

FARM NOTES.

Zealous endeavor to prolong the laying season is often responsible for constitutional weakness and curtailed production of eggs in winter. Correct care of the laying fowls during the molting period will go far toward insuring profitable laying in the second year.

The molting period is much longer than most amateurs suppose, as the first stage is likely to pass unnoticed. It is a gradual process and starts slowly. At first, a few of the larger feathers drop out, one or two at a time, but as the season advances the molt becomes more rapid.

While the fowls are in light molt the hens probably will continue to lay, but laying generally ceases when heavy molting begins. This is when the hen drops the mass of small or body feathers. Prolonging the laying period not only retards the molting period, but it also is likely to result in loss of strength and vigor.

Ordinarily the molt begins in mid-summer and continues from first to last, about three months, although the noticeable molt may not last longer than six weeks. A hen that begins to molt in July should be newly fledged in October. If the molt is delayed the fowls affected will be exposed to considerable protection, and unless unusually comfortable quarters are provided they are almost certain to suffer from disease from such exposure.

Late molting nearly always is the result of a desire to get the largest returns at the moment, even at the expense of the future. But is a late molt economical? True, eggs in summer bring an attractive price—much more than during the spring, yet not as much as during winter. All recognize that it is more difficult to make hens lay during winter than to make pullets yield a large supply, and for that reason most of the old flock are disposed of just before the period of heavy or rapid molt. The few that are not sold are usually selected birds and held for next season's breeders, for which use they are naturally admirably adapted.

The molting period should be a period of rest for the reproductive organs, and it will be when the fowls are not forced either at its beginning or completion. Under such conditions and with proper care, hens usually will begin to lay in February. The eggs also will be large, perfectly formed and with good shells. The fertility, hatchability and strength of the chicks will be all that one can expect or desire.

When a large flock of hens are kept over, an early molt will, of course, be of advantage, because early winter laying is possible only when accompanied by early molting. This means a late summer or early fall molt, which is natural with pullets that were hatched fairly early and that have been kept laying.

For birds hatched later and those that for any reason molt in July, a forced molt is sometimes employed, the hen being made to begin her molt earlier than she would naturally. This may be effected in several ways, some of which are more rapid than others. The advisability of this expedient has often been questioned. Many maintain that it is harmful, and authentic records seem to prove that while the next laying period may be advanced, the egg yield for the year usually is considerably diminished. This might be expected, inasmuch as the rest period is shortened by high feeding. The higher price received for eggs compensates in part, however, for the reduced yield. Whether or not this is a harmful practice, depends consider-

ably upon the rapidity of the molt. The theory of forced molting is that by reducing flesh sufficiently the feathers become dead and loosen, and, therefore, drop out more quickly; then by feeding liberally, new feathers are grown rapidly, the body built up and a laying condition restored.

The most radical method practiced consists of confining the hen and feeding her from one-quarter to one-half of what she would ordinarily require. Even this limited ration consists of foods least fattening such as oats and wheat bran.

Both males and females molt earlier if they have been confined for considerable time. Fanciers who want to exhibit at the fall and early winter shows make use of this fact to assist them in getting candidates for these honors in fresh, new plumage. The production of both feathers and eggs requires much the same kind of nourishment; which is perhaps the real explanation of why hens in heavy molt seldom lay. If a ration sufficiently rich to form both feathers and eggs rapidly was provided, the digestive machinery would soon collapse and neither feathers nor eggs would be formed. Thus, whether the hen forms feathers or eggs, she must be supplied with a small but appreciable amount of mineral matter and a liberal supply of protein, because feathers are found to contain both mineral matter and protein. It then becomes apparent that feathers and eggs are not so different in composition as form and appearance would lead one to believe.

A soft oily skin is favorable to a rapid and healthy growth of feathers and hens or other animals may be fed to promote such a condition. To secure this a liberal supply of such fat-containing foods as beef scraps, oil meal, etc., are often included in rations for molting hens.

