

## Trends of Exotic Chicken Dissemination in North Western Amhara, Ethiopia: Challenges and Opportunities

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### Abstract

This study was conducted in Banja and Burie districts of northwestern Amhara, Ethiopia to investigate the dissemination trends, challenges and opportunities of exotic chickens. Banja and Burie districts and six Kebeles (three/district) were purposively selected. A total 180 respondents were selected by systematic and simple random sampling techniques for the survey and data was collected using semi structured questionnaire. Chi-square test was employed for ordinal and nominal data. Bovans-Brown, Bovans-White (commercial layers) and Potchefstroom Koekoek (dual purpose) breeds are the most distributed exotic chickens in the both study areas. The results revealed that the majorities (91.12%) of distributed exotic chickens were kept in traditional/backyard production system.

Exotic chickens in both study areas were exposed for high mortality due traditional farmers' management practice. The major causes for chick death survey study were NCD and predator. Egg productivity, fast growth, survival, disease resistance and egg hatchability with the overall index value of 0.27, 0.24, 0.09, 0.31 and 0.10 were the first ranked traits, respectively. Due to lack of veterinary services and vaccine almost all exotic chicken owners have traditionally experienced to treat their sick chickens in the study areas. The current result revealed that having a huge number of exotic chicken breed populations in the study areas generally in the region, but this situation was a paradox. The major challenges to chicken production in both study areas were disease, predator, poor extension services, feed shortage and house problem which need to be considered in development plan of the districts.

**Keywords:** Challenges; Genotype; Management system; Mortality

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### Introduction

In Ethiopia chickens are the most widespread and almost every rural family owns chickens, which provide a valuable source of family protein and income (Tadelle, *et al.* 2003a). Distribution of pullets, cockerels, DOCs and fertile eggs, layers and duals breeds has been one of the poultry extension packages accomplished by the regional office of agriculture, since the last 20 years aiming at improving chicken

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production and productivity. Despite this large distribution of exotic chicken breeds, the contribution of exotic chicken in the current production system of the region like lack of knowledge on chicken husbandry, lack of extension follow up, high disease prevalence and predation are the limited factors mainly due to high mortality rate of chicks (Hailemariam., *et al.* 2006).

Most of the research work is still being carried out on intensive poultry production in Ethiopia, with modern housing and feeding systems but agro-ecologically based information on constraint of exotic chicken production is still scanty. Greater efforts have been made to transform the production system into a more commercialized and intensive large-scale system (Ashenafi, 2000). In addition, cross breeds and exotic breeds are multiplied in government owned poultry farms and distributed to individual farmers via the extension division of the Bureau of agriculture and rural development to be maintained and produced under the backyard management system.

Accordingly, Amhara region Livestock Resource Development and Promotion Agency (AR LSRDPA) schemed poultry development strategy starting from 2010 (AR LSRDPA, 2007). During the periods of 2010 to 2015 over 219,939 different exotic chicken breeds in the Northwestern Amhara region were disseminated mainly (39215 day-old) chicks recently which were extensively disseminated in rural areas of Banja and Burie districts by GOs and different NGOs to farmers from different poultry multiplication centers. The main purpose of the dissemination was to enable farmers to generate income through egg production (AR LSRDPA, 2007).

The productivity of disseminated exotic chicken was far below the possible expectations at smallholder farmer level and the country as well as the region couldn't fulfill the national demand. Having a huge number of exotic chicken breed populations distributed in the region, but this situation is a paradox. Therefore the objective of this paper was to study the dissemination trend, major challenges and opportunities of exotic chicken in North Western Amhara Region.

## Materials and Methods

### Description of the Study Area

#### Banja district

Banja district is one of the administrative districts of Awi zone in Amhara regional state of Ethiopia. This district was characterized by a predominantly mountainous location with latitude of 10°57'N 36°56'E that bounded in the south by Ankesha and Gougusa Shikudad woreda, in the west by Guangua woreda, in the north by Fagta Lakeoma woreda and in the east by Sekele woreda. The area is part of the north-western part of Ethiopian highlands where 80% of the area is (highland), 20% is (midland) (BDARDO, 2007). It has unimodal rainfall distribution pattern. The rainy season for the area starts in May and extends to the end of October. The district is located at latitude of 11°10' north and longitude of 36°15' east and 122 km far from the regional city Bahir Dar to south and 447km north to Addis Ababa. The average elevation of the district is 2560 m above sea level (BDARDO, 2007). The district has a total of 26 Kebeles. Like other parts of the country agriculture is the main economic activity and livestock supports the crop production. The district is classified into one agro climatic zone, which is highland with wet and cool weather condition (BDARDO, 2007).

