

POPULAR ARTICLE**ROLE OF VETERINARIANS IN THE POULTRY INDUSTRY:
A PRACTICAL PERSPECTIVE****Asok Kumar Mariappan**

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ABSTRACT

Generally, most of the diseases caused in chickens are due to faulty management practices. Thus, a veterinarian should have keen observation, and he/she has to utilize all his/her senses to identify the key problem in the flock. Apart from routine diagnostic skills utilizing post-mortem and laboratory investigation, it is required to employ all the observations to find out the actual problem in the flock and rectify the issues at the initial stage to maintain health in the flock. Thus, a veterinarian should employ a multidisciplinary approach in solving the problems of the farm, thus ensuring the livelihood of the farmers and, in turn, boosting the economy.

**INTRODUCTION**

Today's poultry industry has been transformed from a mere backyard venture into a highly organized industrial sector and plays a significant role in people's food security worldwide. Poultry eggs and meat are the most consumed food among animal proteins, and still increasing demand for these products worldwide. This leads to promising opportunities for the growth of the poultry sector and makes it one of the dynamically evolving industries among the agricultural sectors. These opportunities can be realized through adapting sophisticated management, improved genetics, advanced nutrition and disease control measures.

POULTRY PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

Two basic poultry production systems are present in India:

1. An industrial poultry sector
2. a small-scale production system/backyard poultry rearing

Various factors impacting the production efficiency of modern commercial chicken strains include genetics (70%), Nutrition (10%), environment (8%), diseases (7%) and managerial skills (5%). Today India is the third largest producer of eggs, the nineteenth largest producer of broilers, and the sixth in chicken meat production in the world. The sector is valued at about Rs.80000 crores at present. However, one of the looming threats to this organized sector is the occurrence of diseases in poultry and the economic downfall it causes to both backyards and organizes poultry farms.

VETERINARIAN PERSPECTIVE

Several persons share the responsibility for monitoring the health-related issues in chickens. The poultry veterinarian is responsible for developing and implementing suitable poultry health programs depending on the necessity. This health program varies from farm to farm and must be custom-designed to suit local conditions. This effort will maintain the proper health of poultry by which the farmers benefit, boosting the country's economy. Thus the veterinarian plays a pivotal role in managing the overall health of the poultry and indirectly boosting the country's economy. The key veterinary services to the poultry industry generally fall under three main categories viz., diagnostic, prophylactic and therapeutic services. Veterinarians generally provide all these services.

To cater for the needs of fast-growing poultry industry, the in-charge veterinarian/poultry consultant of the farm should have sound knowledge in all aspects of poultry science, including bird's anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, nutrition, pathology and other accessory but important attributes like biosecurity programs, vaccination programs, disease surveillance programs and sanitation programs.

The veterinarian should have a keen sense of observation during his farm visits, as a single finding which deviates from the normal rearing practices could save the lives of thousands of birds and prevent incurring monetary losses in terms of medicine /management costs. As a farm in charge, the veterinarian's role starts from setting up appropriate farm outlay suitable for local conditions, selecting the right type of birds, and charting the right feed/water schedule with appropriate components.

Generally, most of the diseases caused in chickens are due to faulty management practices. Thus, a veterinarian should have keen observation, and he/she has to utilize all his/her senses to identify the key problem in the flock.

- Before entering the poultry farm, the veterinarian should ensure suitable bio-security measures are being employed (sense of sight);
- After entering the poultry farm, a veterinarian has to ascertain the amount/intensity of light being provided (sense of sight);
- A veterinarian should ascertain the type of gas being build up in the house (sense of smell);
- A veterinarian should see whether the right type of feed is being served to the birds;
- A veterinarian should also see whether the proper amount of water is being provided (sense of touch);
- A veterinarian should sense whether the birds exhibit any abnormal sounds (sense of sound).

After sensing any abnormalities, he/ she has to take initial remedial steps to prevent future occurrences of this issue. Some issues we generally ignore but costs much to the farmers include ammonia build-up in the farm, nipple flow rate, water quality (pH and TDS), and proper mixture of various components in the feed. Therefore, apart from our routine diagnostic skills utilizing post-mortem and laboratory investigation, it is mandatory to employ all the observations to find out the actual problem in the flock and rectify the issues at the initial stage to maintain health in the flock. Thus, a veterinarian should employ a multidisciplinary approach in solving the problems of the farm, thus ensuring the livelihood of the farmers and, in turn, boosting the economy.

CONCLUSION

Generally, most of the diseases caused in chickens are due to faulty management practices. Thus, a veterinarian should have keen observation, and he/she has to utilize all his/her senses to identify the key problem in the flock. Apart from routine diagnostic skills utilizing post-mortem and laboratory investigation, it is required to employ all the observations to find out the actual problem in the flock and rectify the issues at the initial stage to maintain health in the flock. Thus, a veterinarian should employ a multidisciplinary approach in solving the problems of the farm, thus ensuring the livelihood of the farmers and, in turn, boosting the economy.
