

How to start a poultry farm (Part 3)

by Jan Grobbelaar of the Agricultural Research Council (ARC)

In the previous edition of *Ubisi Mail*, we looked at some important things you have to remember before you start a poultry farm. Now we will take a closer look at the housing of your chickens.

Starting the enterprise

If you have decided on an extensive system (no housing, feed or medicine), you must obtain some chickens. If you have decided on a semi-intensive or intensive system (provide housing, feed and medicine), one of the first things that you need to do is to construct a house or houses where you can keep your chickens.

What type of house must I erect?

The type of house/s that you will construct is entirely your choice, because poultry houses are found in any shape and size and can be constructed with different types of building material. The size and shape of the house will depend on your needs and the type of poultry product that you want to produce. If it is on a small-scale, or you only want to produce for household purposes, it will be a small type of house. If you want to start a commercial enterprise, it will be a large, commercial type of house.

There are only two principals for the construction of chicken houses that you can use, namely:

- Open sided or naturally ventilated houses
- Environmentally controlled or mechanically ventilated houses.

Why do I need a house for the chickens?

You need a poultry house to provide the chickens with a healthy and comfortable environment to ensure the highest production (meat or eggs) at an affordable price.

What is a healthy environment?

A healthy environment means that you have to provide the chickens with a place that:

- Can be cleaned and disinfected properly for the prevention of diseases, to ensure that the chickens are healthy and produce at their best
- Is dry, to prevent the chickens from getting wet and contract diseases that will result in a drop in production as well as a high mortality rate
- Is warm for the chickens to grow well, especially during the rearing phase of broilers and pullets (layers)
- Provides them with shelter from the natural elements such as the sun and cold winds that will result in a drop of production as well as a high mortality rate
- Protect the feed from wild chickens, saving on feed cost. You also prevent of diseases, because it is well-known that wild birds are carriers of various poultry diseases
- Provides nests so that the chickens can lay their eggs in the nests. This will help you to collect more eggs and increase your profit
- Is secure from predators (dogs, cats, snakes, rats, etc) as well as thieves. This way you will be able to increase your flock by rearing more chickens. You will also be able to produce more eggs and increase your profit. **UM**