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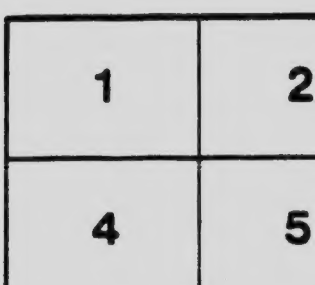

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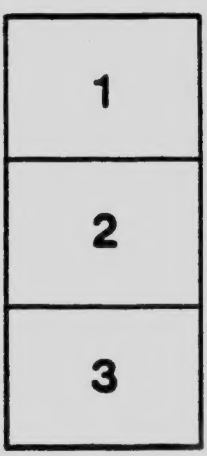

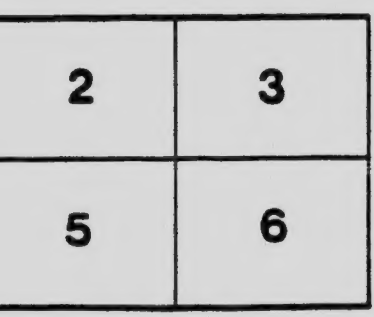

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MANITOBA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BACKYARD POULTRY KEEPING

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Copies of this Circular on application to Publications Branch, Manitoba Department of Agriculture, Winnipeg, Man., or Manitoba Agricultural College, Winnipeg

LEADING POINTS

1. Many city and town dwellers could advantageously keep poultry in their back yards.
2. Overcrowding should be carefully avoided. It is a common mistake in backyard poultry keeping.
3. The general purpose or egg breeds are best for this purpose. Suitable breeds are named herein.
4. A satisfactory style of backyard poultry house is illustrated and described herein. A bill of material for its erection is also presented.
5. Economy and wisdom in the choice of feed must be based upon local circumstances, and will demand study on the part of the owner.
6. The beginner may commence by securing broody hens with which to hatch chicks, by buying baby chicks, or by obtaining laying hens.

By Authority of Hon. V. Winkler, Minister of Agriculture and Immigration

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BACKYARD POULTRY KEEPING

The wide-spread interest in backyard poultry keeping has made necessary the distribution of information on poultry houses suitable for the backyard, and instruction as to feeding and the general care and management of the backyard flock.

A Word of Caution

At this time, when so many house-holders are contemplating keeping a few hens in their backyards, a word or two of caution would not be amiss.

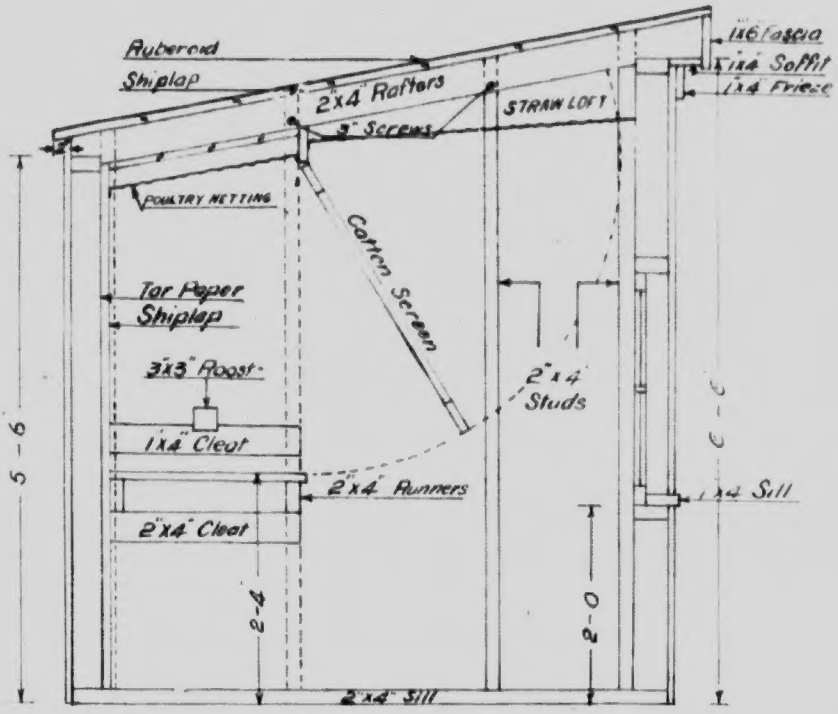
The project of keeping chickens in the backyard is all right in so far as the spirit of enterprise is concerned, but the tendency right along has been for the householder, when going in for poultry, to keep too many for the amount of backyard space available. Overcrowding is sure to result in unsanitary conditions, unless the house is cleaned out regularly and the yard dug up quite frequently. The success of backyard poultry keeping depends almost entirely on the amount of time put in on the general care and management of the flock. A few hens properly looked after will supply the family with eggs the year round, whereas the keeping of too many will simply result in unsanitary conditions, dissatisfaction to the owner, and annoyance to the neighbors.

