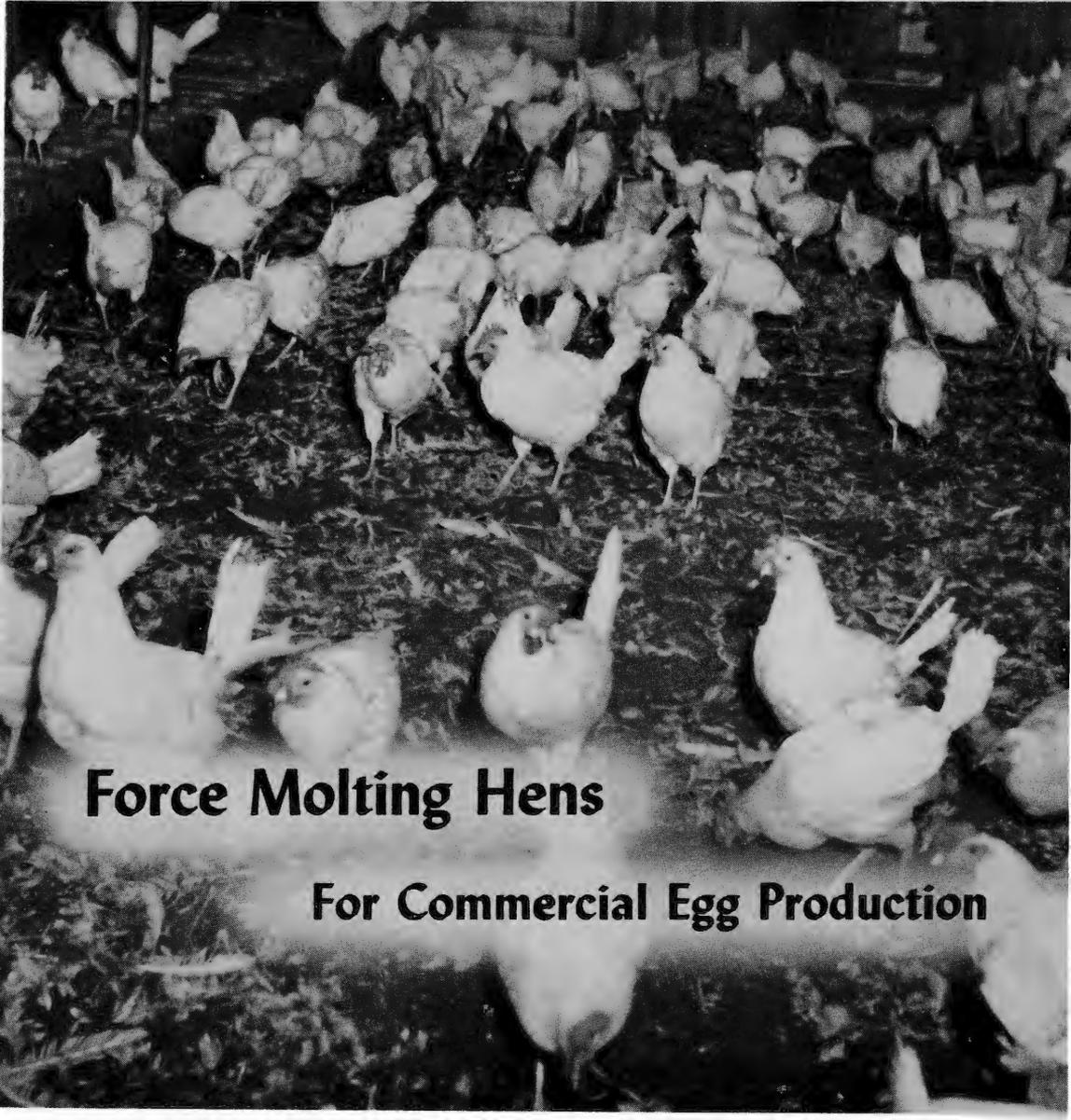




Poultry Pointers

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Force Molting Hens

For Commercial Egg Production

Force Molting Hens For Commercial Egg Production

The Poultry Council of the State College of Washington¹

Many Washington poultrymen force molt yearling White Leghorn hens for commercial egg production. With force molting, layers in a flock can all be given a six- to eight-week rest at one time following their first year of lay.

Advantages Of the Forced Molt

1. Birds are all molted at one time.
2. They lay more eggs after molting. The eggs are large and of good quality.
3. Poultrymen with limited housing facilities make better use of their poultry houses by force molting birds.

Disadvantages Of the Forced Molt

1. Income from the birds being molted is cut off during a forced molt period.
2. Birds in their second year do not lay as many eggs as pullets.
3. After four or five months, some force-molted flocks produce poor-quality eggs. This may necessitate disposing of the flock. Unless another flock is ready to replace it, housing may be empty for a few months.

