Welcome New Members!

We would like to say welcome to all of our new members who have joined us for 1997. We are so happy to have you!

D. Pearce, WA,
Staton Family, FL,
D. O'Brien, FL,
Belvin Family, FL,
N. Cash, FL,
D. Zuniga, TX,
E. Devone, NJ,
D. Schmanski, NV,
Marietta Family, FL,
K. Talbert, FL,
Merriam Family, FL,
C. Tierney, FL,
Leyva Family, FL,
Blackmer Family, FL
M. Saleem, United Arab Emirates

The English Game Cock

by H. Atkinson, Oct. 24, 1913

Small head, and strong and lofty neck,
Hooked beak, and bold large eye;
His breast, and back both broad & flat,
Short round and lusty thigh;
With strong clean shanks, & tapering toes,
And strong tail carried high.

Wings that are powerful, large & long,
thin sharp spurs, set on low;
And lofty mein that indicates
Desire to meet the foe.

In hand so hard, and strong, yet light
Balanced in every part,
Belly, & fluff he's next to none,
Yet amply plumaged too,
That glows & glistens in the sun,

With many a beauteous hue;
While every action shows a grace, agility & pride,
And courage that will last as long as flows life's ebbing tide,
As it has shown in countless sires of ancestors beside.

Poultry Identification Test

by Alan Eldred, Senior Biologist, UF

A poultry science class was taking an exam. A dozen or more cages of chickens were covered so only the legs and feet of the chickens could be seen. Students were to identify the type of the chicken by only seeing the legs. One student was growing very frustrated, muttering as he examined each cage. Finally, he slammed down his paper and pencil, exploded, "How do you expect us to know this?" and headed for the door. The professor said, "Wait, you there, who are you?" The student turned around, pulled up his pants to reveal his legs and said. "Can't you tell?!"

Busting Broodies

by John Proudman - USDA Agricultural Research

A hen stops laying once she starts incubating her eggs (broodiness). In the wild, a turkey (or chicken) would lay a clutch of eggs in the spring (timed by increasing day length, or photoperiod), and when the proper size clutch was laid she would cease laying and incubate the eggs. Once the poults (or chicks) hatched, she would then brood them and hopefully they would be sufficiently grown by fall to survive the winter. The wild hen becomes "photorefractory" during the summer, that is, she no longer perceives long day length as a stimulus to lay eggs. This prevents laying a clutch of eggs so late that the young cannot survive. Thus, nature's plan was to have the bird lay just one clutch of eggs in a reproductive season.

Through genetic selection for egg production, the egg-type chicken (Leghorn) has been bred to continue laying at a high rate for over a year. This hen NEVER shows incubation behavior, or broodiness, and does not become photorefractory. The broiler chicken is bred for meat production, and to a lesser extent for egg production. Growth rate and reproductive performance are inversely related, so the broiler breeder has poorer egg production than the Leghorn. A Leghorn may lay 280 eggs in a year; a broiler breeder may lay 175 eggs in about 40 weeks, after which it is unprofitable to keep her. The turkey hen has the poorest egg production - about 90 eggs laid over about 30 weeks. The turkey is quite prone to going broody, particularly in warm weather. The profit margin is very small, and broody management (in turkeys, at least) can make a significant difference between some profit, and none.

The "broody pen" treatment (which has many variations) works by placing the birds under an environmental stress and by depriving them of a place to nest. In other words, you place the hens in a broody pen. Such treatment may return a hen to production, but one or two weeks of eggs are usually lost. Hens which have had one broody period are likely to have more. There is some older work suggesting that progesterone, or perhaps estrogens, may have some effect on broodiness, but this has not really been carefully studied.

A promising technology that has been studied in turkeys but not chickens is immunization of breeder hens against vasoactive intestinal peptide (VIP). VIP is the brain hormone which controls secretion of prolactin. Prolactin is the pituitary hormone which causes broodiness. If you immunize a turkey against VIP, there will be no stimulation of prolactin during the reproductive cycle, and no broodiness. This technique was worked out by Dr. M. E. El Halawani at the University of Minnesota, and is being commercialized for turkey breeders based on his patent. As far as I know, it has not been tried with chicken breeders, but it should work the same.