How Many Hens Should Be Kept

We do not encourage backyard poultry keeping on a large scale, even though the space is available. The number to keep will depend on the size of the family to be supplied with eggs, the amount of kitchen waste or garbage available, and the amount of feed the owner wishes to buy. At present prices of feed it is doubtful whether it pays to keep more hens than are required to supply the family needs; this statement, of course, is not intended to apply to farms but to places where the feed must be purchased. In deciding on the size of the flock, two hens should be allowed for each member of the family. While the flock may not keep the table in fresh eggs the year round, still they should lay enough in Spring and Summer that a supply of eggs can be put down in preservative to tide over the period of low production in the Winter, besides laying sufficient for Summer use. The records of the backyard poultry keepers would, however, show that most of them are able to get a fairly high egg yield even in the Winter time. For those who are able to do this, it may be profitable to keep a larger flock and supply fresh eggs to families who cannot keep hens.

Breeds

There are two points to consider in selecting a breed suitable for the backyard. It should be a breed that will stand confinement well, and one that will be economical. The heavier or meat breeds



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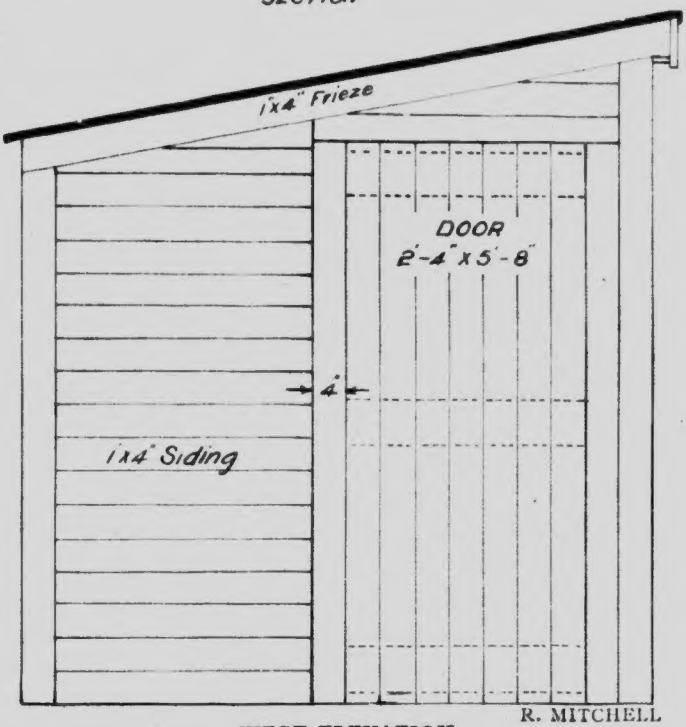

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WEST ELEVATION

placed where they are most convenient for the attendant. The door can be put in either end of the house. The runway can also be put wherever desired. If a warmer house is wanted, the whole interior can be lined, instead of only the north wall and part of the ends of the house. A floor can also be put in if desired, and the house can be put on 3-inch x 6-inch runners, so as to be movable and of more use to tenants.

