

# CHICKEN FATTENING

CONTENTS OF A RECENT DOMINION AGRICULTURAL BULLETIN.

Method of Crate Feeding Poultry in Order to Produce the Finished Birds That Command the Top Prices in the Best Market—Age of the Birds and Rations Used—Cost of Output.

A bulletin recently issued by the Dominion Department of Agriculture, by Prof. J. W. Robertson, Commissioner of Agriculture, and F. C. Hare, Chief of the Poultry Division, covers the ground of profitable commercial poultry farming. The bulletin in its reference to fattening chickens says:

Fatted chickens, when marketed either in Canada or Great Britain,

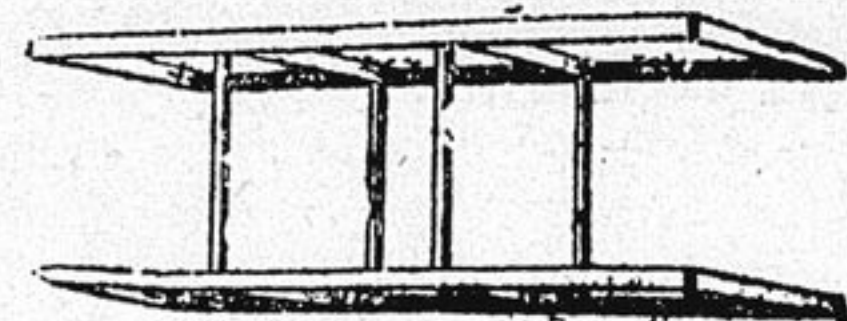


FIG. 1.—FRAME OF THE FATTENING CRATE. should possess the following qualifications:

**Breast.**—The shape of the breast should be broad and full, so that when the chicken is dressed the breast will present a plump, meaty appearance. The breast meat is the most palatable part of the chicken. Large-framed chickens, with prominent breast bones, cannot be satisfactorily fatted.

**Legs.**—The legs of a fowl are largely composed of sinews, of which the meat is inferior, and this, of course, should form as small a proportion of the weight as is practicable. Feathers on the legs are an objection, also black or dark colored shanks, and any development of the spur in male chickens.

**Flesh.**—The color of the flesh of the chicken should be white, and the flesh should be of fine quality. The color of the flesh is governed by the nature of the food consumed. To secure a white-colored flesh, mashes should be fed, of which ground oats and skim-milk are the main parts; if an excess of whole or ground Indian corn is fed, the chickens will have a yellow flesh. The flesh of an oat-fed chicken is of a superior quality to that of a corn-fed chicken.

**Bone and Offal.**—Smallness of bone, and minimum quantity of offal are two important requirements. In selecting chickens for fattening, those should be fatted that are of medium size, and are of a broad, square shape, with short, straight legs, set well apart. The head and comb should be of small size.

**Weight.**—The preferred dressed weight (British system of dressing) for fatted chickens is four pounds. Plump chickens of any weight up to five pounds each are more readily disposed of than large fatted chickens.

The crates in which the fattening is carried on are six feet long, sixteen inches wide and twenty inches high, outside measurements. Each crate is divided by two tight wooden partitions into three compartments, and each compartment holds four chickens. The frame pieces are two inches wide and seven-eighths of an inch thick. This frame (Fig. 1) is covered with slats running lengthwise on three sides—bottom, back and top—and up and down in front. The slats for the bottom are seven-eighths of an inch wide and five-eighths of an inch; the back, top and front slats are the same width, but only three-eighths of an inch thick. The spaces between the slats in front are two inches wide to enable the chickens to feed from the trough. The bottom slats are put on one inch and three-eighths apart, and the slat nearest the back of the crate is two inches and one-quarter from the corner piece. The bottom slats are raised two inches from the bottom of the crate, to prevent the chickens' feet being bruised when the crate is placed on the ground. The top slats are two inches apart, and the back slat one inch and a half. The top slats are cut above each partition, and six strips two inches wide are nailed under them. The three doors so formed are hinged to the rear corner piece.

The crates are placed on stands sixteen inches from the ground. The droppings from the chickens are received on sand or other absorbent material. A light "V" trough, two and a half inches inside, is placed in front of each crate, and is carried on two brackets nailed to the ends of the crate. The bottom of the trough is four inches above the floor, and the upper inside edge is two inches from the crate.

In warm weather the crates should be placed outdoors in a sheltered position. In unsettled weather it is advisable to construct a rough board shelter above the crates so as to shed the rain; or the fattening should be carried on inside a shed or barn. During cold weather the crates should be placed in a warm building. When fattening chickens inside a building, there should be dark blinds covering the windows; these blinds should be raised at each feeding time and lowered when the meal is finished. Abundant ventilation is also required at all times.

