



SMALL-SCALE EGG PRODUCTION

Reasons for keeping hens

- You can provide eggs for your family by keeping 12 hens. The hens will lay 9 to 10 eggs each day.
In this way you can even start your own small business.
- Of the 10 eggs you can sell 4 to pay for the feed of the hens. That will leave the family with 5 or 6 eggs per day for household consumption. Eggs are a valuable source of protein required for normal growth, especially for children.
- If the demand for eggs in your area is high you could expand and sell more of the eggs.

Cage

- It is best to keep the hens in a cage.
- This means that
 - ◆ the hens can be kept in a small space
 - ◆ the hens are kept in a cleaner environment

- ◆ the eggs are not easily broken
- ◆ the eggs stay clean
- ◆ the eggs can easily be collected
- ◆ the hens get fewer diseases
- ◆ less chance of the hens being stolen
- ◆ they need very little care.



- You can buy a cage or make your own.
- It is much cheaper to make the cage yourself.
- Be sure to make the cage strong enough for the weight of 12 hens.
- The size of the cage for 12 laying hens must be: 1,2 metres long by 0,7 metres wide by 0,45 metres high.
- You can build it from: galvanised weld mesh, cane, bamboo or wattle sticks.
- The floor of the cage must be made of wire (weld mesh) so that the hens' droppings will fall through◆this ensures that the floor on which they stand stays clean.
- Fit a feed trough to the cage. It must be as long as the cage. Plastic or metal gutters can be used as feed troughs.
- Plastic cooldrink bottles with drinking nipples are used as drinkers. (The drinking nipples can be obtained from Medunsa.)
- The cage should not stand on the ground to ensure that the manure falls through. Put the cage on poles, bricks,or old tyres or fasten it to the wall of the house, hut or shed.

Hens

- You can buy day-old chicks and rear them, but this is expensive and sometimes the chickens may die.
- It is better to buy young hens (pullets) of 18 to 19 weeks of age which are ready to lay eggs.
- The hens which you buy must be of a very good quality and should be fully vaccinated against all known poultry diseases.
- These hens will start laying within 2 weeks of being bought (when they are 20 to 21 weeks old).
- The hens should be kept for 1 year and then sold as cull hens.
- If you keep them longer, they will start laying fewer eggs and later stop laying altogether.
- You will be able to sell each cull hen for about the same price as a replacement hen.

Eggs

- In order for the hens to lay as many eggs as they possibly can, they must have light.
- They should have 16 hours of light every day.
- This can be done simply if you have electricity.
- Put on the lights before sunrise and let them stay on after sunset.
- If you do not have electricity the hens will not lay as many eggs as hens with artificial light.
- In order to maximise egg production without electricity, situate your cage outside to make maximum use of natural daylight.
- With 16 hours light everyday each hen will lay about 280 eggs in a year.
- Without extra light each hen will lay about 200 eggs per year.

Feed for the hens

- **You must give the hens the best feed possible if you want them to lay well.**
- **It is therefore best to buy a good commercial feed such as all mash laying mash.**
- **You can buy it at most cooperatives.**
- **Feed must be available in the feed trough at all times.**
- **Each hen will not eat more than 120 grams of feed.**
- **One bag of feed will last approximately 1 month.**

Summary

- **The 12 hens will lay 9 to 10 eggs every day.**
- **To pay for the feed of the hens you must sell 4 eggs at about 40c per egg.**
- **The family will be left with about 6 eggs per day for consumption.**
- **It will be best to make your own cage, as you will then save about R200,00.**
- **Eggs can provide high-quality protein for your family.**

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