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EC1459 Revised 1937 Questions and Answers on Laying Flock Management

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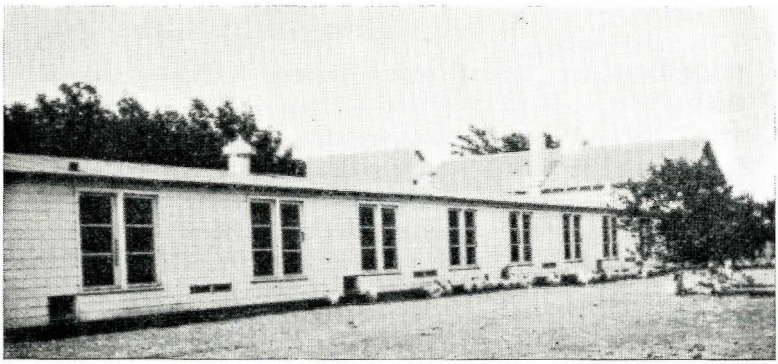

The University of Nebraska Agricultural College Extension Service
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W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Questions and Answers on Laying Flock Management

BY J. R. REDDITT

1. **How may the number of dirty eggs be reduced?**
   Clean nests (do not allow hens to roost in nests), plenty of nests (1 nest to 5 hens), clean, dry, well-bedded houses, clean graveled yards. Gather the eggs often.

2. **Do flocks do better confined or on range?**
   Breeding flocks generally do better on range and commercial egg flocks do better confined. It is difficult to use the same hens for both purposes.

3. **Which are preferred for breeding, hens or pullets, and why?**
   Hens. (1) Hens have generally had rest and hatchability is higher. (2) Hens have been culled and poor layers removed. (3) Hens lay larger eggs, producing larger, stronger chicks.

4. **When should culling be done?**
   All the time throughout the year. Whenever a poor layer shows up, take her out.

5. **What is the best way to break up broody hens?**
   Take them off the nest as soon as noticed, confine in a lighted wire or slat-bottomed coop, and feed them well.

6. **When is the best time to select breeding stock?**
   Two years in advance. First, select large eggs of proper size, color, and shape. Second, at two months of age select and mark the largest, fastest-growing cockerels and pullets. Third, cull closely at the beginning of the first laying season. Fourth, put into the breeding flock only those hens that have survived this rigid all-year culling and pullorum testing.

7. **How may naked-backed chickens be eliminated?**
   This is partially inherited, though crowding and lack of fiber in the feed are partially responsible. In order to control it, remove all young stock showing any slow feathering characteristics and feed a complete ration.

8. **What is the simplest way to control lice?**
   Nicotine sulfate put on the roost just before roosting time. (Directions for use printed on containers.) Sodium fluoride and blue ointment are also effective; but they must be applied to each hen individually.

9. **What is a good spray for mites?**
   Any good wood preservative.

10. **Why is it so important to remove males when the breeding season is over?**
    Male birds fertilize eggs and fertile eggs do not keep well. Infertile eggs will not spoil nearly as rapidly as fertile eggs. When feed prices

average 2½ cents per pound male birds consume about 25 cents worth of feed each month.

11. What is the difference between high-quality hatching eggs and high-quality market eggs?
None, except that hatching eggs must be fertile and best market eggs must not. Select relatively short, round eggs weighing two ounces each.

12. How many feet of mash hopper space should be provided for 100 hens?
Twenty feet.

13. When should Leghorns be hatched to make them the best (a) breeders, (b) market egg producers?
(a) February and March. These may molt and rest after three or four months of production. (b) April and May. These should lay through the winter.

14. When should heavy breed hens be hatched to make the best (a) breeders, (b) market stock?
(a) During February and March. (b) Same.

15. How may one know whether production costs are high or low?
Keeping complete cost-account records.

16. Why are flocks of either 50 or 500 hens recommended in Nebraska?
Eggs from small, carelessly managed side-line flocks are usually inferior to the product of the larger commercial-sized flock. The cost of quality production from flocks under 500 is generally as much as can be realized from the sale of products, or more. To reduce the cost, reduce the size of the flock to meet the home needs, or step it up to a size sufficient to justify labor-saving equipment and efficient management in both production and marketing.

17. What are the causes of unhealthy flocks?
Inefficient management, weak stock, late hatching, crowding. filth, incomplete rations, lack of feed, lack of feeder space, dirty or unprotected feeders and waterers.

18. What is a good treatment for worms?
Try the products of some reliable pharmaceutical company. Ask your druggist for products of the firms making his drugs—prescription stock, not patent remedies. Prevention through sanitation is easier, cheaper, and more satisfactory. Any treatment to be effective must be followed with thorough sanitation. (Also see Nebraska Bulletin 290, "Diseases of Poultry—Their Nature and Control.")

19. For what poultry diseases are vaccines recommended?
Vaccines are not regarded as very effective except by those selling them.

20. Is blood testing for pullorum disease recommended? If so, what method is used?
In hatchery breeding flocks, it is. In small farm flocks, it is doubtful. The quick method agglutination test using stained antigen is con-

sidered very satisfactory, if done carefully by properly trained testers at six-month intervals.

21. **What disinfectants are recommended for use about the poultry plant?**
(a) Any of the phenol (carbolic acid) disinfectants may be used according to directions. (b) Chlorine disinfectants may be made from chlorinated lime. (See directions printed on containers.)

22. **How may soil be kept clean and free of disease-producing organisms?**
Sunshine, drainage, and cultivation will clean soil most satisfactorily?

23. **What are the chief items of cost in poultry keeping?**
Feed, depreciation, replacement, interest on investment, and labor, with feed representing approximately two-thirds of the total cost.

24. **What is the minimum feed cost of producing eggs from a flock of 100 hens laying, (a) 60, (b) 50, (c) 40, (d) 30, and (e) 20 eggs a day? (Feed costs of June, 1937, at 2½ cents per pound.)**
The minimum cost per dozen should be about (a) 11¼ cents, (b) 14 cents, (c) 17½ cents, (d) 23 cents, and (e) 35 cents.

25. **Which of the above letter classes includes the average flocks of Nebraska?**
Class (d).

26. **How may Nebraska hens be made more profitable to the owners?**
Through comfortable housing, proper feeding, and efficient management. (Keep production high to keep costs low.)

27. **How many more eggs would one need to obtain to justify an increase in the housing investment of from $1.50 per hen to $3.00 per hen?**
At 15 cents per dozen for eggs and 12 per cent depreciation, it would require 15 more eggs per hen to cover this added cost.

28. **What kind of litter is recommended for laying hens? How much?**
Generally whatever is available at lowest cost. Straw, hay, shavings, ground corn cobs, and sand have proved satisfactory. It is estimated that about one ton of straw per 100 hens per year is sufficient.

29. **How can chicks be marked so that their age and identity can be determined?**
By toe marks in the webs of the feet or numbered wing bands in the wings. Toe punching should be done at hatching time but wing banding may be done any time.

30. **What is the average percentage of death loss of hens in Nebraska flocks?**
Cost-account cooperators for the last few years report about 12 per cent annual loss.

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