

AMBASSADOR COLLEGE

BIG SANDY, TEXAS 75755

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG, *Chairman*

AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

PRINCIPLES OF POULTRY PRODUCTION

Today poultry farming has gone berserk. Actually some poultry farms are not even classified as farms, but appropriately named factories. Why? Because they treat the chicken as a machine and not an animal. The chicken is debeaked, decomed, dewinged, and declawed. It is shot full of vaccines, antibiotics, hormones, and other medicated food additives. It is put in a cage with water and feed passing by. It never experiences the taste of green grass or a fat juicy bug or worm. Is this the only way you can raise broilers or produce eggs profitably? Is there a simple, natural way for poultry production?

Modern production is oriented towards high production under unnatural conditions and depends upon the technological developments in medicine and nutrition for their success. The establishment of a poultry program should begin with an understanding of the natural laws involved. Basically they pertain to the selection and breeding of the birds, nutrition, sanitation and management practices.

The basis of the poultry flock should be the selection of the natural variety or varieties in the pure lines of birds best adapted to your area and suited to your purpose. It is rather difficult to find pure lines, so once a flock is established it would be desirable to raise your own replacements by selecting the best hens for brooding purposes and continually culling the poor producers and those lacking hardiness and resistance. Unfortunately crossbreeding programs are being used to gain hybrid "vigor" in place of selecting and mating for quality, resistance and production in the pure lines. (See Lev. 19:19.)

In mating birds of the light or egg breeds, such as Leghorns, generally one male is used for fifteen to twenty hens. In the general purpose breeds, such as White Rocks, one male with ten to fifteen hens is a better ratio. We are presently running one rooster for every ten hens in our layer flocks.

New stock to be added to the poultry flock should be isolated from the flock for about two weeks to make sure they do not have any disease or show the symptoms of disease infection.

Once you have obtained your chickens, how should you take care of them? First they must be fed. The best poultry rations can be the simplest if the feeds are grown "organically" on a fertile soil and if the birds are provided with tender green pasture or fresh greens daily along with adequate sunshine. Sunshine provides vitamin D. Green forage is high in the essential vitamins, minerals and high quality proteins required by poultry. In addition the bugs, insects and worms which chickens find provide protein and other "unknown factors" in the diet. A good pasture program will greatly reduce feed cost and help to maintain a healthy flock. Pastures should be rotated and tilled occasionally to prevent buildup of parasite and disease problems.

Pasture alone will not provide sufficient energy (calories) and protein needs for optimum growth and production. The simplest manner of supplying the extra energy and protein is to provide "free choice" grain (whole grains are more palatable than finely ground ones) and protein supplement. This will allow the birds to balance their own ration. Grit should be made available if birds are not on pasture. Laying hens generally need extra calcium which can be provided by high calcium limestone or oyster shells.

When good quality organically grown feeds and forage are not available it will be necessary to provide special supplements of animal proteins, vitamins, and minerals in order to prevent poor growth and production and disease problems. While striving for a simple and balanced feeding program, one may find it necessary to compensate for present deficiencies by adding some supplements to the basic ration. We formulate our rations by:

1. Determining the availability and cost of feeds in our area.
2. Following guidelines in Morrison's Feeds and Feeding.
3. Actual experience with our flocks.

One should be able to grow a portion of his own feeds. When feeds must be purchased we suggest you use feeds not contaminated with antibiotics, hormones or other medications and use the natural supplements when they are needed.

Fresh clean water should be available at all times. If a flock shows signs of illness, we have found it helpful to add a small amount of vinegar (1 oz. per gal. of water) as a purifier in the water and as an aid in digestion.

Another very important point of care is sanitation. The poultry house should be cleaned preferably once a month or more often if needed. At each cleaning the building can be disinfected with a washing of hot lye water or another method is whitewashing several times a year. This will not only free the house of lice, mites, and disease germs, but gives the building a clean, fresh fragrance. After cleaning, the house should be bedded down with clean, dry bedding such as straw, sawdust, or corn cobs--whatever is available in your area. A good deep litter is very essential. Ground corn cobs are excellent absorbing litter. The feet and claws of poultry are made for scratching and their beaks for pecking. Throwing "scratch" grain on top of the bedding daily provides the need for scratching and pecking--giving the poultry much needed exercise to help maintain healthy bodies.

Problems with external parasites such as flies, lice, mites, ticks, fleas, bed bugs, chiggers, etc., can be overcome by good sanitation and dusting procedures. Lime sulfur or cresol spray can be used in houses and on roosts. Dusting with woodashes, diatomaceous earth or finely powdered sulfur directly on the birds, in the nests or in a scratch box will protect the birds.

Part of sanitation is providing adequate ventilation and area. The floor space that should be provided per bird will depend on such factors as type of floor, size of bird, temperature and ventilation. Crowded conditions cause birds to develop habits such as picking, feather eating, and cannibalism which are apt to result in poor growth, poor feed conversion and poor laying, as well as possible disease outbreaks. General recommendations vary from one square foot per bird for broilers to four square feet for the larger general purpose type hens. For ample roost space, allow eight inches for each bird. Laying hens need about one nest to every four birds or community-type nests can be used if preferred. If hens lay eggs on the floor or in feeders, it may be that there is too much light in the nest. Make the nest as enclosed and dark as possible.

Several poultry farmers try to increase egg production by leaving lights on all night. This is a means of "forcing" the chicken. If God had intended poultry to see at night, He would

have created them with cat eyes. Poultry's digestive tract usually completes its duty before the night is over, giving the system a time to rest. By leaving the lights on, the chicken will eat all night and its body will wear out in less than half the time it should.

Management is an overall key to successful poultry production. Planning the whole program with the right goals in mind is the first step. Secondly, common sense, securing the right knowledge and experience will prepare a manager to achieve the planned goals. It is not possible to give all the particulars needed for a successful poultry program in a letter. Much useful information can be obtained through your County Extension Agent, books and USDA publications, and experienced farmers.

A final point of success has to do with following the basic principles in selection, nutrition and management. Hard work and being a conscientious husbandman are essential aspects of a good manager. God promises to help those who will do things His way.

PLT