

THE HINDU

Rearing ducks in polythene pond proves rewarding

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It is usual for landless labourers or small farmers who rear ducks to herd the flock everyday towards some water source in the morning and return during evening.

But a new model of duck rearing promises to be different. The model has been tested in Sambalpur, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar and Khurda districts of Odisha among 150 farmers and can be successfully replicated in other places.

Rectangular pit

A rectangular (6ft x 4ft) or square (5ft x 5ft) pit of 1.5-2.0 ft depth is dug on the ground and the inner sides completely lined with a thick polythene sheet of 7-8 feet width.

The outer edge of the sheet should be properly secured using large stones so that the sheet doesn't slip inwards when the pit is filled with water.

About 300 litres of water is required to fill the pit of this size. Once every 10 days about half the water needs to be changed. A small duck house of 10ft x 5 ft is built using locally available materials. About 25 day-old ducklings (Khaki Campbell breed for laying) are introduced inside the duck house.

Other states

In other States, farmers can take the help of the local veterinarians to know what breeds are suitable for them. One 100 watt electric bulb must be provided to maintain brooding temperature.

Dry rice husk or sand is used to line the floor of the house. Duck mash/feed (wheat based) soaked in water is kept as feed in a plastic bowl. Clean drinking water is made available daily.

After 10 days of brooding, the ducklings are left to roam outside the duck house in order to make the birds accustomed to the environment within a confined area where water in a trough and feed are available.

Feed

At 3-4 weeks of age, grown up ducklings are allowed to enter the polythene pond. Leftover food and kitchen waste, mixed with water can be offered to the ducks daily. But this should be kept in bowls and not thrown into the pond.

Soaked, half-boiled broken rice and wheat in the ratio 1:1 at the rate of 50-60gm per bird needs to be supplemented as additional nutrition for the birds. There is no need to provide any commercial feed for the birds.

Adult ducks are allowed to graze outside and utilise the pond when they want to use it. At about five months the females start laying eggs. During this time a few wide-mouth earthen pots are placed inside the duck house.

The birds are to be let loose during late morning so that eggs will be laid inside the house only and not anywhere else.

Ducklings hatch in 24 days and from the 10th day onwards need to dip their heads inside the water kept in the bowls or pond so as to clean the eyes.

“It is a natural habit among the birds to prevent blindness. So it is important that care is taken to maintain the water purity and it is cleaned well. Drakes (male ducks) can be sold for their meat between 3 and 4 months. This spares the feeding resources to laying ducks,” says Dr. Giri.

Vaccination

Vaccination against plague and cholera is to be done within the first two to three months. Protection against snakes and predators must be taken by the concerned farmer.

Regarding the investment Dr. Giri says, “all it requires is about Rs. 1,000 for setting up such a unit. Cost of polythene (3mt/pond at Rs 55 per metre) comes to Rs. 155, cost of purchasing 25 ducklings (at Rs. 15 per day old ducklings is Rs 375.) Feed cost during brooding at 10 kg for Rs. 24 per kg is Rs 240. Other miscellaneous costs come to about Rs. 250 (Rs.10 per bird). Total expense is Rs. 1,020.

Income

Income from selling male live bird (10 nos at Rs. 300 each) is Rs. 3,000. Eggs are sold at Rs.5 each (about 240 eggs from 10 birds) comes to Rs. 12,000. Income from sale of female birds at Rs. 200 each is Rs. 2,000.

Totally the gross income is approximately Rs 17,000 within a year and half. Net profit is Rs 15,980.

A duck can lay eggs for three years with a certain gap between every year. However, farmers are advised to dispose of the birds after one year and go in for new ones.

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