

## POULTRY NOTES

ST. ELMO WIJEYEKON,

DEMONSTRATOR IN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND MANAGER,  
GOVERNMENT FARM, AMBEPUSSA

## FEEDING

**D**URING the last four months the pure-bred Rhode Island Red Poultry at the Ambepussa Farm have been fed on the following rations made up almost entirely of material produced in the Island. Local fish meal was used instead of imported meat meal for certain pens from the beginning of June :—

## Mashes

	Adults.	Growers.	Chickens.
Kurakkan meal ..	35 lb.	30 lb.	32 lb.
Rice meal ..	35 "	25 "	25 "
Maize meal ..	10 "	15 "	20 "
Rice bran ..	—	15 "	10 "
Coconut poonac ..	10 "	10 "	5 "
Local fish meal or imported meat meal* ..	10 "	5 "	8 "

\* Two per cent. common salt is added to the mash when meat meal is used.

## Grain feed

Adults.	Growers.	Chickens.
Paddy ..	Equal parts of paddy and crushed maize	Equal part of kurakkan, broken rice and kibbled maize.

## GREEN FEED

Grass, *kankun*, spinach, &c., is fed *ad lib* finely cut up in a green feed cutting machine bought from Poultry Pty., Ltd., Sydney, N. S. W., Australia. The green feed cutter has been used here for the last 8 months. It has saved labour and provided poultry of every age with greens.

The kurakkan, rice and maize meals used are made by finely milling the grain. The variety of rice used is the country variety and not the polished grain. The maize is the dark yellow variety. The coconut poonac is "expeller" or "mill",

ground finely into meal. The fish meal is prepared by grinding up a small dry fish—which is *slightly salted*—commonly called “Caralla”. In order to ensure good storage qualities the dry fish is subjected to a further sun drying for several days before it is made into meal. Caralla dry fish is found in large quantities especially in Mannar, and in smaller quantities at village fairs. The present price of the quality used is Rs. 5 per cwt., which quantity yields about 100 lb. of meal after loss by evaporation and incidental waste.

The thanks of the writer are gratefully recorded for the assistance rendered by Dr. A. W. R. Joachim, Ph.D. (Lond.), Dip. Agric. (Cantab.) in supplying the following analysis of Caralla fish meal :—

Moisture	..	..	..	18·3 per cent.
Proteins	..	..	..	41·25 „
Ether extract	..	..	..	8·43 „
Mineral matter	..	..	..	31·48 „

### HOUSING

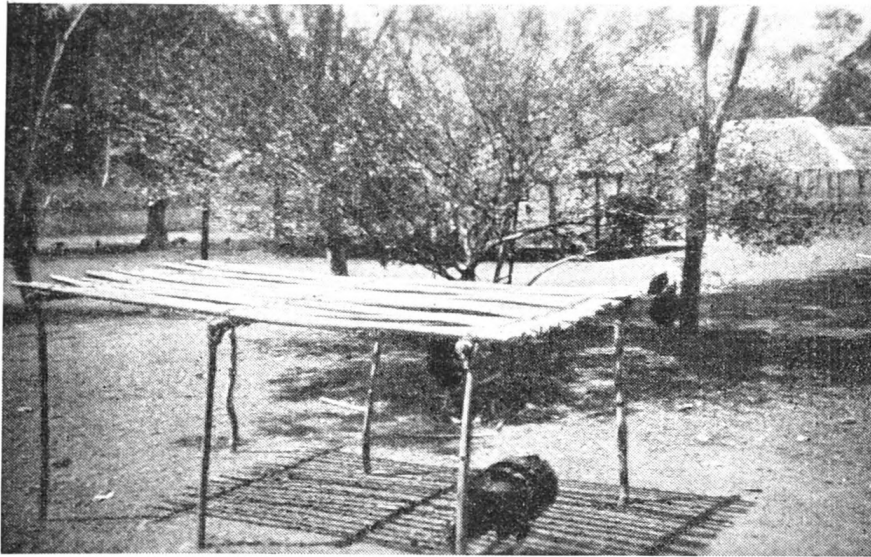
On this farm a method of housing has been introduced which is as near to the back-to-nature idea as circumstances permit. The house, situated in the middle of a large grass-covered run, consists of an open shed having a floor area of 20 ft. × 10 ft., and a cadjan roof supported by six wooden posts of unsawn timber 7 ft. high. A drain 2 ft. wide and 1 ft. deep is cut round the shed and the soil used to raise the floor to a height of about one foot above the level of the run. This floor is hardened by the simple process of watering, treading and stamping down.

In the middle of this shed is a 8 ft. long, 6 ft. broad and 3 ft. high wirenetting compartment, on legs 3 ft. high, which houses the birds at night. The birds reach this sleeping compartment by means of a ladder leading up to the doorway, and rest on perches. Forty adults are housed comfortably. The droppings fall on the floor under the compartment, and are swept up early each morning. The unpleasant odour generally associated with poultry houses is entirely absent.

