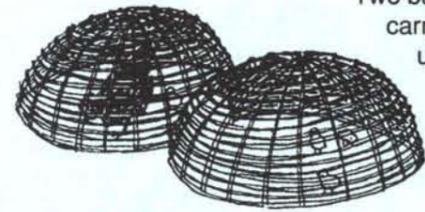


VILLAGE POULTRY PRODUCTION

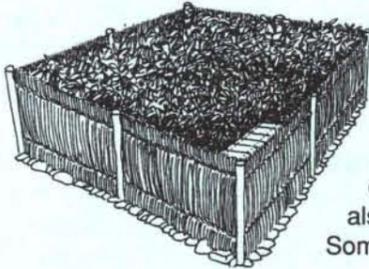
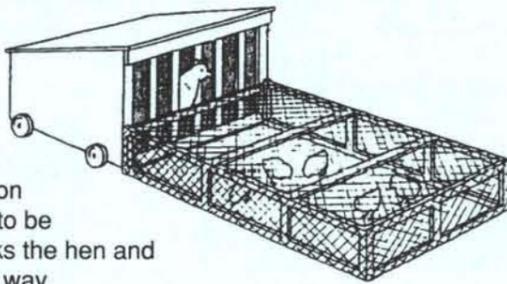
Predators

The main predators were birds of prey (kites and eagles) who would kill chicks up to six weeks old as they scavenged with the mother hen.



Two baskets (used locally for carrying fish) were turned upside-down, and a passageway made between them. Only the chicks could pass between the baskets; the mother hen could not. This meant that extra protein-rich food could be given to the chicks.

This coop was built out of local materials. Like the baskets, it was easily movable. Again, extra food could be given to the chicks. Both of these methods gave good protection – **but** note that **all** food had to be provided during the six weeks the hen and chicks were enclosed in this way.



Make a small, fenced area and plant pigeon peas or a similar shrub to provide cover from predators. The birds of prey will not fly down through the branches. The pigeon pea also provides leaves and seeds for the chickens. Some extra feeding will be needed.

A farmers' discussion group in Kenya identified five main causes for low production with village chickens:

- predators killing young chicks as they scavenged for food
- disease epidemics
- low amount of food eaten while chickens scavenge
- poor, unproductive poultry breeds
- poor hatching of chicks.

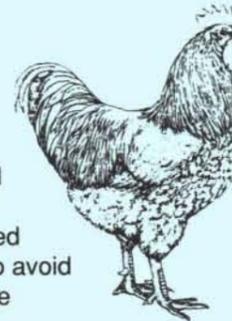
Here are some of the solutions that were worked out and which proved successful. Adapt them to your own situations.

Notice that the Kenyan farmers did not think that building a special poultry house was one of the first priorities for improving village poultry-production. Remember, as soon as you house and enclose a chicken, it depends on you for all its feed and water. If you cannot provide the balanced diet needed, then it is better to allow them to scavenge.

Increased production of meat and eggs improves family nutrition and increases income.

Improving local poultry breeds

Cockerel exchange schemes have worked well in some areas. Cockerels of an 'improved' breed are reared by a project or Government centre. These can then be bought or exchanged by farmers so that they cross-breed with village hens. Exchanged cockerels should be exchanged with those of neighbouring farmers every year to avoid in-breeding. After four to five years the exchange programme should be repeated.



Improving hatching of chicks

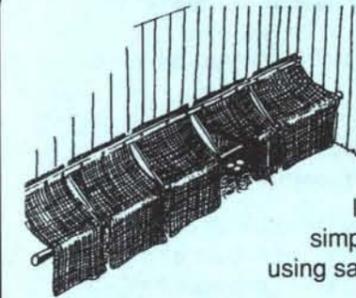
Carefully select eggs for hatching. Choose only well shaped, strong shelled and medium sized eggs. Reject cracked or dirty eggs. Write the date on the egg when it is collected and don't store for more than 3 or 4 days before starting incubation under a broody hen.

Dust the mother hen and the nest with a parasite-killing chemical (eg: *Sevin* or *Asuntol Powder*) to keep her free of parasite pests. Place the nest in a cool, dark and quiet place for the 21 day period needed for incubation.



