

Backyard Duck farming in tribal areas

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INTRODUCTION:

Duck rearing is mostly prevalent among small and marginal farmers in village areas as a **supplementary source of income**. Indigenous ducks are commonly reared. It not only provides them with quick cash but also a source of protein for their family members. **This has made women in villages self-employed**. However, rearing practices can be taken up by both young and old members of the family alike. Both duck meat and duck eggs are highly preferred in some parts of the country, hence, providing a greater potential for improved production.

HOUSING:

Ducks require just a simple house which is dry and well ventilated for night shelter under backyard system. **Houses are usually made of bamboo and wood**. It must be slightly elevated i.e. 2ft above the ground surface. It must be dry, rat proof and well ventilated. Roof can be of straw or asbestos or tin.

FEEDING:

Feed comprises of **leftover grains, kitchen edible waste**. Feeding is done two times – morning before they begin their scavenging and evening after they return home for night shelter. Some farmers also feed three times a

day. Ducks are let loose for scavenging during the day and meet their protein source by feeding on **insects and other natural food from nearby paddy fields**. They feed **on earthworms and other insects** during rainy season. Since ducks are water fowl, they must be given adequate access to water. In backyard farming no specific formulated ration is required, hence cutting feed cost.

BROODING:

Both artificial and natural brooding can be done. However natural brooding is most preferred for backyard farming. Natural brooding by local broody hen since they are good sitters. For incubation, they are provided with **nesting materials like rice husk in a nest box or a small brooding casket handcrafted from bamboo**. They must be given access to proper food and water during the incubation period. A broody hen can easily **brood around 15 ducklings** and take care of as its own. **The incubation period of ducklings is 28 to 30 days**. After hatching they follow the mother hen for scavenging.

Fig; Bamboo casket used for natural brooding using broody hen



IMPORTANT DISEASES OF DUCKS:

Though ducks are comparatively disease resistant, there are few important commonly occurring diseases like-

a) Duck plague (viral disease mostly affecting adult birds) – characterised by vascular damage with tissue haemorrhage and free blood in body cavities.

b) Duck cholera (caused by *Pasteurella multocida* affecting ducks above 4 weeks of age) -characterised by inappetence, high body temperature, thirst, diarrhoea and sudden death.

c) Aflatoxicosis (caused by *Aspergillus flavus*) – commonly found are aflatoxin B1, B2, G1, G2 where B1 is the most potent. Improper drying of feedstuffs is the source of infection. The minimum toxic dose for ducks is 0.03ppm or 0.3mg per kg feed.

d) Botulism – food borne poisoning for both young and adult birds.

VACCINATION SCHEDULE:

| Vaccine | Dose | Route | Age |
|--------------|------|-------|------------|
| Duck plague | 1ml | S/C | 3-4 weeks |
| Duck cholera | 1ml | S/C | 5-12 weeks |

ADVANTAGES:

- Low investment.
- Low feed cost almost negligible.
- No extra labour required.
- No extra land required. Small available space is sufficient.
- Higher prices of duck meat and eggs in local market as compared to chicken.

- Boost family income.
- Enhances soil fertility in the backyard, thus provide better vegetation.
- Quality is better in terms of organic farming since they are raised in natural environment.
- Better adaptability to harsh weather conditions.
- Higher disease resistance.
- Good scavengers.

CHALLENGES:

- There is a wide potential for improvement.
- There must be availability of good fertile eggs from local market.
- Production of eggs is lower than those produced commercially.
- Broody hen availability may be limited at times and artificial brooding is also not common.
- Due to its scavenging nature, they fall prey to many predators.
- Lack of technical assistance to farmers.
- Most farmers are unaware of the importance of vaccination.

CONCLUSION:

Backyard farming is a low input farming system which will certainly help the small farmers in rural areas to improve their economic status. This type of farming provides consumers and farmers with good quality meat also causing least environmental pollution. However, there is a need to popularize this age-old traditional system of poultry rearing and also to minimise its constraints.