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LAYER FARM MANAGEMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Layer poultry farming is gaining popularity in India due to its lower production cost and growing demand for eggs. India ranks third in the world by producing about 3.8 billion kilograms eggs. There is an increase in egg production in India owing to the growth in human consumption and lower production costs. There is a lot of demand for eggs all year in our country, and according to the ICMR recommendation every person should eat 180 eggs and 11 kg chicken in 1 year.

Selection of Suitable stock for layer farming

Basically Layer hens are of two types, depending on the nature and color of the egg viz white egg laying hens and brown egg laying hens. Seeking the market demands of particular type of egg, breed/strain of good quality breeds of laying hen should be selected.

Hybrid Commercial Layers: BV-300, BV-320, Bovans White, Deklab, HH 260, Keystone, Shaver Starcross Indigenous Layers: CARI Priya, CARI Sonali

Selection of location of the farm

- The farm located near the urban areas as it ensures close proximity to the source of chick, feed, medicines, vaccines and the final market for the eggs.
- The site should be well connected with motorable road throughout the year.
- The site should have a good source of drinking water and uninterrupted supply of electricity.
- The land area should be little elevated from the surroundings to ensure good drainage.
- The site should be an open place to ensure plenty of sunshine available throughout the day and free movement of air.
- The farm should not be located very close to residential area or crowded place.
- The site should not be in close proximity to another poultry farm

Systems for Layer Housing

There are two methods or systems of layer housing for raising layer chickens are explained as follows:

Battery Cage System

In this system, there are organized cages in the chicken house with separate provision of the feed, water, and eggs laying.

Deep Litter System

In this, litter or bedding material is required to cover the concrete floor using rice hulks, wood shavings, or chopped wheat straw and hang the water and feed containers to ensure they're within reach of the chickens

Different poultry equipments required

Brooder: It is electrically operated equipment which has the arrangement of producing heat needed for the chicks for the first few weeks, of their life. A brooder with 1.22-meter (50 inch) diameter can be used to brood about 250 chicks.

- **Chick guard**
  Chick guards should be 30-45 cm (1-11/2 ft) in height and should have arrangements to add or remove guards as and when required for extension or reduction of the area.
- **Feeders**
  longitudinal feeders and hanging type of feeders.
- **Waterers**: The waterers used in a poultry farm should be non-corrosive, leak proof, not easily breakable, non-rusting, inexpensive and durable.
- **Nest boxes**: nest boxes are generally made of wood and each should have the size of 30x30x30 cm (1x1x1 ft) each box is useful for 4 birds. A wooden nest box.
- **Other equipments**: These equipments include bird catching hook, bird catching screen, forked spade, catching crate, shovel, spade etc.

Management of layers

Egg type chickens has been categorized as follows

1. Chick stage (0 – 8 weeks)
2. Grower stage (9 -20 weeks)
3. Layer stage (21-72 weeks)

Management of chicks (0 – 8 weeks)

The ration provided during this period is known as chick ration. It contains about 22 percent crude protein and about 2700 kilocalorie metabolizable energy. During the first few weeks, it is advisable to put feed in the feeders at least 4 times a day. Feeders should be cleaned from litter materials before filling it and while placing new feed in the feeders, it should be mixed up thoroughly with the left-over feed. During this period of 8 weeks, each chick should be provided with 5 cm (2 inch) feeder space and 2.5 cm (1 inch) water space. Placement of feeders at proper height is essential for the chicks to eat properly and feeders should be distributed uniformly so that whatever the position of the bird in the house it is not far away from the source of feed. This is especially important during the early days of chick's life.

Management of growers (9-20 weeks)

During this period they are given a special kind of feed known as grower feed which have about 16 percent crude protein. The floor space requirement for each bird ranges from 0.111 to 0.139 sq meter (1.2 to 1.5 sq ft) during this period. Longitudinal/ hanging grower feeders of large size and in sufficient number should be used for providing feed to grower birds. During this period the feeder space for each bird should be 6.5 cm 92.6 inch.

Selection of pullets

The best of the pullets should be selected for egg production. The pullets should be uniform in size and weight. Pullets with morphological defects such as lameness, blindness, emaciated etc should not be selected for transferring them to layer house.

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Transfer of pullets to the layer house

Pullets should be transferred to layer house before laying. Birds should be transferred at the age of 16-17th weeks, so that the stress period will be over by the time they start producing eggs at 20th weeks of age.

Management of layers (21 -72 weeks)

Chickens at the point of laying is known as pullet. Once it started laying it becomes layer bird. Present day hybrids start laying from 19-20 weeks of age and continue laying for a period of one year or more. Ration given this period is known as layer ration.

Collection of eggs

Eggs should be collected 4 times in a day. The first collection to be done at 9 AM followed by 12 AM, 2 PM and lastly at 4 PM. Eggs should be collected in egg trays or bamboo made basket.

Culling of poor layers

Culling is the procedure of selection and rejection of unproductive and poor producers. Poor layers should be culled to minimize the cost of production. By doing so farmer can save some amount of money for not needing to buy feed for the non-layers. The characters that should be taken into consideration for distinguishing good and poor layers are as follows.

Appearance

The healthy bird is more active, more alert, vigorous, well fleshed but not fatty, tight feathering with tail and wings carried up. Deviation of any of these characteristics is the indication of poor layers

Moulting

Moulting provides an indication about the laying capacity of a bird. It is natural and physiological process to renew old feathers at the end of first year of laying. Early moulters are usually poor layers, whereas late moulters are usually good layers.

Broodiness

There may be a few broody birds in a flock. A broody bird will sit in the nest box but will not come out unless forced. They are non-layers and thus cullable.

Care and farm management rely on egg production from a Layer Poultry Farming. Following important points should be considered to for successful layer farming:

- Approximately 5 percent of hens start laying eggs after the first 20 weeks of age.
- Approximately 10 percent of birds lies at 21 weeks of age.
- They develop strongly when they reach the age of 26 to 30 weeks. However, depending on their strain, it can be different.
- Normally they stop laying for a few days after laying a maximum number of eggs.
- And their production of eggs can slowly decrease after this time.
- Egg-laying rate and egg size are gradually increasing.
- The hens grow up to the age of 40 weeks.
- Eggs raise in weight and size until they are 50 weeks of age.

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