

How to take care of chicks



A poultry farmer replaces feeds for chicks in the brooder COURTESY PHOTOS.

Brian Kyagulanyi a poultry specialist at Biyinzika farm says profits begin with proper care of chicken, writes **Sarah Aanyu**

Chicks are such delicate creatures that when not well taken care of they can easily perish.

Usually, knowledge on how to take care of the chicks is required before anyone can buy the chicks.

Take advantage of the fact that you are buying the chicks from the actual experts and ask for advice on how they can be well taken care of or incase the sellers have no idea, ask them to avail you a person knowledgeable. Brian Kyagulanyi, sales support manager at Biyinzika poultry farm says chicken farm business may be profitable but for only those who are able to raise at least a number of the chicks they own healthily.

People make losses either due to ignorance or negligence but all these can be avoided by following the strict guidelines that are made

THE BROODING AREA

"Make sure that the ventilation is good because it is from this that the litter will not get dirty hence avoiding the frequent removal of the litter which lets the chicks live comfortable without frequent transfers," says Ahereza Moses, a manager at healthy chicks home in Wakiso district.

available to you by the sellers.

Preparations

Usually, this is the initial and most important stage that an individual has to be cautious about because it will determine how the chicks live and their steady growth.

Kyagulanyi says early preparation for the chicks is paramount; the poultry farmer must make sure that everything is in place before the chicks are brought and this precaution will help keep the chicks safe from hazards that may occur.

"Before bringing the chicks, make sure that the equipment and room they are to live in is cleaned and disinfected, the surrounding is

warm, the ventilation is good and drafts are avoided. There is litter that is well spread, soft preferably rice husks or wood shavings can do and its minimum depth should be at least 10 centimetres," he says. He adds that in case the room is cold, it should be pre-heated to the right temperature before the chicks are brought in, their water founts and feeders should be spread evenly in the brooding area. He further says the litter should not be used for more than one cycle if good hygiene is to be maintained. "At day one to four, the lights of the brooder should be on for 24 hours but the period can be reduced to 23 hours the day after because the chicks will have slightly adjusted

to the new environment they are living in," says Kyagulanyi.

Frequent observation

Moses Ahereza a brooder expert at Biyinzika farm says observation is paramount and you will be able to tell the condition of the birds just by looking from the way the chicks behave, you will be able to know if any changes need to be made in the room or brooder.

"Usually when the chicks are spread in each ad very corner of the room of the brooder, that means that they are comfortable but when they are collected in one corner, then the temperature of the room should be adjusted so as they feel warm," he says. He says the noise they make also communicates a lot. The loud chirping indicates cold or hunger, low chirping indicates happiness and no noise may indicate weakness or cold.

The bio-security of the brooder

Ahereza says bio-security is a practice designed to prevent the spread of disease onto your farm and it is usually effective if the person makes sure the facility is well maintained in a way that there are limited viruses, rodents and other things that cause havoc to the brooding area. He makes it clear that no disease prevention programme will work out without bio security because it spear heads all and it is the cheapest means of disease control. He advises that for it to be effective, only one type and same age of chicks should be kept in a brooder because when mixed diseases may be spread because the older one could have suffered from a disease and cured but remained carriers and can easily pass on the disease to the newly hatched chicks.

Vaccination of the chicks

Vaccinate the birds at the right time and a dose should not be missed no matter the good healthy state of the chicks. "Make sure that the vaccine is taken good care of after it is collected from the vaccine shop, never should it be diluted without the doctor's instructions and follow the right procedure to make sure that the vaccine has been administered well so as to get good results," says Kyagulanyi. He says you can drop the vaccine in the chick's mouth, the eye or you can mix it in water.

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RECOMMENDED HOURS OF LIGHT FOR DAY ONE TO FOUR BROODERS