

TEACHING FEDERAL BOARD STUDENTS

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The Government is providing training for disabled soldiers at Purdue University the same as at other Land Grant Colleges. There are two classes of these men: those who are taking regular university courses and those whose previous training does not enable them to do the regular university work. For the latter, special courses have been arranged in the School of Agriculture. Each man decides upon his training objective and then takes those courses in the line of work in which he expects to specialize, together with other courses which he may use as a sideline, and also some subjects which are fundamentals, such as biology and chemistry. It is planned that when the school training period is completed the student, in case he is going to work for someone other than himself, will be put in placement training for a certain length of time. In case he has a farm of his own to go on, a definite project will be outlined for him to follow.

This paper will deal with some of the experiences encountered in teaching poultry husbandry to these lower grade students during the past year. The students who are taking poultry husbandry are either taking it as their specialty with something else as a sideline or vice versa. The majority are taking a combination of poultry and horticulture.

The greatest problem in teaching these men is the wide variation in their previous training and experience. They range all the way from those who have had practically no education to those who have had some college training, most of them having only a grade school education or less. In regard to previous experience they include men who have never lived in the country, and men who have been mechanics, coal-miners, etc. So far as age is concerned they range from twenty-one to forty-five. Each man is an individual problem in himself. It is easy to see the problem which arises in endeavoring to teach a class made up of these widely different types of students.

In outlining the poultry courses for these students it was neces-

sary to arrange the subject matter so that it would fit into terms of three months each, to conform to the general plan of other courses for these men. An attempt was made to make the poultry courses as practical as possible and to give eight courses of three months each.

The first course, which is a prerequisite to all the others, is a general elementary course consisting of three recitation and two laboratory hours per week. The recitation work deals principally with breeding, feeding, housing, and marketing, touching briefly on incubation and brooding, and diseases. The laboratory work involves a study of class, breed, and variety characteristics, judging for egg production, candling and grading eggs, and a study of incubators and brooders. This course is given to enable those who are specializing in some other line of work an opportunity to obtain a general knowledge of poultry which will help them in handling a small flock in connection with their other work; to help those who have not definitely decided upon their objective; and to enable the instructor to determine whether the student is here to learn or merely to draw so much money per month from the Government. Sufficient work is required so that there will be no incentive for those who are looking for something easy to continue with poultry. If it is found that a student is not trying, it is recommended that he drop the course. If a student shows the right attitude, but fails to make a passing grade due to sickness or lack of previous training, he is required to repeat the course. In case it is found that a man is such a low grade student that there is no hope of his being able to continue with the advanced courses, it is recommended that he be transferred to another school, of which there are some especially for low grade men. This system has worked out very satisfactorily as it insures a type of student in the advanced courses who has the right attitude toward his work and who is reasonably sure to do the work satisfactorily.

For those who complete the first course and desire to continue with poultry the following advanced courses have been arranged: Breeding and Judging; Diseases and Housing, in which two months are devoted to diseases and one to housing; Incubation and Brooding; Feeding; Marketing; Management; and a practice course in House Construction. The course in House Construc-

tion consists of eight laboratory hours per week. The other courses consist of two recitations and four laboratory hours per week.

Some of these courses, e. g., Incubation and Brooding, and Diseases can only be given at certain seasons of the year, but having completed the elementary course, a student can take whatever course fits in best during the next term, with the exception that the Management course must come last. In case a student fails in one of these courses he is permitted to take the next course but must repeat the course in which he failed when it is given again.

During the past year the courses in Breeding and Judging, Diseases and Housing, and Incubation and Brooding have been given. Judging from these courses, as much laboratory work as possible should be given and it should follow along with and supplement the recitation work as much as possible. Practical experience makes the deepest impression on these men and they understand a thing and remember it best by actually doing it.

In the judging course, in addition to the regular laboratory work, they have a chance to put what they learned in judging for egg production into practice, by actually culling two farm flocks; and from the fancy standpoint they combine with the regular university students in putting on a poultry show. They also attend the Indianapolis Poultry Show. The laboratory in diseases consists of a study of anatomy, post mortem examination of diseased birds, and treatment of sick birds at the farm. One problem in giving this course is to secure sufficient diseased birds for post mortem examination. The housing laboratory consists of drawing plans for a poultry house. In the laboratory work in incubation, each student operates an incubator during one hatch and broods chicks for a period of two weeks.

