



Many time consuming chores are necessary daily. One is the collection of the goose eggs. Here Marge gets a hand from Carrie.

## Acres of Geese

(Continued from Page C16)

In the Chinese breed, the ratio is 1 to 7. Fred notes that if the number of ganders is increased, they form bachelor groups that do not service the hens.

In addition to the geese, the farm has over 1000 ducks, chickens of every size, game birds of every color, guineas, peafowl, and turkeys. Problems abound in this business. Fred says that most commercial chickens do not get broody, and sometimes they have problems with their colored breeds setting their eggs.

Seasonal orders are also a factor to cope with. The family, for instance, has started raising a hybrid duck for meat production. The duck, a cross between a Muscovy and Peking is raised when the seasonal demand for each of the two separate breeds slows. The duck, called a mule duck, has the meat of a Muscovy and the size of a Peking.

The game hens and

colored chickens are as varied as a patchwork quilt. In addition to the color differences between the breeds, there are 4 different types of combs evident in the barn. They include the rose, pea, single and V combs.

An interesting aspect of raising turkeys, is the need to use artificial insemination. The broad breasted varieties of turkeys cannot adequately mate.

The farm is perhaps the only hatchery of this size in the U.S. which raises all of its own breeding stock. Many hatcheries, Fred explained, purchase their stock for sale from backyard breeders. The Wrights ship to all 50 states and have shipped to every continent except Australia.

Their knowledge of shipping and the red tape accompanying it has grown with the business. Marge tells of the beginning, when the Post Office employees received crates of peeps in winter to ship and the air holes were not punched out.

With good intentions, the employees punched the holes open and the result was a larger than normal loss of birds. She explained that the peeps travel so quickly that the stress is minimal, and in winter the safest method is to leave the vent holes closed.

But the international regulations are to the Wrights a headache they often wish they did not have. They have never solicited the export markets. Nevertheless, they ship thousands of birds to foreign buyers yearly. But while they speak with pride and amusement about the people from foreign countries calling at odd hours and even knocking on their door begging to have their orders filled, they wearily relate the difficulties involved in out-of-the-country shipments. They speak of export papers that expire before letters of credit arrive and of delays in consulate approval.

The Wrights' barns look like the PA Farm Show. The family raises exotic birds of every size and description. The eggs are collected daily and religiously labeled right on the egg are the date and type of bird. While noting that some breeds are almost extinct, Fred confessed he would someday like to own all the breeds.

One of the interesting sidelines the family has developed is the sale of certain species of game birds to wholesale sports

markets for feathers used in fishing flies. This one area alone has proved lucrative for the family. Fred also has been contacted about raising birds with pure white feathers. The feathers are sought after as test patches for the textile industry to check dye lots. He notes that if he undertook such a market, each bird would have to be individually caged where it could not rub its neck and damage the hackle. In addition, many pains would need to be taken along the way to avoid discoloration of the feathers.

By using existing buildings to house the animals, by storing the eggs in a specially designed underground egg room, by constantly checking the progress of the incubators, by labeling everything, and by keeping accurate records, the family has managed to cope with the rising costs of everything through the use of good management.

Success it seems at least for this family has centered around two things. The first is hard work, and lots of it. Fred notes that the field is wide open. No one is getting into it because the hours are long and the labor mind-boggling. On some breeds of birds, he is booked on orders for all birds until 1982.

Secondly, success has come from a love for their work. Fred says, "I have the college graduate cycle beat. This time of the year I work

14, 16, and 18 hour days, but when I talk to friends from school, they are strapped to jobs they hate by bills for things they buy to maintain an image. I work hard, but I wake up feeling good because I enjoy what I'm doing."

Whatever the technique responsible, business is booming at Willow Hill Hatchery, and tiny feathered representatives from Lebanon County are traveling the world at an ever-increasing rate.



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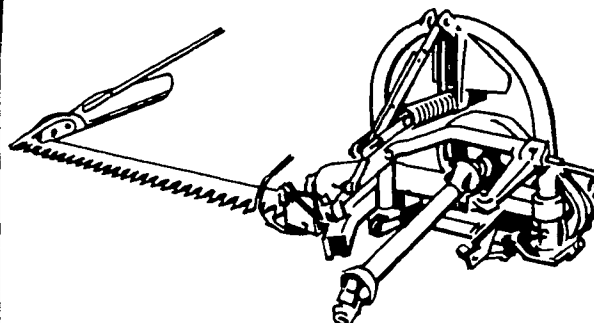
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