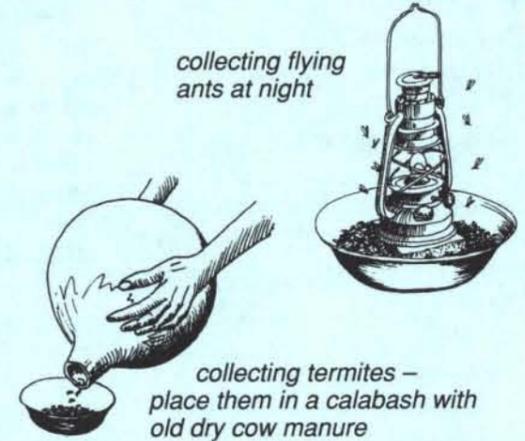
Improving laying conditions

Encourage hens to lay their eggs **before** they start scavenging by not releasing them until 2-3 hours after sunrise and by providing an area for egg laying. Effective nest boxes can be made by simply building a frame along one side and using sacking.



Extra feeding

Poultry were given extra food in the morning and also in the evening to attract them back into the night shelter. Protein-rich feeds are especially important. These could include trapped termites or flying ants, fish waste, snails, fermented grains used in brewing local beer, leaves and seeds (preferably cooked) of pigeon pea or Hyacinth bean (*Lablab niger*) and, if available, cereals such as maize or sorghum.



collecting flying ants at night

collecting termites – place them in a calabash with old dry cow manure

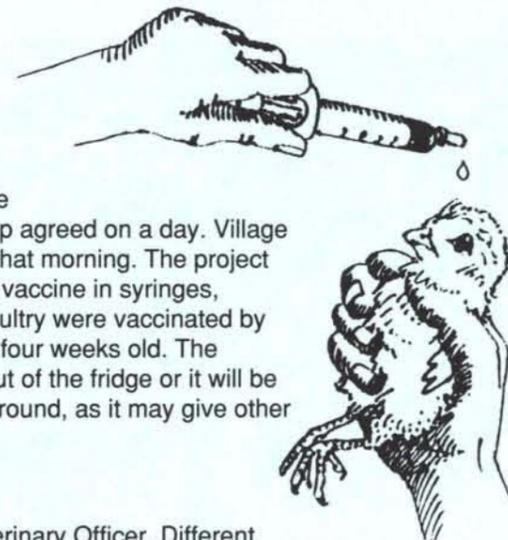
Disease epidemics

Vaccinating poultry against Newcastle (Ranikhet) Disease was found to be a very simple and effective protection.

Vaccine was obtained from the District Veterinary Officer. It **must** be kept cool in a fridge. Each bottle was enough for 1,000 chickens. The farmers' group agreed on a day. Village poultry were not released from their night houses that morning. The project leader travelled quickly around the area giving out vaccine in syringes, **without needles**, to village farmer groups. The poultry were vaccinated by placing one drop in one eye of every chicken over four weeks old. The vaccine **must** be used within 3 hours of taking it out of the fridge or it will be useless. Destroy any left – do not throw it on the ground, as it may give other chickens the disease.

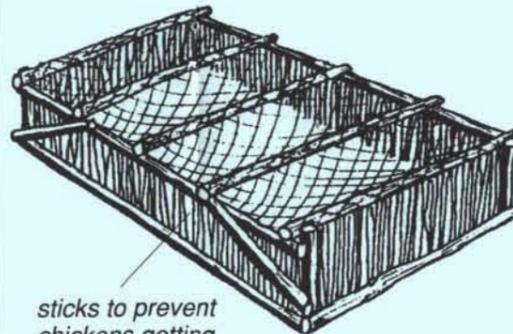
This was repeated every 3 months.

If you want to try this, first get advice from the Veterinary Officer. Different types of vaccine are available, some given in different ways. Some countries provide this service through the Government Extension Agents.



Perches

Provide simple perches for night-time use. This will make it easy to collect the manure regularly.

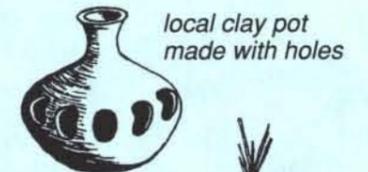


sticks to prevent chickens getting under perch

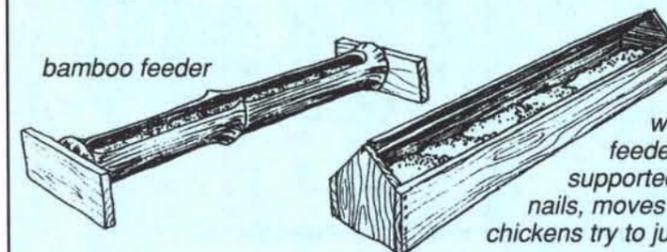


upturned tin with holes

These are some ideas for simple feeders and waterers.



local clay pot made with holes



bamboo feeder

wooden feeder – top bar supported by two nails, moves round if chickens try to jump on it