The experiments that were conducted by this department last year with large numbers of growing chickens determined that four months of age was the most profitable time to place chickens on the market. A prominent English provision merchant states the age question concisely: "The watchwords for the export trade

should be uniformity of size and appearance, and quick-developing plump-breasted birds. To assist in the latter cram all the feed into them they will take for the first fifteen or eighteen weeks, and get them on the market. After that age the feed eaten is practically so much wasted as the chickens will not realize prices commensurate with the extra cost.

In order to have the chickens plump and well fitted for the market when they are at the most profitable

age, they should be placed in the fattening crates when they are three months old. It is not meant by this that chickens cannot be fatted profitably when they are more than three months old. Suitable market chickens of any age up to seven months will show satisfactory gains in the crates.

In fattening one hundred chickens for market eight fattening crates are required, that cost from eight to twelve dollars. The shaping boards cost about fifty cents, and eight shipping boxes lined with parchment paper cost in Montreal about one dollar and fifty cents. The fattening crates and shaping board should not be included in the cost of fattening the first lot of chickens, as they can be made use of for several years.

Taking the results from five lots at four of the fattening stations where the men managed the work best and had good chickens of large breeds, I find that 365 chickens in five lots gained on the average 2.35 pounds each; and the average cost for food consumed was 5.27 cents per pound of increase in the weight. That shows a great increase, nearly two and a half pounds per chicken, and the cost for food was five and a half cents per pound of increase. (The ground grain was valued at one dollar and twenty cents per hundred pounds and the skim-milk at fifteen cents per hundred pounds.)

A satisfactory fattening ration is one that is palatable and that will produce a white-colored flesh. Ground oats, finely ground or with the coarser hulls sifted out, should form the basis of all the grain mixtures. Ground corn fed in excess will result in a yellow-colored flesh of inferior quality; ground peas impart a hardness to the flesh that is not desirable. Ground oats, ground buckwheat, ground barley, and low grade flour are the most suitable meals for fattening. Satisfactory meal mixtures are:

1. Ground oats (coarser hulls removed).
2. Sifting from rolled oats (no hulling dust should be included).
3. Two parts ground oats, two parts ground buckwheat, one part ground corn.

The ground meal should be mixed to a thin porridge with thick sour skim-milk. On the average ten pounds of meal require from fifteen to seventeen pounds of sour skim-milk. When sufficient skim-milk cannot be obtained for mixing the

mashes, a quantity of animal food and raw vegetable food should be added to the fattening ration.

The chickens should remain in the fattening crates for a period of twenty-four days. It is well to divide this period into the first and second weeks, during which time the chickens are fed the ground meal and skim-milk mashes; and the remaining ten days, when tallow should be added to the food.

**Killing the Lice.**—Before the chickens are placed in the crates they should be well dusted with sulphur to kill the lice.

**The First Week.**—It is necessary to feed the chickens lightly the first week they are in the crates. A small quantity of the fattening food should be spread along the troughs, and as this is eaten more food is added, but not as much as the chickens would consume. The food should be given three times a day, and after feeding the feed troughs should be cleaned and turned over. The chickens should receive fresh water twice a day, and grit two or three times during the week.

**The Second Week.**—The chickens should be given twice a day as much food as they will eat. Half an hour after feeding the feed troughs should be cleaned and turned over. Water and grit should also be supplied as in the first week.

**The Last Ten Days.**—At the commencement of this period one pound of tallow a day should be added to the mashes for every seventy chickens. The quantity of tallow should be gradually increased, so that at the latter part of the period one pound of tallow is fed to fifty chickens. The chickens should receive the fattening food twice a day in the feed troughs, and also water and grit as previously stated.

The cramping machine is not necessary for fattening chickens, and only when well fed chickens are placed in the fattening crates is it a profitable method of feeding. When young chickens are placed in the fattening crates in a moderately lean condition and are fed a suitable fattening food from the feed trough, they will make substantial gains throughout the fattening period.

**Feather-Plucking.**—Feather-plucking is most commonly used by feeding a fattening food deficient in protein. The remedy is to remove the chickens that are affected, to feed the others more skim-milk in their mashes, or to add animal food and vegetable food to their fattening ration. Feather-plucking is also caused by parasites irritating the roots of the feathers; in this case the mites can be found amongst the white powdery matter at the base of the quill. The remedy is to apply sulphur and hard ointment to the affected parts.

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3. Any person who takes a paper from the post-office, whether directed to his name or another, or whether he has subscribed or not, is responsible for the pay.

4. If a subscriber orders his paper to be stopped at a certain time, and the publisher continues to send, the subscriber is bound to pay for it if he takes it out of the post-office. This proceeds upon the ground that a man must pay for what he uses.

5. The courts have decided that refusing to take newspapers and periodicals from the post-office, or removing and leaving them uncollected for, is *prima facie* evidence of intentional fraud.