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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, June 18, 1941

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "FILLING THE EGG BASKET." Information from Farm Security Officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

There'll be cackles a-plenty on the farm this summer. The government has asked farmers everywhere to increase egg production so we can have more eggs for ourselves and more for other defenders of democracy. And we're getting them by feeding and caring for laying hens better, holding the best layers longer, and raising more pullets to build into laying flocks this fall. The hens have a job too, and the more of them to do it the better -- "Many hens make light work."

Farm Security officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture are urging borrower families to take part in this defense effort, and are getting good results. Today, these folks pass on to us some of the suggestions they are offering on "improving working conditions of hens." They tell us how to provide more and better food, and better living quarters for our "fine-feather friends."

On this matter of feeding, an Extension Specialist says to keep the mash hopper full. Have plenty of good mash before the hens at all times. Don't make the hens rustle for themselves. Also, when the days get hot and sultry, start feeding wet mash. Moisten it well with water or milk, but have it crumbly - not sloppy. Some poultrymen pour milk on top of dry mash in the hopper - the lazy man's system they call it - and the hens like it. Of course, once you start a wet mash, you should keep it up.

A lot of thrifty farm folk mix their own laying mash, and even produce most of their own ingredients. A farmer in Carbon County, Montana uses grain from his farm and milk from his own cows. But he says he doesn't use sweet milk. He uses



buttermilk left over when his wife churns, and stirs the buttermilk and grain together. On the days when he doesn't have buttermilk, he uses meat meal which furnishes the much needed animal protein. The commercial supplements for a hundred pounds of this home-mixed ration cost him only 33¢, which means quite a cash saving.

Hens, like people, need a balanced diet and if they don't get it there's trouble afoot. Rickets and roup, for example, are caused by lack of certain food elements or vitamins. A good balanced ration is necessary for health and growth and egg production. Just an abundance isn't enough - it must be the right kind of abundance. So if you're a bit in doubt on the feeding question, you might talk to one of your FSA supervisors or county extension agents. With food plentiful and egg prices higher, the extra trouble is worthwhile.

Did you know an egg is more than 70 percent water? It is, and that's why hens need plenty of fresh, clean water at all times. Water is the cheapest of all poultry feeds, and very important. Have it handy, too - don't make Chick-a-biddy go down to the creek or the horse trough for a drink. Have some setting near the dry mash, if possible, and hens will eat more. Also, be sure both milk and water are well-protected from litter and droppings, and fixed so the hens cannot scratch trash into the vessels and spread disease.

Besides food and drink, hens need some grit. If your flock is closely housed or kept in a small sandy yard, you'll have to supply it. Ground limestone or oyster shell are two good kinds that furnish plenty of eggshell-making material. Just keep some in a box and let the hens have it cafeteria-style.

Then house your hens properly. You don't have to have a "hen-palace" but you should have a clean, dry, comfortable place for them. Hens that have to roost in trees like owls, or stay cramped up in dark, damp quarters like toads don't lay well.....and I don't blame them, do you? You can get directions on homemade



poultry houses from your FSA supervisors or county extension agents, but here's a suggestion on summer housing. Why not make a summer shelter for your hens? You could very easily - and inexpensively.

Just build four strong wire sides on a heavy framework, and put a roof over it. Then set it under a shade tree or in a field near the house. You don't need anything fancy, but you do want something safe from varmints and thieves. About the only furniture you'll need will be nests, roosts, mash hoppers, and water containers. And what a picnic the hens will have! They'll be leaving the hot old laying house for awhile and getting out into the fresh air where it's cooler. Also, you'll have a chance to clean up the poultry house and get it ready for the fall crop of pullets. If hens stay cool and well fed in summer, you see, they moult later. And a late moult is a quick moult which means only a short vacation from laying.

Lots of different kinds of litter have been recommended for hen houses, but Forest Service officials of the U. S. Department of Agriculture suggest pine needles. Had you thought of them? They say, take some longleaf dry needles, add a few chopped green pine cones to get the odor of pine oil, clean out the dust and trash, and scatter them around on the floor. This seems just the thing to use in poultry houses. First of all, the pine oil blots out the unpleasant odors, and it also improves sanitation by absorbing moisture yet doesn't become matted or soggy. What's more, when it's finished in the poultry house, it makes a good fertilizer.

Well, taking care of chickens is not necessarily a woman's job, but this time of year when the men folks are busy in the field, it may fall the woman's lot to do it. This is what happened down in Houston County, Alabama, and the women are said to be doing a mighty fine job. For one thing, they've formed a little poultry club and are holding regular meetings with their supervisors to swap experiences - talk about better methods of feeding, short cuts to good management, building lamp brooders, making labor-saving equipment at home, and handling disease problems. To save money, they have even bought some feed cooperatively.

So this is how some people are filling their egg baskets these days - and helping Uncle Sam fill his great big Defense egg basket. Maybe you'd like to follow their lead.

