

1944

## EC1416 Revised 1944 How to Select Good Layers

J. H. Claybaugh

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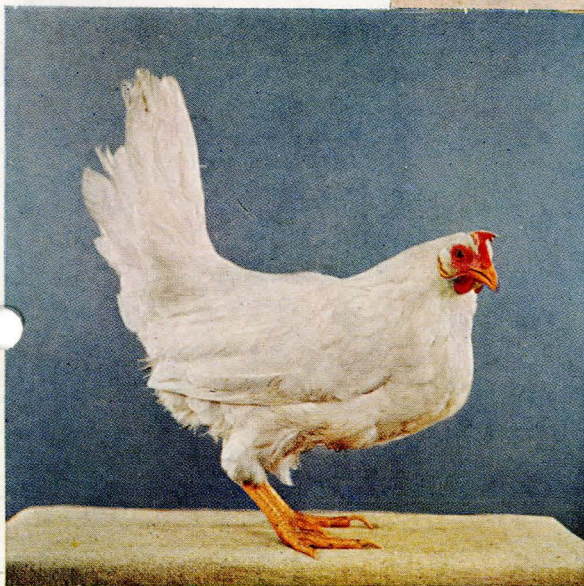
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# HOW to SELECT GOOD LAYERS

**C**ULLING poultry flocks regularly is a means of reducing the feed cost of producing eggs. It protects the health of the flock by removing inactive hens which are most likely to fall prey to disease organisms and parasites. When a narrow margin exists between the cost of feed and the price of eggs, removing the hens as they stop laying is essential to profitable poultry management.



A persistent layer maintains a plump, deep-chested body; is alert, inquisitive and active, although pigment may be bleached from all portions of her body. She will have a clean-cut, strong, refined head and large, bright, prominent eyes like the good layer above.

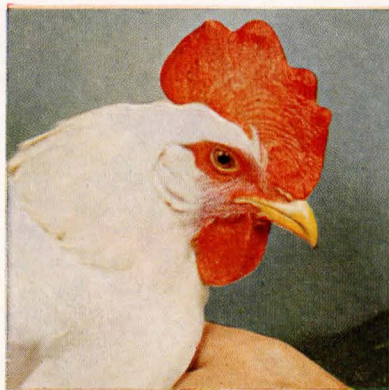


The poor layer on the left has lost weight, is shallow-chested, unthrifty, sleepy, and peepless. She has a thin, weak-appearing head with sunken eyes. Unthrifty condition among such hens may result in the loss of pigment.



# HOW TO SELECT GOOD LAYERS

by J. H. Claybaugh



The head gear develops into reddened, enlarged comb and wattles as a pullet develops sexually. Alert eyes with waxy, red combs are evidence of production. The pullet on the left has laid enough eggs so that the pigment has faded from the ear lobes, eye ring, and back part of the beak.

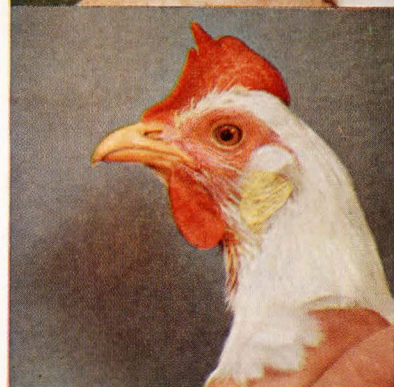
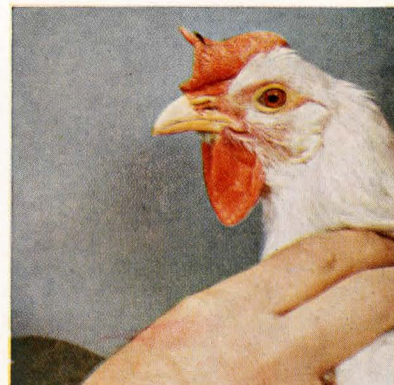
When a hen stops laying, the comb and wattles shrink, become hardened and scaly. The yellow pigment begins to come back. Thinness in flesh or unthrifty condition may be indicated by sunken condition in face. The hen on the upper right has been out of production long enough so that the yellow pigment has partially returned to the ear lobes, eye ring and back part of the beak. She has previously laid long enough to bleach the pigment from her beak.

The good layer on the left has laid over a long period so that all the pigment in the beak has faded.

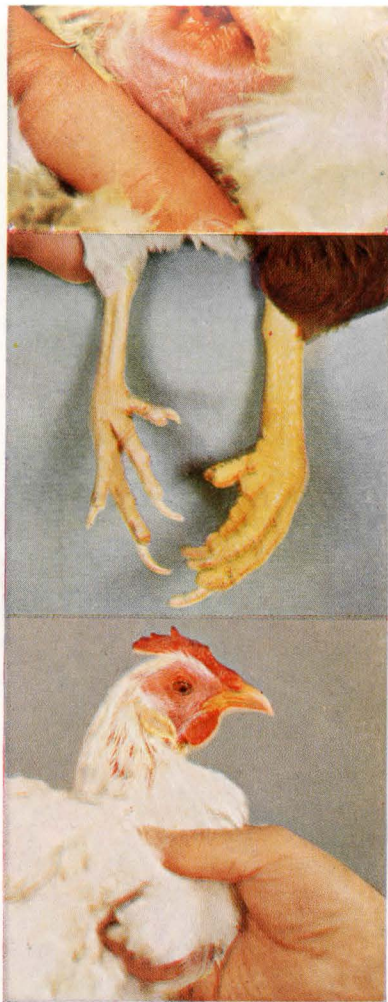
The poor layer on the right is an old hen that has been out of production long enough that the beak has again become yellow.

