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FEATHER PICKING

Under close confinement, as now recommended for laying flocks, chickens may start picking feathers from one another's backs. Such nakedness probably deprives the birds of protection from extreme cold or hot weather.

Canadian workers state that feeding steeped alfalfa hay of high quality chopped to about 1/4 inch lengths prevents feather picking. Alfalfa was steeped overnight by covering with cold water and draining before feeding. It was fed twice daily in shallow hoppers and the residue left from previous feeding was thrown out.

CANNIBALISM

Cannibalism as well as feather picking generally results from overcrowding, either on the floor or at the feeder. "Blow-outs" may initiate the difficulty. Hanging up cabbage or beets or having alfalfa hay in racks helps to keep the birds occupied. In extreme cases it may be necessary to notch the upper mandible ¼ inch back of the tip of each side and trim it off to the "quick". Special metal guards on the beaks may also be used. All birds showing blood should be removed from the flock immediately. Wisconsin workers have observed that one tablespoon of salt in each gallon of drinking water fed one-half day and repeated 3 days later may overcome the trouble.

PROLAPSE OR BLOW-OUTS

The tendency toward "blow-outs" seems to be inherited to some extent. It may be aggravated by inadequate feeding. Using somewhat more than the usual quantity of bran and ground oats in the mash may help. Some poultrymen feel that an occasional flush helps. Others use bran soaked in liquid skim milk or buttermilk as a conditioning mash. Prompt removal of affected birds is essential to prevent cannibalism. If the chicken dying from "blow-out" is dressed promptly, the bird is perfectly edible.

DIFFICULTY WITH COLD IN CHICKENS

May be traced to inadequate ventilation. No one bird seems to be more resistant, although there are strain variations.