

8-1932

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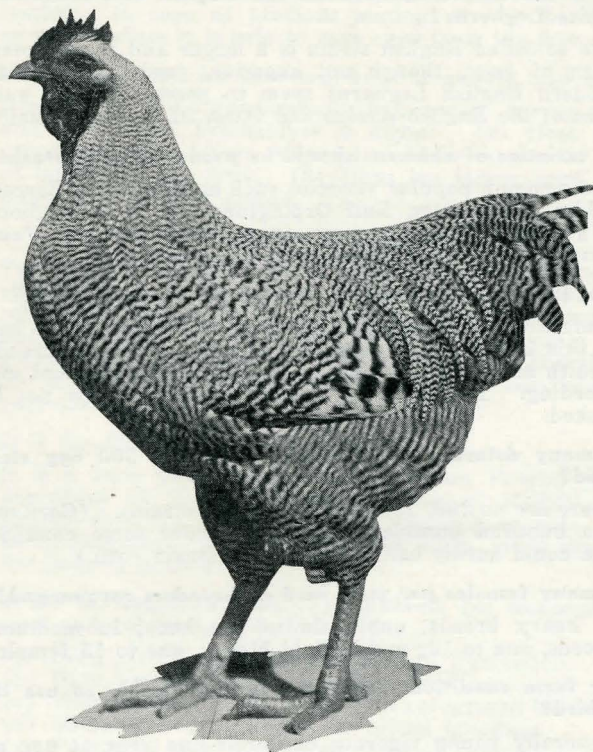
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Extension Circular 1458, Revised -32

August, 1932

Questions and Answers on Poultry Breeds and Breeding



The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service
and United States Department of Agriculture Cooperating
W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Questions and Answers on Poultry Breeds and Breeding

BY J. R. REDDITT

1. Distinguish between breed and variety.

A. Breed refers to type and shape—shape makes the breed—as the Wyandottes, Plymouth Rocks, etc. Variety refers to color and comb—within a breed there may be a number of varieties. For instance, there are eight varieties of Wyandottes and in each it is color that determines the variety. In Rhode Island Reds are the single and rose comb varieties.

2. What is the meaning of "strain?"

A. Strain refers to some family of chickens that has become prominent for some particular characteristic and generally prominent winners at poultry shows.

3. What is the difference between the English and American strain of White Leghorns?

A. The so-called English strain is a larger and rather coarse Leghorn of good, though not superior, production ability. The modern English Leghorns seem to possess all the good qualities of the English strains and fewer of the poor qualities.

4. What varieties of chickens should be produced in Nebraska?

A. The common popular varieties such as White and Barred Rocks, White Wyandottes, Buff Orpingtons and S. C. Leghorns seem to give all one needs or can expect from poultry. Fewer varieties will lessen the variation in the products.

5. Where, then, may one secure dependable breeding stock?

A. Preferably at home, from someone whose flocks can be visited. If this is impractical find out who the reputable breeders are. Health and production are the result of management more than breeding. Yet, breeding is important and must not be overlooked.

6. How many determine the reliability of the 300 egg strains advertised?

A. There are no 200, 250, 300 or 355 egg strains. (Corn may yield one hundred bushels to the acre under some conditions, yet one could hardly call it 100 bushel strain corn.)

7. How many females per male bird do breeders recommend?

A. In heavy breeds, one male to ten hens; in medium weight breeds, one to 12; and in light breeds, one to 15 females.

8. Under farm conditions how long is it advisable to use the same male bird?

A. Generally young vigorous cockerels one year of age are most satisfactory. However, the same males may be used a second season or as long as they are satisfactory as breeders.

9. What is line breeding?

A. Line breeding is systematic inbreeding and is done with a definite purpose in mind. To be most effective, the system requires pedigree breeding and systematic records.

10. What is cross breeding?

A. Cross breeding is the crossing of breeds. The result of a first cross is a cross bred.

11. Is it recommended or of any benefit?

A. Efforts are being made to discover sex-linked characters which when crossed will permit sex identification at hatching time. Some cross breeding is done in England to produce larger market poultry.

12. From a breeding standpoint what factors affect hatchability?

A. (1) Vigor and health, (2) age, (3) inbreeding. Length and intensity of laying prior to hatching does not necessarily affect hatchability provided the flock has been properly managed.

13. How soon after mating may eggs be saved for hatching?

A. One week to ten days, provided there has been no previous mating. In case of previous mating, it may be four weeks or more before it is safe to save eggs from the new mating.

14. Which are preferred for breeding, hens or pullets, and why?

A. Hens. (1) Hens have usually had a rest during the winter and as a result hatchability is higher. (2) Hens have been culled and poor layers removed so there is greater possibility of improving the flock. (3) Hens lay larger eggs, producing larger and stronger chicks.

15. When is the best time to select breeding stock?

A. Two years in advance. First, select uniformly large eggs of the right size, shape, and color. Second, at two months of age select and mark some of the largest, fastest growing cockerels and pullets for future breeders. Third, cull closely at the beginning and throughout the first laying year. Fourth, put into the breeding flock only those hens that have survived rigid, all-year culling.

16. What is the Standard of Perfection?

A. It is a book published by the American Poultry Association describing all the breeds and varieties of poultry recognized by this association. It gives the standard weights, color patterns, and disqualifications of all varieties. It is the rule book for judging poultry.

17. What are (a) standard bred, (b) purebred, (c) thoroughbred, (d) mongrel and (e) pedigreed chickens?

A. (a) Bred according to the Standard of Perfection.
(b) Pure breeding (without mixed breeding.)
(c) Thoroughbred is the name of a recognized breed of horses.
(d) Mongrel may be defined as mixed breeding.
(e) Pedigreed means recorded proof of ancestry.

18. Is a "turken" a cross between a chicken and a turkey?

A. No. It is a large sized, naked necked chicken. It is not recognized by the Standard of Perfection. Evidently, when hatching period differs, there can be no crosses.

19. Is it possible to determine sex in eggs through the use of small mechanical devices sold for this purpose?
A. No.
20. Can fertility of eggs be determined before they are incubated?
A. No.
21. Which are more profitable, light or heavy breeds?
A. Light breeds are regarded as more economical egg producers while heavy breeds are favored for market poultry. Management, location, and markets must be considered.
22. Are certain breeds or varieties healthier than others?
A. No. Health is not a breed characteristic.
23. What should be a fair basis for determining the value and price of breeding stock?
A. Unless it is pedigreed or of unusual exhibition qualities about three times the price paid for top quality market poultry is a common custom. Culling costs, accreditation costs, etc. must be considered along with the history and quality of the birds and the reputation of the breeder.
24. How much of a premium above market should be paid for hatching eggs?
A. A common practice in Nebraska has been around eight to ten cents above market. Rigid culling of the flock and of the eggs is usually required.