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With Lights- More Eggs

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ing along the length of creek that runs through your 160 acres. We have learned from marking of hundreds of young muskrats that they commonly spend their first winter close to their birthplaces; and it therefore seems likely that you could harvest 40 or 50 high grade skins a year on something of a sustained yield basis.

Leaving it to Nature

If you don't want to trap or don't want any trapping done on your property, the muskrats won't necessarily become a worse nuisance. Although drouths and exploitation have kept down the animals in various parts of the state, they may still be nearly as abundant in a number of communities as they are apt to be. For all of their prolific reproduction, they do not multiply indefinitely, and the intolerance they are capable of displaying toward their own kind seems to be the final check on increase of populations past certain levels.

One other point, quite aside from economics. The appeal of the out-of-doors for most of us may be to no small extent bound up with the variety of native wildlife that remains. We may feel that the meadowlarks and quail and the big oaks in the woodlot behind the house belong in our lives in the sense that nothing could fully take their place; those who have watched muskrats feeding, swimming and floating in quiet waters at sunset may be aware of similar thoughts.

And, after all, getting back to business again, if at times the muskrats prove to be a liability, you may yet have one recourse—that of literally "taking it out of their hides!"

COW'S "LIFE EXPECTANCY"

A study of about 147,500 cows in Iowa testing associations over a 7-year period was made at the Iowa Station.

The "life expectancy" of a 2-year-old is barely over 4 years. The 3 to 4-year-olds actually had a slightly longer life expectancy, a 5 to 6-year-old was barely under 4 years and a 7 to 8-year-old could be expected to remain in the herd 3.1 years.

With Lights--More Eggs

By
R. E. PHILLIPS

THE INSTALLATION of electricity on many Iowa farms the last few years is going to make it possible to get a lot of poultry flocks to lay during the fall and early winter months when eggs are scarce and the price highest.

FARM flocks in Iowa usually lay the fewest eggs in November when the price often is highest. The most eggs then are laid in the spring months when the price is low. By proper use of lights in the laying house, this situation can be improved.

Many commercial poultrymen have told me that their laying flocks produce most satisfactorily when the hens have a 13 to 14-hour working day, and during the winter months there is no way to obtain that long a "day" without using artificial lights.

We are now conducting here at the Iowa Station an experiment to determine the optimum illumination necessary for egg production. The hens are kept in total darkness except for the period the electric lights are on. The work has not progressed far enough to make any extended report, but indications are that when hens are kept in total darkness in small pens the illumination from a 50-watt light is not sufficient for optimum egg production.

In the first trial there was little difference in the total number of eggs produced between a pen receiving 100 watts of illumination for 14 hours per day as compared to another pen receiving 200 watts of light. The control pen which received morning lights and then daylight throughout the day produced the greatest number of eggs. At least one more duplicate trial must be run before any definite conclusions can be drawn about this extreme method of lighting.

We know that when the laying hen's working day is shortened, she lays fewer eggs and eats less feed. Research work has gone further and proved that it is not the reduction in the feeding time that causes lower egg production as much as it is the absence of the rays of light which indirectly activate the reproductive organs.

One should not conclude that merely "turning on the lights" will solve the egg producing problem. How the hens are fed, watered, housed and managed in general are quite as important. But the primary cause of increased egg production from the use of artificial lights is the rays of light, while the secondary stimulus is increased or normal feed consumption.

Several methods of lighting are used. Some poultrymen prefer to use lights only in the morning. Others use only evening lights, while a third group uses a combination of both morning and evening lights. A few poultrymen are using all night lighting, but personally I think this is a dangerous management practice.

Electric lights should be suspended from the roof or ceiling so as to give the maximum amount of light on the floor and a small amount of light on the roosts. A 40 or 50-watt bulb covered by a reflector is needed for each 200 square feet of floor space.

One should start using lights for pullets in September or October and continue lighting until March. The shifting of the flocks' working hours should be done gradually. If the plan of using only morning lights is adopted the lights should be turned on about 4 a.m. and off at daylight. If a fixed time of turning the lights on has been established, no change should be made unless it is done very gradually.

If lights are not properly used, many failures will occur. One of the most common mistakes made is that the lights are not turned on each morning at the same time, and the birds go into a molt which is accompanied by a drop in egg production. Many poultrymen are solving the problem of turning the lights on regularly by connecting an alarm clock with the light switch in such a way that when the alarm goes off it throws the switch and the lights come on.