

Commercial Emu and Ostrich Rearing



Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) and ostrich (*Struthio camelus*) birds belong to ratite group have high economic value for their meat, eggs, oil, skin and feathers. These birds are adoptable to varied climatic conditions. Although emu and ostrich were introduced in India, emu farming has gained much importance. Emu and ostrich features, management of these birds during chick, growing, fattening, breeding and non-breeding stages were covered. Care and hatching of eggs, nutrient requirements, healthcare and products of emu and ostrich were also covered. Economics of emu rearing with reference to the cost of maintaining breeders cost of production of eggs and chick were covered. Future research on nutritional requirements, incubation and healthcare management, and development of products for better marketing needs to be addressed.

Grower management

As Emu chicks grow, they require a bigger size of waters and feeders and increased floor space. Identify sexes and rear them separately. If necessary, place sufficient paddy husk in the pen to manage the litter in good and dry condition. Feed the birds on grower mash till birds attain 34 weeks age or 25 kg body weight. Offer greens about 10% of diet particularly different kinds of leaf meals for making the birds eat adopt to fibrous diets. Provide clean water all the time and offer feed as much as they want. Ensure dry litter condition through out the grower stage. If necessary add required quantity of paddy husk to the pen. Provide 40ft x 100 ft space for 40 birds if out door space is considered. Floor must be easily drained and avoid dampness. Restrain the younger birds by securing the body by side ways and hold the body firmly. Sub adults and adults can be secured by holding the wing by side way and held the bird by grabbing both the wings and place by dragging closely to a persons legs. Never allow bird to kick. Bird can kick side ways and front ways. Hence, better securing and firm holding is necessary to avoid harming the bird as well as person.

Ostrich requires larger facilities for better exercise. Floor space requirements 2-2.5, 3.5-4.0 and 5 square meters per bird are required at 4-6, 7-14 and over 14 months age respectively. Run space is also required at 50-400 square meters per bird depending on age.

Emu and ostrich products

Meat from emu and ostrich are of high quality in terms of low fat, low cholesterol, gamey flavour. Valued cuts are from thigh and larger muscle of drum or lower leg. Emu skin is fine and strong. Leg skin is of distinctive pattern hence highly valued. Emu fat is rendered to produce oil, which has dietary, therapeutic (anti inflammatory) and cosmetic value .

Healthcare and management

Ratite birds are generally sturdy and live long (80% livability). Mortality and health problems in emu and ostrich are mainly in chicks and juveniles. These include starvation, malnutrition, intestinal obstruction, leg abnormalities, coli infections and clostridial infections. The main causes were improper brooding or nutrition, stress, improper handling and genetic disorders. Other diseases reported were rhinitis, candidiasis, salmonella, aspergillosis, coccidiosis, lice and ascarid infestations .Ivermectin can be given to prevent external and internal worms at 1 month interval beginning at 1 month age.

Economics

Emu farm economic survey indicated that cost involved in purchase of breeding stock were expensive (68%). The rest of the investments are on farm (13%) and hatchery (19%). Feeding cost per breeding pair per annum was estimated to be Rs. 3600. Cost of production of hatching egg and day-old chick was Rs.793 and 1232 respectively. Annual feed intake per pair was recorded as 524 kg costing Rs.3578. The cost of salable chick at day-old age was Rs.2500-3000 . Better returns from emu and ostrich are possible with good hatchability (more than 80%), lower feeding cost and minimized chick mortality (less than 10%).

Among the emu and ostrich farming emu farming appears to be well manageable. A study is required on marketing of emu products

For further queries and consultation contact **Agroguide**