Phases of Poultry Work: Sanitation Helps to Keep Hens Healthy

Clara M. Sutter
PHASES OF POULTRY WORK
(Sanitation Helps to Keep Hens Healthy)

by

Clara M. Sutter,
Specialist in Poultry,
South Dakota State College
Brookings, South Dakota

EXTENSION SERVICE

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SANITATION HELPS TO KEEP HENS HEALTHY

It is much easier to keep hens healthy and happy than it is to "doctor" sick birds. Therefore, the live poultryman takes care to keep the house and grounds clean and the poultry free from parasites (lice, mites and worms) and such diseases as roup, cholera and tuberculosis.

You may have learned that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" and that is especially true of poultry diseases.

Sometimes people complain that the hens do not like to roost in a poultry house, but when one examines the house it is easy to see why they prefer to stay out of doors. Too often the house is dark, dirty, poorly ventilated and infested with mites which suck the very life from any fowl that dares to seek shelter in the place.

You have already studied the Government Bulletin No. 574 on Poultry House Construction so you have a pretty good idea what the requirements are. It may not be possible for you to have a new poultry house, or you may not have the means to build the kind you would like, but you can make the best of what you have. It does not take money to cut an opening to furnish ventilation, and it does not require new muslin to cover this opening in stormy weather. There is an old gunny sack or something of the kind that may be used instead. It does not cost anything but time to keep the droppings cleaned out and the litter fresh. In town the straw must be bought, but the country boy or girl can have it for the asking.

One of the best remedies to get rid of mites is the oil drained from the crank case of an engine or automobile, so instead of letting it run on the ground save it for the poultry house.

The problem of sanitation is a serious one in winter for the birds are kept in the house for days or even weeks at a time. As soon as a sick bird is discovered, it should be taken away from the rest and if the illness seems serious, kill and burn it at once. Few people realize that the droppings contain millions of bacteria. In a case of diarrhea the amount of discharge that can be picked up on the point of a pin will hold an uncountable number of the disease bacteria. When the poultry is kept in a house that is not cleaned often, the healthy fowls pick up these bacteria with their feed and soon the disease has spread. This is especially true of cholera which acts very quickly. It is equally true of tuberculosis which acts more slowly, and of worm eggs or small worms which often affect the whole flock.
The Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station made a test to see whether it really did make a difference whether the house was clean or whether it was just a theory, and this is what they found:

"Test houses were used - one was given the same amount of care that many farm flocks get, that is the hens were fed and watered but not any special cleaning was done. The other was given enough care to keep everything clean and sanitary. There were 100 hens in each, and following is the table showing how many hens died from each hundred.

Exp. Station Circular No. 70

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Feed &amp; water, little care</th>
<th>Jan</th>
<th>Feb</th>
<th>Mar</th>
<th>Apr</th>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>Aug</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct</th>
<th>Nov</th>
<th>Dec</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
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It is only reasonable to suppose that the one sick bird in January affected many birds because no care was taken to get the diseased droppings from the house.

Nearly all diseases of poultry are taken into the body thru the mouth, either with the feed or water. If the droppings are allowed to stay on the floor of the house where the poultry is fed, any disease germs, worms or worm eggs are picked up with the feed and soon a number of birds are affected.

1. The house should be cleaned at least once each week. If the dropping board is used it is much easier and quicker to do than it is where the droppings have been scratched over the entire floor.

2. Use a hopper for dry mash to prevent the fowls from getting disease germs into it with their feet as well as to prevent them from wasting it.

3. Keep the water pan covered with a frame similar to this (cut) to prevent the fowls from getting their feet in it. Much disease is spread through the drinking water.
4. Keep the birds free from lice and mites.

5. Treat the birds for scaly leg.

6. Disinfect the house at least twice each year.

7. If many birds have died of some contagious disease or from worms, plow or spade the ground around the house and yard, or keep the chickens in a different place at least six months.

8. Do not over-crowd the fowls - allow from 3 to 4 square feet of floor space to each bird.

9. Sunlight is the cheapest disinfectant that you can find. Have plenty of it in the poultry house.

10. Watch for disease in any form, and as soon as a bird acts "dumpy" take it away from the rest until you are sure that it is not diseased. If it dies, disinfect the coup and the ground around it, then burn the dead bird.