Conditions Necessary For Successful Forced Molt

1. Use birds that have layed for at least 12 months. This may vary, depending on the market.
2. Use only birds that have been satisfactory producers in the laying period.
3. Use healthy, vigorous birds which do not show signs of disease or parasitic injury. Flocks suffering mortality because of such health problems as coccidiosis and leukosis seldom do well in the force-molt program.
4. Only White Leghorn chickens are recommended at this time for force molting for commercial egg production. Poultrymen have tried this program with laying strains of heavy chicken breeds, but with little success. Heavy breeds can be successfully force molted for use as breeders.
5. Well-managed, high-producing two-year-old hens in good physical condition have been successfully force molted after having one year of a forced molt program. Egg production again drops, however.

¹ THE POULTRY COUNCIL of the State College of Washington is composed of staff members of the State College of Washington at Pullman and Puyallup engaged in teaching, research, and extension problems of poultry science and pathology.

Procedure

Cull the flock rigidly by taking out all hens that are sick, too fat, and those that show signs of having molted during the year. After culling, the flock should be uniform in health and condition. If the birds do not look vigorous and healthy, do not force molt them. Examine the birds for lice and worms immediately after the flock has been culled. If necessary give them recommended treatment. The following schedule for molting, resting, and laying periods is being used successfully by Washington poultrymen.

Molting Period (approximately 3 weeks)

This period continues until egg production ceases and feathers drop.

1. Confine birds to the house. Have at least 3 square feet of floor space per bird.
2. Remove all mash. It is very important to get layers out of egg production as rapidly as possible.
3. Do not feed any grain for at least 48 continuous hours.
4. Take water away from birds for at least 48 continuous hours. Then give water for only two hours (all in one stretch) daily every day until production takes a drastic drop. This should take from seven to ten days. Provide enough drinking space to prevent crowding when water is given.
5. Following the starvation period of 48 hours, feed about 6 pounds of whole grain a day per 100 birds for the next five days. Increase the grain to 8 or 9 pounds daily per 100 birds for the rest of the molting period. Feed the grain in three equal feedings. Increase the amount

of grain slightly for flocks that are thin. The grain fed during this period may be any single grain or a combination of grains.

6. Mix the equivalent of 0.4 pounds (approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ pint) of 400 D-1000 A vitamin-carrying oil with each 100 pounds of scratch grain. A good way to get oil uniformly mixed is to first mix it thoroughly with 25 pounds of scratch grain and then mix this with several hundred pounds of additional scratch grain. The oil can be mixed each evening with the next day's scratch ration so that it will have a chance to soak into the grain overnight.

7. Do not feed any green feed or milk.
 8. Do not use artificial lights.
 9. Keep hard granite or silica grit and limestone or shell in hoppers.
 10. Birds that fail to molt can be separated from the flock. The molting schedule can be repeated as above until they begin to molt.
- Past records of successful forced molts show that the molting period takes from 15 to 23 days. At this time production should not be over 5 per cent. Feathers will usually start dropping at 10 to 15 days after the start of the starvation period.

Resting Period (from 3rd to 6th week)

The resting period starts after feathers have dropped and continues until the birds reach full production.

1. As soon as the birds have ceased production and are in a full molt, put them back on full feed. The regular laying house feeding schedule used prior to the molt can be followed.
2. Give the birds 13 hours of light.

During Laying Period

The laying period lasts as long as the birds are in profitable production. Use the regular laying flock management program that is used with other birds on the farm. Cull the birds that drop out of production, and dispose of the entire flock as soon as it is unprofitable.

Force Molting Two-Year-Old Hens

Follow the same general outline when force molting hens a second time. It is necessary to cull more rigidly and to reduce the scratch grain during the molting period.

For additional information consult your county Extension agent.

Other Poultry Pointers

A complete list of Poultry Pointers available to interested persons is given below. These may be obtained from your county Extension agent.

NO.	NAME	NO.	NAME
6	Coccidiosis in Chickens and Turkeys—1950	26	Worms in Poultry—1953
12	Cannibalism in Chickens and Turkeys—1954	27	Pullorum Disease, Fowl Typhoid and Paratyphoid and Fowl Cholera in Chickens and Turkeys—1952
14	Feeding and Management of Chicks and Pullets—1951	30	Nests and Their Care—1950
15	Sunporches for Chickens and Turkeys—1948	32	Feeding, Brooding and Rearing Turkey Poults—1950
16	Turkey Brooding and Rearing Equipment—1950	33	Avian Leukosis Complex—1952
17	The Washington Range Shelter—1949	34	Common External Parasites of Chickens and Turkeys—1952
20	Feeding and Management of Layers—1952	35	Broiler and Fryer Production in Washington—1953
21	Force Molting of Hens for Commercial Egg Production—1955	37	Infectious Enterohepatitis (Blackhead)—1949
22	Brooding and Brooding Equipment for Chicks—1951	38	Backyard Poultry Keeping—1950
23	Laying House Equipment—1954	39	Managing Breeder Turkeys—1952
24	The Washington Portable Brooder House—1949	40	Turkey Breeder Houses and Equipment—1950
25	Management of Breeder Chickens—1952	41	The Farm Poultry Flock—1949
		42	Culling Chickens—1951
		43	Respiratory Diseases of Poultry—1953