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**Home Course  
In Poultry  
Keeping**

**III.—Poultry Houses and Furniture.**

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

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**T**HERE are two ways in which money is lost in the poultry house construction. The first method, which is the way many farmers lose their money, is by giving the fowls such poor quarters that they have no protection against the weather and predatory animals. On the other hand, village poultrymen, and especially the novice who proposes



A UNIQUE VILLAGE POULTRY HOUSE.

to take up poultry keeping as a profession, very frequently lose money by building more elaborate and expensive poultry houses than there is any need for.

Indeed, many houses are built so tight and warm that poultry kept in them are less healthy than they would be in a house of a small fraction of the cost. There are throughout the eastern states a number of defunct poultry plants in which the cause of failure is now attributed to the idea of poultry house construction which prevailed ten or fifteen years ago. At that time houses were made with padded walls and entirely inclosed, so that the chickens while roosting in the house at night were kept so warm that they caught cold upon going out into the weather next morning. The present tendency is toward lighter, cheaper, better ventilated buildings.

The two general forms of poultry houses in use are the long house and the colony house. The long house has several pens under one roof and is adapted to the village poultryman who wishes to keep several breeding pens of fowls and who must keep them yarded. The farmer or egg farmer will almost invariably construct his poultry house or houses on the type of the colony house—that is, the house which is to contain one flock of fowls.

**Simple Houses Best.**

The house must be planned for the hen's comfort. Any embellishments or fancy work that is added to please the owner should not be charged up against the productive powers of the hen, for she needs a place to sleep, eat and scratch out of the weather and cares little whether this protection be in the form of a painted building with a silver plated weather cock on the lightning rod or a piano box covered with tarred paper.

The poultry house should be only high enough for the keeper to stand erect, any greater space being a waste and making the house colder in winter. The house should contain about five square feet of floor space per hen if the fowls are yarded, while the fowls on free range may get on with somewhat less space. The milder the climate the less indoor accommodations will be required by the hen.

**Good Drainage is Vital.**

The poultry house should be located upon the best drained soil available on the farm. The sandiest soil that will still grow crops is desired for poultry. If the poultry house be located on pure sand there will be no green crop or insect life for the fowls to furnish feed and amusement, and then results will be little better than upon bare board floors.

On the farm the hen should be separated as far as possible from the hopen, especially if heavy breeds are kept; otherwise the hogs in snapping at fowls that are stealing their feed may learn the taste of chicken flesh. Poultry may be placed near the orchard, but coops for young chicks should not be put under trees, especially with Leghorns, as the young stock will form the habit of roosting in the trees, and serious trouble will be experienced when the cold weather comes on. It is usually impractical to locate poultry houses so that the hens will not find the garden, and we must choose between fencing the hens or the garden.

A stone foundation is best for the poultry house that is permanently located, but where stone is expensive this may be replaced by cedar, hemlock or Osage orange posts. Colony houses are best built on hemlock mud sills cut like sled runners so they may be moved to fresh ground.

Floors may be constructed of rough boards or cement. Cement floors are excellent, but if well constructed are expensive. Cheaply constructed cement floors will not last. Board floors

are common and are preferred by many poultrymen, but built close to the ground they harbor rats, while if open underneath they make the house cold. Earth floors are generally most satisfactory for houses for mature fowls. It is always desirable to grade up the site of the poultry house so that the water will run away from the building. Where the soil is heavy this is essential, for dampness in a poultry house is an evil which must be overcome.

The walls of the chicken house must first of all be wind tight. The cheapest way to obtain this is to use upright boards and batten the cracks. Various kinds of lap-siding give similar results. Single board walls may be greatly improved by lining with building paper, or the wall as well as the roof of the building may be covered with prepared roofing. In very cold climates the wall may be built of double boards with building paper in between.

The question of roofing is an argument between the use of shingles and of prepared roofing papers. The former are preferable, but more expensive, and where you know the make of a roofing which you are sure is durable it is usually to be chosen. One type of poultry house roof that has given excellent satisfaction is made of matched cypress boards, with no other covering whatever. I have seen such roofs ten years of age that were in a perfectly sound and weather proof condition.

The most common form of roof for the long poultry house is the single slope. In a house of fourteen feet in width a height of seven and one-half feet in front and five feet in the rear is a very good proportion. If the shingle roofing is to be used it is probably better to make the house of double pitch. This, in order to get the house high enough for windows and doors, will make the cone unnecessarily high. The difficulty is sometimes avoided by having an uneven double pitch roof—that is, having the cone nearer the front side.

The object of ventilating chicken houses is to supply a reasonable amount of fresh air and, what is equally important, to keep the house dry. Ventilation should never be by means of cracks in the walls or cupolas or openings in the roof. Systems of pipes which remove the foul air from near the floor form a complication which experience has shown to be more trouble than it is worth. The most practical scheme of ventilating poultry houses is to have one or more windows in front of the house which are covered with cloth instead of glass or in less severe climates having the windows covered with poultry netting only. An opening in one side of a room, the other three sides of which are closed, will provide ample ventilation, while the fowls roosting in the far side of the compartment will keep comfortably warm and free from drafts. If dry and protected from the wind a chicken will stand pretty low temperatures without ill effects.

