**Ducks in rural and semi-urban poultry production.**

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**ABSTRACT**

Poultry are majority livestock in Kenya. At 71, 000, the duck population is a small but it contributes significantly to the smallholder economy in the semi-urban and some rural areas. They however, are sizable number among the other farmed birds when chickens are excluded. As local chickens they are reared in order to provide protein in terms of eggs and duck meat, to meet some financial needs, and as a socio-cultural bird for the smallholder farmers. The common local ducks are crosses of Muscovy, Pekin, and Aylesbury. They are on average 4-18 with a a range of 1 to 85 in flock. Most of them are under free-range management and a few under semi-intensive management. Housing, feeding and watering is similar to that of the local chickens, although they need more water than chicken due to their feeding habits, swimming and cooling of the body. A study was carried out on ducks in Machakos (Athi River), Kiambu (Githithuri and Kikuyu), Kiaiadi( Ngong), and Nairobi (Embakasi, Dagoreti, Kibera, Westlands) where the management of ducks was found to be similar, though in some aspects were in contrast to that of local chickens. They were found to lay as many eggs as local chickens that were bigger, more fertile and had a higher hatchability rates. Ducklings had high growth rate such that at 4 months the drakes were on average 2.5 kilograms while the ducks were 1.5 kilograms in body weight. Their main constraints were inadequate feed, poor housing and diseases. Some of the diseases are specific to the duck while others like fowls cholera, shared with other farm birds. Up to date research findings on *Pasteurella multocida* in the area are outlined. The duck are generally resistant to common poultry diseases including Newcastle disease, which can infect them but may not cause serious disease. If improved, so as to enhance their productivity, the local duck can complement or be an alternative poultry to local chickens in semi-urban and some rural areas. Research methodologies that encourage duck production with women participation, appropriate breed selection, improved policy issues and marketing strategies can make local ducks a tool for poverty alleviation, provides food security and gender empowerment.