THE farmer's weekly

HOW TO GUIDE: POULTRY

FARMERSWEEKLY.CO.ZA

SUBSCRIBE TODAY

VISIT **FARMERSWEEKLY.CO.ZA** AND CLICK 'SUBSCRIBE'

POSTED OR HAND-DELIVERED PRINT SUBSCRIPTION
R800 FOR A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY IN YOUR AREA, (EXCLUDING DELIVERY FEES).

DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTION
R780 FOR A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION ON THE MAGZTER APP. (R26 FOR SINGLE ISSUE).
VISIT WWW.FARMERSWEEKLY.O.ZA AND CLICK 'SUBSCRIBE'

Print cover price R35,00. Prices based on a one-year subscription of 26 issues. Please allow three weeks for processing.

Join the conversation on our social media platforms.

Subscription | Facebook | TikTok | Livestock Insights | Auction Network | Agri News

Connecting the dots between land, livestock and logistics.

Click to view the full brochure

Hollard.
Insure your unsure

contents

About the Poultry How-to Guide

Whether you're starting your first flock or expanding an existing enterprise, the *Farmer's Weekly Poultry How-to Guide* is designed to be a practical companion throughout your poultry farming journey.

Developed in collaboration with industry role players, it combines hands-on knowledge with proven farming principles to help you make informed decisions with confidence.

The guide follows the natural progression of a poultry enterprise, beginning with planning, production systems, housing, and infrastructure, before moving on to the day-to-day management of your flock.

Within these pages, you'll find guidelines on brooding, nutrition, water management, biosecurity, health and disease management, parasite control, record-keeping, marketing, financial management, and business growth.

Whether you read it from cover to cover or use the contents page to navigate to a specific topic, we hope this guide becomes a trusted reference that supports you in building a productive, profitable, and sustainable poultry enterprise.

A new chapter of this guide will be published every Friday for the next 10 weeks.

What every new poultry farmer should know

If you are considering poultry farming, or have recently started, you will already know there is a lot to learn. That is really the purpose of this guide.

Over many years, *Farmer's Weekly* has spoken to poultry farmers and industry specialists across the agriculture sector. We have seen successful operations grow, but we have also reported on the mistakes, challenges and difficult lessons that come with farming.

With this guide, we want to bring some of those lessons together in one place.

This How-To Guide is not intended to tell you everything there is to know about poultry farming. Rather, we hope it gives you a good overview of the business and helps you understand the areas that deserve your attention. From housing and feeding to bird health, management and the financial side of the operation, each part plays a role in the success of your farm.

One of the advantages of starting today is that you do not have to learn every lesson the hard way. There is a great deal that can be learnt from farmers who have gone before you. *Farmer's Weekly* has had the privilege of documenting many of those experiences over the years, and we hope the insights contained in these pages help you make better decisions in your own operation.

Your farm will be different from the next farmer's. Your circumstances will determine what works for you. Use this guide as an overview, ask questions, get advice where you need it, and keep looking for ways to improve what you are doing.

Poultry farming can be challenging, but it can also create real opportunity for farmers who approach it with good information, careful management, and a willingness to learn.

We hope this guide helps you along that journey, and that some of the lessons *Farmer's Weekly* has gathered over the years can help you make the most of the opportunities ahead.

GARY WIUM
GENERAL MANAGER, FARMER'S WEEKLY

Supporting the farmers who feed the nation

Poultry farming is, without exaggeration, the quiet powerhouse of South African agriculture. Whether it's a backyard flock providing essential protein to a household in rural KwaZulu-Natal, a medium-scale enterprise supplying local spaza shops in Gauteng, or a high-tech commercial broiler operation in the Western Cape, chickens are central to our nation's food security. Poultry remains the primary and most affordable source of animal protein for millions of South Africans. Yet, despite its critical role, entering and navigating the poultry industry presents a steep learning curve fraught with distinct local challenges.

It is precisely this reality that inspired the creation of this comprehensive how-to guide. In an era marked by shifting climatic conditions, fluctuating feed prices, biosecurity threats like avian influenza, and ongoing pressure on local supply chains, passion alone isn't enough to build a resilient farming business. Success requires actionable, science-based, and context-specific knowledge.

This guide was compiled to bridge the gap between technical expertise and on-the-ground application. Within these pages, you'll find clear, practical instruction covering every link in the production chain: from selecting the right breeds and designing biosecure housing to managing nutrition, flock health, and market access.

For more than a century, *Farmer's Weekly* has operated under a clear and enduring mandate: to inform, educate, and empower the agricultural community of South Africa. Since 1911, our publication has stood as a trusted partner to farmers, serving as a platform where proven farming practices meet modern innovation. We've always believed that a thriving agriculture sector is built not on isolated success stories but on the widespread dissemination of sound, practical advice that helps every farmer perform better tomorrow than they did today.

Publishing this standalone guide directly fulfils that founding mandate. *Farmer's Weekly* has never been merely an aggregator of news; it is a tool for development, business growth, and rural empowerment. By lowering the barrier to technical knowledge, this guide empowers emerging farmers to transition to commercial viability, while providing established producers with a reliable, updated reference to optimise their efficiencies.

As you flip through the pages of this guide, my hope is that it becomes a trusted companion on your farm. By putting practical, proven strategies directly into the hands of producers, we reaffirm our commitment to driving the agricultural economy forward.

Welcome to the *Farmer's Weekly* Poultry How-to Guide. May your flocks thrive and your enterprise flourish. Happy farming!

JANINE RYAN
EDITOR, FARMER'S WEEKLY

Your poultry farming journey starts here

Some of the best lessons in agriculture aren't learnt in a classroom; they're learnt in the field, in the poultry house, and through conversations with people who have dedicated their lives to farming.

When putting this how-to guide together, one thing became abundantly clear: successful poultry farming isn't about finding a single secret to success. It's about consistently applying the right management practices, paying attention to the smallest details, and never stopping the pursuit of knowledge.

This guide was created with one purpose in mind: to place practical, trusted information in the hands of farmers. Whether you're preparing for your very first poultry flock or looking to improve an established enterprise, I hope these pages provide not only answers but also confidence to make informed decisions, solve challenges, and continue growing your business.

Agriculture has a remarkable way of bringing people together. It's a sector built on resilience, innovation, and a willingness to help others succeed. My hope is that this publication reflects those same values and becomes a trusted companion throughout your farming journey, and one you can turn to whenever you need guidance, reassurance, or a fresh perspective.

Thank you for choosing this guide. May it encourage you to keep learning, to be confident in your farming, and to build a poultry enterprise that's productive, sustainable, and rewarding for years to come. I wish you every success on your journey.

