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## Experiment in Raising of Sharp-Tailed Grouse

Harold Milton Malicky  
*Burwell, Nebraska*

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## Experiment in Raising of Sharp-tailed Grouse

by Harold Malicky, Burwell, Nebraska

Permission granted to attempt to raise the sharp-tailed grouse secured from the six eggs supplied by a local rancher who destroyed the hen while mowing hay on July 14, 1958.

July 2 - Six eggs hatched in forced air incubator with 99.5° temperature and 92 - 94% humidity. 100% hatch, but one bird had spraddled legs, so destroyed him.

Put remaining five birds in box brooder on lawn. Started feeding birds egg, cottage cheese and game bird starter, also put 4 teaspoon Enheptin in one quart of water. Scattered feed in the grass to get birds to eat.

Put silver pheasant of same age with these birds until the fourth week. No trouble getting them to eat or drink, which they started to do on the second day. Also started feeding them lettuce on second day.

Grouse are very wild compared to prairie chickens and prefer the shade most of the time. Birds are eating a lot of grass and leaves from weeds. The grouse do not grow as fast as the prairie chickens and are much wilder than the chickens. Good feathering at end of third week. End of fourth week -  
Five birds.

Remarks - when these birds were a couple of days old they would grab each other's toes in their bill and pull the helpless victim around and around until he was rescued by us or got away on his own. This occurred when they were in the box brooder and had a light. After they were put in the larger pen this wasn't done at all.

5th week - July 29 -

Feeding same feed as prairie chickens (hard boiled eggs and game bird starter). Grouse eating as much hand fed grass and clover as prairie chickens. They are not as wild as prairie chickens after measuring wing feathers.

6th week -

Same feed. Birds growing and lively.

7th week -

Same feed. Birds are growing and feathering good.

• 8th week -

Same feed as prairie chickens (20% game bird grower, mixing feed drier, hand feeding grass and clover, dry feed before birds all the time). One bird droopy, ruffled feathers, loose white and yellowish droppings. Treated with one-fourth tablet NF180 for three days. Bird is still droopy in morning and evenings when weather is cool. Eats good and doesn't get any worse. The other birds are eating good and no signs of sickness. These birds do not grow as fast as the prairie chickens.

End of eighth week -

Five birds.

9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th weeks - August 25 - September 23

Feeding birds all dry feed of equal amounts of cracked corn and 20% game bird grower. Also giving plain water with no Enheptin in it. Hand feeding grass and clover twice a day.

September 5 -

One bird, Band No. 18, droopy, ruffled feathers and loose droppings. Started treating all birds with one-fourth tablet of NF180, continuing for three days. No. 18 stands with head down, weak, listless and does not eat.

September 10 -

No. 18 died.

The rest of the birds have not been sick. Bird with Band No. 24 is still not as active as the rest of the birds but eats good. Grouse are still moulting and growing. These birds eat equal amounts of corn and grower.

End of 12th week - September 23 -

Four birds left.

13th, 14th, 15th and 16th weeks - September 24 - October 21 -

Feeding 20% game bird grower and cracked corn. Hand feeding grass twice a day. Plain water. All birds look healthy and active. Birds do not have all new tail feathers yet.

No report on bird sent to pathologist.

End of 16th week - October 21 -

Four birds left.

17th, 18th, 19th and 20th weeks - October 21 to  
November 18 -

Feeding 20% game bird grower and cracked corn. Hand  
feeding grass twice daily. Plain water.

changed bands on grouse -

from	to
24	345211
26	345212
27	345213
21	345214

November 2 -

Found one grouse dead in pen. Examination of bird  
disclosed dark red color in the end of liver. No other  
sign of anything wrong. Bird was a hen and weighed  
1 lb. 7 oz. Band No. 211.

November 7 -

Found one grouse dead in pen. Marvin Schwilling  
took bird to mount for me. Upon his examination of  
bird found an obstruction in small intestine. Hemorrhage  
of brain. Also had small hemorrhages under the skin.  
Bird was very thin and in poor condition. Band No. 212.  
The other two birds look and act very healthy.

End of 20th week -

Two birds left.

