



Buck-Wheat Bytes

Report from Ghana

A GFIA contributor, Dr. S.Y. Apiiga, is studying guinea fowl keeping and production in his native country of Ghana. We found some of the observations and practices very interesting and thought we'd share portions of his report with our readers:

Egg Laying

Guinea fowls start laying eggs at a minimum age of six months. Eggs are laid in nests in the bush, near compound, or in pens in the house.

It came out during the study that it is not advisable to keep guinea hens for more than two years because older ones lay eggs late and the eggs are smaller than young ones. Guinea fowls normally start laying around March- mid October except in areas where there are constant water bodies, fresh greens and available feed.

Feeding them with pre-germinated red sorghum or seeds also induces early laying (February) and extends laying period (November). Pito spent melt can also be used.

Egg Selection for Hatching

Fertile eggs are selected by the by traditionally candling using the hand facing the direct sunrays. The fertile eggs are dark in the air sack area and lighter with

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blood veins whilst the infertile eggs are totally dark and opaque.

Incubation of Eggs

After selecting the fertile eggs, the eggs are given to a hen to hatch. Twenty-five eggs are normally given to a hen and the eggs take twenty-eight days to hatch. Sometimes ducks and turkeys are used to hatch the eggs.

Some farmers who have no hens or whose hens normally do not complete the incubation period (ectoparasites) put the eggs in dawadawa seeds to hatch.

Eggs are candled again for spoiled ones after ten days

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GFIA 2010 Conference in Central Texas

Guinea Fowl International invites you to our Fifth Annual Guinea Fowl Conference.

This year's conference takes place in Central Texas, just outside Austin. Conference dates are Friday, March 26 – Sunday March 28. You may attend all three dates, or single days.

The conference brings together experts in various aspects of guinea-keeping that interest us and help us to do a better job and better understand our favorite birds. This year, speakers from Texas

A&M will discuss incubation (and speaker Dale Hyatt is truly an expert on this topic!), antibiotic alternatives, anatomy, and the latest information on Avian Influenza. There will be a very interesting lecture on the history of incubation, and experts on rodent control and insect control.

Several portable coops will be on site for viewing, and the builder will visit us to discuss coop considerations. See insert or go to our website for more information; please plan to join us!

Report from Ghana (cont.)

and the bad ones given to children to roast and eat. Farmers with one or few hens' mix fowl and guinea fowl eggs to hatch but the fowl eggs are incubated seven days before adding the guinea fowl eggs.

Brooding of Keets

Pullets are not used to incubate guinea fowl eggs because they are not good brooders. Brooding is done (warmth) by the hen using its feathers to cover the keets when the weather is cold.

Receptacles (kusuks) made of straw are used in the evening as a brooder and when the farmer is going to farm off or near the homestead.

Good brooder hens watch and guard the keets against predators (hanks) and return home when they see signs of rain. They make a characteristic noise ko, ko, ko, ko to alert the keets of an impending danger. Brooders can sometimes engage in a scuffle with hawks to protect the keets.

The keets are weaned from the hen after six (6) weeks (natural weaning) by which time they are used to the environment and acclimatized to the weather.

In some instances a foster pullet or cockerel is given to the keets immediately after hatching so that they can lay early to incubate another set of guinea fowl eggs.

Guinea fowl keets can be used for sacrifices and festivities after three months.

Housing and Sanitation

Houses (pens) are built of mud or clay and roofed with thatch (grasses). No ventilation outlets are provided except the gate to the pen. Crop residues are kept in the pens as litter to prevent cold and to serve as a brooder to reduce cold. The pens are not compacted or cemented. Keets are kept in "kusuks" before putting



Dr. Apiiga with some pearl guinea fowl

them in the pens (zongoe).

Sanitation and Cleaning

The droppings of the fowls and guinea fowls which are normally mixed are not cleaned, washed or disinfected. The droppings and litter are removed when it is form into manure and used to fertilize crop fields around March- April each year.