ZUNEL LAING
EDITORIAL PROJECT COORDINATOR

Committed to your success

For many South Africans, chicken production presents an opportunity to enter the farming and business world and become independent and self-sufficient. Hollard itself is a testament to innovation and entrepreneurship, and we support every effort to enable people to achieve their goals and create a better future for themselves.

Business ventures are fraught with risk and uncertainty, and farming is no different. In fact, farming is even more exposed to risk, as producers battle the natural environment every day.

Poultry farming requires determination and the ability to manage various risks in a coherent way. There are risks in the poultry industry that insurers and governments haven't found solutions to, as they are simply too big for any one entity to cover, and farmers are left to fend for themselves. Poultry are susceptible to a range of diseases and health challenges, making effective flock health management essential.

Food security is important to everyone, and poultry are a critical source of protein. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of how food is produced and, rightly so, are insisting on responsible production practices.

This guide aims to arm you with the basic knowledge on how to start and manage a poultry farm, whether it be in your backyard or on a commercial scale. With time and dedication, you can grow your small start-up into a multinational operation!

By supporting this guide, we believe we're making a meaningful contribution to agriculture, communities, and individuals as South Africa works towards a more self-sufficient and food-secure future. At Hollard, we're proud to play our part in helping to create a better future for all.

HOLLARD INSURE

Connecting the dots
between land, livestock and logistics.

Contact your broker or visit Hollard.co.za

Hollard.
Insure your unsure

1

Introduction to poultry

Poultry production begins with understanding the fundamentals. In this first section of the *Farmer's Weekly Poultry How-to Guide*, you can explore the role of chickens in food production, the different production systems available, and the key terminology every new farmer should know. This foundation will guide your farming decisions from the very beginning.

OVERVIEW

- Key poultry industry terminology
- The role chickens play in society
- Types of production
- Broilers vs layers
- Chicken facts and fiction

SOURCES

- ARC Manual
- South African Poultry Association - 2021 Industry Profile
- Current status and intervention of South Africa chicken production-A review - Article in World's Poultry Science Journal · January 2021
- Introduction to the South African Poultry Farming Industry
- Tips for small-scale poultry producers – *Farmer's Weekly*, 27 May 2022
- Profitable free-range chicken production in the Swartland – *Farmer's Weekly*, 12 August 2024
- Raising stress-free broilers – *Farmer's Weekly*, 29 October 2019
- The critical role of proper nutrition in pig and poultry production – *Farmer's Weekly*, 4 December 2024
- How to succeed with small-scale chicken farming – *Farmer's Weekly*, 16 September 2017

Key poultry industry terminology

GENERAL	
Breeder	A chicken kept for reproduction rather than meat or egg production
Broiler	A chicken bred specifically for meat production
Chick	A newly hatched baby chicken
Cockerel	A young male chicken under 20 weeks old
Free-range system	A production system in which birds have regular daytime access to an outdoor area
Hen	An adult female chicken over 20 weeks old
Intensive system	A high-density commercial production system in which birds are housed entirely indoors or in cages
Layer	A hen bred specifically for egg production
Pullet	A young female chicken under 20 weeks old
Rooster/cock	An adult male chicken
Semi-intensive system	A production system that combines indoor housing with limited outdoor access
EGG PRODUCTION	
Clutch	All the eggs laid during a single laying cycle
Egg tooth	A small, sharp point on a chick's beak used to break open the shell
Hatchery	A specialised facility where eggs are incubated and hatched
Incubator	A controlled environment used to incubate and hatch eggs
Pipping	The process of a chick breaking through the eggshell during hatching

MEAT PRODUCTION	
Bleeding	The controlled draining of blood from a bird immediately after stunning
Defeathering	The mechanical or manual removal of feathers from a slaughtered bird
Evisceration	The mechanical or manual removal of the internal organs (viscera) from a slaughtered bird
Scalding	The process of immersing a slaughtered bird in hot water to loosen its feathers before plucking
Stunning	The process of rendering a bird unconscious and unable to feel pain before slaughter
ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY	
Comb	The fleshy red structure on top of a chicken's head
Cloaca	The common opening through which waste is excreted and eggs are laid
Gizzard	The muscular part of a chicken's digestive system that grinds food
Wattle	The fleshy lobes hanging beneath a chicken's beak

Chickens play a vital role in our society

The poultry industry is a vital part of global agriculture, providing a significant portion of the world's protein supply through both meat and eggs.

In South Africa, poultry farming plays a dominant role in food security and economic development, contributing 16,6% of all agricultural production and nearly 40% of all animal product sales.

A mature chicken is an important contributor to agriculture. SUPPLIED

Chicken remains the most consumed animal protein in the country, surpassing beef, pork, and mutton due to its affordability and versatility.

FOOD SECURITY

Chicken meat and eggs are:

- High in protein, which is essential for muscle growth and body repair;
- Low in fat, particularly the white meat from the chicken breast;
- Rich in vitamins A, D, E, and B12, as well as essential minerals like iron and selenium;
- Affordable, compared with other meats, making it accessible to low-income households.

Due to the efficient feed conversion ratio (FCR) of poultry compared with other livestock, chickens require less feed to produce 1kg of meat or eggs, making poultry farming one of the most resource-efficient food production systems in the world.

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CHICKEN PRODUCTION

Chicken production is not only a key contributor to food security but also a major economic driver.

Producers engage in different marketing strategies based on their scale of production:

- **Contract farming.** Many commercial producers operate under agreements with processors or retailers, supplying a fixed number of birds or eggs per cycle.
- **Independent sales.** Small-scale farmers often sell live chickens or eggs at local markets, offering flexibility but requiring strong marketing skills.
- **Retail partnerships.** Some farmers establish agreements with supermarkets or butcheries to ensure steady demand.

• *Refer to the master reference register for sources.*

TABLE 1: POULTRY'S ROLE IN FEEDING HUMANS	
Converting feed to food	Maize, soya beans, animal industry offal, minerals, vitamins, and a variety of other products that aren't readily consumed by humans are combined and fed as balanced diets to broilers and layers to produce meat and eggs. Chickens transform these products into highly nutritious sustenance for humans. Eggs are the most comprehensive source of nutrition for humans. The protein in eggs serves as a benchmark against which all other proteins are measured for their capacity to promote growth in young animals and humans. Eggs also contain all of the vitamins and microminerals required for proper development, as well as fats and oils for energy.
Efficient FCR	Chickens have lower energy requirements than cattle for sustaining their own bodies, making them particularly efficient converters of feed to meat and eggs. This is why these items have remained relatively inexpensive in comparison with beef and mutton.
Consumption of poultry meat and eggs	Since 2010, more poultry meat has been produced and consumed (36,1kg/person/year) than the combined figure for beef, mutton, and pork (23,5kg/person/year). Egg consumption is around 156 eggs/person/year.

