

Indigenous Chicken Selection and Breeding

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Chicken Selection

Selection of healthy chicken is important to ensure a healthy flock with high productivity. It is important to look for different features in chicks, growers, hens and cocks. Select or buy new chicken early in the day, as stress from lack of water, feed and rest, will make them look sickly. The key features to look for in chicks are;

- Shiny, dry, thick and coloured down feathers
- Soft belly
- Clean, dry navel and clean feathers around the vent
- Thick shanks with spaced and straight toes
- Big clear eyes
- Lively behaviour



The key features to look for in growers, layers and cocks are

- Healthy appearance
- Shiny normal feathers
- Larger size than birds of the same age
- Clear shiny eyes
- Clean, dry beaks and nostrils
- Clean feathers around the vent
- Straight legs and toes

- Males are large relative to the hens and are mostly alert and protective

Additional features to look for in layers_are

- A red comb (more coloured when in lay)
- Pale legs when in lay
- The breast bone should not be too sharp

Breeding

Breeding is the process of mating selected individuals based on desired traits/characteristics. The result is a breed with unique features inherited from parents. Features such as the, colour of comb and feathers, ear lobes and shank are usually determined by the parents. A breed could have variations in plumage colour. Thus a white and a black hen may be a different variant of the same breed.

Different types of chicken breeds

Frizzled feathers, Naked-neck, Dwarf and the Normal type are commonly found in the warm regions. Naked-neck and Frizzled feathers are likely to be a natural adaptation to heat stress. Dwarf tend to be 2/3 of the normal chicken size, mostly because of the short shanks.

Chicken in commercial systems are usually kept for either egg or meat or both products. It is important to select chicken suitable for a specific production system and environment. The features include;



Layers are “boat-shaped” with a strong straight back.



Meat chicken e.g. broilers have long-legs and are, more upright with more developed breast muscles.



A dual-purpose breed e.g. KALRO improved chicken is a form in between the layers and meat chicken.

Spiking: *is the introduction of young cocks into an older flock to compensate for the decline in fertility.*

Indigenous chicken genotype.



Naked neck



Dwarf



Normal Feathered



Frizzled feathered

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