CC56-132 Poultry Profit Pointers: Range Management

Elvin C. Schulte

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Poultry Profit Pointers

Range Management

EXTENSION SERVICE
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
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COOPERATING
W. V. LAMBERT, DIRECTOR
Poultry Profit Pointers
RANGE MANAGEMENT
by Elvin C. Schultz

Poultry Range

The number of birds that can be ranged on an acre will depend upon the type of sod and the fertility of the land. On most land, 250 to 500 pullets can be ranged per acre.

Pullets should be reared on range after being started in permanent or colony brooder houses. They should be hardened off at 5 to 8 weeks of age by letting them run on wire sun porches or gravel yards in front of the brooding houses. At 8 to 12 weeks of age, transfer them to the shelters on the range.

Shelter and Shade

Use your range shelter wisely. It is the best source of shade for the pullets. Provide plenty of roosting space -- at least six inches per pullet. Confine the pullets to the shelter for a few days until they become accustomed to their new quarters.
The open range shelters are most desirable in Nebraska. One 8' x 10' range shelter is adequate for each 100 pullets. Your county agent will give you plans for these shelters.

If space and facilities permit, move the shelters every few weeks. This will help prevent outbreak of filth-borne diseases. By moving the range shelters, you can also avoid killing out the grass in your pastures.

**Pastures for Poultry**

A fast growing, succulent pasture is rich in protein and vitamins needed in rearing strong, well developed pullets.

1. **Permanent Pastures**
   - A well sodded field of ladino clover, alfalfa, alfalfa-brome-grass or mixtures of bluegrass and clovers make good pastures. It may be necessary to clip the grass two or three times each season to increase the growth of tender grass.

2. **Temporary Pastures**
   - In areas where poultrymen cannot arrange for permanent pastures, seasonal or temporary pastures can be seeded.

   Sudan grass is drought-tolerant and is considered one of the better temporary pastures for poultry. You may need to clip it several times to keep it tender with fresh growth.

   Rye is a good pasture for late fall and early spring. It will supply pasture for the late broods of pullets, especially in the fall, and provide grass for the early pullets in the spring.
Feeding

Follow a good feeding practice such as feeding in hoppers every one to three days. The feed can be hauled to the range by truck or tractor. Move the hoppers each time they are filled so that the grass will not be killed out around them. Be sure that the old feed is not left too long in the hoppers and that it does not become moldy from rains.

Another practice is to feed pellets or grain on the ground. The feed is broadcast twice daily with a lime spreader or dribbled from the back of a moving truck or trailer. Be careful not to over-feed or waste the feed.

Hoppers or feeders should protect the feed from the weather.

Plans for range-type feeders can be obtained from your county agent.

Follow feeding practices that are recommended by cooperators in the Poultry Management Program.

Fencing

Use temporary fencing to keep out predators and to prevent the birds from harming nearby crops. The fence can also be used in rotating pastures.

Nests

Some pullets mature earlier than others. Provide nests in the east or north side of the shelter so that early-maturing birds can lay and become accustomed to nests before they go into the house later in the summer or early in the fall.
Watering

Provide plenty of clean, fresh water at all times. A large barrel with an automatic fount attached will insure an adequate water supply. If you paint the barrel with aluminum paint, the water will stay cool for a longer time.

Piping the range and using automatic float valves will save labor and insure a continuous supply of water. The pipe should be put under ground about the depth of a plow furrow to keep the water from becoming too hot in the summer and to prevent the pipes from freezing in late fall or early spring.

Do not place the watering founts too far from the range shelters. Birds will not go very far for water.

A well cared for group of pullets on range. The raised wire screen prevents the pullets from coming into contact with the damp ground around the waterer.
Grit

Provide a good, gray granite grit at all times when pullets are on range. Place the grit in a hopper to prevent waste.

Health Maintenance

Sanitation is the key to success in poultry management. However, if your facilities are the kind that cannot be kept thoroughly clean, it may be necessary to use some of the medical products that are available on the market.

Vaccination is an approved practice for the prevention and control of Newcastle disease, bronchitis and fowl pox.

Worm your pullets and laying hens periodically. A flock free of worms will give greater returns to the owner.

To keep your flock healthy, watch carefully for symptoms of disease and take immediate action when they appear.

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