

A Study on Health Management Practices in Free Range Chicken Farming in Batticaloa District

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Free Range Chicken (FRC) farming plays an important role in rural economy. Information on health management in FRC in Sri Lanka is minimum. The study objective was to identify health management practices in FRC farming in Batticaloa district. Data on FRC farming, especially focusing on health management were gathered from randomly selected 120 FRC farmers in 6 veterinary ranges in Batticaloa district using a pre-tested structured questionnaire. Data analysis was conducted by obtaining frequencies of respondents belonging to each category using Minitab 16 software. Majority of farmers were females (53.3%). Most of farmers (74%) reared common village chicken and main rearing purpose was to sell eggs (46.67%). 22.5% of egg production was used for family consumption reflecting the importance of FRC farming in rural farm family nourishment. According to farmers' perception, infectious diseases (70.6%), parasitism (70.8%) and predation (40.8%) were the major constraint in FRC production. Coccidiosis (27%) and fowl pox (26%) were the main diseases reported. Only 31.7% of farmers treat the sick birds either by western (54.55%) or indigenous (45.45%) medicine. Vaccination was not practiced by majority (81.7%) of farmers since they are not aware on vaccination (68.04%). Parasitism was common during April-June (35%) or October-December (35.8%). Ectoparasitism was a common problem and carbaryl, engine oil or cooking oil and liquid paraffin were externally used to control and plastering the wall of chicken houses was practiced as hygienic practice. Endoparasitism was identified by 38% of farmers. Piperazine citrate was used by farmers without having veterinary advises. Apart from the western medicine, indigenous medicine such as; Aloe sp. (26%), pepper (9%), papaya leaves (4%) and milk (9%) were used to control endoparasites by 48% of farmers. In conclusion; according to farmers' perception, although infectious diseases and parasitism are the main constraints in FRC system, farmers' attention on health management is minimum. Hence, FRC system has potential to expand by improving health management.

Keywords: Diseases, Free range, Parasites, Village chicken