

**ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT WELFARE STATUS OF BROILERS IN  
ANURADHAPURA DISTRICT, SRI LANKA**

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Assessment of broiler welfare is important to provide information to make evidence-based decisions. Since scientific literature on broiler welfare in Sri Lankan conditions is limited, this study was aimed to assess the welfare status of broilers in the *Anuradhapura* district. Eleven divisional secretariat divisions were selected in the district for the survey. Using simple random sampling 32 farms were assessed and selected farms were based on the age of the birds. The descriptive analysis was done to evaluate the socio-economic and management conditions of the selected farms. Welfare assessments were calculated as criteria scores and interpreted according to methods given in the welfare quality protocol®. Correlations among measures were calculated using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The analysis of farm management condition indicated that average brooder mortality and final stocking density were 2.09% and 9 bird per m<sup>2</sup>, respectively. Though it is essential in a welfare perspective, none of the farmers provide darkness for broilers. The calculated scores based on the assessment indicated that none of the criteria recorded as excellent (above 80) or unacceptable scores (below 20). Further, enhanced scores (between 55 and 80) were reported for plumage cleanliness (60.27 ± 3.75), hock burn (57.05 ± 5.52), panting (61 ± 5.40), dust sheet test (79.38 ± 1.37), and stocking density (69.62 ± 3.47); and acceptable scores (between 20 and 55) were reported for footpad dermatitis (50.64 ± 5.20) and litter score (49.25 ± 4.74). There was a positive correlation between litter score and stocking density. Regression results revealed that stocking density ( $p < 0.05$ ) and hock burn ( $p < 0.1$ ) had a significant effect on average body weight. In conclusion, in the selected farms, broilers received either good or the minimum requirements in terms of assessed welfare criteria. The information gathered can be used to make decisions to improve broiler production and their welfare.

**Keywords:** Enhanced score, Welfare assessment, Welfare quality®