Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

Package 11, Item 9

Type: Script

Date

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**Feeding chickens for better production**

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Information on this topic was requested by DCFRN Participants in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Maldives, Mozambique, Netherlands Antilles, Nicaragua, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Philippines, Tanzania, Thailand, Uganda, and Uruguay.

Presenter: Barbara Peacock

**Special notes**

1. DCFRN information is not intended to be offensive in any way to your rural people by discussing topics, promoting ideas or practices that may offend or that directly oppose any cultural values. You are well aware of these cultural customs and practices in your area. Please keep them in mind when you are preparing to use DCFRN information.

2. Before using the information in this item, please read the notes at the end.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a world-wide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson, and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on ways to increase food supplies for your family, or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully.

Today our subject is *feeding chickens for better production*. Here's Barbara Peacock.

**PEACOCK:** I'm sure you've noticed that chickens like to spend a lot of time scratching and pecking for food on the ground, under leaves, in the grass, among plants—almost anywhere. What they're doing is searching around to get the food they need to stay strong and healthy. This way, they're able, most of the time, to find much of their own food without any help from you. They scratch in the soil and find insects, grubs, worms, seeds, and other things that are good for them to eat. Even the soil and small bits of stone they pick up are good for them.

Now although your chickens find much of their food themselves, it's even better if you give them some extra feed as well. Also be sure that there's always fresh clean water to drink near their feed. This will help them produce more meat and eggs for your family to use or to sell, and the extra feed doesn't have to cost you any money.

I'll tell you about three different kinds of feed you can give to your chickens that won't cost you any money. Of these three different kinds:

- one gives them energy,

- another kind makes them strong and makes them grow well, and

- the third kind makes their bones strong and helps them stay healthy.

*Energy feeds*

First I'll talk about some feeds you won't have to buy that will give your chickens the energy to grow, to move around, to scratch and peck for food, and to lay eggs. These are called "energy feeds." The best energy feeds are grains like maize, wheat, rice, sorghum, millet —grains like that—chickens get lots of energy from grains that you can grow.

There are other things, too, that give them energy. They can get it from fruit and vegetable peelings or leftovers, coconut trash, cooked root crops—things like that. Try to give your chickens some grain or some of these other feeds every day. Even a small amount of ground cooked cassava would be good. But never give them rotting garbage or anything that's mouldy or going bad. It would make them sick.

*Protein feeds*

Now let's talk about the second kind of extra feed you can give to your chickens. This kind will help them grow big and strong. We call feeds of this kind "protein feeds."

To begin with, all those different kinds of grains I mentioned a moment ago have some protein in them; however, others you can grow contain a lot more protein. Now I'm talking about crops like soy beans, other kinds of beans, and peas. They're very good protein feeds for your chickens. They'll help to make them strong and healthy.

Another good protein feed for chickens can come from animals, poultry, or fish. After an animal has been killed for meat for your family or to sell, there may be parts of the animal's body and insides that are left over. If you have no other use for them, you can cook them and grind or chop them up for your chickens to eat. They will like this food and it's very good for them. You can use scraps or leftovers from any kind of animal, big or small, even from chickens killed for eating. If you use the stomach and intestines or "guts," it's best to first empty them out—squeeze out what's in them—before you cook and prepare them for your chickens. Remember, though, it's most important that you cook all animal parts before feeding to your chickens. I'm not saying this feed should be hot when you give it to them, just that it must be cooked before you feed it to them.

If you have extra fish or parts of fish, do the same thing —cook them, then grind or chop them up and feed them to your chickens. You can also chop up or grind cooked fish and dry it in the sun. You can then store it for a longer time so you can keep on feeding some every day. Cooked fish is very good for chickens.

Another good protein feed for your chickens is cooked blood. Whenever an animal or chicken is killed, be sure to collect the blood—don't just let it run onto the ground and be wasted. You can cook it for your chickens and then mix it with some of their other feed. The best thing to do is cook it until it becomes thick and lumpy, then spread it out on a flat clean surface, and let it dry out in the sun. You can then store it for feeding later.

It's good if you can give your chickens extra protein feed of some kind every day.

*Minerals and vitamins*

Now finally, the third kind of extra feed you can give to your chickens—the kind that helps to keep them strong and healthy and that makes their bones strong, especially when they're growing. This kind also helps hens to provide you with eggs that have strong eggshells.

To begin with, don't ever throw away the eggshells from eggs that you eat. Crush them and feed them to your chickens. Another thing you could use is seashells or even snail shells—they're very good too. Just smash them up into pieces about the size of a bean, so the chickens can swallow them. You can also use bones.

If you're going to use bones, boil them for half an hour, then put them out in the sun until they're good and dry, and then smash them up. Again, the pieces should be about the size of small beans, so that the chickens can easily swallow them.

Smashed up eggshells, seashells, or bone—all these things are good for chickens and you should give them as much as they want.

Green leaves of various plants are also very good for chickens—they may find these themselves, or if they can't, you can give them some. Leaves are easier for the chickens to eat if they are chopped up. You can also cut green grass or leaves for them, dry it and store it, and then you can feed it during the dry season when there's not much fresh plant food around.

Along with all this, the only thing you may have to buy is salt. You should regularly give your chickens a bit of salt to keep them healthy. They like it best if a little is mixed in with their other food—not too much though, or they won't eat it. Mix about a pinch of salt with each handful of feed you give to your chickens—that is the amount of dry salt you can pick up between your thumb and two fingers.

So there you have it—three special extra kinds of feed for your chickens.

- First, for energy, grains are very good, especially maize, wheat, rice, and sorghum—and even wild seeds; and fruit and vegetable scraps and peelings.

- Then to make your chickens strong and grow well, you can give them protein feeds like soybeans and other beans and peas if you have enough—also cooked parts of animals, fish or poultry, including cooked guts and blood.

- And finally to keep your chickens strong and healthy, give them crushed eggshells, smashed up seashells or snail shells, and dry bones that have been boiled for half an hour; and don't forget the chopped up or dried green leaves.

Your chickens can get many of these good things from leftover foods you might otherwise throw away—and best of all, nothing I've suggested except the salt will cost you any money.

Remember, I said at the beginning, chickens that get enough of the right kinds of food and enough good clean water will grow better and lay more eggs for your family to use or to sell.

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is Barbara Peacock.

**Notes**

1. This item is aimed at people whose chickens are not confined to a pen, but spend some or all of their time out foraging for much of their feed themselves. Chickens kept confined all the time must be given special rations and a supply of very fine gravel or "grit" to aid in digestion, which are not mentioned in this item.

2. You may wish to use this item in association with previous DCFRN items related to feeding and watering chickens. They are:

New Uses for Old Tires and Inner Tubes - DCFRN Package 4, Item 6

Keeping Hens in a Pen in the Garden - DCFRN Package 5, Item 1D

Bamboo Chicken Troughs - DCFRN Package 6, Item 9C

3. Although chickens are featured in this item, much of the information it contains is also applicable to other kinds of poultry (e.g., ducks, turkeys, guinea fowl).

**Information sources for this item**

1. Better Farming Series No. 13 - Keeping Chickens - (48 pages), available from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy. (Published by arrangement with the Institut africain pour le developpement economique et social (INADES), Abidjan, Ivory Coast). <http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/themes/documents/bfs13/1.htm>