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Quail Farming

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Quail (*Coturnix cotumix*) is a member of the avian family. Compared to other poultry farming businesses, quail farming is an inexpensive farming especially for small-scale farmers due to its low startup costs, little space needs, and high yield.

What Makes Quails Special

- Fast Growth and Early Maturity: As early as 6–7 weeks of age, quails begin laying eggs and grow quickly. They are perfect for fast returns in poultry production because of their short life cycle.
- High Egg Production: A healthy female quail produces between 250 and 300 eggs annually. Quail eggs are higher in iron, vitamin B12, and protein than chicken eggs, making them nutrient-dense.
- Nutritious and Lean Meat: Because quail flesh is low in fat and cholesterol, it's a healthier option than other fowl. Quail meat is highly valued for its necessary fatty acids, high protein content, and minerals including iron, potassium, and salt.
- Hardy and Disease-Resistant: Due to their resilience, quails require little room or attention. Their low mortality rates and ability to flourish in small confines make them ideal for home or small-scale farming.
- Space and Feed Efficient: Their space and feed requirements are about a quarter of those of hens. This makes raising quail, even in cities, affordable and sustainable.
- Research Importance: Because of their quick generation cycle, quails are utilized as model organisms in genetics, embryology, and toxicity research.
- Economic and Rural Development Value: As a high-profit, low-investment business, quail farming helps women and small farmers.

Breeds of Quails

There are basically two species of quail that are widely known in India:

1. Black-breasted Quail (*Coturnix coromandelica*): The Black-breasted Quail is indigenous to South Asia and India. It is one of the few native quail species in the Indian subcontinent and is significant both economically and ecologically. Compared to the typical Japanese quail, this one is smaller and more colorful. The species' name comes from a distinctive black

patch on the male's breast, while the female's buff and brown patterns make it easier to blend in with grassy environments.

2. Japanese Quail (*Coturnix coturnix* Japonica): One of the quail species that is most significant to the global economy is the Japanese quail. Originating in East Asia, specifically China, Korea, and Japan, it has been domesticated for centuries and is now extensively raised worldwide for the production of meat and eggs. This bird matures in 6–7 weeks and begins laying eggs shortly after. It is small, resilient, and grows quickly. A healthy hen is very productive and profitable, producing 250–300 eggs annually. The meat is lean, soft, and low in fat, and the eggs are small, speckled, and high in protein, vitamins, and minerals. These attributes have raised the meat's demand in the health-conscious market.

Housing and Management

It is sufficient to have 1 square foot of floor space for 4-5 adult quails. Providing multi-tier cages if space is limited will allow more birds to be reared vertically. Houses can be made of bamboo, wood, or wire mesh, depending on cost and availability. Proper ventilation keeps the house dry and aids in the removal of dangerous gasses. The best temperature for chick is 35°C for the first week, and as they become older gradually lower it to 25°C. It takes 14-16 hours of light per day to produce eggs continuously. Low-wattage bulbs will keep the pen's illumination consistent. The floor should be covered with dry, clean litter, such as sawdust or rice husk.To cut down on feed waste, use nipple drinkers and trough-style feeders. Clean, fresh water and well-balanced feed with enough protein, vitamins, and minerals should always be available.

Feeding and Nutrition

For optimum egg production and quick growth, proper diet is crucial. Quails require a high-protein diet (20-24%) to fulfill their energy needs and reproductive success. Good growth and egg production are ensured by a well-balanced combination of grains, soybean meal, vitamins, minerals, and grit. A five-week-old quail consumes about 5 grams of feed per day. A quail of 6 months old consumes about 30-35gms of feed per day, and requires about 400 gms of feed to lay 12 eggs. A constant supply of fresh, clean water is essential for bird health and hydration. For optimal intake and reduced waste, feed should be given three to four times each day. Use of stale or moldy feed should be avoided since it might be hazardous. To stop the transmission of disease, cleaning of feeders and drinkers should be done on regular basis.

Common Diseases and Their Control

Quails thrive in a variety of climates and are inherently disease-resistant, meaning they typically don't need as many immunizations as chickens do. However, they can occasionally be vulnerable to illnesses such Newcastle disease, coccidiosis, quail bronchitis, brooder pneumonia, colibacillosis, enteritis, respiratory infections, and ulcerative enteritis. Using Amprolium sulfate at a dosage of 1.00 g per liter of water for three to five days can help treat coccidiosis, which frequently affects quails in deep litter systems. Using antibiotics like Tetracycline, Streptomycin, or Amoxicillin at a dose of 1 gram per liter of water for three to five days can treat other bacterial infections. Use approved disinfectants to clean cages, floors, and equipment on a regular basis. To stop the spread of disease, isolate sick or new birds right away. Limit visitor access and keep them away from rats and wild birds.

Challenges in Quail Farming

- Marketing Difficulties: Despite being nutritious, quail meat and eggs are not as popular with customers as chicken. Farmers find it challenging to make a profit from the sale of their goods in many areas due to the lack of a structured marketing system.
- Consumer Awareness and Acceptance: Some people are afraid to try quail eggs or meat because they don't know enough about them or because they have false beliefs about their safety and flavor.

- Disease Outbreaks and Poor Management: Disease outbreaks can result from poor housing, feeding, and hygiene practices, which can be financially devastating, particularly for small-scale farmers.
- Lack of Awareness and Training: The financial benefits of raising quail are still not well known among small farmers. Insufficient availability of technical assistance and training frequently results in subpar management and low output.
- Aggressive Behaviour in Male Quails: The male quails will peck the female quails, blindening them, when they are raised together.

Future Prospects of Quail Farming

- Growing Demand for Healthy Protein: Because quail meat and eggs are high in protein, low in fat, and cholesterol-free, they're a nutritious substitute for chicken. The market for quail goods is anticipated to increase gradually as health consciousness rises.
- Ideal for Small and Backyard Farmers: Quails are perfect for women entrepreneurs, young people in rural areas, and small farmers seeking additional revenue streams because they require less land and investment.

Conclusion

Quail farming is poised to address the growing demand for sustainable protein sources. With proper training and government support, quail farming can play a vital role in strengthening rural livelihoods and ensuring food and nutritional security in India.

Reference

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