

INSTRUCTIONS FOR TRAINING THE QUIZ ACT

Read first the instructions for handling the quiz show (yellow mimeographed sheets).

Before you start training this act, cut down the rations on your chickens for three or four days--omit all extra grain, and reduce the amount of egg mash being fed. Unless the chickens are markedly underweight or have been on reduced rations for some time, you may want to omit all feed the night before you start training.

Set up your training table with the quiz apparatus and feeder in the positions marked on the yellow handling instruction sheet. Check the feeder to see that it is filled with grain and working properly.

Place the chicken on the table. Click the feeder once so that the chicken has a chance to locate it.

Start training with the black spot up in the location nearest to the feeder.

Your chickens have been trained to peck black spots. If you jiggle the string of the quiz apparatus slightly and tap the black spot with your finger, the chicken may come over and peck the spot. Reinforce immediately if this happens, even if the peck is a weak one. If the chicken pays no attention to the black spot, place a grain or two of corn on the spot. When the chicken pecks at this corn, reinforce her immediately with the feeder. Then place one smaller grain of corn on the spot. Reinforce her immediately when she pecks at it. The third time, reduce the size of the grain of corn still further. Keep this up, reinforcing the chicken with the automatic feeder each time, and reducing the size of the corn each time, until the chicken will peck the spot with no grain on it.

After the chicken has pecked the black spot nearest the feeder about thirty times and has been reinforced each time, begin to train her on the other spot. This will probably not take as long, but you may jiggle the string, point to the spot again, and place grain on it if necessary. After about 10 reinforcements for pecking this spot without helps (such as the grain of corn on the spot, or pointing), begin to shift the spot back and forth from one position to the other so that the chicken learns to look for it and go to the side desired.

On the second day of training, keep the chicken fairly hungry. You will not need to put corn on either spot, probably, but may need to jiggle the string or tap at the spots in either location, in order to help the chicken find the apparatus.

On the second and later days of training, watch carefully to see that the chicken is pecking on the black spot, not raking at the wood around it.

About the third day of training, you may begin to require the chicken to peck the spot twice before you reinforce her. Let her peck once, then make her peck it again, then reinforce her very quickly. This is known as a ratio of two: that is, two responses to one reinforcement. Drop back to the one peck ratio about every third reinforcement.

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The chicken should be hungry when you start training her to the two-peck ratio. If she seems strained, that is, if she stops working, begins to wander around, or gets very slow at going for the spots, put her away for a little while, and on the next training session, drop her back to one peck per reinforcement. Then get the chicken hungry and try again at the next session to raise the ratio to two, but again watch carefully for signs of strain. Most chickens, if handled carefully, can be brought to a ratio of two pecks to one reinforcement in two or three days of training.

Watch all the time to make sure the chicken pecks the spot and does not rake or scratch at the wood around it.