BILL OF MATERIAL

FOR BACK YARD POULTRY HOUSE ILLUSTRATED HEREIN

No. of Pieces	Description	Size inches	Length Feet	Quantity in Board Feet
2	For Sills	2x4	6	8
2	For Sills	2x4	8	10⅔
2	For Plates	2x4	8	10⅔
2	Framing for Dropping Boards	2x4	10	13⅓
1	For Roosts	3x3	8	6
6	For Studs, cut in two	2x4	12	48
6	For Studs, cut in two	2x4	14	56
5	For Rafters	2x4	7	4⅔
1	Framing for Windows	2x4	14	9⅓
3	Stops for Windows	1x3	10	7½
1	Outside Casings for Windows	1x4	10	3⅓
2	Corner Boards	1x4	14	9⅓
2	Corner Boards	1x4	12	8
1	Outside Casings for Doors	1x4	12	4
1	Outside Casings for Doors	1x4	10	3⅓
1	For Fascia Board	1x6	10	5
1	For Frieze Board	1x4	8	2⅔
1	For Frieze Board, Gables	1x4	14	4⅔
1	For Soffit Board	1x4	8	2⅔
2	For Cotton and Wire Screens	1x3	10	5
2	For Cotton Screen	1x3	12	6
1	Frame for Door	1x6		7
				235⅓

MISCELLANEOUS

200 Feet Board Measure 1"x4" Drop Siding.
175 Feet Board Measure 1"x8" Shiplap.
24 Feet Board Measure 1"x4" T.G. Flooring.
150 Superficial Feet of Heavy Tar Paper.
65 Superficial Feet of Ruberoid Roofing.
4 Square Yards of Heavy Duck Cloth for Screens.
4 Square Yards of Poultry Netting for Screens.
2 Sashes 4 lights 10"x12" size 2' 0"x2' 4".
1 Door Size 2' 4"x5' 3".
1 Pair 8" T. Hinges for Door.
1 Thumb Latch for door.
3 Pairs 4" Strap Hinges for Screens and Small Door.
3 Hooks and Eyes and 6 Buttons for Screens.
7 Lineal Feet ¾"x¾" Quarter Round.
2 Lbs. 4" Nails, 6 lbs. 2½" Nails, ½ lb. 2" Flooring Nails, ½ lb. 2" Finishing Nails.
42 Superficial Feet Poultry Netting, 2" mesh —¼ lb. Staples.
½ Doz. 3" Screws No. 14.

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The interior equipment should be of a simple nature. Old boxes can easily be remodelled into nests, feed and shell hoppers, and a water stand.

The Yard

The yard or pen is a matter for the owner to decide for himself. In so far as is possible, it would be better to have two small pens or

yards rather than one large one. This will permit of growing green feed during the Summer. The flock can then be put into one yard while grain is sown in the other. A soon as this is up a few inches, they can be put back again and the other yard sown the same way. For fencing, it is best to get a regular poultry fence instead of the wire poultry netting. A five-foot fence should be high enough to keep the flock under control. If necessary, the primary feathers of one wing can be cut off, so that the birds cannot fly over the fence. Clipping off three or four inches is usually sufficient even in Leghorns.

Feeding

In feeding the backyard flock the aim should be to use all the kitchen waste that is adaptable. Care should be exercised in feeding waste fat or other greasy substances. Such food should be mixed with a bran mash and fed in small quantities only. Feeding soft mashes and also hopper feeding dry mashes will mean a saving of hard grain. About one-quarter to one-third of the feed given may be mash both in the wet and dry state, and in some instances feeding these up to one-half the ration will be all right. Wet or soft mashes, if not fed too sloppy, will stimulate egg production. For a dry mash there is nothing that can equal crushed oats with a little granulated charcoal added.

