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EC1495 Improve Market Poultry

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January 1949

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION WORK

IN AGRICULTURE AND HOME ECONOMICS

U. of N. Agr. College & U. S. Dept. of Agr. Cooperating
H. G. Gould, Acting Director, Lincoln

IMPROVE MARKET POULTRY

E. C. 1495

Part of the Nebraska program to improve market poultry includes having the surplus cockerels reach the market at the time quality is highest. This means selling cross bred and Leghorn cockerels when 10 weeks of age. Nebraska Experiment Station Bulletin 386 reports, "With good equipment for brooding and feeding, the investment of seven pounds of low cost feed to produce a two pound 'plus' Leghorn broiler at 10 weeks can usually be anticipated as profitable". Perhaps hatcherymen need to have their own broiler growing plants where they can demonstrate the profitableness of selling two pound Leghorn cockerels at 10 weeks of age. When chick buyers buy straight run Leghorn chicks the cockerels can be inventoried into the brooder houses as costing them nothing. The present demand for sexed Leghorn pullet chicks has resulted in many cockerel chicks being destroyed. This decreases the supply of available poultry meat. When Leghorn and crossbred cockerels are marketed at their peak of quality, consumer resistance is low. Studies with economy of gain as well as tenderness of fleshing favor selling Leghorn cockerels when they weigh 2 pounds. Crossbred poultry with Leghorn blood should average $2\frac{1}{2}$ pounds at 10 weeks of age.

Nebraska will earn a reputation for better market poultry when broiler type chickens are so managed that the cockerels are marketed when 12 to 14 weeks of age, weighing from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to $4\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. Good hatchery management demands a follow up on all chicks sold. One way to make sure that only the best broiler type cockerels are retained as breeders is to have an understanding with the chick customers that the truck will be sent to the farm at the proper time to make preliminary selection of the breeding males and haul off the surplus cockerels not needed for the family's use. Dubbing the cockerels that are to be saved for breeding males is a distinctive way of marking them.

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