Feeding improved chickens

Chickens meat is an important source of protein and is widely consumed in Africa. In rural areas traditional chickens are reared but provide few eggs and little meat and get lost easily compared to improved chickens that are adapted to living in pens and respond better to concentrate feeds.

Chickens need food rich in energy, protein, minerals and vitamins. Fresh vegetables, fruits and leaves can also be fed to chickens to satisfy half of their needs. To increase production, concentrate feed that contains a mixture of grains, oil cake, bran and shells is best.

Feed ingredients

Maize, sorghum, millet and rice residues from millers can be used in place of grains as they are rich in energy.

Proteins are obtained from soy bean oil cake, palm oil cake, moringa leaves and fish wastes. Termites also contain lots of protein but not to newly hatched chicks because they have sensitive intestines. Biting termites with big red heads are harmful and can kill the chickens.

Minerals like calcium from crushed bones help the chickens to develop strong bones and egg shells. Readily made concentrate feeds are available in agrovet shops. Salt is also a necessary source of minerals as it increases the chickens appetite.

Group feeding

Chickens need different feeds depending on their age of developments which makes it important to separate them. Chicks need more protein than older ones, reproductive chickens need more energy, minerals and calcium. It also helps to ensure that all chickens eat well.

Providing enough feeders to chickens ensures that chickens do not fight for feeds. The feeders should be placed off the ground to avoid wastes and contamination of dirt with the feeds.

To ensure that the chickens remain healthy, feeders and water cans should be cleaned daily before adding more feeds and water.