Eggs are a by-product of chickens and a natural source of nutrition for humans.

A guide to chicken production systems

For emerging farmers, understanding the structure of the poultry industry, the different types of chicken production, and the basic principles is essential for success.

STRUCTURE OF THE CHICKEN INDUSTRY

Chicken farming can be divided into two primary industries:

1. Broiler production: chickens bred for meat production.

2. Layer production: hens bred specifically for laying eggs.

BROILER PRODUCTION

Broilers are fast-growing chickens, typically reared from day-old chicks up to 33 to 35 days of age, when they reach the optimal weight for processing.

The broiler industry is highly commercialised, with production facilities designed to maximise growth rates, feed efficiency, and meat yield.

Large-scale broiler farming operations ordinarily supply supermarkets, butcheries, and fast-food chains, while smallholder farmers often sell live birds to local markets. Broiler breeders, on the other hand, keep parent-stock chickens whose offspring go on to become broilers. These birds aren't reared for meat but rather for their superior genetic traits, which ensure their offspring grow efficiently in a commercial operation.

EGG PRODUCTION

The egg industry consists of commercial layers, which are hens specifically bred for high egg production. Hens start laying eggs at around 18 to 20 weeks of age and continue producing for approximately 12 to 18 months before being replaced.

A subset of the egg industry includes breeder laying farms, where hens produce fertile eggs that hatch into either broilers (for meat production) or pullets (young hens that will later become commercial layers).

Commercial poultry production combines careful management, biosecurity, and nutrition to ensure healthy, productive flocks. PHOTOS: FW ARCHIVE

TYPES OF CHICKEN FARMING SYSTEMS

Chickens can be farmed under different systems, depending on scale, resources, and market demand. Each system has its own advantages and challenges.

1. INTENSIVE SYSTEM

This system is the most common commercial poultry farming method, requiring substantial capital investment. Chickens are housed in climate-controlled structures with automated feeding and watering systems.

- **Key features:**
  - High stocking density;
  - Birds show efficient feed conversion and rapid growth;
  - Strict biosecurity measures are implemented to prevent disease; and
  - Requires significant investment in infrastructure and management.


Intensive system

2. SEMI-INTENSIVE SYSTEM

In this system, chickens are given access to both indoor housing and outdoor areas. Farmers provide supplementary feed but allow birds to forage for part of their diet.

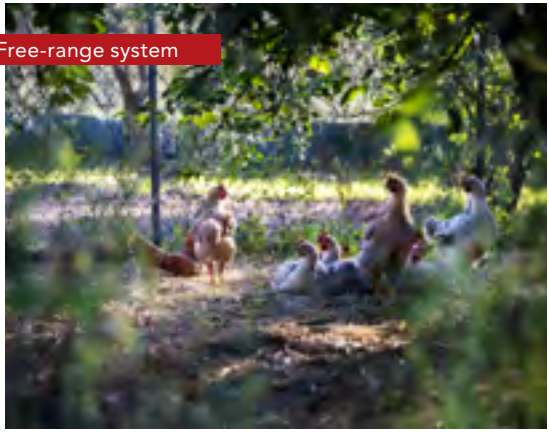
- **Key features:**
  - Strikes a balance between controlled feeding and natural foraging;
  - Requires moderate capital investment;
  - Promotes better welfare conditions compared to intensive systems; and
  - Is suitable for niche markets that prefer free-range products.


Semi-intensive system

3. FREE-RANGE SYSTEM

This system allows chickens to roam freely. It is most commonly used in areas where poultry are raised for household consumption or on a small scale.

- **Key features:**
  - Requires low input costs but also involves low productivity; and
  - Birds scavenge for their own food, leading to inconsistent growth rates.


Free-range system

Broilers vs layers: which should you farm?

The choice between farming broilers or layers is perhaps as difficult a question to answer as, 'Which came first, the chicken or the egg?' This is because there's no quick or fool-proof answer, and every farmer must decide for themselves which one is likely to work best in their system.

In this section, we look at various broiler and layer breeds to help you make an informed decision. The list is by no means exhaustive, and there are many other breeds to choose from, but we chose those that are largely used in intensive, commercial, operations.

BROILERS

A broiler is any chicken bred specifically for meat production. In South Africa, most commercial broilers typically reach slaughter weight between 32 and 34 days of age, but in other parts of the world, they may be slaughtered later. In the US, for example, broilers are typically slaughtered at around 47 days, while in the EU, they are slaughtered at 42 days.

Broilers typically have white feathers and yellow skin. According to Eagles Pride Hatchery, broilers are usually grown as mixed-sex flocks in large chicken houses. For large commercial operations, broilers are generally produced intensively. However, they can also be produced in free-range systems under more extensive conditions. In a commercial system, broilers are provided with high-protein feed. Eagles Pride Hatchery explains that this feed, combined with artificial lighting conditions, encourages the birds to eat, leading to rapid growth.

Broiler production starts on a breeder farm, where broiler hens are raised to produce fertile eggs. As with other livestock, broilers are selected for genetic traits that promote fast growth, high feed efficiency, and high-quality meat.

The eggs are collected and transported to hatcheries, where they are incubated in a controlled environment in terms of temperature, humidity, and ventilation. The eggs generally hatch within 21

The choice of broiler breed influences growth rate, feed efficiency, and overall production performance.

days. The chicks are then vaccinated and transported to a broiler farm.

ON THE FARM

In an intensive operation, broiler chickens are raised in specialised housing systems designed to provide optimal conditions for growth. These houses are equipped with automated feeding, watering, and ventilation systems to maintain a stable environment.

While the broilers receive high-protein feed, the composition of the feed changes depending on the growth stage the birds are in. For example, a starter broiler (between 10 and 14 days) is fed a different diet to a grower (up to 28 days), and a grower is fed a different diet to a finisher (up to 34 days).

Once the broilers have reached the desired weight, they are transported to an abattoir and processing plant, where they are slaughtered and processed. The slaughtering process involves stunning, bleeding, scalding, defeathering, evisceration, and chilling. The carcasses are then cut into various products, such as parts and deboned meat.

Once the birds are slaughtered and their meat processed, the carcasses or carcass pieces are packaged and distributed to retailers, wholesalers, and consumers.

BREEDS

In broiler production, specific breeds have been developed for rapid growth, feed efficiency, and high-quality meat.

