

## The Case Of The Chicken Chicken

Who's who in the "pecking order" preoccupies laying hens so much that poultry scientists try hard to understand this aspect of social life in the henhouse. For example, previous evidence indicates that a hen's egg production and length of life relate to how aggressively she pecks.

Recently, poultry specialists at the ARS Poultry Genetics Laboratory in Athens, Ga., restudied at close range the attitude of one chicken

toward another to clarify these specific points:

1 — Do chicken strains vary in aggressiveness? And does relative aggressiveness of a chicken strain change over a period of time?

2 — Is aggressiveness related to size? Do birds recognize superiors as individuals — or as belonging to a superior strain?

3 — Is aggressiveness linked to egg quantity or quality?

Relationships between strains were given special consideration in planning the study.

Poultry specialist R. E. Cook of ARS and J. C. Wom-

ack and L. D. Tindell, both formerly of the Georgia Agricultural Experiment Station, studied pairs of hens in a special observation cage. They matched birds from four strains of White Leghorns and two strains of Rhode Island Reds, in three encounters. Although the tests took on some aspects of a tournament, none of the birds was injured.

The first pairings were held when the birds were 20 weeks old, the second and third at 38 and 56 weeks. hen earned points for aggressiveness — if she outpecked her opponent, if her pecks were uncontested, or if the

Lancaster Farming, Saturday, January 15, 1966—11

other hen simply withdrew when she threatened. As soon as the researchers could judge which hen dominated the other, they returned the birds to individual cages.

The experiment clearly established that there are superior strains in the chicken world. Each stock revealed a clear level of aggressiveness, which the scientists believe is carried genetically.

In general, the relative aggressiveness of a strain did not change with age. Only in the last rematch did the two least aggressive strains exchange standings.

Chickens apparently recognize breeds and strains. Rhode Island Reds clearly yielded to the much smaller White Leghorns, even though within strains the bigger bird was usually the more aggressive. Scientists were uncertain whether breed differences or individual looks were more important for a chicken in recognizing a superior in the pecking order.

Tougher strains were the better producers. The rank of strains by egg production was the same as strain-standing for henpecking, except in one case. On an individual basis also, the most aggressive birds laid the most eggs.

## COUNTY GRANGES MEET

Lancaster County Pomona Grange #71 will hold their dinner meeting Saturday, January 15, 7 p.m. at Rhoads Spanish Restaurant, Quarryville. Reservations should be made through Miss Marie Murphy. There will be a memorial service in charge of Miss Murphy and the newly elected officers will be installed by Norman Maule and his team from Chester County.

Fulton Grange #66 held their regular meeting January 10 at Oakryn, Pa. Master, Giles H. Brown conducted the business meeting. Fulton Grange was invited to attend a church service Friday evening, January 28 at the Mount Hope Methodist Church where evangelist Joseph Brookshire of Lexington, Ky, will be conducting a week of services.

Lecturer Miss Aenes Spence, presented a Stephen Foster program. Group singing, "Old Folks at Home" and "My Old Kentucky Home." The "Life History of Stephen Foster" was told by Paul H. Uebel. Chester Todd Jr. Miss Stanley Stauffer Jr. and Miss Ralph Armstrong demonstrated the presentation of the American flag.

The next meeting will be held January 24.

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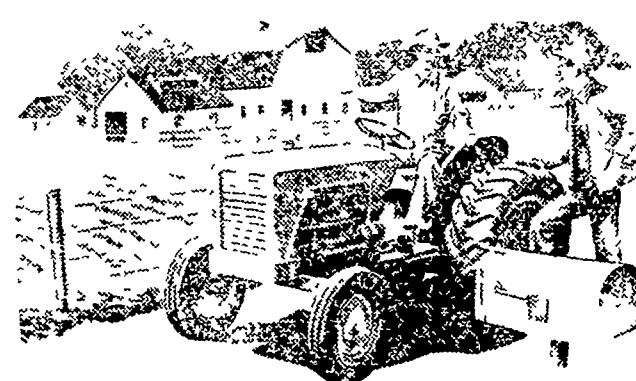
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