#### Bure district

Bure district is located in the northern part of Ethiopia. The district has a total of 27 administrative Kebeles which 5 are urban and 22 are rural. Burie administrative and commercial center of the district is located 420 kms from Addis Ababa and 148 kms from Bahir Dar. The district has a total land area of 2207.2 km and the district has three agro climatic zones, 80%, w/Dega 10% Dega and 10% kola, respectively (BDARDO, 2007).

### Study Population

The populations studied were three different exotic chickens distributed by the government (GOs) and different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Banja and Burie districts, which are commercial layers (BB and BW) and dual purpose (PK) breeds.

District	Altitude	Annual RF	Mean Annual Temp	Human population	Total chicken Population	Indigenous chicken	Exotic chicken
Banja	1900-2700 Masl	2,200-2400 mm	12°-25°C	111,975	97497	78054	9443
Burie	700-2750 Masl	713-2832 mm	17-27°C	281,310	203079	183307	19772

**Table 1:** Ecological characteristics, human and chicken populations of in the both study areas.



**Figure 1:** Map of the study districts are indicated by arrows.



**Figure 2:** Bovans Brown, Bovans White (commercial layers) and Potchefstroom Koekoek (dual).

### Sampling methods

Two districts of Banja (highland) and Burie (midland) were purposively selected; six Kebeles which have been participating in improved poultry extension package were also selected purposively. The selection was done with the help of office of two districts agriculture livestock experts based on high potentiality of exotic chicken distribution from high and midland agro ecologies and 180 exotic chicken owner farmers were selected from household package beneficiary's registration book of each selected Kebeles were selected by using systematic and simple random sampling techniques for survey.

For the interview, a semi-structured questionnaire was prepared, pretested on two non-random sampled households from each study sites during the rapid field survey and the interview was conducted with the household head. Sampled respondents' personal observations and informal discussions with the experts and key informants were carried out. In addition to, semi-structured questionnaire survey and focus group discussion (FGD) work were employed to collect the required data. Experts from agriculture and rural development agents, extension staff, district administrators in both districts at each Kebeles also participated in the group discussions. Continuous supervision was considered to reduce error during data collection.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

#### **Questionnaire survey and group discussion**

The questionnaire survey was conducted on different aspects of the backyard poultry production systems and its challenges and pre-tested before the actual data collection. Group discussions were made with focus group established from each Kebeles with group comprising 5 to 7 members. Type of management system of chicken (backyard and semi-intensive), and cause and rate of mortality, season of chicken mortality, occurrence and severity of disease outbreak and other important aspects in chicken production were collected through group discussion. Ranking was considered to identifying the major constraints and farmer's perception on breed preference. So far participants were asked to rank their first, second, third and fourth of major constraints. Farmer's perception on breed preference and trait selection were analyzed and summarized by index method. Index was computed with the principle of weighted average according to the following formula.

#### **Data Management and Statistical Analysis**

Data was managed both in hard and soft copies. All collected data were entered into Microsoft Excel computer program. An observation on mortality was analyzed using the frequency procedure of chi-square and for major constraints and farmers' perception used ranking index.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Chicken Production System**

#### **Management system**

About (91.12%) of respondents were used backyard chicken management system in both study areas, whereas, (8.89%) of farmers were kept their chicken by semi-intensive management system (Table 2). According to the result obtained from group discussion, majority of the farmers kept exotic chickens extensively under traditional production systems. The reason might be created by poor awareness of farmers due to lack of strong extension service. This result is higher than with reported by (Ahmedin, 2014) in Gorogutu district (74.4%) extensively management practices. According to the previous report in the other parts of the study areas are similar to Addis and Malede (2014) who stated that all most all interviewed farmers in the north Gondar zone were practiced extensive production system.