The practice course in house construction, which is given during the summer term, makes it possible to give a course which would otherwise be impossible because of lack of consecutive laboratory hours. This course is being given at the present time and is proving very satisfactory. Each group of fifteen students builds a 16'x 24' laying house and fences the yards for it, and also a 10'x 12' colony brooder house.

The courses in Feeding, Marketing, and Management will be

given for the first time during the coming year. It is planned in the feeding course to give two weeks practice in fattening, each student to feed fifteen birds which will be killed and dressed at the end of the fattening period. In the marketing course as much practice in candling, grading, packing, and shipping eggs will be given as the facilities at the farm will permit. The management course, the last course to be given, will be in the form of a problem which will consist essentially in running a poultry farm for one year. This will be largely a review of previous courses. Each student will be able to fit the particular problem to his own individual needs and in this way can have a definite project in mind to start upon when the course is completed. It is also planned to make an inspection trip to some of the commercial poultry farms in the state. The time allotted to laboratory in this course will be devoted to practice in feeding laying hens.

Aside from the courses as outlined, it is hoped if possible to have a judging team to compete in a contest such as was held at the Great Heart of America Poultry Show at Kansas City last winter. Several of the Federal Board students take an active part in the Purdue Poultry Club, in which they come in contact with the regular University students and the members of the faculty. There was a special class for Federal Board Students in the Purdue Egg Show and most of the men showed great interest in picking out their eggs and in helping in different ways with the show.

Another thing that is benefiting several of these men a great deal is the fact that they are keeping small poultry flocks of their own. This is a thing to be encouraged as it gives them some experience and creates more interest in their work.

In teaching these students it has been found that the best way to keep them working is to give a ten minute quiz at the beginning of each recitation period. A one hour test is given once a month. The more individual attention which can be given each student, both inside and outside the class-room, the better the results. Each section has been limited to fifteen students as it has been found unsatisfactory to try to teach more than this number in recitation and also because this is as many as can be accommodated in some of the laboratory work. Some men, while

able to answer a question correctly on paper, are absolutely lost when they try to tell the same thing on their feet. This can be overcome gradually by practice in reciting before the class and some men have been helped considerably in this respect by being assigned a ten or fifteen minute report to be given before the class. Another difficulty in some cases is to get the men to use their own judgment. Some are too much inclined to memorize the assignment and to accept the ideas of the author or instructor rather than to reason the thing out for themselves.

In assigning lessons an attempt has been made to give library references as little as possible. The best results are secured where text books are used. For this reason the plan has been to buy one or more text books for each course. Each student is also given whatever bulletins are available for a particular course. The best results are secured where the class period is devoted to recitation on the part of the student rather than to lecturing by the instructor. The men are required to get any outside reports or problems which are assigned handed in on time. If this is not done they are graded accordingly. Neatness is also insisted upon in all laboratory work. However, the instructor should not be too "hard boiled" with this class of students for the reason that they may become discouraged and lose interest. An attempt should be made to encourage them in every possible way.

It is planned, in order to keep a definite goal in mind in each course towards which to work, to use the problem method of teaching as much as possible, more so than has been done in the past. For this class of students it is especially important to point out to them the practical application of each course.

One advantage in teaching these students is that their attitude is very good. They are interested in their work and are not afraid of working overtime or of doing too much. Many find their work difficult because of their lack of previous training, but their attitude does much to overcome this. Although it is impossible to go as much into detail in some of the courses as might be desired, there is no doubt but what most of the men are being greatly benefited by this training.

The poultry courses are among the most popular courses being offered to these students, there being at times more students taking poultry than any other one course. They see in it an

opportunity to start in business for themselves with limited capital on a small area of land. At present there are seventy-eight students taking courses in poultry. Thirty-seven of these are taking the beginning course and part of them will continue with poultry, and forty-one are taking the advanced courses. Some of them already have places to go on as soon as they finish their courses.

The results which are being secured make the instruction which is being given these men entirely worth while. Many of these men will be able to earn a comfortable living after they finish their course of training, a thing which they perhaps could not have done otherwise.