21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th weeks - November 19  
to December 17 -

Feeding 20% game bird grower and cracked corn.  
Hand feeding alfalfa leaves and plain water. These  
two birds have not moulted all of their feathers  
yet. Do not eat as much feed as they should, but are  
active. End of 24th week -

Two birds left.

25th, 26th, 27th and 28th weeks - December 18, 1958 to  
January 14, 1959 -

Feeding 20% game bird grower and cracked corn.  
Hand feeding alfalfa leaves and plain water. Birds are  
eating better than before and are active. They still  
have not moulted all of their feathers and do not eat  
as much feed as I think they should. I have been feeding  
them clover leaves from the lawn whenever they are possible  
to get. Birds seem to want these before they eat any  
other feed.

End of 28th week -

Two birds left.

29th, 30th, 31st, and 32nd weeks - January 15 -  
February 12 -

Feeding 20% chicken breeder crumbles and cracked corn mixed half and half. Also hand feeding alfalfa leaves and plain water. Birds are eating more feed than when feeding 20% game bird grower.

January 28 -

One bird droopy and ruffled feathers. Loose greenish droppings. Started giving bird one-half tablet NF180 each day for three days. Fourth day the bird died. No cause of death determined.

Started putting willow twigs with buds on them in grouse pen. Bird readily eats the buds and ends of branches.

End of 32nd week -

One bird left.

33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th weeks - February 13 to March 12

Feeding 20% chicken crumble and cracked corn. Also hand feeding alfalfa leaves, plain water and cottonwood buds. This one bird eats two or three buds each day and is eating more corn and 20% crumble.

End of 36th week -

One bird left.

• 37th, 38th, 39th and 40th weeks - March 13 to April 11 -

Feeding same as prairie chickens (20% chicken breeder crumbles and cracked corn) and plain water. Bird is very active and gets along well with the male prairie chicken. Eating more feed than ever before.

End of 40th week -

One bird left.

Permission given to obtain three settings of sharp-tailed grouse eggs.

41st, 42nd, 43rd, and 44th weeks -

Feeding same as prairie chickens (20% chicken breeder crumble and cracked corn, plain water) also fresh clover. This bird is tame compared to the chickens and is very active.

End of 44th week -

One bird.

45th, 46th, 47th, and 48th weeks -

Feeding same as prairie chickens (20% chicken breeder crumbles and cracked corn, plain water).

June 1 -

Bird had loose green droppings. Gave bird one-half pill of NF180 for three days. Died on June 3. Posted bird and found small growth on inside of back. Egg sack was filled and looked as if bird would lay in ten days. End of 48th week - No birds left.

Picked up thirteen eggs on May 22, 1959 and 25 eggs on May 29th.

Put in forced air incubator - Temperature of 99.5°, Humidity of 86 to 88%. Grouse hatched June 12 to 13. No. of birds hatched - 36. Three of these birds were crippled so killed them within a few days.

Put birds in two box brooders on lawn<sub>13</sub> in one, 20 in the other.

Started feeding birds chopped hard boiled eggs and cottage cheese with Vit-A-Cin added, plain water. All birds eating and drinking good. Started adding 31% turkey pre-starter on fifth day, also started feeding chopped lettuce on fifth day until third week. Some of these birds were dancing the first day.

Second week -

Started feeding strawberries to birds, which they really like.

July 2 -

One grouse of the 13 droopy, ruffled feathers, loose droppings, very weak. Isolated bird and added sulfa to water.

July 3 -

Bird died, Marvin Schwilling posted bird. It was very thin and inflamed lower intestines, very loose watery droppings.

July 11 -

One grouse of the 12 droopy, thin, ruffled feathers, and not eating good. Isolated bird and gave one-half pill of NF180. Bird was eating very little and drinking some water.

July 12 -

Bird died, Marvin Schwilling posted bird and found only grayed spots on liver. Bird was very thin.

July 13 -

One of grouse of 11 droopy, ruffled feathers, not eating. Left bird in pen and put one-half teaspoon sulfa in water.

July 14 -

Bird died. Not posted yet, put in deep freeze.