#### **Feed and feeding practices**

About (72.77%) of the respondents were managed their exotic chickens under free scavenging system with no additional feed supplements (Table 2). The remaining (27.22%) of the exotic chickens are managed under free scavenging with additional feed. The cumulative feeding frequency (67.78%) of the respondents feed evening and morning, whereas morning, evening and afternoon (4.44%), afternoon only (12.22%), morning only (8.34%) and (7.22%) no feeding practices in both agro ecologies. Whereas, (82.78%) and (17.22%) of the respondents throw on the ground and on feeding trough were the major feeding practices in the study areas. About (90%) of the respondent stated that the season of feed shortage serious was in rainy season in both agro ecologies.

### Chicken house and watering practices of farmers

About (8.88%) of respondents were cleaning daily, while, (21.11%) of the respondents were reported of cleaning weekly as well as (65.56%) of the respondents were cleaning monthly and (13.33%) of the respondents did not use cleaning practices frequently in highland agro ecologies. Whereas (12.22%) of respondents were cleaning daily, (33.33%) of the respondents reported of cleaning weekly as well as about (43.33%) of the respondents were cleaning monthly and (11.11%) of the respondents were did not used cleaning practices frequently, respectively in high and midland agro ecology (Table 2). This result indicated that lack of frequent cleaning of chicken shelter can easily cause for infectious disease and increase mortality rate. From the total respondents (16.11%) of them kept their chicken at night sheltering place within separate shelter and in both agro ecologies, respectively.

Management practices (%)	Agro ecology		Cumulative % (N)
	Highland % (N)	Midland % (N)	
Backyard	95.56 (86)	86.67 (78)	91.12 (164)
Semi- intensive	4.44 (4)	13.33 (12)	8.89 (16)
Frequency of feeding (%)			
Morning, evening and afternoon	7.78 (7)	1.11 (1)	4.44 (8)
Morning and evening	66.67 (60)	68.89 (62)	67.78 (122)
Afternoon only	13.33 (12)	11.11 (10)	12.22 (22)
Morning only	12.22 (11)	18.89 (17)	15.56 (28)
Overall	100 (90)	100 (90)	100 (180)
Feeding practice (%)			
Throw on the ground	95.56 (86)	70 (63)	82.78 (149)
On feeding trough	4.44 (4)	30 (27)	17.22 (31)
Feed resources (%)			
From the house	94.44 (85)	87.78 (79)	91.11 (164)
Purchased	5.56 (5)	12.22 (11)	8.89 (16)
Type of feeding system (%)			
Only scavenging	72.22 (65)	73.33 (66)	72.77 (131)
Scavenging with additional feed	27.78 (25)	26.67 (24)	27.22 (49)
Season of extra feed (%)			
Long-rainy(Jun-sept)	100 (90)	100 (90)	100 (180)
Short -rainy (Apr-Jun)	NA	NA	NA
Season of feed shortage serious (%)			
Rainy season (Jun-August)	100 (90)	95.56 (86)	90 (176)
Dry season (Feb.-May)	NA	NA	NA
Hygiene status (%)			
Daily	8.88 (8)	12.22 (11)	10.55 (19)
Weekly	21.11 (11)	33.33 (30)	22.77 (41)
Monthly	65.56 (59)	43.33 (39)	54.44 (98)
No cleaning practices	13.33 (12)	11.11 (10)	12.22 (22)
Housing type (%)			
In bamboo cage	26.67 (24)	23.33 (21)	25 (45)

In the family house	47.78 (43)	40 (36)	43.89 (83)
Night separate shelter	4.44 (4)	27.78 (25)	16.11 (29)
Separate house with other animal	21.11 (19)	8.89 (8)	15 (27)
Watering practices (%)			
Once a day at any time	85.56 (77)	88.89 (80)	87.22 (157)
Twice/day	14.44 (13)	11.11 (10)	12.77 (23)

