CARE OF THE BROODY HEN

By

O. C. UFFORD
COLORADO AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE  
Fort Collins, Colorado  

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CARE OF BROODY HEN

By O. C. UFFORD,
Instructor in Poultry Husbandry

The broody hen when not being used for hatching and brooding purposes is very often neglected and mistreated.

The period from April to August is the natural season for the development of the brooding instinct of the hen. This is especially true of the medium and heavier breeds such as Plymouth Rocks, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds, Orpingtons, Brahmas, Cochins, etc.

In a great many cases a large portion of the flock becomes broody during the summer and are a nuisance as well as greatly affecting the production of the flock. The poultry raiser can overcome this to a marked degree by giving a little additional care to his flock of laying hens. Break the broody hens not needed for incubation and brooding, and get them back into laying condition at the earliest possible date.

The high cost of feed and the prices that can be secured for eggs for hatching or marketing will merit this added attention to the flock.

REASONS FOR KEEPING THE BROODY HENS LAYING

Broody Hens Increase Egg Spoilage

The loss from egg spoilage during the summer months is enormous. This can be attributed to a large extent to the production of fertile eggs.

The broody hen which is allowed to remain on the nests from day to day in the laying quarters instead of being confined, contributes to a large extent the cause for starting the fertile egg on its downward path. It only requires a few hours of incubation by the broody hen during hot weather to start chick development which finally results in spoilage of the egg.

BROODY HENS ARE A NUISANCE IN THE LAYING HOUSE

When broody hens are allowed to persist with their desire to sit, the nests in the laying house become filled with them. The layers are crowded out and often forced to seek nests outside, which results in the loss of many eggs.

BROODY HENS ARE UNPROFITABLE

The broody hen is a non-producer. Any hen that is a non-producer is unprofitable. One can make her profitable by keeping her laying.

COMMON PRACTICES OF CARING FOR BROODIES

Instead of confining the broody hen as she shows signs of becoming broody, she is simply thrown from the nest each evening as the eggs are gathered. Due to her natural instincts,
she is usually very persistent and can be found back on the nest the next time the eggs are gathered.

Another common practice is to confine the broody in a coop or pen, without food or water for several days. This will break her up in time, but due to the starving, she gets out of condition and it will require several weeks of feeding to get her back to laying again.

THE PROPER WAY TO CARE FOR BROODY HENS

1. Remove the hens from the laying house at first signs of broodiness, which is a clucking, ruffling of feathers, squawking at one’s approach or remaining on the nest late in the afternoon.

2. Place the broody hen in a coop with a slatted bottom. The coop should be raised off the ground to permit a free circulation of air under it. This reduces the fever or temperature which the broody hen develops and if confined in time she will be quickly broken of her desire to sit.

3. Another good method of breaking broodies is to confine them in a pen with one or several vigorous male birds.

4. The broody hen should be fed and watered as frequently as the other members of the flock. They will be broken of their broodiness just as quickly and will be in much better condition to start laying than the hen that has been starved.

5. The broody hens should be removed from the broody coop just as soon as the signs of broodiness are over.

The following table shows the records of a few trapnested hens, giving the length of time it requires some hens to get over their broodiness and back into laying again, when they have been properly cared for.

Broody hens that have not been properly managed will require many more days to get back to laying.

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<th>Hen's No.</th>
<th>Date Last Egg was laid</th>
<th>Date Next Egg was laid</th>
<th>No. Days Between eggs</th>
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<td>May 12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>April 13</td>
<td>April 26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>408</td>
<td>April 7</td>
<td>April 20</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>210</td>
<td>April 24</td>
<td>May 5</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>474</td>
<td>April 25</td>
<td>April 30</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>332</td>
<td>May 1</td>
<td>May 8</td>
<td>7</td>
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