

# How to start a poultry farm (Part 9)

The most common poultry breeds available in South Africa can be divided into two groups. The first is the group that can be kept either under extensive or semi-intensive systems, and are multi-purposed. Indigenous breeds like Venda, Ovambo, Potchefstroom Koekoek, Naked Neck, Natal Game and standard breeds like New Hampshire, Rhode Island Red and the Black Australorp, all fall under this category.

Then there are the breeds that are used in an intensive system for either meat or egg production. Ross and Cobb are excellent for meat production, while Hi-Line or Lohmann are the best egg producers.

## Naked Necks

Records of Naked Neck chickens have been found in areas as far apart as central Europe and Malaysia. The South African Naked Neck is thought to have originated in Malaysia. These chickens have a variety of colour patterns. There are two types of Naked Necks, one of which is purebred and has a completely naked neck and the other, which is not purebred, has a tassel on the front part of the neck.

## The Venda

In 1979 a veterinarian, Dr Naas Coetzee, noticed a distinctive new breed in Venda and named it after the region. Similar chickens were later seen in the Southern Cape and in Qwaqwa. The Vendas are

multicoloured with white, black and red as the predominant colours. Rose-coloured combs and five-toed feet are not uncommon. It is fairly large and lays tinted eggs of a generous size. The hens are broody and very good mothers.

## The Ovambo chicken

These chickens originated in the northern part of Namibia and Ovamboland. Unlike the Venda chicken where white feathers occur, the Ovambo is dark-coloured. It is also smaller in size and it is these two differences which help to camouflage the bird and protect it from raptors. The Ovambo is very aggressive and agile. It has been known to catch and eat mice and young rats. This chicken can fly and roosts in the top of trees to avoid predators.

## The Koekoek

The term "Koekoek" describes the colour pattern. The Koekoek's colouring is present in as many as nine different breeds. The feather colouring is sex-linked, making it very useful in breeding programmes. If a black or red cock is crossed with a Koekoek hen, the sexes of the offspring can be separated when the chicks are only a day old. Sexes can be identified as the females are completely black, while the males have a white spot on the head. The Potchefstroom Koekoek was bred locally from crosses between the black Australorp and the White Leghorn. **NF**



1



2



3



4

- 1 The Naked Neck
- 2 The Ovambo
- 3 The Potchefstroom Koekoek
- 4 The Venda chicken