The most commonly used breeds or strains in broiler production are:

- **Cornish Cross (Cornish X)**

The Cornish X is the most prevalent broiler breed in commercial production around the world.

It is a hybrid resulting from crossing Cornish and Plymouth Rock chickens. The Cornish X has a broad, muscular build,

Layer breeds are selected for their ability to produce eggs efficiently over an extended production cycle.

white feathers (desirable in commercial production because they result in a cleaner-looking carcass after processing), and yellow skin (appealing to the market).

Due to its high feed conversion ratio (FCR), which indicates an animal's feed efficiency, the Cornish X can reach marketable weight of around 2,4kg to 4,5kg by six to eight weeks of age. A high FCR also means that the breed needs less feed to gain sufficient marketing weight. The Cornish X is also known for its meaty breast, and well-developed thighs and drumsticks.

TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING BEFORE BUYING THIS BREED:

The Happy Chicken Coop says that if allowed, the Cornish X will eat a lot more than it should, and could develop leg and heart problems. This means the farmer will have to control access to feed, and cannot simply leave feed in feeders.

It adds that the Cornish X doesn't forage, and must therefore be provided with feed. The breed also drinks a lot, which means the farmer must ensure they provide adequate water at all times.

The birds also defecate a lot more than other breeds, says The Happy Chicken Coop, and because broiler feed is generally high in protein, their faeces tend to smell.

The Happy Chicken Coop adds that the Cornish X is a particularly finicky bird that doesn't do well in the heat or cold. Therefore, farmers need to ensure the birds are kept in temperature-controlled housing.

Because of these factors, the Cornish X is not an easy chicken to rear, and requires a lot of daily care.

- **Ross 308**

The Ross 308 is known for its robust performance across a wide range of environments and management systems. It has a broad, muscular body, which is particularly well-developed in the breast area, making it highly valued for meat production. The breed is compact with a sturdy frame, providing the strength necessary to support its rapid growth and significant body weight.

The Ross 308 has white feathers, which are favourable, as they make for a 'cleaner-looking' carcass after processing. Like the Cornish X, the Ross 308 also has yellow skin. It can reach its typical marketing weight of around 2kg to 3,2kg by five to seven weeks of age.

The breed is robust and resilient, with good resistance to common poultry diseases when managed properly, making it suitable for a range of production environments.

The breed performs well in a variety of climates and management systems, from intensive commercial operations to more extensive farming practices.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER BEFORE

INVESTING IN THIS BREED: as the Ross 308 grows so quickly, it could lead to leg problems, lameness, or skeletal disorders. Thus, these chickens cannot be kept for a long period of time and must be slaughtered at an early age.

The breed's rapid growth can also lead to cardiovascular problems, such as heart disease and fluid build-up in the abdomen, as its organs may struggle to keep up with its body size. Respiratory issues can also arise due to the stress placed on their systems.

The Ross 308 requires a carefully managed diet. This means the farmer will need to closely monitor nutrient intake.

The breed is also sensitive to variations in temperature and humidity, so it is best raised in chicken houses, where the environmental conditions can be easily controlled.

Modern broilers are bred to convert feed efficiently into meat, making nutrition and management critical to ongoing success.

- **Cobb 500**

The Cobb 500 is known for its excellent growth performance, high feed efficiency, and consistent meat yield. Developed by Cobb-Vantress, the breed is widely used in commercial poultry production.

The Cobb 500 has a broad, well-muscled body, with particular emphasis on breast muscle development. This makes it highly desirable for meat production. It has a sturdy, compact frame, white feathers ,and yellowish skin. It can reach a marketable weight of between 2kg and 3,2kg at five to seven weeks of age.

Ideally, the Cobb 500 isn't suited to extensive production, as its rapid growth and heavy body makes its less active. Thus, it is better suited to intensive production.

LAYERS

Layers are chickens specifically bred to lay eggs. The more eggs a hen lays, the more profitable that hen is for the farmer. Thus, layer hens have been intensively bred to ensure they produce as many eggs as possible over as long a period as possible. With the correct nutrition, housing, and

management, layer hens usually begin laying between the ages of 18 and 22 weeks.

In South Africa, several layer chicken breeds are commonly used for egg production. These breeds are selected for their high egg-laying capacity, adaptability to local conditions, and overall hardiness.

The Lohmann Brown is a popular commercial layer breed known for its high egg production and adaptability to different production systems.

- **Hy-Line Brown**

The Hy-Line Brown is known for its excellent egg production, with hens producing more than 320 eggs on average at the age of 72 weeks. (Age is an important factor when it comes to how many eggs a hen lays. Egg production tends to drop after two years [104 weeks].) The eggs are brown-shelled, and the breed is highly adaptable to various environmental conditions.

The Hy-Line Brown is known for its calm temperament and disease resistance. It also has a strong feed-to-egg conversion ratio, meaning the breed produces a large number of eggs on less feed, making it cost-effective for intensive operations. Considering its hardiness and robustness, the breed is also ideal for free-range or organic systems.

The Hy-Line Brown has reddish-brown feathers, often with white streaks or flecks scattered throughout, giving it a characteristic light-brown appearance. The breed is medium-sized, with a robust and sturdy body structure. These chickens aren't overly large but are compact and typically show a broad chest. The breed has a bright, single red comb, with a similarly coloured wattle and earlobes. The legs are generally clean, yellow, and featherless. The feet are strong and designed to support their active foraging habits.

- **Lohmann Brown**

The Lohmann Brown is recognised for its consistent egg production and low feed consumption. It lays brown eggs and is favoured for both commercial and small-scale farming.

The breed is hardy and adaptable, and performs well across different regions and climates. Like the Hy-Line Brown, the Lohmann Brown lays around 320 eggs per year at the age of 72 weeks.

The Lohmann Brown looks similar to the Hy-Line Brown. It has light- to medium-brown or reddish-brown feathers, often with some white underfeathers, which

gives it a sleek, uniform appearance. The breed is medium-sized, compact, and generally muscular, yet it maintains a relatively light weight. It has a single, bright-red, upright comb, and the wattles and earlobes are also red. The comb can be slightly larger in hens compared with roosters, especially during peak laying periods. The Lohmann Brown has strong, yellow, featherless legs. Like the Hy-Line Brown, it is a natural forager and can thus be raised intensively in a housing system, or for the free-range or organic market.

- **ISA Brown**

The ISA Brown is renowned for its prolific egg-laying ability, producing more than 340 eggs annually at the age of 72 weeks. The eggs are brown, and the hens are known for their docile nature.

