

Management Practices and Attitudes of Buy-Back Farmers towards Broiler Chicken Welfare; Gampaha District, Sri Lanka

GGULB Senevirathna¹, RMAS Bandara^{2*}, WPCG Weerasinghe¹ and TS Samarakone¹

¹Department of Animal Science, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka

²Department of Livestock Production, Faculty of Agricultural Sciences,

Sabaragamuwa University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

*rmamilabandara@gmail.com

The buy-back system is well established in the current broiler chicken industry in Sri Lanka. Stockman's attitude always affects the welfare of poultry and management practices. This study assessed some key management practices and attitudes of the buy-back farmers towards broiler welfare. A total of forty poultry farmers engaged in buy-back system in Gampaha District, Sri Lanka were interviewed via telephone conversations using an open structured questionnaire. Relationships between variables were computed by Ordinal Logistic Regression. The majority of the farmers were male (82.1%), were at the age of 35-50 years (56.4%) and had more than 5 years of experience with buy-back system. The most popular flock sizes were 1000-5000 birds (64.1%). All farmers used open-sided houses. Overall, 94.5% of farmers isolate sick birds but no one euthanize severely injured/sick birds. Many farmers provide medication for the sick birds (71.8). More than half of the farmers were not aware of the concept of farm animal welfare (56.4%). Attitude on livestock welfare, transportation and slaughtering compared with gender, age, experience and education resulted in no significant differences. The majority of farmers were uncertain whether poultry should be free from fear (99%) and pain (94.8%), transport cause stress (89.7%), and stunning reduce pain (89.6%) or not. There was a trend to be significant ($P=0.051$) of welfare awareness (Yes) with the attitude of the way of handling is important. Many farmers stated that handling does not affect meat quality (82.4%) and does not cause pain and stress to birds (51.3%). When flock size increased, farmers awareness of the pain of birds is decreased ($P=0.0001$). Results revealed that the majority of buy-back farmers had negative or neutral attitudes towards poultry welfare, and management practices were mainly production oriented. We suggest poultry welfare awareness programs would enhance the positive attitude of the farmers, ensuring welfare of broiler chickens.

Keywords: *Attitude, Broiler Chickens, Buy-back Farmers, Welfare*