



POULTRY-KEEPING

A Few Rules For The Minority

"If you were given a thousand pounds what would you do with it?" I asked my friend Susannah.

Susannah thought for a moment. Then she said, "I'd buy a little poultry farm about twenty miles out of town and live on the egg-money."

"How can you expect to keep fowls when you don't know anything about them?" I demanded.

"It's the fowls that are going to keep me," said Susannah, "and they don't know anything about me."

I QUOTE this because it is typical (in my limited experience, admittedly) of the attitude of many poultry farmers. They don't seem to think it necessary to understand their hens. They merely exploit them. This is completely unethical. I have therefore drawn up a few rules for the benefit of the minority who regard poultry-keeping as a sport or pastime rather than as a mere money-making racket. The consideration of possible profit will come later:

1. Remember the significance of the title "Poultry Keeping." You can't have your fowl and eat it too.

2. Always be courteous and considerate to your poultry. Some people wouldn't treat a dog the way they treat their hens. They literally throw the food in their faces.

3. Entrust your hens to somebody who knows something about the psychology of hens. I know, of course, that many parents entrust their children to people who know little about child psychology, but then hens are dumb animals. In fact it is difficult to find anything dumber than the average hen. Do not take advantage of this dumbness.

4. Always be truthful to your fowls. Many people try deliberately to deceive their hens by putting china eggs in the nests, flattering themselves that the hen does not know the difference. If a hen continues to lay after this disgusting deception has been practised on her you may be sure that she is merely heaping coals of fire upon her owner's head, and hoping it hurts.

No Room To Run

And now a word about poultry runs. The title is definitely misleading. Many poultry runs are almost as overcrowded as a modern dance floor, so naturally there is no room to run. The fowls merely stand around in bored and listless attitudes. Surely something could be done about this? Have we learnt nothing from modern educational theory? Formerly it was considered the thing even in our schools to herd individuals together. Questions were answered in chorus, games were played by teams. But now all that is altered. It is the age of individuality. Classes are smaller. Individual differences are catered for.

But in our poultry runs primitive conditions still prevail. The fowl has no privacy. It spends its days promenading solemnly in a bare yard exposed to the public gaze—a yard that compares unfavourably with the exercise ground of a prison camp. At night, with its fellows, it is herded into barracks. We need an-

Slimming Diet

BREAKFAST.

Half grapefruit or 1 orange, apple or pear; 2 eggs, boiled or poached; 2 slices toast; black coffee or tea (no sugar); $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk.

DINNER.

1 cup clear broth; medium serving lean meat or fish; 2 green vegetables served without butter.

LUNCH OR TEA.

Small serving lean meat or fish, or one egg; two green vegetables; fresh fruit; black coffee or tea (no sugar).

—American "Ladies' Home Journal"

other Harriet Beecher Stowe to blazon to a shocked world the sufferings of the humble household hen.

Why Ducks Are Different

The theory that people who live together grow to look alike is regarded as hypothetical. But you have only to look at the average poultry farm to realise how true it is. The average fowl is indistinguishable from her neighbour.

Let us consider the case of ducks. Ducks are allowed to wander at will. They see life. They are not restricted to the society of their own kind. The result is that every duck is an individual.

I like ducks. They are such fat comfortable dependable souls. They make soothing and companionable noises. And it's such fun looking for the eggs. Ducks are moreover invaluable in ridding the garden of pests. Of course people complain that they rid the garden of plants, too, by walking over them with their large flat feet, but after all, one must take the long-range scientific view. This is but another manifestation of the Struggle for Existence and the Survival of the Fittest. The ducks are obviously the fitter species.

The fact that hens compare so unfavourably with ducks as far as personal appeal is concerned is thus directly attributable to their environment. If hens were for a generation or so allowed to lead the normal happy life of ducks, some new species of hen would make its appearance—a plump low-slung model built for comfort rather than speed, equipped with a benign expression and a characteristic cry halfway between

a quack and a purr. And there would be no recurrence of that unfortunate pathological case, the broody hen. I have never seen a broody duck.

The Broody Hen

The cruel treatment meted out to this unfortunate creature, mere victim of the maternal instinct, is indicative of the unenlightened state of public opinion in regard to fowls. Instead of shutting her up in a box by herself where she has not even the companionship of others to prevent her from brooding, she should obviously be given something to take her out of herself.

Remove The Causes

But these after all are only remedies. The actual cause of her brooding must be sought out and removed. Perhaps she has a public conscience and feels strongly the wrongs her race has suffered. The conscientious poultry farmer must endeavour to abolish these. Here are a few suggestions for his guidance.

1. Pull down your existing poultry houses. Rebuild the whole place. Allow an individual hutment for every fowl. Edmund Hubbard, in a recent broadcast with Uncle Scrim from 2ZB, mentioned that in American egg-producing factories each hen was given a special cubicle. But in this case the object is merely to get maximum production from each hen—blatant exploitation! In the case of the conscientious poultry farmer the idea of the individual hutment is to give the maximum pleasure to the individual fowl. And by hutment I do not mean a

mass-produced unit. I mean something individually styled, in the same way as Government houses are individually styled.

2. Allow space for a well-equipped recreation ground (An Anti-Brooding Measure).

3. Allow the individual hen to decide whether she will bring up her children herself or entrust them to an incubator. (Though many hens are the Play-girl or Business Woman type, some of them will still prefer the former.)

* * *

Under these circumstances it's really much cheaper for the conscientious prospective poultry farmer to stay home and buy his eggs ready laid.

—M.B.



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