However when there is an outbreak of new castle disease (nokum) the droppings are immediately removed before a new stock of birds are brought into pens.

Health Care and Disease Prevention

Farmers use a lot of herbs (roots, leaves, stems, bark, fruits, and seeds) and other materials combined with spiritualism to treat or prevent diseases and pest of guinea fowls. These include the following:

- Mango leaves are pounded and put in water for the birds to drink (about 50kg to one or two liters of water).
- Mahogany bark put in water.
- Honey (50mls) put in one litre of water to drink.
- Pawpaw leaves are pounded and put in water to control worms.
- Neem leaves hung in pens to control lice.

Socio-Economic Value of Guinea Fowls in Ghana (from Dr. Apiiga's report)

- Courtship and dowry
- Sacrifices, festivals, funerals and festivities (Christmas, New Year, Ramadan, Naming of babies etc.).
- Formerly women and girls used not to eat fowls except guinea fowls. So these birds were kept for women any time a fowl is sacrificed in the house. (Kusasis and Frafras)
- Gifts to friends, in- laws, relatives and visitors.
- Meat dried and cooked with sesame for important visitors to the house (Kusasis).
- Exchange for fowls, goats, sheep, seed, labour, etc.
- Income (cash)

Member transitions

Longtime GFIA member Bill Stevenson suffered a stroke early this week, and is now in intensive care at the Peninsula Regional Medical Center in Salisbury, Maryland. He is expected to remain in intensive care for about two weeks, and then will be assessed for further treatment needed. Bill had a special relationship with his birds, as can be seen in the photos on this page.

Cards can be sent to him (see below); also for anyone wishing to help contribute to the care of his large flock of guineas and chickens, contributions can be sent care of:

Bill Stevenson
c/o Hedy McCarter
6454 Cherry Walk Road
Hebron, MD 21830



Above, Bill and his rooster Whitey. Below, Bill waits at the Lewes, DE ferry with his guinea Jesse, preparing to meet with Hedy McCarter and Dan and Charlotte MacNeice.



GFIA member Don Perrin passed away on Sept. 11, 2009, in Alexander NY. He was 68 years old, a retired dairy farmer. He kept over 400 guinea fowl and was working to get additional colors of guinea fowl added to the Standard for showing guineas at poultry shows.

He was on the Board of Directors of the Buffalo & Western New York Poultry Association (where he was referred to as "The Guinea Man," and he founded a poultry association newsletter. He won many awards with his pearl and pied pearl guineas.

We will miss him and his efforts to increase the presence of guinea fowl at US poultry shows.

GFIA memberships expire at the end of each calendar year. If you joined anytime after Sept. 1, 2009, your membership is still valid for 2010. If you have not joined or renewed since then, now is the time! Benefits include a Welcome Packet, educational materials, thrice-yearly newsletters, and an annual educational conference. In addition, you'll be supporting our work to expand the information available about guinea-keeping. Already, two studies are underway involving guinea fowl (one on free-choice feeding and one on parasite control), which were started because of GFIA.

Our mission:

- Supporting the responsible keeping and breeding of guinea fowl;
- Educating on the care and habits of guinea fowl;
- Assisting those interested in incubating, hatching, and keeping guinea fowl.

2010 Membership Rates (prices in US dollars):

- Single Membership \$20.00
- Family membership \$28.00
- Junior Membership \$5.00
(age 15 & under)

To join or find out more about membership:

Send payment to the address below;
join online using Paypal at
www.guineafowlinternational.org;
call 979-773-9100

When you join, please include your name, address, phone numbers(s), email address. We'd also like to know whether and how you want to be listed in our membership directory, how many and what color guinea fowl you own, and any special areas of interest.

Also, please consider contributing to our newsletter or serving on a committee. Email president@guineafowlinternational.org or call 979-773-9100.

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