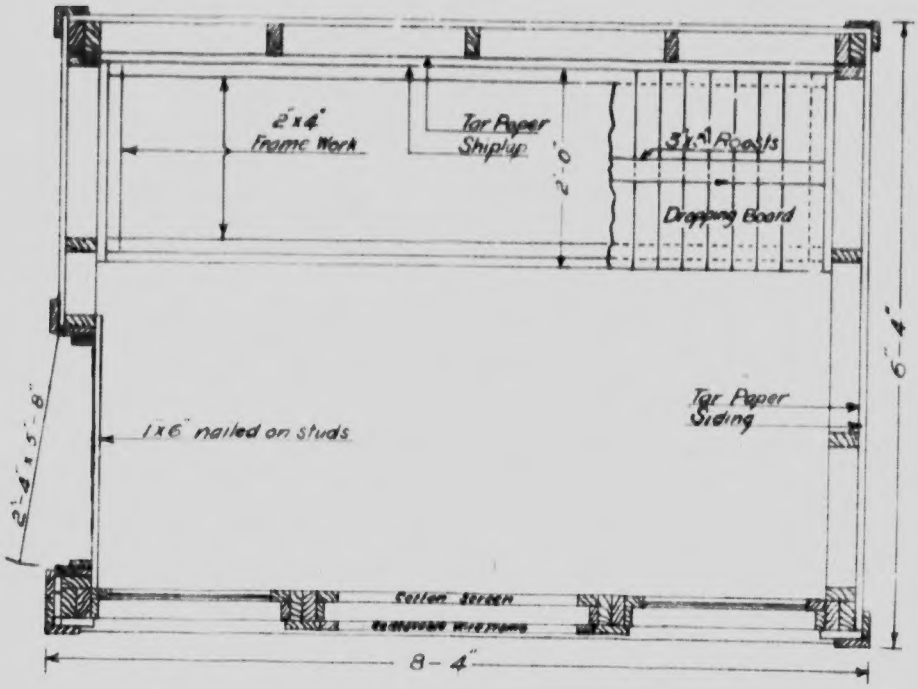
The kind of grain to feed will depend on the price and the food demands. The coarser grains and grains lacking milling qualities should be fed. The amount to feed can be judged only by experience. The hens should have to scratch for all hard grain. Plenty of straw should be kept on the floor and the grain thrown into it. Lawn clippings will make excellent green food. These can also be dried and stored for winter use. Grit and oyster shell should be in a hopper before the hens all the time.

Getting a Start

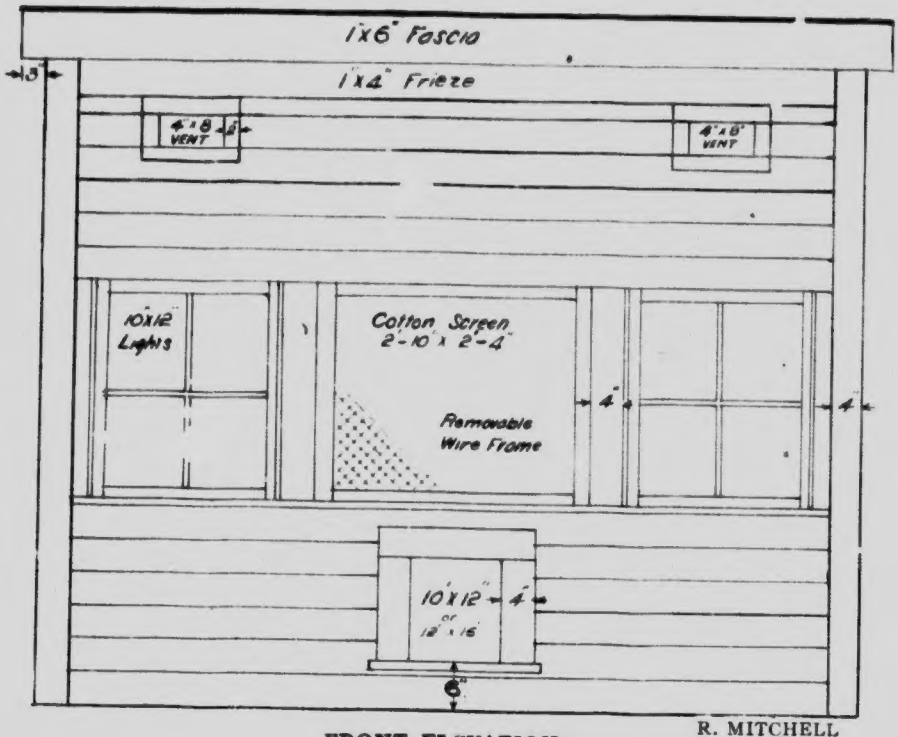
There are three ways in which a start can be made in backyard poultry keeping. The first and most popular is to get eggs for hatching and a setting hen; the second is to buy baby chicks, and the third is to buy laying hens. No matter which of the three is followed, the beginner should start with pure bred stock, if at all possible. The superiority of pure bred stock over mongrels or scrubs is so pronounced that even the beginner will realize the difference. Size, type and color are more uniform in pure bred stock than in mongrels. They take less feed and will lay more uniform eggs.

The first way of starting will mean an outlay of two to three dollars for a setting of eggs, and about the same amount for a broody hen. With good luck there may be ten to thirteen chicks hatched, in which case the baby chicks cost about 20 cents each. This way of starting may be the cheapest of the three, depending, of course, on the price of the eggs and how they hatch.

