

Mr Mongoose & the Fowl Coob

The mongoose was imported to Jamaica in the latter part of the 19th century to control the population of cane rats. But there was a little problem.

The mongoose is by nature diurnal (run up and down a day time) and cane rats are by nature nocturnal (night creatures). So when Bredda Mongoose up and looking for him dinner, dinner was often asleep somewhere underground out of his reach, and when dinner was up and about, Bredda mongoose was in la la land. Trouble! There is a Jamaican proverb “Tiger old, him nyam cockroach” – all organisms adapt to guarantee survival and necessity is the mother of invention. When hungry bite mongoose, he had to diversify and apply creative means to get his food. Mongoose started to eat any and everything – snakes, spiders, frogs, slugs, insects, birds and bird eggs, and started to attack peoples’ yard fowls. Many mornings, there were no eggs and sometimes, a chicken or two had vanished, as mongoose, who knew he could not teef fowl eggs in broad daylight, had started operating like a night owl. Many nights, mama and papa went to bed, only to hear the commotion in the backyard as mongoose ‘quaff down’ half a dozen eggs and made off with a chicken or two before papa could open the back door, armed with a piece of two-bi-four. But there is a plaster for every sore. By next morning, the plan was made. The fowl coob would now be rebuilt on a sturdy branch of the mango tree. Then, here was the creative part. A piece of zinc or some smooth metal, e.g. an opened kerosene tin, was nailed around the base of the tree. Every night thereafter, you could hear the scratching and sliding, as poor, hungry Bredda Mongoose tried desperately to climb the tree, but kept sliding off. After a couple nights, he would give up and find another yard with a fowl coob. Source: Kin Teet Kibba Heart Bun by Joan Andrea Hutchinson. This book celebrates the creativity and resourcefulness of Jamaican ‘poor’ people and will be sure to take you back in time as you remember your growing up years. Order your copies at - kinteetkibbaheartbun@yahoo.com This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it or bumpyhead@cwjamaica.com