

STATUS REPORT 2 – AZAGRA FARM



Left photo: the third cow, purchased from the local butcher, who also raises cows. It was about to be made beef for sale in the market. He originally offered another cow for quite cheap, which we turned down after William, the local gov't agricultural rep, looked it over. Even if it was pregnant, which is a plus, it was too old. So we now have three cows. All have since been vaccinated, and dewormed, and the first two have been artificially inseminated. We will know in a few weeks if they took hold. If not, then the procedure will be repeated. While theoretically done for free by the gov't, each shot calls for a suggested donation of P200, which is quite cheap. The third cow is too young yet to be inseminated.



Above left: the completed chicken coop. Note green fish net mesh encompassing the chicken house. Above right, an inside view of the chicken house from the other end. Nylon mesh on right side row of coconut trees is barely visible. Pile under the manzanita tree is nipa roofing that will be used for the “kamalig” to be built for Nitoy’s son Jun to sleep in, as he will be in charge. Nitoy remains in charge of the entire 7.5 hectare farm.

Unlike the more traditional chicken coop where hundreds of chickens are kept in slots and raised shoulder-to-shoulder, this coop serves mainly as a weather shield and nesting place for the chickens, as we are raising them as “free-range” and organic. Their main diet consists of grub, seeds, etc that they eke off from the ground. We supplement it with “tahop” or rice bran that is fortified with enzymes.

Left photo: the nesting baskets of nipa, or “pugaran”, set up above ground. Note bamboo feeding and/or watering trough below.



We started with 14 chickens bought at the market last week. Picture on left shows the second set of 4 chickens (purchased from a tenant in the Malubog farm) being vaccinated and then its wing feathers cut – to prevent it from flying over the fence.

So we now have a total of 18 chickens. We originally thought of starting off by buying 30 or 40 but William suggested we just wait for them to hatch more chickens. The game plan therefore is to cull all the excess eggs over 10 per nest, and use them for home consumption, and if excessive, sell them in Sandra’s store. For the chickens that get hatched, all males will be culled, and the eventual excess be sold. I foresee dinners to be chicken galore. Perhaps a target population of a hundred or so is optimum.



Photo on left is part of the brood. The rooster on left is a loan from the local gov’t thru William. It is a hybrid that is there to impregnate all the female chickens. Trouble is, it is taking its own sweet time. William promised to bring in another rooster, so the two will “compete” and get the job done faster. Nitoy also has his own chickens (even more free range) and a rooster which is fighting cock, and we decided against moving it into the enclosure as it might fight with William’s rooster to the death.

But while we have noted that the lazy rooster already has mounted a number of chickens, it seems that some of them were already pregnant when purchased, as 2 of them laid eggs yesterday.



Photo on left shows one of the eggs. What amazes me is how the chicken “knew” that it was supposed to climb the stairs shown on right, and go to a nest, which Nitoy says it now will remember as its own. Nitoy numbered each nest, and I don’t suppose the chickens read that.



I guess I’ll be in for more surprises when we finish up the next project: a goat house, with a target of 40 to 50 goats. My cash flow analysis indicates this will be the most commercial, as we don’t eat goat much. Since I will become a goatherd, I hope I don’t get everybody’s goat.

Danny Gil, 20 Apr 2008