July 16 -

Two more birds look droopy, ruffled feathers. We are going to try to send them to Purina's Research Laboratory in St. Louis, if possible.

Feeding grouse grapes and chopped apples which they eat readily.

The pen of 13 grouse never did eat as good and are wilder than the pen of 20. Started mixing feed drier from fifth day on. Birds do not eat pre-starter very well when dry. No leg weakness in any birds. Put in movable pens 6 x 10 on lawn on tenth day.

End of 5th week - July 17

30 birds left.

June 9 -

A rancher brought us part of three grouse nests (24 eggs) which he had run into while mowing. Hatched same as other grouse - June 21 - hatched 12 birds. Put in box brooder on lawn. Feeding eggs, cottage cheese, and turkey pre-starter 31%. Mixing feed much wetter for these birds and adding more Vit-A-Cin to feed. Also feeding strawberries, grapes, and chopped apples, plain water. Birds are eating very good and are very active. Fed chopped lettuce for one week only. Birds eat clover and plantain leaves from lawn. Put in movable 8 x 10 pen on lawn when two weeks old. These birds do not eat completely dry feed (pre-starter) very good.

End of 4th week - July 12

12 birds.

Remarks - The grouse do not grow as fast as the prairie chickens and are more wild. Some of the grouse were dancing the first day but have only seen them twice since.

6th, 7th, 8th and 9th weeks - July 28 - August 14 -

Feeding 30% turkey pre-starter, cottage cheese, boiled egg and Clovite. This pre-starter has NF180 in it. Plain water. Also feeding apples and grapes to birds, which they eat readily.

July 20 -

One bird sick so treated all 30 with NF180. Birds began dying on July 23 through August 13. Have lost all but three birds. Sent two birds to Purina Laboratory and the report was BLACKHEAD. The NF180 pills didn't seem to have any effect upon the birds - gave one-half tablet a day for three days. Almost all the birds that died, died within one week. A few lived for ten days but continued to get weaker and finally died. All birds were eating good and in good condition prior to getting sick. We thought that with previous experience with blackhead from last year we could save at least a part of these birds. Began feeding all dry feed on August 1st.

End of 9th week - August 14

Three birds left.

5th, 6th, 7th and 8th weeks - July 13 to August 16

Feeding same feed as the others.

July 22 -

One bird died so treated remaining 11 birds with one-third tablet NF180 a day for three days. Lost six birds within the next week from BLACKHEAD. The remaining birds are active and eat good. One is dancing every day and all are not so wild as before. We had a much higher recovery rate with the 12 birds when treated. These birds were very sick and did not eat for two days after treatment. We have 5 of these birds left and they look very good.

End of 8th week - August 16 -

Five birds left.

10th, 11th, 12th and 13th weeks - August 15 - September 12

Feeding 30% turkey pre-starter and plain water for 10th and 11th week. Feeding 22% Purina game bird grower for 12th and 13th weeks. Birds are eating very good and look healthy, but are wild.

August 18 -

Noticed loose droppings so treated with NF180 for two days.

August 22 -

One bird died.

August 27 -

One bird died. This bird appeared to be cured of blackhead and was eating looking good.

End of 13th week - September 12 -

One bird left.

9th, 10th, 11th and 12th weeks - August 17 - September

14 Feeding same feed as other sharptails. Birds are eating good.

One bird is still larger than the rest but all seem healthy and look good. No sickness in these birds for this four week period. One bird still dances every morning, and are wilder than the chickens. We put in a pan of dirt every morning and they use it regularly.

End of 12th week - September 14 -

Five birds.

14th, 15th, 16th and 17th weeks - September 13 - October 11 -

Feeding 20% game bird grower with NF180. Plain water. Also feeding apples and pears. No sickness the last four weeks. Bird is eating good and very healthy.

End of 17th week - October 16 -

One bird.



13th, 14th, 15th and 16th weeks - September 15 - October 13 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower with NF180. Plain water. Also feeding one apple and 3/4 pear a day to these birds. One bird dances every morning. All birds eating clover and plantain leaves and eat more apples than the prairie chickens. Noticed one bird had loose droppings on September 23. Treated all birds with NF180 tablet. Marvin Schwilling measured the wing feathers on all five birds on September 23. All birds now healthy and very active. On September 23 four birds had not completed (second) molt. These birds are not feathering out as fast as prairie chickens. End of 16th week - October 13 -  
Five birds left.

