

Quail Rearing– An Increasingly popular Poultry Farming Option

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Quails are of the pheasant family. They are well-known as a miniature birds. Their rearing is gaining popularity as the poultry farmers' choice. Raising quails has many similarities to raising chickens, with a few differences.

➤ Housing of quails

❖ Deep litter system:

- ✓ In 1 sq.ft. of floor space 6 quails can be reared.
- ✓ After 2 weeks, quails can be reared in cages or continued to be reared in deep-litter system or shifted to free-range/backyard.

❖ Cage System:

- ✓ Rearing quails in cage system will help to gain good body weight, as unnecessary wandering of animals is avoided.
- ✓ Each unit should be about 6 feet in length and 1 foot in width and subdivided into 6 subunits. To save space, the cages can be arranged upto 6 tiers in height.
- ✓ Commercial egg layers are usually housed in colonies of 10-12 birds per cage.

❖ Backyard rearing:

- ✓ Backyard rearing of quails will minimize the need for housing and food, thus minimizing production costs. They forage and also consume kitchen waste. Starters prefer more bugs and worms, while adult birds eat a more vegetarian diet such as seeds and berries.
- ✓ They are susceptible to predator attacks and tend to fly or wander. So, secure fences and enclosed spaces should be a preferred.

➤ Feeding of quails

❖ Starters:

- ✓ A quail consumes 500 g. of feed till it reaches 5 weeks.

❖ **Layers:**

- ✓ Quails of 6 months age, consume about 30-35 g. of feed/day.
- ✓ For production of 12 eggs, quail requires about 400 g. of feed.
- ✓ Feed material should be made of small particles. The particle size is reduced by grinding the feed for more time.

➤ **General management of quails**

❖ **Weight:**

- ✓ The quail egg usually weighs about 9-10 g. A day-old chick weighs about 8-10g. At the age of six weeks, female quails usually weigh 175-200g, and the males weigh about 125-150 g.

❖ **Age of egg laying:**

- ✓ Female quails start laying eggs at 7 weeks of age and continue up to 22 weeks of age.

❖ **Lighting:**

- ✓ Sixteen hours of light per day should be available to the egg laying quails.

❖ **Sexual differentiation:**

- ✓ The breast of the male quail is usually narrow and covered with equally distributed brown and white feathers while that of female quail is broad and covered with brown feathers with black dots.
- ✓ The female and male quails should be separated at the age of four weeks as there will be increased competition for food and pecking is observed if housed together.

➤ **Management of quail chicks**

- ✓ The quail chicks need more temperature. Absence of adequate temperature and exposure to cool winds leads to clustering of young ones, resulting in high chick mortality.

➤ **Breeding management of quails**

- ✓ Quails start laying their eggs at the age of 5th-7th week. They attain 50% egg production at 8th week of age.
- ✓ In order to produce fertile eggs, the male quails should be reared along with the females at 8-10 weeks of age with a male to female ratio is 1:3 to 1:5.
- ✓ Incubation period in quails is 18 days.

- ✓ With 500 female quails 1,500 quail chicks can be produced per week.

➤ **Saleable products from quail**

❖ **Meat:**

- ✓ After 5-7 weeks, quail is considered mature and ready to be harvested for meat.
- ✓ Being a small bird, the meat yield of quail per bird is much less than any other poultry. But comparatively, quails mature quickly and they have an incubation period of 18 days. So, though there is very little meat per bird, more number of birds can be housed in smaller spaces, incur less cost of feed due to lower overall feed consumption and raise them more quickly resulting in a overall higher yield.
- ✓ Quail meat is tastier than chicken and has less fat content.

❖ **Eggs:**

- ✓ Most quail eggs have a cream-colored base with dappled specks and red and brown flecks.
- ✓ Quail can produce up to 1 egg per day which means that they have a high rate of egg production *i.e.* up to 280 eggs per year. Though they are a fraction of the size of chicken eggs, they taste fairly similar or even better than them. Nutritionally, the quail eggs are on par with that of chicken eggs with less cholesterol.
- ✓ Quails mature at about 6-7 weeks and also lay eggs sooner than most other poultry. They lay their first egg at 5-7 weeks of age compared to chickens that take 18-20 weeks.

❖ **Manure:**

- ✓ Like chicken manure, quail manure is a good fertilizer. It can be used for your crops or can be sold. Ageing and composting quail manure for few months to a year is a must as it is high in nitrates and can burn your plants if not properly prepared.

➤ **Diseases of quails**

- ✓ Generally quails are resistant to infectious diseases than chicken and therefore there is no vaccination required for quails
- ✓ When there is deficiency of vitamins and minerals in the female quail breeders, the chicks obtained from their fertile eggs are usually lean with weak legs. To prevent



these breeder females should be provided with quality concentrate feed with optimum minerals and vitamins and ample clean drinking water.

- ✓ Proper bio-security measures such as disinfecting farm premises will prevent disease outbreaks in quail farms.

Conclusions:

Rearing quail has many benefits that make it a very profitable endeavour, like:

- ✓ Raising quails is very easy, even for beginners. Therefore, commercial quail farming can be a good and profitable business idea for youth and women entrepreneurs.
- ✓ They are smaller sized birds and therefore relatively less capital is needed for starting this business.
- ✓ Quails do not need much space or feed while the turn-around for eggs and meat is much faster than chicken.
- ✓ Quail meat is tastier than chicken and has less fat content. It promotes body and brain development in children.
- ✓ Nutritionally, the quail eggs are on par with that of chicken eggs with less cholesterol.
- ✓ Quail meat and eggs are a nutritious diet for pregnant and nursing mothers.
- ✓ Quails can be marketed at an early age *i.e.* 5-7 weeks.
- ✓ They achieve early sexual maturity *i.e.* they start laying eggs in about 6-7 weeks of age.
- ✓ They have a high rate of egg laying *i.e.* up to 280 eggs per year.

