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## **Welfare issues in intensive broiler production on the perception reflected by different social strata: A case study in Matara district**

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Meeting the societal aspirations about animal welfare is essential to prioritize the welfare issues. The objective of this study was to identify and prioritize welfare issues of broiler production as perceived by broiler farmers, academics and general public. Adminstrating a questionnaire, information was collected (n=50; stratified random sampling for each category). Fifty welfare issues were classified under 5 domains; feed/water (FW), housing condition/stocking density (HCSD), natural behaviour/animal health (NBH), suffering/stress (SUS) and transportation. Respondents were requested to rank the importance of each issue to improve broiler welfare on a 5-point Likert Scale. Descriptive statistics were used. Irrespective of the social category, most important welfare domain was FW (87.3 % ± 0) followed by NBH (86.7 % ± 0), HCSD (85.8 % ± 0), SUS (85.2 % ± 0) and transportation (82.5 % ± 0). The most important issues identified were disease controlling, cleanliness of water and the amount of feed consumed. The top three important welfare domains for the general public were FW (83.7 %), NBH (82.7 %) and SUS (81.4 %). The highest concern for welfare was recorded by the academics (88.44 %) while that of the consumers was the lowest (81.44 %). The highest (88.4 %) and the lowest (83.18%) priorities were marked by above degree level respondents, followed by those studied up to A/L and O/L. Overall, the perception of poultry welfare is higher (87.34%) among the 30-50 years aged category. It is concluded that the perception on the welfare issues of commercial broiler production is influenced by social strata, their education level and age.

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