The breed is adaptable, easy to manage, and has strong resistance to common poultry diseases. The ISA Brown has reddish-brown or

Table 1: Comparison of the three predominant broiler breeds used worldwide

	Cobb 500	Ross 308	Cornish X
Origin	Developed by Cobb-Vantress	Developed by Aviagen	Hybrid of Cornish and White Plymouth Rock
Use	Commercial broiler production	Commercial broiler production	Commercial broiler production
Growth rate	Rapid (marketable weight in 5–7 weeks)	Rapid (marketable weight in 5–7 weeks)	Rapid (marketable weight in 6–8 weeks)
FCR	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Body structure	Broad, muscular body; compact frame	Broad, muscular body; compact frame	Broad, muscular body, especially in the breast
Breast meat yield	High	High	Very high
Feathering	White, dense, uniform	White, dense, uniform	White, dense, uniform
Skin colour	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Adaptability	Highly adaptable to various environments	Highly adaptable to various environments	Generally adaptable to various environments
Health and robustness	Strong disease resistance	Strong disease resistance	More prone to health issues
Suitability for intensive systems	Highly suitable	Highly suitable	Highly suitable
Suitability for alternative systems	Less suited to free-range or organic production	Less suited to free-range or organic production	Not typically used
Reproductive traits	Consistent hatchability, uniform flocks	Consistent hatchability, uniform flocks	Variable; may require specific breeding
Market presence	Popular worldwide, particularly in large operations	Popular around the world, and widely used in various regions	More commonly used in the US, but recognised worldwide
Environmental sensitivity	Requires controlled environment for optimal performance	Requires controlled environment for optimal performance	Requires controlled environment for optimal performance; less robust in suboptimal conditions

Table 2: Hy-Line Brown statistics	
Eggs (units per year)	
Age of hen (free-range)	
60 weeks	Up to 270
72 weeks	Up to 344
90 weeks	Up to 445
Age of hen (housed)	
60 weeks	Up to 266
72 weeks	Up to 338
90 weeks	Up to 434
Liveability (%)	
60 weeks	97,4
80 weeks	95,1
90 weeks	93,5
Average egg weight (g)	
26 weeks	59,2
32 weeks	61,9
72 weeks	64,8
Egg mass/housed hen (kg)	
18–90 weeks	26,8
Haugh units	
38 weeks	90
56 weeks	84
72 weeks	81
90 weeks	79,7
FCR (kg feed:kg eggs)	
20–60 weeks	1,9:2,06
20–72 weeks	1,91:2,08
20–90 weeks	1,98:2,15
Source: hyline.com	

chestnut-coloured feathers, often with lighter or white feathers on the underside and around the neck and tail. This gives it a sleek, attractive appearance.

Like the breeds discussed earlier, the ISA Brown is a medium-sized chicken with a compact and robust body. It has a single, red, upright comb that's well-developed, along with a similarly coloured wattle and earlobes. The comb may grow slightly larger in hens during their peak laying periods.

The legs are yellow and featherless. They're also strong and built to support the bird's active foraging and constant movement.

Table 3: Lohmann Brown statistics	
Eggs (units per year)	
Age of hen (housed)	
72 weeks	324
80 weeks	367
90 weeks	416
Egg mass/housed hen (kg)	
72 weeks	19,99
80 weeks	22,75
90 weeks	25,94
FCR (kg feed:kg eggs)	
	2,15:2,25
Liveability (%)	
Rearing	98% to 99%
72 weeks	94% to 95%
90 weeks	91% to 92%
Source: lohmann-breeders.com	

Table 4: ISA Brown statistics	
Eggs (units per year)	
Age of hen (housed)	
80 weeks	374
90 weeks	425
100 weeks	470
Total egg mass/housed hen (kg)	
80 weeks	23,4
90 weeks	26,7
100 weeks	29,6
Liveability (%)	
80 weeks	94
90 weeks	93
100 weeks	93
Average egg weight (g)	
80 weeks	62,6
90 weeks	62,8
100 weeks	63
Haugh units	
80 weeks	81
90 weeks	81
100 weeks	81
FCR (kg feed:kg eggs)	
80 weeks	2:2,08
90 weeks	2:2,11
100 weeks	2:2,15
Source: isa-poultry.com	

Table 5: Differences between raising layer and broiler chickens		
	Layers	**Broilers**
Duration	Layers take longer to reach maturity (around 18 to 20 weeks) before they start laying eggs. Once they begin, they continue producing for about one to two years.	Broilers are raised for a much shorter period (usually six to eight weeks) before they're ready for slaughter. This quick turnaround time makes broiler farming more attractive for rapid returns.
Management	Layers require long-term care, regular feed, water, lighting, and health monitoring to maintain consistent egg production. Housing and equipment need to be set up for egg collection.	Broilers are typically less labour-intensive compared with layers. They grow quickly and require less complex housing and equipment, but they still need proper ventilation, temperature control, and health monitoring.
Feed costs	Layers need specialised feed that promotes healthy egg production, including calcium for strong eggshells. However, after the initial growing phase, their feed consumption stabilises, making feed costs more predictable over time.	Broilers require high-protein feed to achieve rapid growth. Although feed costs are significant, the short grow-out period limits the total feed costs compared with the longer-term feeding of layers.
Revenue	Income is steady as eggs are produced daily, offering continuous cash flow. However, prices for eggs can fluctuate, affecting profitability.	Broilers provide a one-time income at the end of each growth cycle when they are slaughtered. This can provide faster returns on investment, but requires restocking after each cycle.
Labour	Layers require more ongoing management and labour to ensure optimal laying conditions and to regularly collect eggs.	Their short growth period reduces labour intensity, but broilers still need daily care, especially in managing the environment (temperature, ventilation) to prevent disease and optimise growth.
Cost efficiency	Layers can be cost-effective over the long term due to their continuous egg production. However, the initial set-up, feed, and longer grow-out time before they generate income can be a financial challenge. Nonetheless, their steady egg production offers consistent revenue.	Broilers tend to be more cost-effective in terms of quick returns and shorter management periods. The quick turnaround allows farmers to earn profits more rapidly, but there's less continuity in income compared with layers.

WHICH IS EASIER TO PRODUCE?

'Easier to produce' is perhaps a misleading concept. Layers and broilers each have their own advantages and disadvantages, and whichever the farmers decides on farm should fall in line with their long-term goals, abilities and infrastructure. Farmers need to consider the purpose of production, the farming system they plan to run, and, quite significantly, market demands.

Table 5 (*see above*) lists the differences between layer and broiler production. All things considered, broilers are generally considered easier to farm because of their shorter growth cycle and less ongoing management compared with layers. In terms of quick return on investment, broilers also tend to be more cost-effective because of their rapid growth and quicker time to market.

