

Why farmers are adopting concentrates

By Chris Magezi

For many years poultry farmers have been using local ingredients to make poultry feeds, like silver fish for protein and shells for calcium. For the past five years, there has been a transformation in the poultry feed industry. First, the building of big feed milling companies. Secondly, the introduction of feed concentrates from countries like the Netherlands.

New players (both local farmers and international investors) have joined the industry with massive numbers of birds, because Uganda has the lowest cost of producing an egg and poultry meat in the region as compared to Kenya, South Sudan, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi and Tanzania.

Due to the increase in poultry numbers, from 30 million birds 10 years ago to about 40 million today, the demand for the local raw materials increased, yet supply remained the same, this led some feed suppliers to fake the raw material for the poultry feeds in order to meet the demands. In the process, many farmers were affected as they lost chicken and led to total closure of some farms.

Fish meal is commonly used in poultry feed. However, fish meal supply is limited, with prices increasing.

Now, most commercial farmers have started to use imported feed concentrates to keep up with the demands of the market and avoid the fake feeds. Poultry farming is a lucrative and popular business throughout the world. But it can be a risky business especially if you are not concerned about poultry feed management. Success in the poultry farming mostly depends on feed quality and feed formulation systems. For proper growth, egg production and good health, poultry birds require energy.

In order to obtain desired growth rate, one must purchase and provide highly nutritious poultry feeds. The imported feeds include pre-starter feeds, layer concentrates and broiler concentrates.

Pre-starter feeds

Newly hatched birds have an under-developed digestive system and require highly digestible protein ingredients. Pre-starter feed for broilers is designed with high nutrient and energy value using easily digestible protein sources by supplementation of various additives. It is meant to feed birds after hatching until seven days. Survival rate of post-hatching birds and uniformity at market size are the key elements in broiler farming systems. Obviously, both factors are related to early feeding, that is the feeding during zero to seven days post-hatching. For post-hatching birds, it is important to start feeding as early as possible to provide exogenous nutrients and energy so that the birds can use the yolk-sac energy for improving immune function. For this reason, the concept for a pre-starter feed has been developed and adapted by many farmers countrywide.

Layer concentrates

These range from 5% to 20% of the feeds. If you are a poultry farmer with access to affordable maize bran, wheat bran, limestone and your own feed mill, the layer concentrates offer a special solution; protein concentrates. The concentrate will contain high quality protein sources, vitamins, minerals, trace elements, enzymes and additives. Mixing all micro ingredients separately, puts a farmer at a high risk on incorrect dosing and will not give a homogeneous mixing. By using the protein concentrate which contains all the micro ingredients and protein in well-mixed concentrates, preparing good feed becomes easier!

Mixing the protein concentrate together with your raw materials will result in a high quality poultry feed. Layer concentrates can help you achieve a high production above 90% for over a year.

Broiler concentrates

The broiler concentrate range from 10% to 35%. For the broiler concentrate the farmer can produce the feed on their own at an economical cost with best quality by adding maize and maize bran only. Since the raw material is tested in the well-equipped laboratory the farmers need not have to worry regarding the quality, where it is not possible for some farmers to achieve good results where they produce their own feed with the non-tested raw material available in the local market.

Broiler concentrates are a cost effective feed with all scientific requirements fulfilled for minimum Feed Conversion Ratio (FCR) maximum weight gain and lowest possible production cost. Farmers using broiler concentrates sell their birds at four weeks, when the bird is 1.2-1.5kg.

Challenges of concentrates, the biggest changes facing farmers using concentrates is stock-outs, however suppliers are getting more organized when it comes to managing stock.

The writer is a poultry consultant and will be training at the Harvest Money Expo in February next year.