**Have as Little Furniture as Possible.**  
Make all roosts on the same level. The ladder arrangement causes the birds to fight for the highest perch



COLONY HOUSE.

and offers no advantage whatever. Have roosts and all other inside poultry furniture so that it may be readily removed for cleaning and lice painting. Put in only enough roosts to accommodate the hens and let them be in the back side of the house. The floor beneath the roosts may be separated from the rest of the house by a board set on the edge, which will prevent the droppings being mingled with the litter of the feeding floor, or the roost may be placed over a platform raised some two or three feet above the floor. In cold climates an extra cloth curtain is sometimes hung in front of the roost, thus forming a cupboard or closet. This curtain should be let down only on extremely cold nights.

**Poultry Yards.**

The farm poultry keeper of the old school does not yard his fowls. The fancier, who is generally a village or city dweller, is obliged to construct yards. As the fancy poultry breeders are the ones who do most of the writing for the poultry papers, the idea of yards becomes infused into poultry literature. With the result that farmers who begin to take an interest in poultry breeding often go to the expense of building poultry yards in imitation of the town poultryman. Now, as a matter of fact, yarded poultry can be made to give really better results than fowls on free range, but it takes a lot of unnecessary labor to supply them with the shade, exercise and green food that they secure on the range. Yarded fowls, if left to take care of themselves to the extent that the free range poultry may be, will prove unprofitable. By all means those who are situated where the chickens may run free should not bother with yards, except a small run on one side of the house, which may be used in stormy wintry weather or when the hens threaten the destruction of some favorite garden spot.

**CANNING VEGETABLES.**

**How to Treat Them So They Will Keep Their Freshness.**

The glass jars that are to be used for canning should be set in a boiler of cold water, placed on the stove and boiled for ten to fifteen minutes. This completely sterilizes them, destroying the bacteria that cause fermentation. The jars should be left in the boiling water until the moment they are to be used. The rings and covers should be sterilized in the same way.

Rhubarb can be easily canned and kept for winter use, when it makes an acceptable substitute for expensive canned fruit. Rhubarb for canning should be cut when it is young and tender, washed well and cut into pieces about two inches long. Pack these pieces tightly into the jars and fill with cold water. After about ten minutes pour off the water and fill again, to overflowing this time. Seal the cans tightly and the rhubarb will keep until you are ready to use it.

When the tomatoes do well there is usually an abundance of fruit—much more than can be used while it is fresh. It takes care to can tomatoes so that they will keep, but with a little practice it can be done. The tomatoes should first be washed thoroughly and then boiled for about six minutes. After this preliminary treatment they should be peeled and sliced. Then put them in a kettle and heat slowly, stirring frequently. Boil for half an hour and then put into the jars and seal tightly.

These are about the only vegetables that are available for canning unless it is ground cherries, which make delicious preserves. If the family likes horseradish an extra amount of it can be prepared in the spring, when it is plentiful, and kept for use later in the season.

**Raising Early Melons.**

Melons bought in the market never have the flavor of those grown in the home garden. Commercial growers select varieties because of their shipping qualities rather than for their flavor. Melons are not the easiest vege-



FINE HOME GROWN MUSKMELONS.

table raised, but a little time and effort spent in getting a successful crop will be well repaid.

The best way to get early melons is to plant the seed in berry boxes in a hotbed or in the house about six weeks before the usual date for planting them outdoors. The soil should be rich and fine. About ten seeds should be planted in each box. As the plants are well up all but three of the strongest can be destroyed.

When the weather becomes warmer the boxes can be transferred to the cold frame and the plants gradually hardened. When all danger of frost is past and the soil outside has become warm the melon plants can be set out in the garden. Six feet apart each way is the best distance for muskmelons and eight or ten feet for watermelons. A few shovelful of poultry manure mixed with the soil of each hill will greatly hasten the growth of the melons. In transplanting make a hole about the size of the berry box. Strip off the sides of the box carefully so as not to disturb the roots, place the cule of dirt in the hole and pack fresh dirt around it.

The future care will consist mainly of thorough cultivation and protection from striped beetles.

**Tomato Growing.**

Tomatoes must be started in the hotbed or in the house early in March, especially in the northern states, if satisfactory results are expected. They should be transplanted to the cold frame about two weeks before they are set out in the garden in order to harden them. Frequent transplanting also makes the plants more stocky and develops the root system.

As soon as danger of frost is past the plants may be set out in the garden. If early tomatoes are wanted the best plan is to pinch off all side shoots, leaving only the main stem. This should be tied to a strong stake four or five feet high to hold it erect. When trained in this way the plants can be set out in rows three and a half feet apart and about two feet apart in the row.

Another plan is to make a four sided rack about a foot square at the bottom by a foot and a half at the top. It should be about four feet high, with two or three slats on each side. One of these is placed over every hill and the vines trained up over it. They ripen much better when handled in this way than where they are allowed to spread out on the ground, and there is not nearly so much loss from rotting. Where this method is used the plants will have to be set out about three and a half feet apart each way.

In case there is danger of a frost just as the fruit is beginning to ripen a little straw may be put over the vines nights and removed during the day.

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