

Rodents Control in Poultry Production; Harnessing Conflicting Animal Welfare Interests in Developing Countries

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Abstract : An aspect of biosecurity measures to ensure good welfare for chickens is rodents' control. Rats and mice are rodents commonly found in poultry houses in most of the African countries. More than 20,000 species of rat have been identified in Africa among which are; Black house rats (*Rattus rattus*), East African mole rat (*Tachyorcytes splendens*), Naked mole rat (*Heterocephalus glaber*), Zambian mole rat (*Fukomys mechowii*), African grass rat (*Arvicanthis niloticus*), Nigerian mole rat (*Cryptomys foxi*), Target rat (*Stochomys longicaudatus*) and West African Shaggy rat (*Dasymis rufulus*). Apart from being destructive, rats and mice are voracious in that they compete with chickens for feed and water thereby causing economical losses to the farmer, they are also vectors to many pathogens of poultry diseases such as Salmonellosis, colibacillosis, ascariasis, coryza, pasteurellosis and mycoplasmosis. As bad as these rodents are to the poultry farmers, they are good sources of animal protein to local hunters and other farmers in most African countries. Rat is considered a delicacy in Nigeria and many other African countries hence the need to investigate into how the rats species will not go into extinction. Rodents are usually controlled by poultry farmers with the use of rodenticides which can either be anticoagulant or stomach poison, and with the use of baits. However, elimination of rats and mice is being considered as callous act against these species of animal and their natural existence as human food also. This paper therefore suggests that sanitation methods such as feed removal from rats and mice, controlling feed and water spillage, proper disposal of waste eggs, dead birds and garbage, keeping the surroundings of the poultry clean; rodent proofing by making it difficult for rodents to enter the poultry houses are some of the humane ways of controlling rodents in poultry production to avoid improving the welfare of a particular animal at the expense of the other.

Keywords : management, poultry, rodents, welfare

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