Washing Eggs

When you wash an egg, you remove part of the cuticle that covers the shell. The cuticle is important for impeding moisture loss during storage (through the pores of the shell) and also for helping prevent the entry of bacteria through the shell. It is important that the temperature of the wash water be approximately 20 degrees F higher than that of the egg. This keeps the egg from being cooled. Cooling could result in the egg sucking in microorganisms in the wash water through the shell. The wash water should be at least at a temperature of 95 degrees F.

After eggs are washed in commercial processing plants, they are usually sprayed, not dipped, with a light food-grade quality mineral oil. This is especially important in retarding moisture loss during storage. It is also important in decreasing loss of carbon dioxide from the egg, which is an important factor in maintaining albumen quality. Both factors are important for maintaining the quality grade (AA or A) of the egg. Dipping is not necessarily bad, it is just messy and wastes oil. The equipment used in commercial processing produces such a fine spray that the oil coating is not noticeable to the consumer.

Here are some interesting facts about eggs:

1. The egg is laid with a protective coating on it. You may notice that they are wet when laid; when that dries, they are protected against bacteria entering.
2. If the next hen deposits a wet dropping on that egg, the coating can dissolve in that spot, the same as if you wash the egg. So it is possible that a heavily soiled egg can pick up bacterial contamination.
3. The egg is at its freshest the instant it is laid. After that, no matter what you do, the egg begins to lose moisture through the shell. The membranes begin to shrink as it loses moisture and the size of the air cell increases.
4. Heat IS detrimental to egg quality. So those eggs that have been out in the henhouse for several days at 90+ Fahrenheit tend to be of poor quality. In fact, you should probably throw them out.
5. Store hatching eggs in the 50-60 degree range.
6. Refrigerate food grade eggs as soon as you collect them.

PBCPFA on the Web

by Dennis Hawkins

Our club's web page, located at:

http://www.afn.org/~poultry

has a counter that counts the number of times that people access it. There have now been more than 7,500 visitors to the club's web page. The number has increased from about 6,000 at the last meeting. Ordinarily, this would be a good thing. However, the club's web page is suffering from a lack of information. It lists many chicken breeds with no description and oftentimes no photograph. There are several other poultry related pages out there that are more complete and are pulling away visitors that might have come back to the PBCPFA page if it were more complete. This is where you come in. If you know something about a particular breed of chicken, you can write an article about it and submit it to me for publication on our club's web page. No article is too small as long as it is factual and not copied word for word from another source. I look forward to hearing from you.

