

Chick Rearing for the Household Poultry Keeper

ALTHOUGH, in general, household poultry keepers buy perching pullets when they wish to replace their laying birds and do not rear pullets from day-old chicks, inquiries on chick rearing are received by the Department from householders. This subject has been reviewed in articles in previous years, but at this time of the year it is profitable to recall the more important aspects of chick rearing and this is done in this article by the Animal Industry Division of the Department of Agriculture.

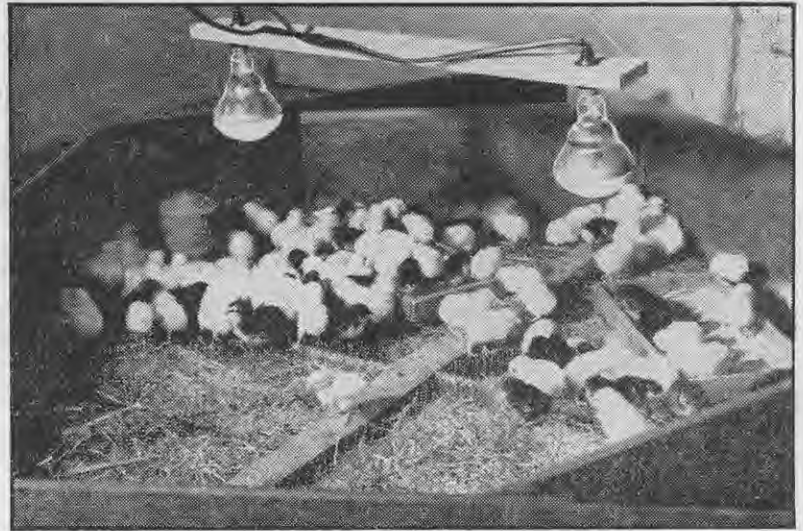
UNTIL the last 2 or 3 years it was probably sound advice to recommend to household poultry keepers that if they were determined to attempt chick rearing, they should use hens. There were two main reasons for this advice—first, because brooder equipment for rearing small lots of chickens was not easily obtained, and second, because the average householder's home-made brooding equipment was very crude and unsatisfactory. Stories were frequently heard of attempts to rear chicks with hot-water bottles, in front of a fire, or with ordinary electric globes, and in most cases numbers of chicks were lost or at best second-quality, poorly grown birds resulted.

The position has changed considerably with the availability of infra-red electric brooding units and many people in cities have seen the bright emitter infra-red lamps in use with chicks in shop windows. The units are comparatively easily used if certain common-sense fundamental rules and the maker's instructions are followed.

The following steps should be considered by the household poultry keeper who wishes to rear pullets for laying or cockerels for eating.

Purchasing of Day-old Chicks

First it is necessary to ensure that the required number of day-old chicks

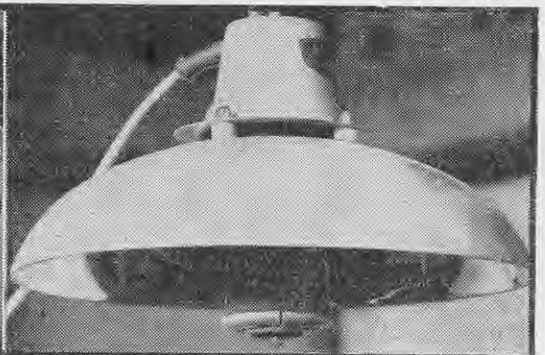
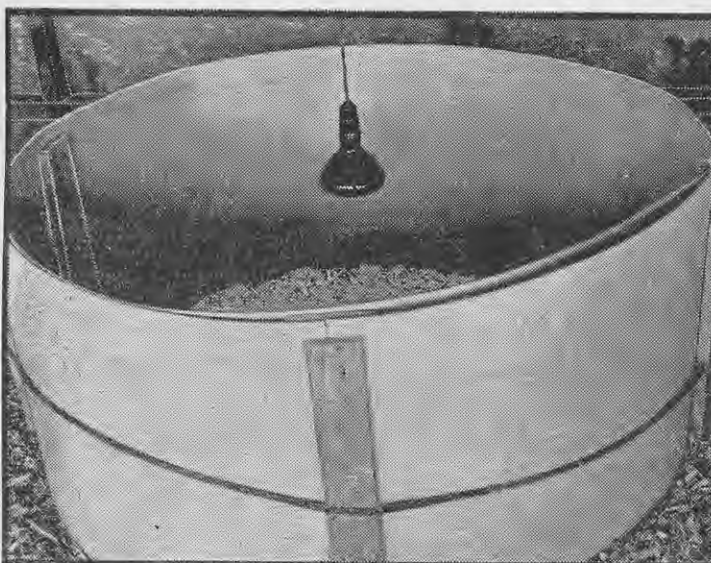


Infra-red lamps in use with a wire frame and wooden surround. Note how the chicks are given water and food within the surround for the first few days.

can be supplied, and they should be ordered from a breeder well ahead of the time they are needed. If purchasing is left until the last minute, there is a risk of disappointment. Householders who do not know where to purchase chicks may obtain a copy of the annual list of poultry breeders accredited under the New Zealand Poultry Flock Improvement Plan from the local office of the Department of Agriculture or by writing to the Department, P.O. Box 2298, Wellington. Another important point for consideration is the best time at which to buy chicks if the pullets are to be used for laying. July and August are the best months in which to rear heavy-breed chicks such as Austra-

lorps and Rhode Island Reds. Later than this is not recommended for these breeds. Many poultry keepers favour crossbred birds such as those from White Leghorn males and Australorp hens. Chicks from this cross may be reared during July, August, and the first half of September. For light-breed chicks such as White Leghorns, August and September are good months, but later than the first half of October is not recommended. In general late-hatched chicks of both heavy and light breeds do not rear as satisfactorily or make as good birds as those hatched and reared in the months named.

When the day-old chicks have been ordered and the date of arrival fixed



[Photograph at left by Fraser Niederer

Left—The infra-red lamp is useful for rearing small batches of chickens not exceeding 70. For the first few days the chickens should be restrained in a surround or barrier, which can be enlarged a little periodically until it is no longer required. Above—The infra-red dull emitter, which can be used in the same way as the lamp at left.