

BACKYARD POULTRY FARMING: A KEY TO "ATMANIRBHAR RURAL INDIA"

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INTRODUCTION

70 percent of rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood, with 82 percent of farmers being small and marginal. The land holding capacity of small and marginal farmers are not sufficient for large scale livestock farming. In such situation the backyard poultry farming seems to be the key to atmanirbhar rural India.

Backyard poultry farming is an age old practice in rural India. Most of the backyard poultry production comprises rearing of indigenous birds with poor production performances. The potentiality of indigenous birds in terms of egg production is only 70 to 80 eggs/ bird/ year and meat production is also very less. The backyard poultry production can be easily boost up with improved varieties of chicken and can promise a better production of meat and egg. To improve the socio-economic status of the traditional farmers, backyard poultry is a handy enterprise with low-cost initial investment, but high economic return along with guarantee for improving protein deficiency among the poor.

Merits of backyard poultry farming:

1. Low investment but higher economic return.
2. A unit can be started with small flock.
3. Feed cost is negligible due to better utilization of agricultural by-products and leftover feed and grains.
4. Egg and birds can be sold in local market with high price, because there is a growing demand for local chicken.
5. The consumers are willing to pay higher prices for high quality desi chicken meat or egg.
6. Boost up in family income by better utilization of family labours who are not able to perform other agricultural works like old family member, women or children.
7. It can be considered as an 'ATM', because as per family need the birds and eggs can be sold at any time anywhere with cash in hand.
8. Quality of chicken and egg is better in terms of organic farming as the birds are raised in stress less environment with natural input.

Improved strains of birds to selected for backyard farming:

Local or indigenous breeds are very poor in performance with respect to their egg and meat production. Therefore an improved strain of bird must be chosen for backyard poultry farming. The following points must be considered while selecting the birds for backyard farming.

- Adaptability in village condition
- Self-propagation
- Good brooding capacity
- Mothering ability
- Well body conformation
- Disease resistance
- Good scavengers
- Attractive and coloured plumage
- Escaping capacity from predators

Keeping in view the above characteristics the varieties that can be recommended for backyard poultry farming are-Vanaraja, Gramapriya, Giriraja, Girirani, Krishna - J etc. The annual egg production capacity of Gramapriya and Vanaraja birds are 200 to 220 and 200 to 230 egg/ bird/ year, respectively. First egg lays at 200 to 230 days depending on plane of nutrition and other management parameters. Egg weight varies from 55 to 60 gram. Mature body weight 2.5 to 3.5 kg.

Housing management for backyard poultry farming

Modern system of housing is not required for backyard poultry farming but, small house is required which can protect the birds from sun, rain and predators. If free range system is practiced the birds are let loose in day time for foraging and at night sheltered in shed. For better production performances certain criteria that can be considered are –

1. The poultry house should be in east-west orientation to protect from summer wind and cold stress and also for direct sunlight in winter months.
2. During summer direct sun light should be avoided to reduce the summer stress in birds.
3. Low cost housing material like wood, bamboo, grass, thatch etc. can be utilized.
4. The poultry house should be free from water seepage or moisture.
5. Floor should be in elevated land or above ground level (minimum 2ft) and free from water crack, easily cleaned, rat proof and durable.
6. There should be free air movement in upper part of the shed to reduce gas formation inside the shed.
7. Height of the side wall in poultry house is



generally 7 ft. to 8 ft. The centre height is 9 ft. to 12 ft. with slope in either side.

8. Roofing material like thatch, tiles, asbestos etc. can be used.
9. Brooder house should have easy ventilation and wire netting which is used for open air ventilation.

Feeding management

In case of modern system of poultry farming the feed cost alone is 70% of total expenditure in poultry production. In backyard poultry farming the feed cost is considered to be minimum. Hence, the birds are let loose for scavenging in the open yard and collect the required protein, energy, minerals and vitamins etc. from insects, snail, termites, seeds of grasses and weeds, leftover grains, crop residues and household wastes. Feed ingredients like broken rice, ground nut straw, wheat or job's tear grain, rice bean, etc. also can be given to the birds. During rainy season poultry feed should not be stored more than 1.5 months to in backyard poultry farming generally two times feeding is practiced; once at morning and another at evening. The space requirement for feeder is 2 to 7 cm at brooding period, 7 to 10 cm during growing stage and 12 to 15 cm / bird at laying stage. The water space should be 0.5 to 1.5 cm during brooding, 1.5 to 2.5 during growing and 2.5 cm during laying period. The birds may be supplied with extra concentrate ration @ 30 to 60 gm /day/ bird for better performance. The balanced ration may be formulated with appropriate percentage of maize, rice polish, wheat bran, ground nut cake, fish meal, shell grit or lime stone along with salt, minerals and vitamins or may be with locally available ingredients. The poultry feed should contain at least 20% protein in starter level, 16% in grower and 18% in laying stage with energy level (ME) 2800 kcal/kg feed in starter, 2600 kcal/kg at grower and 2650 kcal/kg in layer ration.

Considering all the above points it can be said that the backyard poultry farming is traditionally known to the rural India. It can be adapted very easily by the farmers of India and can improve their socio-economic status and make the farmers atmanirbhar.