The body changes that take place before a hen starts to lay are softening and enlarging of the abdomen, spreading of the pubic bones and expanding and moistening of the vent.

The well expanded, moist vent of the hen on the left shows that she is laying. The yellow pigment fades rapidly







After the hen has laid a few eggs.

The small vent with skin showing much pigment as illustrated at the right is definite proof that this hen is not laying.

After a hen has laid intensively for several months, all yellow pigment is removed from all portions of the body. The pigment fades slowly from those sections where the blood circulates slowly. When a laying hen of yellow skin breed has all pigment in shanks faded as shown by the shank on the right, she has laid at a profitable rate since her first egg. In contrast, the yellow shank shown at the left of the picture is that of a hen that has not been in production.

During the spring and summer months, yellow pigment in the shanks indicates that the hen has not been laying as well as her sisters with faded shanks. Thick, coarse shanks, such as the one in the picture at the left, are indications of an overfat condition.

Coarseness or masculine appearance in the head is noted by heaviness over the eye and meatiness in the face and wrinkles as shown in the lower picture on the right.

A new coat of feathers during the late spring or summer months or within 6 to 8 months after a hen starts to lay, may be regarded as a reason for culling such hens that lack persistency. A hen that molts slowly may have shanks completely yellow by the time the new feathers are grown. A neck or partial molt is typical of a hen that has stopped laying temporarily. This hen has been out of production long enough for the yellow pigment to develop on ear lobes, eye ring, and back part of beak. The old hackle feathers have been dropped and the new fine feathers are shown.

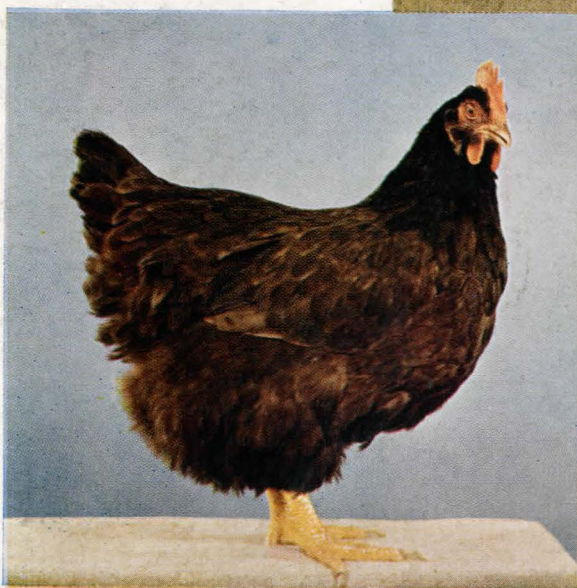
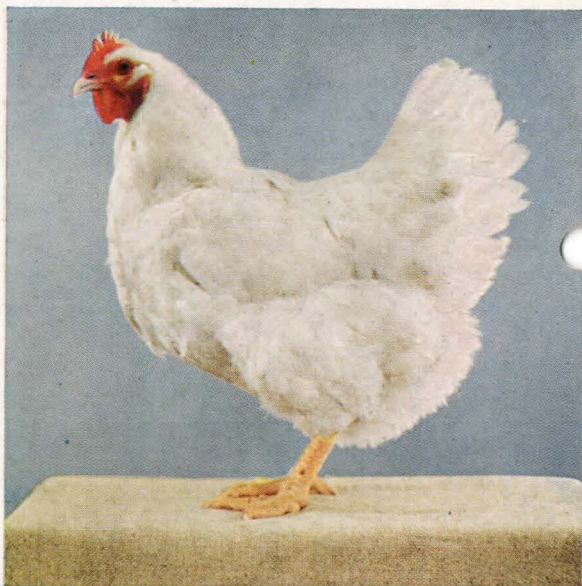




Persistent layers among the heavier breeds maintain healthy, plump bodies without becoming excessively fat. Hens of the same flock which retain some pigment in the shank, like the white hen below, are regarded as having laid fewer eggs than those with shanks completely faded.

The poor layer shown below is overfat with coarse meaty head and well rounded fat shanks. Yellow pigment shows that she has laid no eggs recently. Such hens often show coarser, rougher combs than is here illustrated.

Worn, ragged plumage is regarded as a sign of continuous production since the pullet started to lay or since the old hen started to lay after completing her molt. During the spring,



summer, and fall, nest-worn feathers and lack of pigment can be used to select the very best layers from the flock.

Trap nest records show that the best layers produce 20 to 25 eggs each month for 12 months after they start laying as pullets.

Hens which lay 20 to 25 eggs per month for 10 months and then stop laying, usually molt during the summer.