By contrast, layers provide ongoing, long-term income through egg production, which can be more stable over time.

MyLife video series

Audio-visual learning is designed to support and empower people by making knowledge accessible throughout their lifelong learning process.

This comprehensive broiler production video series, developed by MyLife and Sagritex, supports skills development and serves as a source of information.

The content was created with input from industry specialists and reflects best farming practices. It caters for a range of knowledge levels, from beginners to short-course and diploma-level learners, depending on the topic and intended audience.

The content aims to:

- Make a meaningful difference in people's lives;
- Promote lasting knowledge;
- Enhance skills development;
- Simplify the learning process and encourage ongoing learning; and
- Empower learners to reach their full potential.

THE SERIES COVERS THE FOLLOWING:

- **Management**
  - Management 1
  - Management 2
  - Management 3
  - Management 4
  - Management of the environment
  - Optimum conditions
  - Managing the grower phase
  - Lighting programme
  - Litter moisture
  - Ideal temperature for age
  - Catching principles 1
  - Catching principles 2
  - Hygiene and sanitation
  - Medication usage
  - Record-keeping
- **Housing**
  - Site selection 1
  - Site selection 2
  - Site selection 3
  - Types of housing 1
  - Types of housing 2
  - Aspects of housing 1
  - Aspects of housing 2
  - Aspects of housing 3
  - Aspects of housing 4
  - House preparation 1
  - House preparation 2
  - House preparation 3
  - House preparation 4
  - Correct ventilation
  - Air-quality requirements
  - Ventilating grower houses
  - Ventilation systems
  - Transition ventilation
  - Natural ventilation 1
  - Natural ventilation 2
  - Heating systems
- **Drinking systems**
  - Drinker systems 1
  - Drinker systems 2
  - Preparation of water equipment 1
  - Preparation of water equipment 2
- **Feeding systems**
  - Feeding systems
  - Feed 1
  - Feed 2
  - Feed 3
  - Preparation of feeder equipment
- **Diseases**
  - Biosecurity practices
  - Biosecurity
    - Programme
    - Farm layout
    - Footbaths
    - Water sources
    - Biosecurity management
  - Disinfection phases
  - Other diseases
  - Bacterial infections
  - Infectious diseases
  - Newcastle disease
  - Clinical signs of Newcastle disease
  - Newcastle disease control
  - Infectious bronchitis
  - Gumboro disease
  - Gumboro disease control
  - Mycoplasma infection
  - Mycoplasma 2
  - Coccidiosis
  - Viruses 1
  - Viruses 2
  - Vaccination
  - Vaccination through water
  - Spray vaccination
  - Reasons for vaccination failure 1
  - Reasons for vaccination failure 2
- **Marketing**
  - Introduction and marketing 1
  - Marketing 2
  - Marketing 3

Start Your Poultry Farming Journey

Learn practical poultry skills online with MyLife & Sagritex

Start in 3 easy steps:

Click on your course | Add your course to the cart | Apply code FWMY10

BROILER PRODUCTION VIDEO SERIES

The **Broiler Production Video Series** is a comprehensive audio-visual e-learning resource designed to support lifelong learning, practical skills development, and the transfer of industry knowledge. Developed with contributions from industry specialists, the content ranges from introductory to diploma-level learning, depending on the topic and target audience.

The series simplifies learning through practical visual training while strengthening farming skills and improving productivity. It covers the complete broiler production cycle, including management, housing, drinking and feeding systems, disease management, biosecurity, vaccination programmes, environmental control, recordkeeping, and marketing.

Designed as both a learning programme and practical reference resource, the series equips current and aspiring broiler producers with the knowledge and confidence to improve farm management, solve production challenges, and build sustainable poultry operations.

- **Study online**
- **Learn at your own pace**
- **Practical farming knowledge**
- **Mobile-friendly learning**
- **Industry-relevant content**

farmer's weekly
How to Guide

my life®
Ignite Tomorrow

Sagritex
Cultivating Knowledge, Growing Success

Exclusive Discount Code Offer

FWMY10

10% OFF • Valid until 31 December 2026

Fact or fiction?

Before embarking on the journey of keeping chickens, whether to turn a profit or simply provide your household with eggs and meat, it's important to first separate the facts associated with chickens and chicken farming from some of the most common misconceptions.

Chickens that are allowed to roam or are kept in a backyard are as 'clean' as any other animal would be in the same situation. PHOTOS: FW ARCHIVE

BELIEF 1

CHICKENS ARE DIRTY

Chickens are no dirtier than any other animal, but the cleanliness of your birds and their environment will depend on whether you keep their coop or housing structure clean. Thus, your chickens' cleanliness will depend on your management of their housing.

If you regularly change their bedding and scrub out their housing facility, your chickens will be clean.

Chickens that are allowed to roam or are kept in your backyard will forage and kick up dust when given the opportunity. However, this does not make them dirty; they are as 'clean' as any other animal you may keep.

VERDICT: FICTION

BELIEF 2

HENS NEED A ROOSTER TO LAY EGGS

Hens don't need roosters to produce eggs; they are able to produce eggs on their own. This is similar to the reproduction system of the female human: a female does not need a male to ovulate; she ovulates regardless. The same can be said for hens; without a rooster, the hen will still produce an egg. Without intervention, and in a completely organic setting, a hen will ovulate once every 25 hours; thus, she can produce an egg every day. Of course, in more intensive systems

Hens produce eggs whether a rooster is present or not. Roosters are only needed to fertilise eggs.

where eggs are being produced for profit, hens can lay substantially more than one egg a day, if they are given the correct feed (laying mash, which contains certain hormones to stimulate ovulation).

AT THE AGE OF TWO YEARS, EGG PRODUCTION BEGINS TO DECLINE

You only need a rooster if you want your hens to produce chicks.
VERDICT: FICTION

BELIEF 3

HENS LAY EGGS EVERY DAY

This is somewhat true. As mentioned under Belief 2, hens generally ovulate every day, which results in an egg a day per hen. (Again, this is specific to organic systems where no intervention is provided to stimulate hens to lay more eggs).

However, this is only a general rule of thumb, and the frequency at which a hen lays her eggs will depend on her breed and age. For example, after the age of two years, a hen's egg production begins to decline until she no longer produces any eggs at all.
VERDICT: SOMEWHAT FACTUAL

BELIEF 4

ALL CHICKEN EGGS ARE BROWN

Chickens lay eggs of various colours, and this is usually breed-specific. In addition to brown eggs, they can also produce white, blue, or green eggs. Egg colour has no bearing

Chicken eggs come in a variety of colours, not only white or brown.

on taste or nutritional value, but the market may specifically require brown eggs. This is, therefore, an important determination if you're producing eggs for profit.
VERDICT: FICTION

BELIEF 5

CHICKENS CAN CHANGE SEX

This is not true from a biological perspective: a hen cannot become a rooster and a rooster cannot become a hen. Thus, a hen cannot fertilise an egg and a rooster cannot lay an egg.

