



Aldrovandi on Chickens: The Ornothology of Ulisse Aldrovandi (1600) Volume II Book XIV

Ulisse Aldrovandi

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Aldrovandi on Chickens, written in 1598, is the first English translation of any work by the Italian naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi. It exemplifies the spirit and the letter of Renaissance science—the former, in the extensive classical references; the latter, through careful examination of every process involved with the raising or use of chickens.

Aldrovandi discusses such concepts as artificial stimulation of egg production, culling, and flock behavior. He traces reproduction in great detail from the competition of sperm in the oviduct to the position of the developed chick.

The author directs himself particularly to the chicken's beneficial effects on human life. In addition to recipes, he lists remedies concocted from chickens for many diseases, and the prescriptions provide a fascinating glimpse of the medical practices of the time. The chicken family, Aldrovandi suggests, is an admirable example of unity for the human family—provided the rooster's extraordinary lustfulness is not emulated.

As the well-known Italian zoologist Alessandro Ghigi points out in his foreword to this translation, *Aldrovandi on Chickens* contributes substantially to the history of science and the study of ornithology. The author's genius and unique style make the book an important representative of one of the golden ages of the intellect.

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