



Japanese Quail (Coturnix Quail)

The Japanese Quail, also known as Coturnix quail, pharaoh's quail, stubble quail and eastern quail differs considerably from the North American Bobwhite quail. The Bobwhite is larger than the Japanese quail, however the Coturnix produces larger eggs. The incubation time needed for fertile eggs is shorter (14-17 days) compared to Bobwhite quail eggs (23 days). Coturnix may start laying eggs as early as 6 weeks of age compared to 16 weeks for the Bobwhite.

DESCRIPTION:

Japanese quail can be sexed as early as three weeks of age, based on the feather color which is distinct for the male and female of the species. When matured, the Japanese males weigh in the range of 100-140 grams (4-5 oz.), and they reach sexual maturity at 5 to 6 weeks of age. The plumage color on the throat and breast will be cinnamon or rusty brown. When males are sexually matured, a large glandular or bulbous structure appears above the cloacal opening. If this gland is pressed, it will produce a foamy secretion. Males generally live longer than females. Males crow and their sound has been described as "Ko-tum-neex". Adult Japanese quail females are generally larger than the males and weigh in the range of 120-160 grams (4.5-6 oz.). Through proper selection, heavier birds can be produced for meat. The females can be easily identified by their slightly whiter plumage under the throat and upper breast, different from the characteristically black stippled feathers of the male. In this area, the feathers of the female quail are longer and more pointed than those of the male birds.

The female Japanese may start laying eggs as early as 35 days of age under proper conditions, laying approximately 200-300 eggs a year. Fertility in breeder flocks is high between 2-8 months of age although after that, it is considerably less. To obtain better fertility, a ratio of one male to one or two females should be considered when mating.

CARE OF THE ADULT QUAIL:

Young birds can be transferred from the brooder to the cages or to the floor around the fourth week, depending on the breeder's purpose in raising quail. If the birds are raised for dog training or as a hobby, they can be raised on the floor. If the birds are being raised for breeding or for egg or meat production, they will perform better in cages. Pedigree cages of 5" X 8" X 10" will hold a pair of quail. Colony cages of 2' X 2' X 10" will accommodate up to 25 adult quail while a 2' X 4' X 10" will accommodate up to 50 adult quail. However, it is recommended that more space be provided for the birds; this will reduce or eliminate odor problems if they are being raised indoors. For cage construction, 1/2" X 1" welded wire is recommended.

Adult quail will perform better if given 16-25 square inches of floor space per bird. They need 1/2 inch to 1 inch of feeder space per bird for feed, and 3/4 inch of trough space for water. Adult quail hens require 14- 18 hours of light per day to maintain maximum egg production and fertility. Egg fertility lowers considerably after the birds are a year old. Litter materials such as chopped straw, chopped com cobs, sawdust or wood shavings should be about 2 inches in thickness for birds raised on the floor. Daily cleaning of the cages and removal of droppings is necessary for sanitation, if the birds are kept in indoor cages.

NUTRITION:

The exact dietary requirements of the Japanese quail are still controversial. Turkey starter, chicken starter or a gamebird starter which can be purchased at local feed mills, should be adequate for proper quail egg and meat production. A free choice supply of calcium (lime stone or oyster shell) should be available to laying hens. Adult quail will eat 14-18 grams (.5 ounces) of a balanced ration. Fill the feeder only half full to prevent feed spillage. Fresh water should always be provided. Water is one of the most essential nutrients for the bird.

DISEASE PREVENTION:

Although Cotumix is a hardy bird compared to poultry, it can be affected with most of the common poultry diseases. Sanitary management is the best guarantee to prevent diseases. Use commercial disinfectants to thoroughly clean and disinfect the cages, feeders and waterers. Take measures to control rats, mice, and flies which may bring disease organisms to the quail.