Nonetheless, chickens can exhibit behavioural traits of the opposite sex. In other words, a hen may act like a rooster, and a rooster may act like a hen. For example, a rooster may allow other roosters to mate with them and try to hatch eggs, while a hen may begin crowing, grow rooster feathers, and try to mate with other hens. These behavioural changes are thought to be caused by hormonal imbalances, or the result of disease or injuries to the chicken's reproductive organs.
VERDICT: SOMEWHAT FACTUAL, IN TERMS OF BEHAVIOUR

BELIEF 6

ONLY ROOSTERS HAVE SPURS

Both hens and roosters can have spurs, depending on the breed. In some breeds, spurs are related to sex, and only roosters have them.

In others, however, spurs occur in both hens and roosters. This is particularly true for the game breeds.
VERDICT: FICTION

BELIEF 7

ALL EGGS TASTE THE SAME

An egg's flavour depends on the hen's diet, so it is absolutely untrue that all eggs taste the same.

All retail-bought eggs may taste the same, but this is mostly because they are produced by hens kept in intensive systems, which receive feed that's very similar in nutritional value and components.

An egg produced by a chicken raised in an organic system, on the other hand, will taste very different to one produced in an intensive housing system.
VERDICT: FICTION

BELIEF 8

CHICKENS KILL EACH OTHER

This is true, particularly if the chickens are kept in a space that's too confined. If a chicken senses that another chicken is weak, it may peck the latter to death. In nature, this is a way to protect the health of the larger flock, as the potentially diseased chicken is eliminated from the flock.

Chicken saddles protect hens' backs from the rooster's claws during mating. CSKK VIA FLICKR

To prevent this from happening, make sure your chickens have enough space. Chickens in restricted spaces may take their frustrations out on smaller, weaker birds.

Chickens are also territorial, so when adding others to the flock, be sure to do so carefully. For example, chicks from a different coop are likely to be killed quite quickly when moved into a new one.

It should also be kept in mind that temperament is breed dependent, and not all chicken breeds are particularly aggressive.

VERDICT: FACT

BELIEF 9

CHICKENS EAT EACH OTHER

Chickens are omnivores, and under the right circumstances, they will absolutely cannibalise each other.

For example, if a chicken dies in a coop or house, and the carcass is not removed timeously, the other chickens may start to eat the carcass. This is also more likely to happen if the birds aren't receiving enough protein. Chickens may also pull out and eat each others' feathers if they don't receive enough protein.

Therefore, it's vital for the health of your birds to ensure they receive adequate nutrition, which includes the right amount of protein.

VERDICT: FACT

BELIEF 10

YOU CAN BUY CHICKEN SADDLES

This is true. Chicken saddles protect hens' backs during mating, preventing the rooster from scraping them with his claws.

Generally, roosters don't hurt the hens during mating, but those that are kept with too few hens or have a particular favourite for mating may be more aggressive during the act, leading to the hen's feathers being scraped off her back and shoulders. Once the feathers are gone, the buffer between the rooster's claws and the hen's skin is gone, and he may actually cut her open during mating. In these instances, it would be wise to invest in some chicken saddles.

VERDICT: FACT

1b

Importance of education

Sound knowledge and understanding of poultry management helps ensure farmers have the necessary inputs in place before they start, while promoting correct bird growth, welfare, and optimal productivity.

OVERVIEW

- An in-depth look at why practical, hands-on training is essential for poultry farming success, sustainability, and profitability.

SOURCES

- KwaZulu-Natal Poultry Institute

Building success with the KZNPI

Mary-Ann Bruton, general manager of the KwaZulu-Natal Poultry Institute, explains why training is essential for profitable, sustainable poultry farming.

WHY IS FORMAL OR STRUCTURED TRAINING IMPORTANT BEFORE STARTING A POULTRY ENTERPRISE?
A good understanding of poultry management is important to ensure a farmer has all the required inputs before starting, and to ensure the correct growth and welfare of birds to optimise productivity.

Training programmes emphasise reading bird behaviour to ensure optimal animal welfare. PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON KNOWLEDGE GAPS YOU SEE AMONG NEW OR EMERGING POULTRY FARMERS?
- Record-keeping and financial decision-making; and
- Correct management of the environment.

HOW DOES TRAINING INFLUENCE FARM PROFITABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY?
Delegates get practical hands-on training on best practices and to learn how to manage poultry. Enhanced productivity and decreased mortality can help to improve profitability.

WHAT MISTAKES DO FARMERS TYPICALLY MAKE WHEN THEY ENTER POULTRY PRODUCTION WITHOUT TRAINING?
- Incorrect feeding;
- Incorrect environmental control; and
- Incorrect financial management.

TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR NEW ENTRANTS

WHAT BASIC SKILLS SHOULD A BEGINNER POULTRY FARMER LEARN FIRST?
Bird handling, inputs required, and management of all aspects of production.

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES DOES THE INDUSTRY OFFER?
There are many courses available, but not all from reputable service providers. Practical training is virtually non-existent except within company in-service training and internships.

Education plays a key role in closing knowledge gaps in record-keeping, finance, and farm management.

HOW LONG DOES IT TYPICALLY TAKE FOR A BEGINNER TO BECOME PRODUCTION-READY AFTER TRAINING?
Our week-long training can prepare beginners, but the more experience the better! Some things may only be observed after years of farming.

WHAT LEVEL OF LITERACY OR AGRICULTURAL BACKGROUND IS NEEDED TO BENEFIT FROM POULTRY TRAINING?
Most of our training is practical and requires minimal literacy. It isn't necessary to have an agricultural background, although it helps.

Delegates with matric usually cope better with some of the concepts such as record keeping and calculations of productivity. Our courses are NQF levels 1 to 3.

KWAZULU-NATAL POULTRY INSTITUTE

PRACTICAL SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

WHICH PRACTICAL SKILLS ARE MOST CRITICAL FOR DAILY POULTRY FARM MANAGEMENT?

WITHOUT TRAINING, SMALL MISTAKES IN FEEDING OR BIOSECURITY CAN QUICKLY WIPE OUT AN ENTIRE FLOCK

Reading birds' behavioural signals to provide them with an optimal environment.

HOW IMPORTANT IS HANDS-ON LEARNING COMPARED WITH CLASSROOM LEARNING?
Very important! Poultry farming is practical, so learning it should be, too!

