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EC1436 Feather Picking and Cannibalism Control : What Should be Done when Chicks Eat one Another

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FEATHER PICKING AND CANNIBALISM CONTROL

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN CHICKS EAT ONE ANOTHER?



IT'S A SORE EXPERIENCE!

Cannibalism is a vice caused by faulty management. Among chicks, it is encouraged by too much heat, lack of fiber in feed, crowding, and lack of exercise or lack of water, or too much light in the brooder house.

1. Remove the victims as soon as found. Placing pine tar on victims is recommended. Then remove the causes.

2. Darken windows to subdue lights. Watch ventilation and temperature in brooder house.

3. Give the chicks more room. Keep the chicks busy and encourage all exercise possible. Add a sun porch or let the chicks outdoors. To very young chicks feed frequently a small amount of chopped greens or boiled, infertile eggs from the incubators.

4. Add a teaspoon of salt to each gallon of drinking water.

5. To older chicks feed leafy green vegetables frequently, or germinated oats, lawn clippings, green chopped alfalfa, or cut dandelions several times a day. Whole dry oats can be fed with safety to chicks that are 2 weeks old. Ground ear corn can be fed after chicks are six weeks old.

6. Feed more milk, boiled eggs, or add more meat meal to the mash to satisfy this abnormal appetite if the ration has been low in protein.

**Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics
University of Nebraska College of Agriculture, and the United States
Department of Agriculture cooperating, H. G. Gould, Associate Director,
Lincoln.**

7. Provide plenty of trough room for feed and water so all chicks can drink and eat at one time. Keep mash in feed troughs before the chicks at all times. Do not allow the watering vessels to remain empty. Self feed dry whole oats after chicks are 4 weeks old.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WHEN HENS EAT ONE ANOTHER?

Cannibalism and feather eating among hens may be regarded as a bad habit caused by a protein or fiber deficiency.

1. Get pullets into laying quarters before production starts.

2. Self feed whole oats and alfalfa hay as well as a 20% mash. Ohio Experiment Station reports good results substituting ground ear corn for ground corn in the mash or as the scratch grain.

The most effective control obtained in Canadian experiments was secured from chopping third cutting alfalfa hay into one half inch length and soaking it over night. The water was drained off before the soaked hay was fed. The hens were given all the soaked hay they would clean up once a day. No tendency to overeat was reported. Each hen consumed about 15 pounds of dry hay a year. The hens fed steeped alfalfa showed lower mortality, laid more eggs, increased in body weight and finished the year in good feather.

3. Provide one single nest for each five hens. Darken nests by use of curtains or tunnels. See E. C. 1438.

4. Adding one per cent more salt to mash.

5. Mechanical specks can be fastened to beaks of guilty hens.

6. Electric debeakers are reported quite successful.

Prepared by J. H. Claybaugh,
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