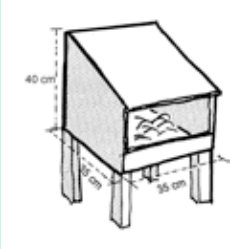


Improving hatching and brooding in small-scale poultry keeping



Agrodok 34

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This publication is sponsored by: ICCO

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First edition: 1985

Sixth edition (completely revised): 2011

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Printed by: Digigrafi, Veenendaal, the Netherlands

ISBN Agromisa: 978-90-8573-114-6

ISBN CTA: 978-92-9081-401-6

Foreword

This booklet is about small-scale poultry hatching and brooding practices, focusing on successful keeping of the standard backyard poultry flock. We have thoroughly revised the previous editions of this manual, creating a whole new version adapted to the latest insights into efficient village poultry hatching and brooding practices. It includes both natural and artificial hatching and brooding, both of which have their due place depending on the farmer's objectives.

Acknowledgments

Much information and most of the illustrations in this manual originate from the Network for Smallholder Poultry Development and from The Southern African Chicken Book by Ed Wethli, whose permission to use them is gratefully acknowledged. Our sincere thanks go to Farzin Wafadar, Gerd de Lange, Ineke Puls, Salimata Pousga, Janna de Feyter and Adri Vink for their precious time and effort spent working on this revision.

We wish the reader good readings and good business.

The editors,
Wageningen, 2011

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1 Introduction

Poultry plays an important role in most developing countries, as it contributes to the livelihood of rural smallholder farmers who keep village chickens.

General information on chicken farming is discussed in many booklets on the subject, like Agrodok No. 4: small-scale chicken production.

This booklet focuses on upgrading hatching and brooding practices in the free-range poultry flock in order to:

- Achieve an optimal number of chickens.
- Implement regular flock replacement.
- Successfully raise the young chicks through their first 8 weeks of life.

Both hatching and brooding can be natural, by a hen or a substitute mother (turkey, duck), or artificial, in an incubator (hatching) and a brooder (brooding).

Three village-based poultry systems may be distinguished according to the definitions of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO):

- traditional free-range system (1-10 birds)
- improved free-range system (5-50 birds)
- small-scale confined system (50-200 birds)

Village poultry, as kept in the first two groups above, receives hardly any care. As a result almost half of the young birds die within the first 8 weeks of life. Simple management tools such as better housing and feeding can prevent this.

Chapter 2 describes the factors that influence the choice between natural and artificial incubation.

Chapter 3 provides basic information on eggs, storage of fertilized eggs, handling practices and the development of chicks during incubation.

Brooding and raising the chicks either by hens, or artificially in incubators and brooders, is discussed in Chapters 4-7. By simple management and selection measures the hatching and brooding results of family poultry can be improved quite considerably.

The final Chapter gives an overview of feed and health and clearly states the importance of sanitation practices.

Some general advice

When starting hatching and brooding it is best to use local breeds that have proved their worth under local conditions. Furthermore, it is essential to consult the extension agents in the area about any required medication/vaccinations against infectious diseases. Enquire also about the most appropriate season to start raising chickens.

Replacing your hens every year is sometimes recommended. Old hens lay fewer eggs, but eat the same amount of feed. Usually you can get a good price for old hens because people like their taste. But some hens prove to be excellent mothers, so it would be unwise to slaughter them early. And never get rid of your laying hens until you have young hens ready to take over!