Remarks - I have one wing shot grouse taken during hunting season. Bandaged wing. Bird eats apples, pears and some corn, and a lot of clover and plantain leaves.

18th, 19th, 20th and 21st weeks - October 12 - November 9 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower, plain water and adding NF180 to feed twice a week. Feeding apples and buds of trees. They relish apples and eat grower well. Grouse not as large as they should be at this time. No sickness. End of 21st week - November 9 -  
One bird.

17th, 18th, 19th and 20th weeks - October 14 - November 11 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower, plain water and adding NF180 to feed twice a week. Also feeding apples and buds from trees. Birds are as tame as the prairie chickens now. Move birds every day and they eat a lot of clover and plantain leaves. No sickness. End of 20th week - November 11 -  
Five birds.

22nd, 23rd, 24th and 25th weeks - November 10 - December 8 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water, also apples every day. Grouse still not feathering out as they should. Feeding buds of trees to bird each day. No sickness. End of 25th week -  
One bird.

21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th weeks - November 12 - December 10 -  
Feeding same as other grouse. Birds are eating apples and buds of trees very well. All birds active and looking good. No sickness.

End of 24th week -  
Five birds.

26th, 27th, 28th and 29th weeks - December 9 - January 6 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water. Moved pens until January 1. All grouse eat apples regularly and more than prairie chickens. No sickness.

End of 29th week -  
One bird.

25th, 26th, 27th and 28th weeks - December 11 - January 8 -  
Feeding same as other grouse. All grouse eat apples well. The grouse dig holes in snow to roost. Weather has been bad since January 1st. Lots of snow and cold, but doesn't seem to affect birds. Birds dust in snow.

End of 28th week -  
Five birds.

30th, 31st weeks - January 7 - January 14 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water. Bird was sick on January 10th, gave one-half NF180 pill for three days.

January 14 -  
Bird died.

29th, 30th, 31st, and 32nd weeks - January 9 - February 6 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water.

January 11 -  
One bird sick - did not treat.

January 14 -  
Bird died.

All other birds healthy and did not get sick. All birds in same pen. Birds still eat one apple every day and two cups of game bird grower.

End of 32nd week - February 6 -  
Four birds.

33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th weeks - February 7 - March 6 -  
Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water, also one apple a day which birds clean up. All birds healthy. Have seen cock trying to mate with hens but have seen no dancing. No sickness.

End of 36th week - March 6 -  
Four birds.

37th, 38th, 39th and 40th weeks - March 7 - April 4.-

Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water. Birds eating lots of clover leaves and do not eat apples. Move pen to new ground every day. All birds healthy. End of 40th week - April 4 -  
Four birds.

41st, 42nd, 43rd and 44th weeks - April 5 - May 3 -

Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water. Birds eating more clover and plantain leaves and less grower. April 12 -

One bird sick. Gave one-half NF180 pill for three days.

April 17 -

Bird died.

April 30 -

One grouse started laying.

End of 44th week - May 3 -

Three birds left.

45th, 46th, 47th and 48th weeks - May 4 - June 1 -

Feeding 20% game bird grower and plain water. Move birds every three days to new ground. All birds look good and no sickness.

Set the first few eggs grouse layed on April 30 but they were not fertile.

May 4 -

The grouse I thought was a male died. Upon posting discovered bird was a hen. No cause of death.

Have two hen grouse left so on May 4 put one hen grouse in with male prairie chicken. On May 5 put other hen grouse in with male prairie chicken. Both birds are now laying and up to June 29th have gotten 66 eggs from the two hens. On pair of bird eggs have not been fertile. The eggs from other pair of birds have hatched - 10 birds. One chick died the first day and one has a spradled leg so killed this bird when ten days old. These chicks are a known crss between a sharptailed hen and a male prairie chicken.

End of 48th week - June 1

Two birds left.