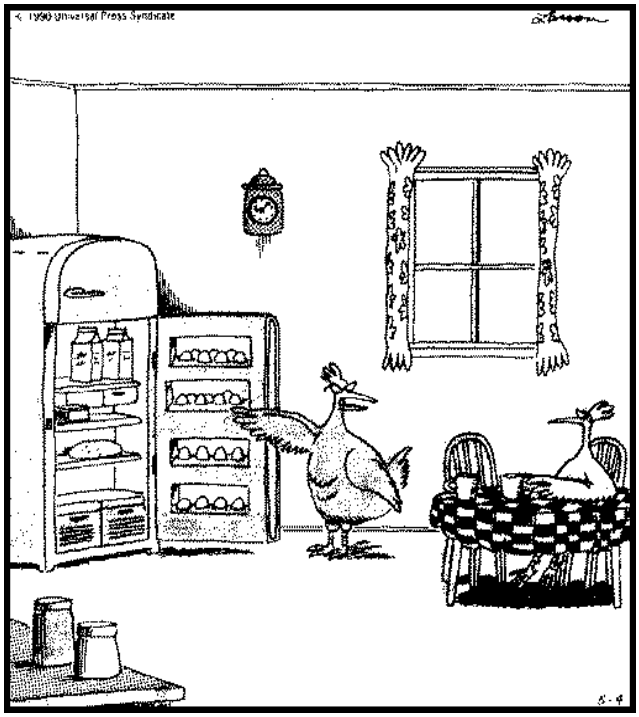
More Fire Ants

I wonder which is harder on the environment, a quart of gasoline, or a nest full of fire ants? One thing is for sure, the quart of gasoline will always be a quart of gasoline. But while the fire ant nest may only be one mound today, a month from now it will be 50 and a month from then it will be 50 times 50. Gasoline, as it turns out, is one of the few pesticides capable of obliterating a fire ant mound almost instantaneously with little or no threat to poultry or human life. While Amdro, a commercial product, works very well, it is oftentimes too slow for use around poultry and other livestock. Nevertheless, it is very safe for the environment. Because of a possible threat to the water table, gasoline should be used only when absolutely necessary.

Many other "safe" methods for controlling fire ants were suggested - none of which actually work. These ranged from using grits to shoveling ants from one mound to another one. One interesting experiment that I tried was to pour bleach on a mound followed by ammonia. The combination produces a deadly gas. Unfortunately, it is more deadly to people than fire ants. It doesn't kill the mound, so save your lungs and don't bother trying that one yourself.

There may also be a legal problem with using gasoline to kill fire ants. A Florida Environmental officer informed one of our club members that killing fire ants with gasoline was illegal. He stated that if he saw someone killing fire ants in that manner, he could arrest them. He cited Florida's litter law (F.S. 403.413) as being what gave him the authority to do so.

The Far Side by Gary Larson



"Well, here's your problem, Marge -- If you and Bob really want kids, next time try sittin' on these little guys."

Mini Membership Application

Send your name, address, telephone number, and dues to:

Rose Greggs, PBCPFA Treasurer
8643 El Paso Dr.
Lake Worth, FL 33467-1109

Include the names and ages of your children (if any). The dues for the PBCPFA club are $12 for families and $8 for individuals and run from January 1 to December 31. New members joining after June 31 are eligible for an initial half price rate. For existing members, all renewals are due December 31 and are for one year. **Refreshments served and a raffle at every meeting!**

May Meeting

At the May meeting, we confirmed the date for the picnic. If you still haven't signed up for a dish, call Lee Salmon at 561-686-4774. The picnic will be held in Dreher Park at pavilion #7 on Saturday, June 21, 1997 at 1:00 pm. From I-95, exit at Southern Boulevard (exit number 50), go east 1/2 mile to Parker Avenue and turn right, go south 3/4 mile to Summit and turn right again, go west 1/3 mile to Dreher Trail North and turn right again, then go 1/2 mile back north to the South Florida Science Museum and continue past there for approximately another 1/4 mile to pavilion #7.

Mike & Jeanette Robinson brought the refreshments to the last meeting. They also brought a spectacularly delicious cake. If you missed getting a piece of that cake, then you missed out on something special.

Arvis and Rick Okerson gave a very interesting presentation regarding poisonous plants. They showed us about a hundred different species of actual plants that are poisonous to either people or poultry. Arvis and Rick cut most of these samples themselves from within Palm Beach County. Some of these toxic plants may be growing in your own back yard. Their dedication to the club may very well have saved somebody's life.

Casey Brynes made the delicious fruit salad for the April meeting. It was pointed out that I forgot to mention her in the last newsletter.

Classified

FOR SALE:

PBCPFA T-Shirts, excellent quality, beautiful logo. Small, Medium, Large, and X-Large sizes are available for $10.00 (members), $12.00 (non-members). Contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157. Don't be chicken, get yours today.

Baseball caps with our PBCPFA logo on them. They look fantastic and sell for a low $5.00! Contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157.

Rhode Island Red Chicks. Available in ages from one day to several months old. Contact Richard Greggs at (561) 433-8157.

FOR LOAN OR RENT:

Don't let your flock fall victim to predators! The poultry club owns a trap that members may use free of charge. Your neighbors may rent the trap for a small fee. To reserve your time to use the trap, contact Richard Greggs (561) 433-8157.

WANTED:

Newsletter articles for the PBCPFA newsletter. The deadline is the fourth Friday of the previous month. Submit articles to the editor by mail, email, or in person at the meeting.