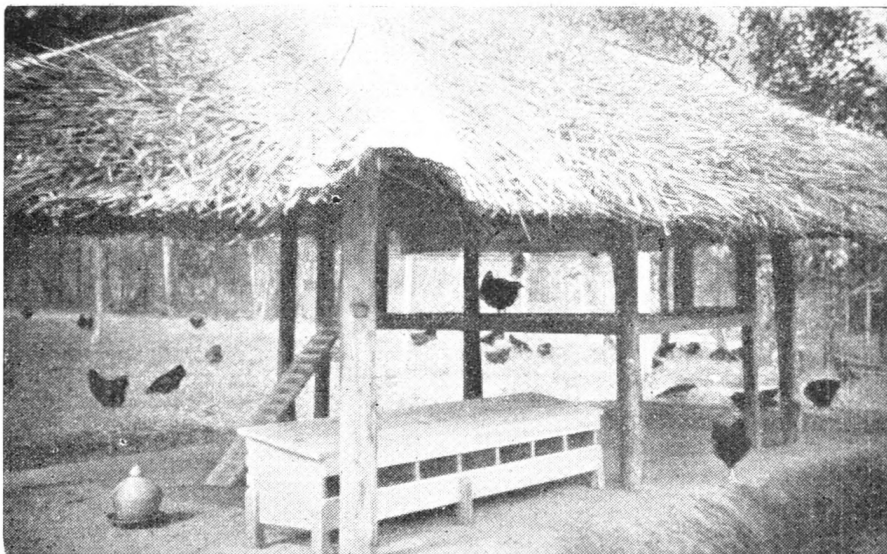
In wet weather a length of wirenetting taken round the six posts of the cadjan shed, at floor level, keeps younger birds within bounds. The entire structure costs about Rs. 25 inclusive of labour costs. This type of house can be constructed at very little cost, if any, by villagers—bamboos being used instead of wirenetting for the housing compartment.

### MANAGEMENT OF COCKERELS

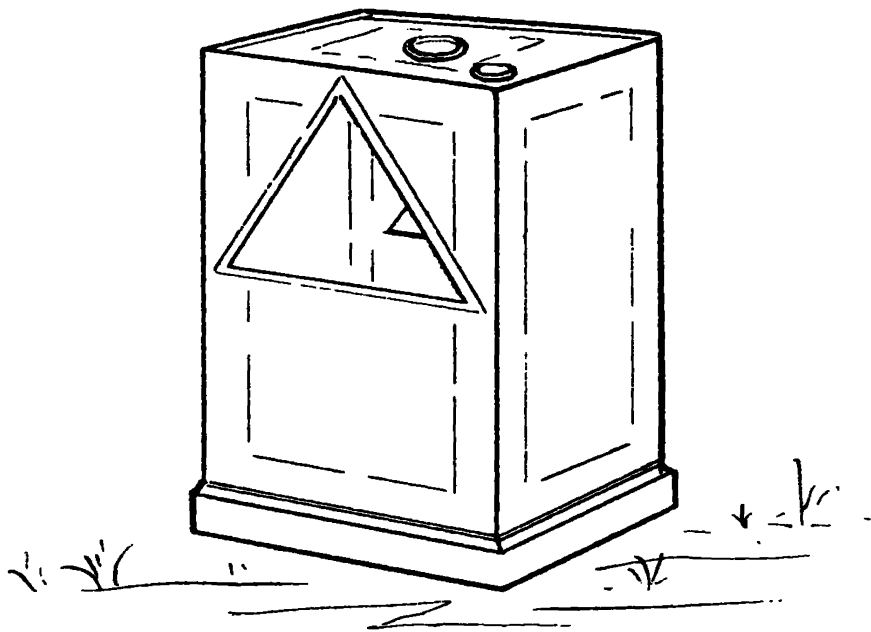
*Safety zones.*—From about the fourth month in the case of heavy breeds like the Rhode Island Red, cockerels penned together in a run begin to test their strength by fighting. The



