

A cross-sectional study was conducted to establish the characteristics of rural poultry production in Nyandarua, Nakuru and Laikipia districts of Kenya. Sites of diverse agroecological zones (AEZ) in the 3 districts were selected, thus Ol Kalou in Nyandarua, Njoro in Nakuru and Ng'arua in Laikipia. Each site was divided into 4 clusters according to AEZ and land size. Systematic sampling techniques were applied to select farmers. A checklist was then used to collect the baseline information for every household. The study revealed that the average flock size was 17.3 chickens with Ng'arua region demonstrating the largest flock size of 21 chickens. The purpose of rearing indigenous chickens were stated as home consumption and sale of eggs and meat, hatching eggs, and as gifts. Farmers in Ng'arua region reported the highest sale of eggs and chicken meat. The average number of broodings per year, number of eggs laid before a chicken becomes broody, eggs set for hatching and hatchability was 2.5, 16.5, 11.1 and 84.2%, respectively. The average chick mortality reported by farmers in the first eight weeks was 47.9%. Diseases especially Newcastle, were cited as the main cause of mortality. Farmers did not commonly practice selection for genetic improvement, but occasionally they purchased a cock or hen to control inbreeding. In all the 3 regions, 78.4% of the respondents indicated that women took greater responsibility and decision making in the production of indigenous chickens; 54.8% of farmers used different herbs to treat and control diseases. Conventional vaccination, disinfection and deworming rarely practiced. On most farms, chickens were left to scavenge around the homestead, often they were supplemented with kitchen leftovers and a handful of grains. The survey results demonstrated that there was potential for improving rural poultry production through interventions using appropriate technologies that are currently on-shelf.