

EXTRA-SPECIAL FOWLS

Chicken Cinderella Tale Now Lacks Only Ending

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(Journal Farm Editor)

This is a Cinderella story about some chickens—not plain, ordinary chickens, but extra special purebred New Hampshire Red chickens. The Cinderella ending isn't quite completed yet, but the owner of the fowls—Charles Delamarter of R. 1, East Lansing—is keeping his fingers crossed and hoping.

Here's the story:

Delamarter has raised chickens for years. About 12 years ago, he became dissatisfied with chicks furnished him by breeders and decided to begin breeding chickens on his own. He subsequently developed his own strain of New Hampshire Reds and came up with a strain whose males made premium broilers and whose hens proved to be good layers.

When the Chicken of Tomorrow contest was announced two years ago, Delamarter decided to enter his New Hampshire Reds. The contest, sponsored by the A. & P. stores and conducted through cooperation of the state agricultural colleges, was designed to develop a perfect chicken—one which would feather rapidly, develop a maximum weight on a minimum of feed, have plenty of white meat and be otherwise perfect.

Placed Seventh

Delamarter placed seventh in the state contest conducted in 1946 and his 1947 entry was judged fourth in the state. He then entered a regional contest in Indianapolis and was named seventh in a five-state area, placing above all the other Michigan entries.

But when the list of 40 finalists was announced early this year, Delamarter's name was not there. The judges apparently had tried to spread the entries to as many states as possible, and had given Michigan's place to Lloyd Tice of Barryton, who won the state title both years.

So Delamarter reluctantly gave up and went back to perfecting his own strain. One day he received a letter from the Chicken of Tomorrow committee, stating that four alternates had been chosen from leading breeders at the regional contests and that he was one of the alternates chosen. He was told that in case the eggs of one of the breeders in the finals did not hatch, one of the alternates would be chosen—and he might be the lucky one.

It should be explained at this point that all 40 breeders in the finals were to ship 720 eggs to the central clearing house at Easton, Md., where they were to be hatched. They were then to be fed on a special formula for 13 weeks and then killed, dressed and frozen. The breeder whose birds were judged the best for marketing purposes was to receive a \$5,000 first prize. The winning bird was to get the Chicken of Tomorrow citation—posthumously—and the breeder naturally would receive considerable publicity.

Now, let's get back to our story.

Gets Instructions

Delamarter was instructed to send 720 eggs—the A. and P. company paid him \$50 for them—to the Maryland hatchery for incubation along with the eggs of the 40 finalists and the other three alternates. An intricate shipping schedule was worked out between officials of the contest and the Railway Express agency so that all the eggs could reach the hatchery at the same time—some from as far away as Pualyp, Wash.

Delamarter was instructed to allow five days for shipping the eggs to the hatchery for incubation beginning March 1, so he made plans to ship them from Lansing February 24. He saved all his eggs from the 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th and packed them in four egg crates—15 dozen to a crate.

He took them to the express office here the afternoon of the 24th only to discover that the express company in the meantime had received instructions to ship his eggs the 26th, two days later!

That presented a problem. Eggs ordinarily don't hatch well unless they are incubated within a week after they are laid. Some of Delamarter's eggs would be 10 days old when they would be put into the incubator, and that wasn't good. He couldn't possibly save enough eggs in the two days to fill the four crates, and he couldn't remember which crate held the older eggs.

Makes Guess

So he made a guess. He thought he recognized one crate as being the freshest, and he picked one of the others, hoping the eggs it held were not too old. Then he saved enough eggs from the next two days to fill the other two crates.

He took his eggs down to the express office again and this time they went off to the hatchery. Mind you, he still thought it was a wasted effort because his eggs were to be used only if somebody else's didn't hatch—and the 40 top breeders in the country were competing.

Came D-Day for the big breakthrough on the incubator line and Delamarter didn't hear a word from the hatchery. He assumed that either the 40 finalists' eggs came through or his didn't hatch well and one of the other alternates was chosen.

Here's the payoff. Delamarter received a message from the contest officials Wednesday stating that one of the finalists did not send eggs to the contest because of a disease in his flock, that Delamarter had been named to take his place among the finalists, and that 609 of his 720 eggs hatched for an 84.5 percent batch—one of the highest percentages in the entire contest!

Delamarter said Thursday that a 60 percent hatch is considered good under normal conditions.

"Now I've got to cross my fingers again," he declared. "I've been lucky so far, and there's just a chance that I might be . . ."