

The farmer is pictured holding a water container for his exotic birds. PHOTOS BY DAVID MAFABI

FACTS ABOUT BROODER CHICKENS

- They will lay eggs for a long period of time, depending on the breed.
- They are resistant to many diseases.
- They are easy to raise and maintain.
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Farmer finds goldmine in local breed chicken

A dropout at 17, Steven Mukweli took to poultry farming and today he is a millionaire, writes **DAVID MAFABI**.

Steven Mukweli, a resident of Bungokho in Mbale, is a self-made millionaire. A dropout at 17, Mukweli decided to venture into poultry farming. The man who started with just seven birds, today boasts of over 20,000 exotic and 1,600 local breeds. "Farming was the only option. I started with a handful of free-range birds but today the story is different," he said. Mukweli, who has gone a step further into breeding, says anyone can make it. In the tips below, the farmer shares how best one can make cash from eggs, hatching and chicken sales.

Egg hatching

Mukweli who two years ago graduated into the business of hatching chicks at his farm says for proper results, farmers should provide nests for laying hens and that the nests should be close to each other in a slightly darkroom. According to him, hatching chicken eggs is an extremely rewarding experience, which requires good planning, dedication, flexibility and

observation by the farmer. "Put some soft material such as dry grass or coffee husks in the bottom and use sand, soil or small stones to support the nests so that they don't collapse or drop the eggs as the hens enter and leave," advised Mukweli.

Egg selection

Mukweli says that at this stage a farmer needs to choose eggs which the hen can comfortably sit on and hatch as anticipated. He says the right eggs one should select for hatching must have no cracks, avoid too big (twins), too small, too pointed, too oval and too spherical.

Conditions

Mukweli explains that he has over five cocks and advises that each farmer must have a cock on the farm that mounts the hens. According to Mukweli each cock should be given eight to 10 hens to avoid competition and fighting.

He says during laying and hatching, the chicken house and the nests should be free from parasites such as lice and mites as these might make the hen abandon the eggs. Zainabu Muyobo, also a poultry farmer in Manafwa district advises farmers to prioritise good health saying the birds should be feeding very well. "You need to provide enough water and feeds at this time because the hens will stay on the eggs to warm them for hatching for 21

days," says Muyobo. "And the revenue potential for this kind of business investment is estimated at about Shs50m annually and in order to achieve this, one should have at least an initial capital investment of about Shs3.5 million," he said. Mukweli says that chicken droppings collected daily have enabled him get free manure for his gardens where he has also embarked on fruits and banana growing.

Market

According to Mukweli the birds especially from his farm are on high demand. "Customers find me at my farm," he says. He earns about Shs500,000 weekly from the sale of local chicken and eggs, which has enabled him transform himself from a poor rural farmer to a model farmer in Bungokho.

"I also earn Shs700,000 from selling broilers and exotic eggs in Mbale municipality hotels and businessmen, so all together I earn more than a million shillings a week from my farm when the chicken begin laying eggs," Mukweli revealed. Mukweli says as a poultry farmer he has earned a lot of money from the sale of local chicken eggs because they begin laying eggs after about five months and have a long laying period.

Management

Mukweli says although the chicken are locally bought within the

community, his birds undergo nine different vaccinations. He also disinfects his chicken houses every time new birds are brought in. He explains that visitors on the farm are limited because some of the diseases are transmitted by humans.

Incubating guidelines

Keep the temperature between 98 and 101 fahrenheit (The optimal temperature that you are striving for is 98.5). Keep the humidity between 55 and 70 per cent. It will take 21 days for the eggs to hatch. Gently rotate the eggs 1/4 to 1/2 turn three times a day for the first 18 days. For the last three days of incubation do not rotate the eggs. Don't wash the eggs before putting them in the incubator, leave them as they are.

The eggs for incubation must be bought from from somebody that raises chickens, ask for fertilised eggs because you want to incubate them. There is no way to guarantee fertilisation but the chicken raiser will give you good eggs that have probably been fertilised. Keep the humidity on the low end of the scale 55-65 for the first 15 days but try to get the humidity up to around 65-70 for the last few days. This will help the hatching.

500,000

THE MONEY MUKWELI EARNS FROM CHICKEN SALES

days," says Muyobo.

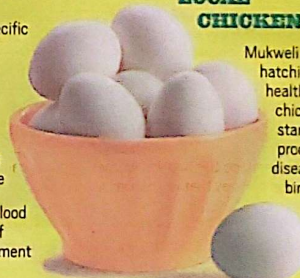
Profits

The farmer explains that ideally hens are bred domestically mainly for eggs and meat but investing in massive production is a viable business idea because you can get meat, eggs, and hatch more chicks, which can also be sold at one's wish. "And the revenue potential for this kind of business investment is estimated at about Shs50m annually and in order to achieve this, one

HATCH

A hatch generally requires specific design and specifications for handling the parental stock together with the cocks, brooders, young chicks and feeds. The bottom of the nest can be dusted with ash to prevent parasites from co-habiting the facility. The parasites normally suck blood from the brooder hen on top of disturbing the peaceful settlement of the hen on the eggs.

LOCAL CHICKEN



Mukweli says hatching health local chicken starts with procuring disease free birds and that this

requires the buyer to be every observant while buying birds.

"For instance they should not have falling feathers, running nose, red eyes, fallen comb, pale comb, and bloody comb. And these symptoms might be a pointer of Newcastle disease, fowl pox and coccidiosis," said Mukweli. He explained that to improve the quality and output of poultry, a farmer is advised to cross breed their chicken and that in cross breeding, one cock should mount not more than 10 hens.