In starting with baby chicks, it is necessary to have some small equipment to brood and rear them properly. A home-made hover



PLAN



R. MITCHELL

FRONT ELEVATION

are hardly adapted for this line of poultry keeping. The general purpose or the egg breeds are the best. Of these two, an egg breed, such as the Leghorn, probably has an advantage over the heavier breeds, such as Rocks, Wyandottes, Rhode Island Reds or Orpingtons. The former are more active and sprightly, and where eggs are the only consideration they will be more economical. So far as big egg yields are concerned, there is more in strain than in breed. The breed for the beginner to choose is the one that suits his fancy. To be successful, a poultry keeper must like the fowl he is looking after.

The Backyard Poultry House

There is an endless variety of backyard poultry houses in existence now. No two poultry keepers can agree in all points on the question of poultry house construction. Size, type and interior arrangements are the points on which they differ. Backyard conditions are so widely different that there may be this difference of



This photograph shows the outside appearance of the backyard poultry house, of which the working plans and bills of material are presented on pages 4, 5 and 6 of this circular. Consult the drawings to see how it is built.

opinion. The principle of construction, however, should be practically the same.

The plan of the house herewith submitted has incorporated in it what we consider the essential points in a backyard poultry house. There is plenty of room for a flock of a dozen hens. It is well lighted and well ventilated. The interior arrangement of the roost and dropping board, nests, hoppers and drinking fountain are such that the hens are comfortable, and the attendant can look after them with comfort as well. A gable roof, instead of the shanty roof, would make a better house, but the cost would be higher. The height of the house, both in the front and rear, permits of using a false straw loft to improve the ventilation.

The plan as given permits of alteration to meet individual requirements. The nests, hoppers and drinking fountains can be

can be made out of an ordinary soap box. An electric light can be dropped down into the box, or a hot water jug or lamp can be used to furnish the heat. Care should be taken not to over-crowd, over-heat, or chill the chicks. The cost of starting in this way may be a little higher than in buying the eggs, but, as a rule, it is cheapest in the end, even though the price of the baby chicks be as high as thirty cents each.

By starting with laying hens an immediate supply of eggs can be obtained. The cost of starting in this way is greater than in either of the other two ways, but the owner is one year ahead. Laying hens can usually be bought cheaper some time toward the end of the breeding season. Many poultry breeders will sell off hens at this time at almost half price, and in many cases a good start can be made with a backyard flock by taking advantage of this fact.

Quite a number of backyard poultry keepers prefer to keep hens only in the Summer, and to sell them again before Winter. This enables them to get a good supply of eggs to preserve for Winter use, and also obtain plenty of table eggs for the Summer. By following this plan, the expense of building a house and maintaining a flock throughout the year is done away with. Where good stock can be procured at a reasonable price, this plan of backyard poultry keeping will be quite satisfactory.

Feeding the Chicks

Little chicks require a variety of food, but nature has furnished them with enough for the first thirty-six hours after they are hatched, so until then nothing should be fed. After this they should be given bread crumbs soaked in milk and pressed out. Feed this three times a day. Also feed some chick feed two or three times a day, alternating with the bread crumbs. The chick feed can be purchased from any seed firm, and consists of the ordinary farm grains cracked fine. Fine wheat screenings alone, or cracked corn added will take the place of chick feed. The bread crumbs should be fed on small boards, and the chick feed should be thrown on the floor in a little chaff, cut straw, or dry lawn clippings. In this way the little fellows will begin scratching early in life. Five feeds a day should be fed at regular intervals, feeding as late at night, and again as early in the morning as possible, to shorten the time between the last night and the first morning feeding. The bread crumbs can be left out of the ration after the first week or ten days. A small quantity of table scraps and a little bran can be mixed and fed as a soft mash once a day. Be careful to avoid feeding it wet or sloppy. The chick food should be changed gradually to feed wheat and cracked corn, if available. They should also get a dry mash made of equal parts of bran, shorts and fine oat chop or corn chop. Put this in a small dish the day the chickens are put out, so they can eat all they want at any time. Add fine charcoal to it. This will help to keep them in good, healthy, growing condition. Feed green feed liberally. Give plenty of clean water to drink, or milk if it is available.

Closely watch for lice. At the start dust the hen and chicks with a good lice powder. Keep everything clean.

