

Short and Simple
Instructions in ::::

Pheasant Culture

BY

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Breeding Pens

Breeding pens should be built on grass or alfalfa plots, with some shade and shelter from the elements. Convenient dimensions for a six bird pen, one male to five females, would be 6 ft. high, 12 ft. wide and 50 ft. long, and should be covered sides and top, with wire netting of one inch mesh. Posts 4x4x7 set one foot in the ground and 10 feet apart. A 1x6 baseboard, and a 2x4 railing at the top, with 2x4 joists or braces across from post to post to support the cover netting and to staple the netting to. A smaller number of birds of course could be accommodated in a proportionately smaller pen. As the pheasant is a very shy and timid bird it is desirable to provide some cover or hiding place for them within the pen, this may be any sort of a skeleton frame with brush leaning against it.

It is not necessary to provide nests or nesting places for the pheasants, as oftener than not, they drop their eggs at random about the pen.

Eggs should be gathered regularly and not later than the middle of the day, to avoid the detrimental effects of the heat of the sun. And of course the fresher the eggs the better the chance of them hatching.

The average laying of the pheasants is fifty to sixty eggs per season so in order to take care of the egg production, about four bantam hens should be provided to each female pheasant. I will say here that birds hatched during the early part of the season are unquestionably more vigorous and therefore more satisfactory than those hatched at the tail end of the season. About 13 eggs, depending on the size of hen, is the proper number to give a bantam hen, though we have used Rhode Island Reds in case of emergency, such as a lack of bantams ready to set, with some success though the danger of broken eggs and trampled young, is, of course, greater with the heavier hens.

Nests of the brooding hens should be on the ground and slightly scooped out, just

enough to keep eggs from scattering, and during the last week of incubation should be slightly dampened each day. The period of incubation is 24 days. Of course nests and birds, in fact the whole premises, should be kept free of insect pests, as the pheasant has less resistance to poultry vermin than the chicken has. The most effective preventative during this stage is to sprinkle the brooder hen with sodium-chloride once a week, but such treatment should be discontinued three days before the birds begin to hatch, or it is pretty apt to prove fatal to them when they first come out of the shell and are unable to escape the power of the fumes.

Feeding Mature Birds

The mature birds may be fed about the same as chickens, though meat is a more necessary part of their diet. The pheasant is highly insectivorous.

Feeding the Young Pheasants

Keep sour milk before them. Hard boiled eggs with greens, (onion tops preferred) chopped fine, with chick feed or other cereal foods is a good diet at the start. But the vital point is to avoid over-feeding during the first two or three

weeks, and they should be allowed no food at all for the first thirty-six hours, though water is necessary. Before learning the danger from over-feeding; we were losing from 50% to 75% of our hatch during the first three weeks from indigestion, but now our losses are not worth mentioning.

Just before time for the eggs to hatch, a coop of $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch mesh wire should be placed over the nest, as otherwise the young birds will leave the nest and the mother hen, and she cannot call them back, as they do not understand her call, it being a foreign language to them. But after about three days they learn her call and should then be let out for an hour or two every evening to forage for bugs and insects. After the pheasants are three or four weeks old they will require little or no particular attention other than to keep a supply of food ready for them when they get in from foraging. If left to run at large the young pheasants will soon become independent and stray off and quit returning for food when about two or three months old.

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