

Free range chicken farming guide

Many households in Uganda keep local chicken mostly on free range system. With good management, productivity can be increased.

In free range farming, the birds are allowed to move over a wide area which might be enclosed during the day while during the night, they are housed. The flock size varies depending on financial capacity, facilities, perceptions and priorities of the producer. The need to protect crops from damage during the cropping season restricts movement of the birds during the cropping season leading to nutritional deficiencies to the birds specifically during the cropping season or generally.

Feeding the chicken

The feeding of free range birds is influenced by the scavenged feed resources available and the availability of the scavenged feed resources is affected by season. Hotter and dryer climates will produce more insects while cooler humid climates will support more worms.

Allowing the birds have access to cattle enclosure can allow birds have access to new food resources like ticks and earthworms. The range area can be extended through use of accessible areas under trees especially under orchards.

Free range birds can also be given supplementary feed and non conventional feed to reduce competition with humans for example substitutes for fish meal, soybean and ground nuts include industrial bi products like those from fish factories and earthworm meal.

Poultry vices

Vegetation which is the main meal of birds on free range has minimal nutrients. This is why feather pecking and associated cannibalism is common.

Protein deficiency is closely associated to feather pecking. Generally, incidence of feather pecking decreases as the levels of dietary fibre increases.