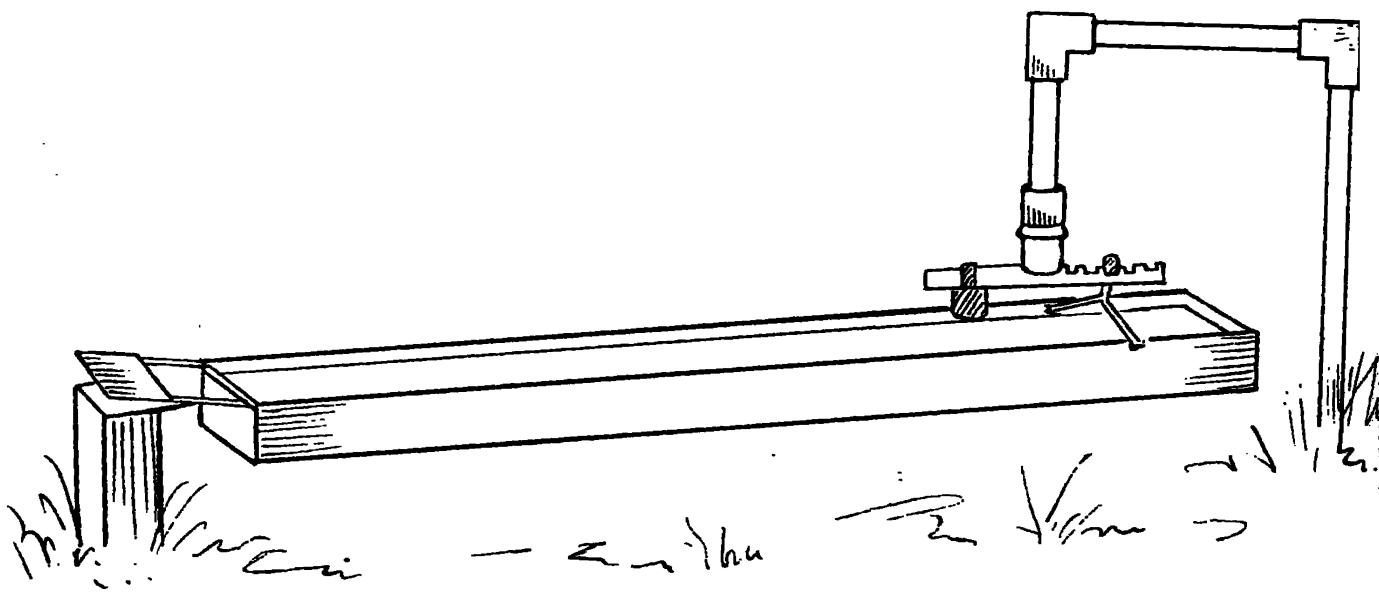
SAFETY ZONE OR "MASSA"



POULTRY HOUSE AT AMBEPUSSA



**KEROSENE TIN "DRINKER"**



**THE "CLIFF" PATENT VALVE AND DRINKING TROUGH**

result is that while some cockerels assert themselves overbearingly, others exist in fear of their stronger fellows. What would have become a serious menace to the life and well-being of the cockerels here was checked by the erection of "Safety Zones" *Massa* in the runs. The victims fly on and off these platforms, are lost to view among other birds, and thus escape from the bullies.

*The Monitor Bird.*—Another idea that works with success here is the penning up together of a number of spirited cockerels with a cock bird of mature years. He permits a healthy bout now and then, but only up to a certain limit.

*The hardening process.*—Cockerels are penned in an open grassy run with perches round a shade tree. On one side of the run is an open shed fitted up with perches. The cockerels are encouraged to spend an open-air life night and day, but the weaker birds have a chance of perching in the shed, chiefly during bad weather. As these birds develop, they join the lustier birds, which treat the shed with Spartan contempt even in bad weather. This treatment of cockerels becomes very necessary here as many of them—several hundreds—are meant for village distribution and should be capable of standing up to village conditions in any part of the Island. This hardening process was adopted advisedly in spite of possible animal and insect marauders, and steps are taken to ensure their safety by a vigilant night watcher.

#### DRINKERS

For the use of larger units of poultry several empty kerosene tins have been transformed into sanitary and "unbreakable" drinkers. An equilateral triangular opening of 7 in. side is cut on each of two opposite sides of a tin—the base of the triangle being about  $6\frac{1}{2}$  in. from the top edge—and the simple drinker is ready for use. It wears better if placed on a square frame made of four strips of wood about 2 in. high.

The "Cliff" patent water valve and drinking trough, imported from Poultry Pty., Ltd., Sydney, N. S. W., is under trial at the farm. If it proves satisfactory in use under Ceylon conditions the kerosene drinker can be replaced by it as the runs are supplied with a pipe-borne water service. The "Cliff" automatic valve provides a constant supply of water by means of a balanced lead weight which stops the flow at correct trough-level and starts it again as the fowls drink down below the level. The first automatic drinker has been in use here for some time, and has not only saved labour but also provided the fowls with a constant supply of clean water.

*Note by Editor.*—A more detailed analysis of the Caralla fish by Dr. Joachim himself shows that an average specimen

contained 17 per cent. of salt. This is a much higher percentage of salt than should be found in fish meal used as poultry food and the Department of Agriculture is carrying out trials to find an easy method of reducing the salt before the fish is used. The results of these trials will be published in due course. Till then the use of the fish is not recommended.

Likewise the quantity of salt which should be added to the mash when meat meal is used is under investigation. In the meantime 1 per cent. is suggested as a safer limit than 2 per cent.