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THE MAIN HEALTH PROBLEMS OF POULTRY IN THE PERI-URBAN AREAS OF NAIROBI, KENYA

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INTRODUCTION

Kenya has a total area of 580,367 km², about the size of Texas. Only about 20 percent of Kenya’s land is considered to have high or medium potential for farming or intensive livestock production. Another 10 percent of the land is categorised as marginal for agriculture, while the remaining 70 percent is used for extensive grazing or taken up by national parks and forests. With a population of about 28 million, Kenya has one of the highest agricultural population densities in the world when its agro-climatic is taken into consideration (Migot-Adholla et al., 1994). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that Kenya is a developing country with a rapid population growth rate of about 3% which is also associated with a rapid rural-urban migration. There is therefore high demand for the available agricultural land. This has resulted in many people resorting to poultry production which requires little land especially in the peri-urban areas which can readily supply the cities with poultry products with few transport costs.

Poultry keeping is practised by about 90% of rural households but about 80% are indigenous/local chickens. The rest of the birds are commercial hybrids (pullets and broilers) which are mainly raised in the peri-urban areas of main towns (National Poultry Survey, 1979). One of the major threats to this trend of poultry development is due to the losses leading to poor weight gains, high mortalities and morbidities (Gitao and Mbuthia, 1993). In this study therefore, 100 farms with various health problems were visited and an analysis was done on the types of the different health problems.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The Veterinary University Clinic is situated 15 km from Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. The poultry clinic offers services to farmers in the peri-urban areas of Nairobi. In 1994, one hundred farms around the University poultry clinic service were visited. These farms were visited after their owners reported various health problems in their flocks. The various housing, nutritional and management methods were examined. The farms were revisited and the success or failure of