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Home Course In Poultry Keeping

IX.—Seasonal Review of the Work.

By MILO M. HASTINGS,
 Formerly Poultryman at Kansas Experiment Station, Commercial Poultry Expert of the United States Department of Agriculture, Author of "The Lollar Hen."

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IN this last lesson I shall apply the suggestion given in the previous eight lessons by naming briefly the things that will require attention month by month.

January.
 All stock saved for sale as breeders should have been got rid of around the holiday season or shortly thereafter, and the poultryman begins the year with a well culled flock of layers. In January the laying hens will require more attention than at any other season of the year. The weather is severe, and as egg prices are high every egg added to the basket represents a good profit. See that the house is tight, except openings in the front left for ventilation. See that these windows are so protected that snow does not blow in. Whether you will keep the hens shut in or allow them to run out will depend upon your general plan of operation. If feeding in litter is used, it will be best to keep the hens indoors as much as possible, and careful watch will be necessary to see that the birds are kept busy and always too hungry to mope around, yet the January hen must never go to bed with an empty crop. When the temperature of the house is below freezing the hens should be given water with the chill taken off twice or, better still, three times a day. Sometimes eggs will have to be gath-



WHITE WYANDOTTE COCKEREL.

ered more than once a day so that they will not freeze in the nest. Do not neglect to provide green food. If your supply of fall cabbages and other vegetables run out, it will be necessary to use either steamed clover or alfalfa or to sprout oats.

February.
 The February work of the poultry yard is very like that of the January. The main idea at this season of the year is to keep the hens laying. When the warm days come, the droppings that have accumulated in the poultry house will become damp and malodorous and should be removed. If there is a heavy fall of snow shovel a little strip in front of the house, and if hens range around stables or in feed lots it will pay to shovel a path for them. During very sloppy days it may be desirable to shut the hens in, as it is of little benefit for them to trail around in the slush, and it will result in the selling of the eggs.

March.
 With a well kept flock of poultry the March egg yield is the heaviest of the year. Eggs are declining in price rapidly at this season and should be marketed frequently. By this month any supply of vegetables kept from the previous fall will have been exhausted, and with the feeling of spring in the air the poultryman must not forget that warm days will not bring the hens spring food. Dry clover and alfalfa are fair, but sprouted oats are better, and it will be worth the trouble necessary to prepare them. As soon as the ground may be worked all yards or, if on a farm, a patch of ground near the poultry house should be sown in oats. The chickens may pull one-half the crop up by the roots as it comes through the ground, but it is the chickens we are interested in and not the oat crop. If the incubator is to be used for hatching it should be started about the 1st of March, while the hens may now be set as rapidly as they become broody. With the heavy broods ever-effort should be made to have the bulk of the chickens hatch during the month of April. During the last two weeks in March incubators are to be set for Leghorns.

April.
 With green food sown the previous month the egg production problem in April will simplify itself considerably. The hens can now range abundantly, and the care necessary in the winter time to keep them busy and happy is no longer required. April is the poultryman's busy month. His labors with the layers consist chiefly in gathering the eggs, but the work is most arduous with sitting hens and incubators, which are now running full blast, and even more of his time must go to

the care of wee chicks. Of all the work of the poultry farm that of caring for the newly hatched chicks is the most difficult to systematize or to entrust to the hands of hired labor. The coops or outdoor brooders should be well scattered about, as it is not good for large flocks of young chicks to run together. Moreover young chicks must be protected in their feeding quarters from the presence of old fowls, which in their greed to get at the food meant for the little fellows will run over and trample them. On the farm this is most easily arranged by having the food for chicks in a slat coop, which keeps out the grown fowls.

May.
 May, like April, is a month in which the hens take care of themselves. The hatching of the larger breeds should be finished the early part of this month. Hens of all breeds will insist upon wishing to brood, but can be broken up by penning them in an outdoor coop for a few days. Little chicks will require a great deal of care, and when thunderstorms come up some one must hasten out, frequently in the rain, and see that the foolish hens and frightened brooder chicks get under shelter and do not crouch up in some fence corner. If perchance some have been forgotten one should make a thorough search as soon as the shower is over and bring all soaked chicks into the house to dry. Those found down flat on their backs and apparently dead, if rescued soon enough and wrapped in woolen rags and placed around the stove, will revive in a most astonishing fashion.

June.
 The hatching of Leghorns should be brought to a close during the early part of this month and all male birds taken from the yards. The growing chicks will now be old enough to need less care, and the chief source of the poultryman's loss will be due to his carelessness in leaving coops unprotected from "varmints." Lice and mites will now begin to invade the poultryman's camp more abundantly, and with the approach of the warm weather more cleanliness in feeding vessels and about the house will be necessary.

During June crops should be sown to supply green food in the midsummer, when the grass and spring sown crops dry up.

July.
 The poultryman's work is considerably relieved during July. Indeed, this is the best season of the year for him to leave the chicken farm to the hired man and visit his kinfolk. Cleanliness to keep down disease and lice and care in gathering the eggs frequently and marketing them promptly are the chief points worthy of mention. Early broilers will be ready for market during this month.

August.
 In August we have the same problems as the previous month. Be sure the hens have abundant water and green food. The egg yield should show a considerable increase over July. The male birds of the heavier breeds should now be got into shape for market. The poultry breeder should take careful observation of his growing stock and make selection of the most vigorous youngsters to be reserved, from which to pick the breeding stock. More green crops should now be sown for the fall pasturage. All two-year-old hens and, if you have abundant pullets, a portion of the yearling hens may now be sent to market.

September.
 Eggs are now advancing in price, but it is neither right nor, in the long run, profitable to hold them. Sell all eggs promptly and try to get recognition for your honesty and quality of your product. Young male birds, especially Leghorns, should be separated from the pullets. The coops or colony houses in which the young pullets have grown should be gradually moved toward the house which is to be the winter quarters and the pullets got into the habit of roosting in the laying house. Nice secluded nests should be arranged, as a few precocious pullets will begin laying in this month. Sow wheat and rye for winter green foods.

October.
 Pullets will now begin laying in considerable numbers. If you have fancy trade keep their eggs, which are small, separated from the larger stock. Any remaining old hens that are not to be kept through the winter should be disposed of. Runty pullets and all young male birds not needed for breeding stock should also be sent to market.

November.
 This month should find the laying flock nicely installed in their winter quarters. November eggs are high in price and scarcer than at any other time during the year. The poultry fancier will now select his birds and get them ready for the shows. As the nights grow colder use judgment in closing up the poultry house. If it is closed tightly the hens which have been roosting in the open air will catch cold, and roup will be the result. Keep a careful lookout for this dread disease and take immediate steps to correct things if the symptoms of roup appear.

December.
 December is the height of the poultry show season. The fancier will be a very busy man. His birds must be cooped, trained and prepared for the shows. The poultryman himself next be away at shows, and some one else will have to look after the flock at home. By all means layers must not be neglected. Not only are December eggs highly profitable, but layers that do not start in this month will be unable to keep in the background until the warm spells of March.

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