WHICH BIOSECURITY PRACTICES MUST FARMERS FULLY UNDERSTAND BEFORE RECEIVING BIRDS?

- Minimising contact in whatever way possible;
- Separating birds of different ages, and managing flocks of different ages;

Practical, hands-on learning is central to effective poultry education and long-term farm success.

- Maintaining 'clean' and 'dirty' areas; and
- Principles of vaccination.

WHICH ANIMAL WELFARE PRINCIPLES SHOULD ALL POULTRY FARMERS BE TRAINED IN?

- Environmental management;
- Feed and water; and
- Signs of disease.

EDUCATION FOR SMALLHOLDER VS COMMERCIAL FARMERS

HOW DO TRAINING NEEDS DIFFER BETWEEN SMALLHOLDER AND COMMERCIAL POULTRY PRODUCERS?

Many of the principles are the same; the key is learning to apply them in different systems.

For example, reading behavioural signals is the same in any system, but management differs between controllers and open-sided houses. Commercial producers may use more feeding phases, while smallholders may adjust feeding by amount.

Equipment differs (chain feeder versus tube feeder), but feeding principles remain the same. Marketing differs, but the principles of marketing are consistent.

WHAT CHALLENGES DO SMALL-SCALE FARMERS FACE WHEN ACCESSING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES?

Good practical training is expensive and represents a significant proportion of smallholder income, compared with commercial producers. Travelling to training venues can also be costly.

HOW CAN EDUCATION PROGRAMMES BE ADAPTED FOR RURAL OR RESOURCE-LIMITED FARMERS?

For education programmes to be inclusive of rural and resource-limited farmers, they should incorporate the following approaches:

- Prioritise practical, hands-on learning rather than relying on theory-heavy sessions;

- Use simple, local language and avoid technical jargon. Use everyday terms, relatable examples, and storytelling to enhance understanding;
- Incorporate visuals such as pictures, diagrams, and videos to improve comprehension and knowledge retention;
- Promote low-cost, locally available solutions and repurposed materials;
- Deliver training in short, modular sessions, allowing farmers time to practise what they have learnt before progressing to the next module.

Continuous learning ensures poultry farmers stay up to date with evolving industry practices and technologies.

This bite-sized approach supports better understanding and information retention.

BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

BEYOND PRODUCTION, WHICH BUSINESS SKILLS SHOULD POULTRY FARMERS DEVELOP?

- Record-keeping and calculations of productivity;
- Financial management.

DO FARMERS UNDERESTIMATE FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN POULTRY PRODUCTION?

This is often lacking.

WHICH RECORD-KEEPING SKILLS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR SUCCESS?

Farmers need:

- Financial records (all expenses and purchases);
- Production records (feed intake, mortality, and body weight);
- Other records (vaccinations, chemicals used, rat control ,and so on) are also important.

INDUSTRY READINESS & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

HOW CAN TRAINING INSTITUTIONS HELP FARMERS INTEGRATE INTO FORMAL POULTRY VALUE CHAINS?

Institutes like the KwaZulu-Natal Poultry Institute (KZNPI) involve industry experts in their courses to train and interact with delegates. Networking with other delegates extends beyond the courses.

WHAT ROLE DOES CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLAY ONCE A FARMER IS ALREADY OPERATING?

Farmers never stop learning.

ARE THERE CERTIFICATION PATHWAYS THAT HELP FARMERS GAIN CREDIBILITY

WITH BUYERS OR FINANCIERS?
Training-based certification (capacity building) provides certificates upon completion of recognised training programmes, such as those delivered by KZNPI, and serves as an indicator of a farmer's technical competence.

However, buyers and financiers are ultimately more concerned with the quality and consistency of the chickens and eggs produced, as these directly reflect the farmer's performance and reliability.

FUTURE SKILLS & INDUSTRY NEEDS

WHICH NEW SKILLS WILL FUTURE POULTRY FARMERS NEED AS THE INDUSTRY EVOLVES?
Marketing and traceability.

HOW IS TECHNOLOGY CHANGING POULTRY EDUCATION AND TRAINING?
There are many webinars and online training courses available, but practical skills remain essential.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE SOMEONE CONSIDERING POULTRY FARMING AS A CAREER TODAY?
Ensure you have a market before starting. Finding a niche market is key. Do the financial calculations. Margins are small, and economies of scale play a role.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

WHAT ARE YOUR THREE NON-NEGOTIABLE TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW POULTRY FARMERS?
Master biosecurity practices: biosecurity is the first line of defence against disease outbreaks. Farmers must understand how to control access to the farm, maintain hygiene, and prevent contamination through people, equipment, feed, and water.

Poor biosecurity can wipe out an entire flock within days, regardless of how well other aspects are managed.
Understand feeding and nutrition: feed is the biggest cost in poultry production and the biggest driver of performance.

Farmers must learn how to provide the correct feed for each growth stage, ensure consistent access to clean water, and avoid underfeeding or poor-quality rations.

EDUCATION MUST BE INCLUSIVE OF RURAL FARMERS

Good nutrition directly affects growth rates, egg production, health, and overall profitability.

Learn daily flock observation and record-keeping: successful farmers closely monitor their birds every day. This includes checking behaviour, feed and water intake, droppings, and overall health. Keeping simple records (mortality, feed usage, egg production, weight) allows farmers to detect problems early and make informed decisions.

WHAT SHOULD EVERY FARMER KNOW BEFORE BUYING THEIR FIRST CHICKS?
Success in poultry farming begins before the chicks arrive.

- The poultry house must be fully prepared, cleaned, disinfected, and properly equipped.
- Brooding management is critical, as the first two to three weeks determine the overall success and performance of the flock.
- The source of chicks matters, and farmers should purchase them from reputable hatcheries or trusted suppliers.
- Feed and water must be available in advance, ensuring chicks have immediate access to them upon arrival.
- Biosecurity measures (footbaths and controlled access) must be in place before chicks are introduced.
- Have basic knowledge of daily flock management prior to chick placement.

KWAZULU-NATAL
POULTRY INSTITUTE
POULTRY MANAGEMENT TRAINING CENTRE

ATTENTION POULTRY FARMERS

KwaZulu-Natal Poultry Institute has
90% subsidies available on the following courses:

Poultry production
14 to 19 Sept 2026

+

Managing a Poultry Abattoir
05 to 09 October 2026

Applicants must be existing small scale poultry farmers.

GET YOUR APPLICATION
WhatsApp – 064 860 0130
email: training@kznpi.co.za

Speak to your broker about Hollard agriculture insurance.

Hollard.
Insure your unsure