toes.

The worth of each bird is decided virtually by comparison. The amateur should study the illustrations, memorize the main features to be examined, then inspect the pullets one at a time, at the same time comparing each bird with the average standard of the group. When young, growing pullets are being culled the only ones of concern at the time are those that compare unfavourably with their mates. If the comparison is too unfavourable, the bird is not worth keeping, but if there is room for doubt, it can be legbanded with a ring of a distinguishing colour so that it can be watched all the more carefully for the next few weeks.

Influence of Age

At all stages the age of the pullets influences the interpretation of signs, but that factor is most useful at the time of maturity. Light-breed fowls mature and begin laying at an average age of 6 months. Some strains begin laying as early as 4½ months. Pullets hatched early in the season are likely to start laying at a younger age than late hatches. Heavy breeds take about a month longer to mature than light breeds. A pullet which lags too far behind the majority in maturity should be culled.

September-hatched White Leghorns may be quoted as an example. If some begin laying at 5 months, the majority at 6 months, and most of the others at 7 months, those that remain require careful examination. If any appear unlikely to start "reddening up" for a month or more, they should not be retained any longer in the hope that they may prove worth while after all, but should be sold immediately. Early-maturing birds, if they are fed and managed properly, frequently are late moulters; that gives them a long laying season. Late-maturing pullets all too often turn out to be early moulters, which reduces profit.

If a dozen pullets are needed for the laying house, the householder should not start with 12 chicks. Ample allowance must be made for mortality and culling. It is better to rear too many than too few, retaining the best and sending the balance to the mart.

NEW POULTRY BULLETIN

A new bulletin on domestic poultry keeping, written by W. L. McIver, who contributes the monthly articles on the subject in the "Journal", has just been published. It describes the most modern methods which make for efficiency and labour saving. Bulletin 338, "Household Poultry Keeping", is obtainable free from the nearest office of the Department of Agriculture.