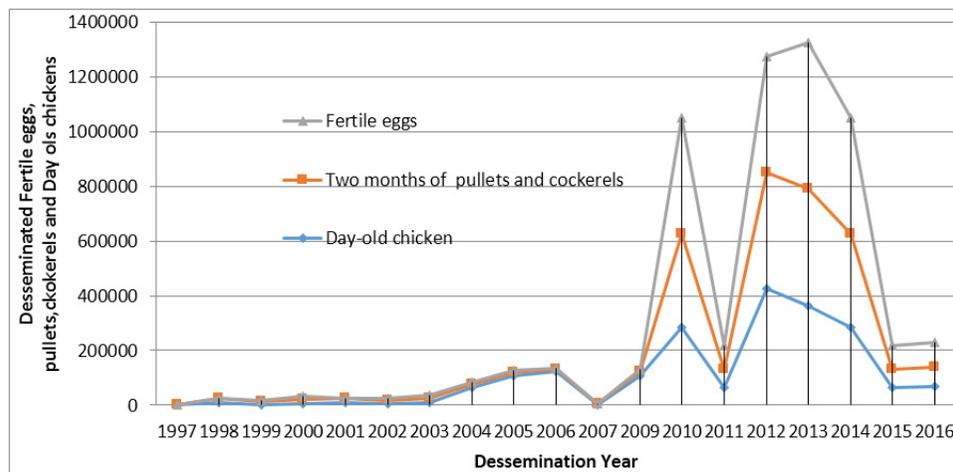
NA = Not available

**Table 2:** Chicken management systems, feed and feeding practices in the study areas.

### Exotic Chicken Breed Dissemination Trend in Amhara Region

Introduction of exotic breeds of chicken into northwestern part of Amhara Region have been conducted over the last two decades and the trend is increasing in the region (Figure 3). Such massive introduction of exotic genotypes was conducted via distribution of fertile eggs, day-old chickens, crossbred pullets and exotic cockerels. However, neither the exotic chicken breed/crossbred increased in sizes nor the egg production in the areas distributed (Figure 3).

Accordingly, the Bureau of the Amhara National Regional State of Agriculture and Rural Development (BoARD) schemed poultry development strategy starting from 2010 (Figure 3). The main purpose of the strategy was to enable farmers to generate income through rearing day-old chickens of three exotic breeds, Bovans-Brown (BB), Potchefstroom Koekoek (PK) and Bovans white breeds (BW) which were hatched and distributed from poultry multiplication centers located at Andassa, Kombolcha and Ethio-chick. During the periods of 2010 to 2016 over 32,134,426 (31,319,335 day-old chickens, 642378 two month pullets and cockerels and 172713 fertile eggs) were distributed to in the region (Figure 3).



**Figure 3:** Trends of exotic chicken distribution in Amhara region.

According to the (CSA, 2015/16); there were around 18 million chicken populations in Amhara region, accounting to 2.9% of the national chicken population. Distribution of pullets, cockerels, day-old chickens and fertile eggs, layers and duals purpose breeds, has been one of the poultry extension packages accomplished by the Regional Office of Agriculture, since the last 20 years, aiming at improving chicken production and productivity. The highest chicken population of the region (total chicken population of the region is 18,031,121 (206 200, 513705 and 17311216 exotic, hybrid and indigenous, respectively is found in Amhara region (CSA, 2015/16) (Figure 4).

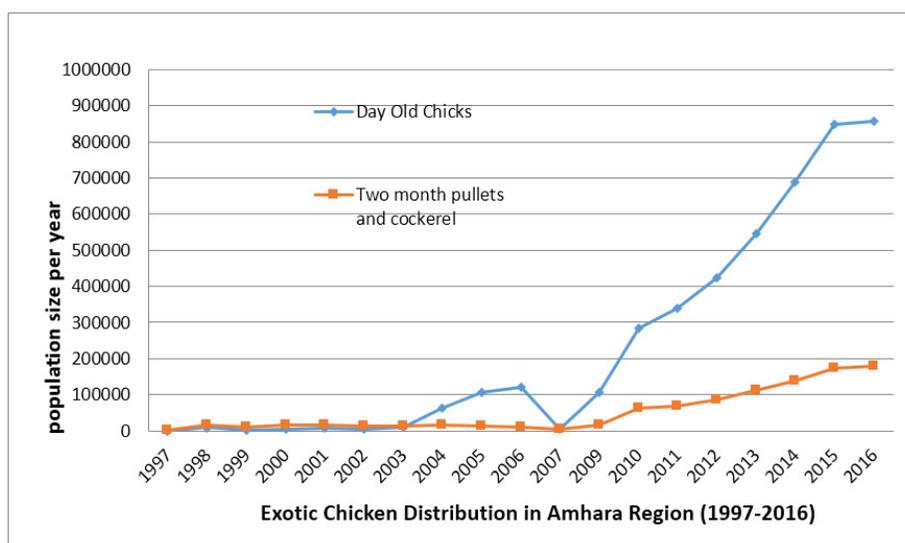


Figure 4: Trends of exotic Chicken distribution in Amhara region (1997-2016).

