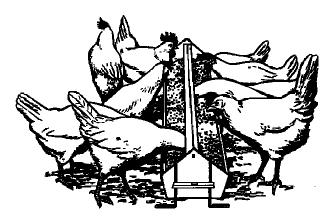
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE MISSISSIPPI State

Feed Chickens Properly

Poultry feeds are referred to as "complete" feeds, because they are designed to contain all the protein, energy, vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients necessary for proper growth, egg production, and health of the birds. Feeding any other ingredients, mixed with the feed or fed separately, upsets the balance of nutrients in the "complete" feed. Feeding additional grain or supplement with the complete poultry feed is not recommended.

Young chickens or broilers kept for meat production are fed differently from pullets saved for egg production. Broilers have larger bodies and gain weight more rapidly than do the eggproducing types of chickens. Therefore, these birds are fed diets with higher protein and energy levels. If saved for egg production, broiler hens



make poor egg producers. Then consume more feed than leghorn-type hens and produce fewer eggs.

Feeding Schedules

Feed chicks a "starter" diet soon after they hatch. Continue feeding the starter feed until they reach 6 or 8 weeks of age. The starter diet has the highest level of protein a chicken receives during its lifetime. As the chick matures, it requires a lower percentage of dietary protein and a higher level of energy.

After the chicks reach 6 or 8 weeks of age, feed them a "finisher" diet (to broilers) or a "developer" diet (to pullets or cockerels saved for breeding purposes). Feed broilers a finisher diet until they reach slaughter size. Feed the pullets and cockerels a developer until they are at least 20 weeks of age. When egg production starts, feed them a "layer" ration until egg production ends.

The minimum requirements for protein, calcium, and phosphorus in poultry feeds are shown. Remember, chickens saved for egg production are fed pullet-type diets, not broiler diets, regardless of being from broiler or egg-type stock.

Minimum Requirements	Protein %	Calcium %	Phosphorus %
Ducilous			
Broilers			
Starter (0-6 weeks) Finisher	23	0.9	0.5
(6 weeks - mkt)	10	0.8	0.5
Pullets Starter			
(0-8 weeks) Developer	20	0.9	0.5
(8 to 20 weeks)	14	0.8	0.5
Laying Hens	5		
Layer	16	3.0	0.5

Vitamins

Vitamins are always added to poultry feeds in higher amounts than are needed. This insures that chickens eat plenty of vitamins for proper health. Higher levels usually are not harmful, but extra vitamins are unnecessary and expensive.

Minerals

Layer feeds are fed only to laying hens, and laying hens are fed only layer feed. Hens require higher levels of minerals (calcium for eggshell formation) than chicks. Layer feed fed to chicks will reduce growth and place unnecessary stress on chicks.

Medicated Feeds

Poultry feeds are available with several types of medications for preventing or treating diseases. Coccidiostats and/or antibiotics are the two most common medications added to feeds.

Coccidiosis is hard to control by sanitation practices alone. It is best prevented by feeding a coccidiostat, or drug added to feed at low levels and fed continuously to prevent coccidiosis. Feed broilers a ration containing a coccidiostat until the last week before slaughtering. Feed unmedicated feed during this final week.

Mature chickens develop a resistance to coccidiosis if allowed to contract a mild infection of the disease. Birds raised for placement in the laying flocks are fed a coccidiostat containing feed until about 16 weeks of age. The medicated feed is then replaced with a nonmedicated feed. Spotty outbreaks of the disease are controlled by treating in the water with an appropriate coccidiostat. Examples of coccidiostats added to the ration include Monensin sodium, Lasalocid, Amprolium, and Salinomycin.

Antibiotics may also be added to some poultry feeds. Antibiotics aid broiler performance and maintain healthy birds. They are usually added at low (prophylactic) levels to prevent minor diseases and produce faster, more efficient growth. Higher (therapeutic) levels are usually given in water or injected into the bird. Examples of antibiotics fed in the feed are Penicillin, Bacitracin, Chlortetracycline, and Oxytetracycline.

Follow the recommended medication withdrawal periods before eating meat or eggs from the treated birds. Follow all warning instructions listed on the feed label.



Water

Many people overlook the importance of providing clean, fresh water to their flocks. Water, though not often considered a nutrient, is the most important nutrient for animals. Chickens, as all farm animals, need clean water at all times. Drinking water must not get too hot or cold, or chickens will not drink it. Clean the water troughs and replace with fresh water at least once daily.

Keep water and feed troughs clean of droppings, litter, soil, and other contaminants. Keep feed troughs clean and dry. Empty feed troughs at least two or three times weekly (daily if necessary) and refill with dry, fresh feed. Do not wash feed troughs unless they are contaminated with harmful residues or unless the feed gets wet. Do not let the feed become moldy. Moldy feed can kill chickens.

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