

CHAPTER THIRTY THREE

Poultry Husbandry:

Introduction:

- This is a farm in which only birds are bred or raised for sale or for domestic purposes.
- Birds such as the fowl, turkey, duck and guinea fowl are raised on this farm.

Starting the farm:

- Beginners always start with a few birds, since it is easy to handle birds when they are few.
- Birds and animals are suited to certain living conditions and if they get the conditions which they like, then their number may be increased.

Management or housing systems:

- Having obtained his birds, the next thing a farmer must consider is where to house or keep them.
- Bad housing means a great loss, for the birds must be kept in clean and well ventilated houses.

Kinds of housing systems:

- The housing systems for poultry-keeping are:
 - (I) The extensive system.
 - (II) The semi-intensive system.
 - (III) The intensive system.

The extensive system:

- In this system, the birds are allowed to move freely about in search of food and water.
- They are allowed to spend most part of the day outside.
- There are two types of the extensive system and these are:
 - (a) The free running system.
 - (a)The free- range system.

The free running system:

- This is the cheapest or the economical type of housing system in poultry keeping.
- The birds are allowed to move freely about in search of food, over a large area around and beyond the farmer`s house.
- Some tiny coops are built for them, so that they can return to lay eggs or rest during the night.

Advantages:

- The large extent of land used avoids the overcrowding of the birds.
- The fowls are healthy since they perform a lot of exercise.
- Less money is spent in maintaining the fowls.
- The birds get enough green forage from which minerals are obtained.
- The birds get a lot of sunshine which is a source of vitamin D.

Disadvantages:

- Predators and moving vehicles may kill the birds.
- The fowls may go and destroy people`s farms and property.
- The fowls are exposed to weather hazards such as heavy rainfall.
- Their eggs may be lost, broken or become unclean.
- They can easily be attacked by pests and diseases.
- The birds population may not be known.

The free-range system:

- This is also referred to as the open range system.
- Under this system, the fowls are housed but allowed to move freely on a large grass run which is fenced during the day.
- Unlike the free running system, this system is somehow organized since balance rations are placed in feed trough in the range.
- Also, the control of diseases and pests is normally carried out by the owner.

Advantages:

- Since the birds are fenced, they are protected from intruders.
- The bird`s population can be accounted for.

- Since the birds are fenced, they do not destroy people`s farms and property.
- They exercise their body and get vitamin D from the sun`s energy.
- The fowls are not exposed to pests and infectious diseases.

The semi-intensive system:

- This is the type of housing system in which the birds spend part of their time in buildings and part in the open, (i.e. runs or paddock) which are mostly fenced.
- In fact, it combines some aspects of the extensive systems, since the birds have a restricted freedom of movement.
- There are two types and these are;
 - (a) The run system.
 - (b) The movable fold unit system.

The run system:

- In this system, the fowls are kept in a permanent house surrounded by a grass-field or a run which is fenced.
- The run or paddock in their system is normally divided, for the control of parasitic diseases and vegetation lost on the run.

Advantages:

- The system gives commercial quantities of eggs.
- It can easily be practiced as backyard poultry keeping.
- It permits a good supervision of the birds.
- Diseases and pests can easily be controlled.
- The birds enjoy sunlight and exercise their body.
- Since they are housed, they are protected against weather hazards.

Disadvantages:

- The run may become muddy and foul during the rainy season, when proper care is not taken.
- Pests and diseases may spread when the vegetation in the run is not well kept and controlled.

The movable fold unit system:

- It consists of a portable house to which a run is attached.

- While they are in the run, the birds get enough sunlight and fresh air.
- They also sleep in the portable house during the night.
- It is not commonly used in Ghana.

Advantages:

- Its portability makes it movable to dry and clean places at any time.

Disadvantages:

- Egg eating and cannibalism may occur among the birds, if they are not properly supervised.

The intensive system:

- This is the system in which many birds are kept within a small area, and never allowed to go out.
- It is capital intensive, i.e. a lot of money is needed.
- There are two types and these are:
 - (a) The deep litter system.
 - (b) The battery cage system.

The deep litter system:

- In this system, the birds are kept in a pen day and night.
- The pen must be provided with fittings or equipments such as water troughs, feed troughs and perches.
- The floor of the building must be covered with litter materials such as sawdust or dry grass, in order to collect the droppings of the birds.
- These litter materials used must be capable of decomposing easily, in order not to choke the respiratory tract of the fowls.

Advantages:

- It requires less labour.
- Just a little land is needed for a large number of birds.
- It is efficient and reliable if it is well supervised.
- Pests and diseases are reduced since hygienic conditions are provided.
- The birds are protected against weather hazards.
- A high production of eggs is assured.

Disadvantages:

- The system involves or needs a lot of money.
- The birds do not perform enough exercises, and do not get enough sunlight.
- Cannibalism, egg eating and so on may occur due to overcrowding.
- Pests and diseases can spread very fast, if good sanitation practices such as disinfecting and the washing of the floor is not done.

The battery cage system:

- It consists of a block of cages within which each cage is designed to contain one or more birds depending on the space, the design and the construction of the units.
- It is usually housed in well-ventilated and lighted pens.

Advantages:

- Less labour and little land is used.
- It permits strict supervision of the performances of the birds.
- Birds receive individual attention.
- The eggs obtained are clean and bigger.
- The eggs are not eaten or damaged by the birds, since they do not have access to these eggs.

Disadvantages:

- A high amount of money or capital is needed to establish or operate the system.
- The fowls lack exercise and sunlight.
- The fowls do not have access to natural vegetation.
- It is not suitable for brooding chicks.

Feeding the birds together:

- When many birds are fed together, they get in each other`s way and so it is important that there are enough troughs for them all to feed.
- About 15cm of trough space must be given to each bird.

- Birds walk into the food they eat, and may leave droppings there.
- Certain diseases are spread by the droppings from infected birds and for this reason, feeders are to be designed to prevent birds from eating the feed troughs.