

Characterization of Indigenous Poultry Production Systems in the Nkonkobe Municipality, Eastern Cape Province South Africa

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ABSTRACT A characterization of indigenous poultry production was carried out to ascertain the production systems employed by the indigenous poultry farmers over the years. A survey of 312 households was conducted in 14 villages in the Nkonkobe Municipality using structured questionnaires. Information was collected on demographic database, chicken housing, and feeding and health management. Descriptive data analysis was used. Findings revealed that keeping of indigenous poultry was popular (89.8%), most (76%) were owned by adult females who are mostly (71.8%) clustered in the age range of 46 years and above. Their literacy level was high, as the majority (71.8%) attained primary and secondary education. Mean flock size was 29.98 per household with the majority (69.5%) rearing birds for home consumption. An extensive system of production was common with housing provided at night for protection against predators and theft. Supplementary feeding was common, as was regular provision of water to the flock. The use of Aloe ferox as prophylactic treatment (94.3%) and as a booster of immunity (81.8%) to diseases was commonly practiced. Mortality in adult birds was uncommon but was high (48.1%) in chicks within six weeks after hatching. Indigenous poultry farmers face some challenges among which are, the poor housing that exposed the birds to inclement weather, predator attacks and stock theft, high mortality of chicks after hatching and expensive feed for the flock. It is, therefore, recommended that institutional support should be provided towards harnessing the potentialities of the farmers in all stages of production for sustainable up-scaling.