

Poultryman's year

(Continued from Page 42)



Emden geese, a heavy white breed, are popular for their feathers and meat.

tion. Darker-colored African geese are used for marketing purposes and the white Chinese Weeders are popular for grazing in vegetable and fruit areas.

Several varieties of ducks at the hatchery pens include Pekin, Rouen and Muscovy, all useful for meat and egg production.

"The ducks start to lay right after New Year," explains Emma. "They often start at 4 a.m., and during bitter cold Winter weather we have to gather the eggs every half-hour so that they don't freeze in the goose and duck boxes. That early-morning gathering goes on until the weather warms up and it's safe to leave them out until a bit later.

Another unusual bird available at the hatchery is the guinea, sometimes used as "watchdogs" because of their ability to notice the slightest activity around them.

"The market for guineas is

amazing," says Emma, noting that most are raised in small flocks on farms. Some customers, though, have gotten as many as a hundred of the small pheasant-like chicks at a time.

Guineas are currently selling at about three dollars per pound, live, and mature at about three to three and one-half pounds. Dressed and prepared in the finest restaurants, guinea is considered a gourmet dish.

But, perhaps the most fascinating residents in the

hatchery buildings are the several dozen peafowl. Some are housed, but three dozen of these big birds have the run of the place. They've laid claim to the straw shed, where they regally perch and watch over the 180-acres of hay and grain ground.

Considered by some as the most beautiful of all birds, the peacocks strut across the poultry yards and jump from fence to roof with complete disregard for the shimmering paisley-patterned tail

(Turn to Page 45)

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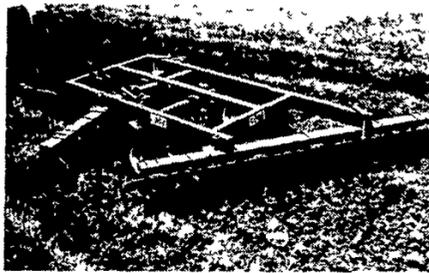
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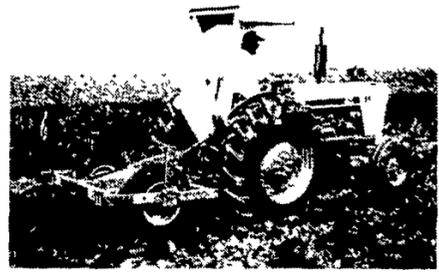
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