





OSTRICH



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REARING

The first 16 weeks are the most important for survival as chicks are vulnerable & susceptible to infections. Chicks hatch with a yolk reserve of about 25% of their body weight which is absorbed in 3 – 4 days. Thereafter feed needs to be increased daily, at a constant rate by increasing feeding frequency. Ostriches are usually kept in pens for the first 3 – 4 months, after which they are kept in paddocks until slaughter at 10 – 14 months.

Phase feeding is optimal for ostriches because the nutrient requirements of birds change as they grow. Ostriches need a minimum level of fibre to ensure the development of fibre digestion capabilities & this level increases as they grow as do energy requirements. Because birds eat larger quantities as they age, the overall nutrient density of the ration can be reduced. Young ostriches (up to 3 months) perform better on high-quality diets with a lower roughage inclusion but as the bird ages & because of their changing nutrient requirements, their feed conversion efficiency declines.

KEY REARING FEEDING TIPS

- Feed growing chicks 3 – 6 times a day.
- Start with crumbs then move to pellets to improve intakes.
- Always provide ample, fresh & cool water.
- To help the birds overcome stress, add a vitamin electrolyte mixture to the drinking water for the first 5 days post-hatching.
- Always provide fresh feed. Never put fresh feed on top of old feed.
- Small stones, as a source of grit that aids in digestion, can be provided.
- Refusal to eat & drink is a common problem with ostrich chicks. Alleviate this problem by placing several older chicks (1 – 3 weeks), that are already eating, with the younger chicks.



REARING FEEDING TIPS

AGE GROUP	LIVE WEIGHT (KG)	FEED CONSUMPTION (KG/PERIOD)
Day old – 6/8 weeks	0.8 – 18	22 – 25
2 – 4 months	18 – 45	55 – 60
4 – 6 months	45 – 70	90 – 95
6 – 10 months	70 – 95/100	230 – 250
10 – 14 months	>95	300 – 320

WHEN TO CONTACT YOUR TECHNICAL EPOL ADVISOR:

- If birds appear malnourished & tend to eat excessive non-food materials, they may be constipated.
- If leg abnormalities appear, it can be an indication of rapid growth, protein content that is too high or an imbalance between Ca & P.
- In case of obesity, the thickness of fat in the abdominal wall is a good indication & may vary from 0 to 8 cm. This can be used as a condition scoring tool.



BREEDING

Successful, cost-effective production of ostriches starts with the breeders. Most problems in the early weeks can be linked to sub-optimal breeder rations. Diets must have the correct amino acids, vitamins & carbohydrates for the maintenance of high fertility after the attainment of sexual maturity. Males & females reach adulthood at 30 & 20 months respectively, with breeding starting at 30 to 36 months. Mature breeding birds should be fed in two phases; breeding & off-season. In the off-seasons, birds only require a maintenance diet whereas during the breeding season the correct energy & protein balance is key to ensure optimum egg production. Over-feeding should be avoided as this may lead to infertility & there is a potential carry-over effect of dietary energy levels from one year to the next.

Reduce excess fat accumulated during the breeding season by reducing the feed allocation. Prior to the breeding season feed can be increased so that the birds go into lay in a fit but not fat condition. Nutrients are transferred from hen to egg, & egg to chick so vitamins & minerals should be adequately supplied to the breeder hen to ensure better chick survival. The hen lays eggs every two days & can lay 30 to 50 eggs per season with an incubation period of 42 to 43 days.



KEY BREEDING FEEDING TIPS

- Feed birds a good balanced ration to ensure growth throughout rearing.
- Feed should cater for increased calcium & phosphorus. If Lucerne is fed, use finely chopped green Lucerne as stalks may cause constipation.
- Ad lib access to fresh feed daily.
- Ad lib access to granulated calcium carbonate & oyster shell.
- It is recommended that cocks (male ostrich) do not consume layer diets, as the excess calcium results in a reduction of zinc absorption with adverse effects on sperm production. Cocks should be kept in adjacent paddocks & fed maintenance diets. After the hens have finished their daily ration, the cocks should be introduced for mating.

PRODUCTION GOALS BY LIFE STAGE

GROUP		GOALS
Breeders	Off season	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Replenishment of lost nutrient reserves
	In season	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good egg production• Adequate nutrient transfer to ensure strong, healthy chicks at hatch & a good feather harvest
Chicks (0 – 2 months)		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smooth transfer from yolk sac absorption to feed intake
Grower birds		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Optimum growth rates and feed conversion• Muscle growth, meat, skin and feather quality (slaughter birds)• Good reproductive organ development (future breeders)
Pre-breeders		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continued reproductive organ development• Early puberty• Feather development

EPOL OSTRICH FEED RANGES

Epol offers a high-quality range of ostrich feeds to suit the specific needs of birds at different stages. **MegaGro** is the flagship ostrich range, formulated to deliver excellent growth rates & feed conversion ratios. Please see table below for recommended feeding guidelines per bird per day:

RANGE		MegaGro	
PHASE	Weeks	V-No.*	Grams
PRE-STARTER	0 – 8	30897	Ad Lib
STARTER	8 – 16	30896	
GROWER	16 – 24	30895	
FINISHER	24 – 32	30894	Feed ad lib with Lucerne or other roughage.
MAINTENANCE	32 – 48	30893	
BREEDER	From 2-3 weeks before start of breeding season.	30892	

* All products are registered under Act No. 36 of 1947.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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