

Abstract

A study was carried out in November 2008 and March 2009 to investigate the pathology, prevalence and intensity associated with *Echidnophaga gallinacea* infestations of free range local ducks. The ducks were categorized into ducklings (<2 months), growers (2 to 6 months) and adult ducks (>6 months). A total of 47 adults, 50 growers and 48 ducklings comprising 77 females and 68 males were sampled. Each duck was subjected to a thorough clinical examination with emphasis on the cutaneous system and observations recorded. Body, head and leg skins were examined and identified parasites quantified. Parts of the skin were collected for histopathology processing, examined and the severity of the lesions determined. The data obtained was entered in Microsoft Excel and analyzed using Chi square (χ^2), t-test and one-way analysis of variance. *Echidnophaga gallinacea* (the stick-tight flea of poultry) was the only ectoparasites observed in 51/145 ducks (35.17 %). Grower ducks had a 47.06 % prevalence which was higher than ducklings (31.37 %) and adult birds (21.57 %). Female ducks had a higher prevalence (58.82 %) than male ducks (41.18 %). Thika Central District had the highest prevalence of *Echidnophaga gallinacea* infestation of 45.09 %, Embakasi (25.49 %), Kasarani (15.69 %) and Westlands (13.73 %). The study documents *Echidnophaga gallinacea* species in different age and sex of ducks for the first time in Kenya. Their control strategy and impact on productivity of ducks need to be investigated.