

# **Chapter Twenty 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 fowl, turkey, duck and guinea fowl are raised on this farm

### **Starting the farm:**

When you are a beginner or a person who wants to start keeping birds, then you must start with a few birds. It is easy to handle the birds when they are few. If the birds get the right conditions and do not die, then you can increase their number.

### **The housing systems:**

- Having obtained your birds, the next thing that a farmer must consider is where to house or keep them.
- If they are kept in a poor and a bad housing system, then a lot of them may die.
- The birds must be kept in clean and well ventilated houses.

### **Kinds of housing systems:**

- The housing systems for the keeping of poultry are:
  - (i) The extensive system.
  - (ii) The semi- intensive system.
  - (iii) The intensive system.

### **The extensive system:**

- This is the cheapest type of housing system in poultry keeping.
- 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.
- (b) The free- range system.

### **The free running system:**

- This is the cheapest 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:**

- Overcrowding of the birds cannot occur, since they can roam over a large area.
- By moving about, the birds perform a lot of exercises which makes them healthy.
- The farmer spends less money in this system.
- The birds get a lot of sunshine which provides them with Vitamin D.

### **Disadvantages:**

- Predators and moving vehicles may kill the birds.
- The fowls may go and destroy people`s farms and property.
- They can easily be attacked by pests and diseases.
- Their eggs may become lost or broken or unclean, since they can lay eggs anywhere.

### **The free range- system:**

- This is referred to as the open range system.
- Under this system, the fowls are kept in houses or coops but are allowed to move freely on a large grass run, which is fenced during the day.
- The grass run consists of a piece of land on which grass has been planted.
- Under this system also, the farmer provides food to the birds.

### **Advantages:**

- Because the birds are kept in a fenced area, they are protected from their enemies or intruders.
- The birds cannot go and destroy people's farms and property.
- They can move about and perform exercises, which make them healthy.
- They also get sunlight which provides them with vitamin D.

### **The semi– intensive system:**

- This is the type of housing system, in which the birds spend part of their time in buildings, and part of on fenced runs.
- 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 which is surrounded by a fenced run.

### **Advantages:**

- It can be used to produce commercial quantities of eggs.
- It can easily be practiced in the backyard of a person's house.
- Diseases and pests can easily be controlled.

### **Disadvantages:**

- During the rainy season, the run may become muddy and give out a foul scent.
- If the vegetation or the grass on the run is not well kept, diseases and pests may spread among the birds.

### **The movable fold unit system:**

- This consists of a portable house to which a run has been attached or fixed.
- While they are on the run, the birds get enough sunlight and fresh air.
- They also sleep in the portable house during the night.

**Advantage:** Because it is portable or small, it can be moved from place to place.

**Disadvantage:** The birds may eat their own eggs or kill and eat their fellow birds i.e. cannibalism may occur.

### **The intensive system:**

- This is the system in which many birds are kept within a small area, and never allowed to go out.
- 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.
- Within the pen, we place equipments such as water trough, feed trough and perches.
- While the water trough is used to provide the birds with water, they are provided with food using the feed trough.
- We must also place litter materials such as grass or sawdust at the floor of the pen.
- This litter material will collect the droppings or the waste of the birds.
- The litter material must be changed from time to time.

### **Advantages:**

- It requires less labour.
- Just a little land is needed for this system.
- The birds are well protected against danger.
- This system gives high production of eggs

**Disadvantages:**

- A lot of money is needed to start and operate this system.
- The birds do not perform enough exercises, and do not get enough sunlight.

**The battery cage system:**

- This consists of a number of cages, in which the birds are kept.
- The number of birds placed within each cage depends on the size of the cage.

**Advantages:**

- It requires less labour and less land.
- The system produces clean and bigger eggs.
- The birds are given individual attention.