



National Agricultural Research Institute

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## Care of hens with baby chicks



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## **CARE OF HENS WITH BABY CHICKS.**

### **Looking after hens with baby chicks.**

In small village or household flocks of chickens the losses of baby chicks are very high. Over a half or even all of the chicks may be lost in the first week or two, leaving the hen with only two or three of the chicks from the eggs she has hatched. The main causes of this loss are probably pigs, dogs, snakes and birds of prey.

### **Raising young chicks.**

Poultry distribution schemes have usually recommended the raising of chicks up to 4-6 weeks in deep litter houses and using commercial feed. The chickens are then gradually introduced to the recommended

All of this takes extra work but should be well worthwhile in saving the lives of chicks up to 6 weeks of age. After this they should be able to look after themselves with the rest of the flock. However, all chickens will do best if they are housed at night and given extra feed in the evening. This will also enable you to collect most of the eggs that are not needed for hatching.

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Cooked garden food, kitchen scraps, green leaf material, coconut scrapings or residues, sago residues, fish wastes, fruits such as bananas and pawpaws, and all kinds of grains are suitable feeds.

Picture 3: Shows baby chickens inside an enclosure where food is provided continuously.



A good mixture of these is best. It may be possible to obtain copra meal, palm kernel meal, rice bran or wheat millrun.

management of scavenging for food outside during the day and being housed at night, with additional local garden food or household scraps given in the evening as the birds return to their night houses.

Picture 1: Shows a hen teaching her chicks to find food.



There is no reason why chicks hatched locally by village hens should be removed from their mother. She is able to give them warmth and some protection, as well as teach them to find food. However, in order to prevent the losses, hens with their baby chicks must be given special care and attention.

Picture 2: Shows a baby chicken looking for food.



## Type of housing system

The hen and chicks should not be housed at night with the other birds. They should be given their own shelter made from timber, roofing iron or concrete blocks, on clean ground and able to protect the birds from wind and rain as well as pigs and dogs. This will shelter the birds at night and also provide a place for them to hide from danger. An area around the shelter, about 12 paces round, can be enclosed with a temporary fence about the height of a normal table. This fenced area should be large enough for the hen to be able to scratch the ground and teach her chicks to look for food.

## Feeds

The fenced area should contain food and water containers. Young chicks need plenty of clean water available at all times, provided in containers that they can easily reach into but not so deep that they run the risk of drowning if they fall in. Adequate food must be provided for the hen.