

Quail Rearing: A Challenging Experience

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Quails flock near watering and feed source

We never thought Fresh Coturnix, a company we built upon trust and friendship along with the spirit of completing the requirement of the subject Share Farm Project for two consecutive semesters had taught us a lot on quail rearing, the challenge we faced and enjoying every bit of it. Realizing that Malaysian loves exotic foods and quails are rarely seen in the market, we decided to choose meat quails as one of the livestock species to be reared under our project. The breed we reared was IKTA breed, a developed Japanese quail breed Coturnix japonica produced by Institute for Poultry Development (IKTA). To give a gist to the company name, we had it the same with the scientific name of the species.

Quails are easy to rear as they can be marketed by 6 weeks and do not require much capital. The interval of quails rearing is also short involving six to seven cycles per year. They also suffer less disease infection and the meat contains a high nutritious value.

Quail rearing is divided into two phases: the brooder stage for two weeks and the grower stage starting from two weeks until marketing. Feed used in the brooder stage was Broiler Starter Mash and that used in the grower stage was Broiler Finisher Pellet. Since the budget we got from the school was limited, we tried our best to be creative in some ways to reduce the cost of rearing. One of them was by making of own hand-made feed trough. Natural behavior of quails includes scratching the soil and pecking on anything they come across, thus we fix the feed trough with a layer of conjugated wires. The outcome was excellent. There were less wastage of spilled feed and we saved cost from buying feed trough. Feed was given twice a day and clean water was provided ad libitum.

We practiced deep litter system and quarantine area was sectioned away from the flock. This is one of the ways to reduce disease spread and to ease up the process of feeding and monitoring the birds both healthy and sick. Saw dust was used for the bedding to absorb urine and provide comfortable place for the birds. We also lighted up kerosene lamp during the night in case the electric bulbs got fused.



Students are engaged in Defeathering of quails

Cage was checked daily for any holes or leakage that might causes the birds to fly away or predators to come in. We were glad that the school provided us a perfect cage with appropriate width and length to allow good ventilation for the birds.

Every business has its own hustle and bustle. Throughout running the project, we faced problems such as high mortality due to predator like rats and death caused by pile ups during colder part of the day. Adequate lighting is necessary for two reasons. Firstly, the quails will have a source of warmth during rainy days and cold nights, secondly, to avoid quails from piling up and pecking on each other, when the shed is dark. Lighting also stimulates feeding as it guides them to the feed trough and water sources.

Prior to slaughtering the meat quails at 6 weeks of rearing, we had planned the marketing strategy which included distribution of fliers and pre-order forms. To our surprise, the response of customers towards our products was very satisfying. We managed to sell all our products to students and staffs inside the campus and catered demands from restaurants selling delicious quail's meat dishes around Kota Kinabalu.

We came out with a processed meat product which included de-feathering and evisceration processes. The final product was then packed in a plastic wrapper with our company name attached inside. To maintain the freshness of our product, the quails were slaughtered in batches and delivery was done immediately. For frozen meat, we made it sure that the meat was kept in a safe condition and properly frozen at appropriate temperature. At the end of the project, we are proud of ourselves as we made it through everything about quails rearing from a day old chick to a processed and freshly packed quail's meat product. Our strategy was a success. We managed to gain profits out of the project and had fun doing it. If asked whether we will do it again if given another chance next time - yes definitely!



Marinated and grilled quails for sale



Quail house at Ladang, UMS