Oil meal is not especially palatable and should be used sparingly, possibly one part in 16 or 20 of dry mash as commonly compounded. With the light and active breeds beef scraps may be fed in hoppers, thereby effecting a saving, as fowls soon get a sufficient quantity and are not continually picking over the dry mash for bits of this animal food, wasting grain to save scraps. When mixed in mash, 15 per cent. is a fair proportion.

To those who would take advantage of forced molts, a word of caution is due. Do not reduce rations abruptly. Furthermore, do not reduce them to the extent that the fowl's constitution is impaired. Rather depend upon confinement and a selection of feeds that have little forcing or fattening tendencies.—Philadelphia "Public Ledger."

Your Brain Must Have Pure Blood.

No more important physiological discovery has ever been made than that the brain requires a due supply of pure blood. It is estimated that this organ receives as much as one-tenth of all the blood that is sent from the heart—a great deal more than any other organ of the body. If the vitality of the blood is impaired, the blood then affords the brain an imperfect stimulus and there is mental and physical languor, sluggishness of inactivity. Pure blood is blood that is free from humors, it is healthy blood, and the term pure blood as it is generally used means blood that is not only right in quality but also in quantity. Hood's Sarsaparilla makes pure, rich, red blood. This is one of the great truths about this great medicine. 51-51

Hard Luck.

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"What proves it?"
"Here it is leap year when a woman has an extra chance to be married, and along comes the war to take all the men away."—Baltimore American.
—It will pay you to read the "Watchman."

CASTORIA.

CASTORIA.

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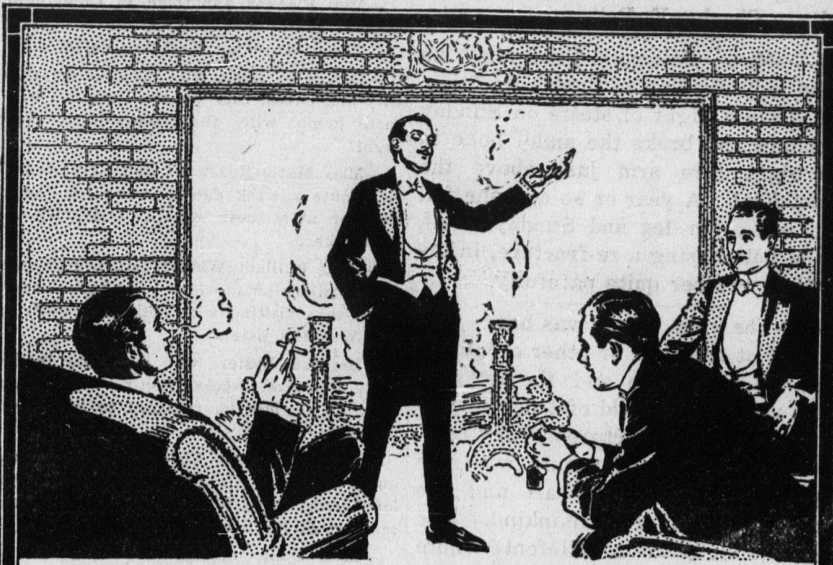
THE CENTAUR COMPANY, NEW YORK CITY.

Steers Should be Dehorned.

Feeding steers should be dehorned is the opinion of authorities at the Pennsylvania School of Agriculture and Experiment Station. If they have horns when purchased they should be dehorned before placed in the feed lot. In every bunch of cattle having horns there is a "boss" who keeps some of the weaker ones away from the feed trough or in a state of worry so that they do not make the max-

imum gains. In shipping cattle for slaughter those with horns often bruise others so badly that it shows up in the carcass.

It is usually true that steers which have been shipped to market without being dehorned will sell at a price from fifteen to twenty-five cents less per cwt. than similar steers free from horns. About ninety per cent of the cattle shipped to market today are dehorned in advance.



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