#### Perceptions of Farmers on day old chick Distribution and Management

The result obtained from key informants during group discussion, among Bovans white and Koekoek breeds with the index value of 0.23 and 0.25 were more preferred breeds by farmer's as first and second ranked, respectively in highland and mid land (Table 3). Bovans Brown chicken was least preferred breed by farmers because of its poor productivity during feed shortage and low resistance to disease. The merits mentioned by farmers for their breed preference were like egg productivity, fast growth, survival (adaptability), disease resistance and egg hatchability with the overall index value of 0.27, 0.24, 0.09, 0.31 and 0.10 were the first ranked traits, respectively.

According to farmer's perception on adaptability of distributed exotic chicken breeds during group discussion stated that almost all farmers did not like distribution of day old chick in both agro ecologies. The reason might be associated due to poor adaptation to the new production environment. The adaptation period helps the chick to grow at some level, in which able to scavenge their own feed at the village and protect from predators.

Parameters	Agro Ecology		Overall index
	Highland	Midland	
Farmers breed preference			
Bovans Brown	0.20 (3)	0.21(2)	0.23 (2)
Koekoek	0.22 (2)	0.25 (1)	0.33 (1)
Bovans white	0.23 (1)	0.19 (2)	0.26 (1)
Criteria for preference			
Egg productivity	0.41 (1)	0.38 (1)	0.27 (1)
Fast growth	0.25 (2)	0.27 (3)	0.24 (1)
Body weight	0.11 (2)	0.11 (4)	0.11(3)
Survival(adaptability)	0.11 (4)	0.17 (3)	0.31 (1)
Disease resistance	0.09 (6)	0.07 (5)	0.09 (1)
Egg size	0.35 (1)	0.26 (2)	0.16 (3)
Hatchability	0.26 (6)	0.37 (1)	0.10 (1)

Adapted breed			
Bovans Brown	0.22 (3)	0.23 (2)	0.22 (3)
Koekoek	0.33 (2)	0.30 (1)	0.27 (2)
Bovans white	0.34 (1)	0.22 (3)	0.35 (1)
Egg preferred breed type			
Bovans Brown	0.29 (1)	0.30 (1)	0.26 (1)
Koekoek	0.27 (2)	0.26 (2)	0.22 (2)
Bovans white	0.28 (1)	0.27 (1)	0.25 (1)
Reason of egg preferred			
Egg size	0.35 (1)	0.34 (1)	0.34 (1)
Egg color	0.37 (1)	0.33 (2)	0.35 (2)

**Table 3:** Farmers' perception and index with rating of trait of categories.

Index=sum of [3 for rank 1 + 2 for rank 2 + 1 for rank 3] for particular trait divide by sum of [3 for rank 1 + 2 for rank 2 + 1 for rank 3] for all traits.

### Challenges and opportunities of exotic chickens

#### Challenges

Under farmer management poultry production, the most respondents frequently mentioned diseases were as the first ranked chicken production problem in both agro ecologies followed by poor extension services was ranked as the first in highland, whereas, improved feed shortage as the second and fourth in mid and highland, respectively (Table 4), as the key informants indicated that during group discussion; the reason might be due lack of inputs like vaccine and poor attention for chicken health care in both agro ecologies as it is also reported by (Fessiha, *et al.* 2010a) in Ethiopia. Exotic chickens are poor scavengers as well as foragers and have low levels of disease tolerance, possess poor maternal qualities and are poor adapted to harsh conditions and good quality feeds as compared to the local breeds.

Major constraints	Agro ecology		
	Highland	Midland	Overall index
Poor extension services	0.29 (1)	0.25 (3)	0.26 (2)
Disease	0.23 (1)	0.32 (1)	0.3 (1)
Formulated feed shortage	0.06 (4)	0.29 (2)	0.16 (3)
Predator	0.28 (2)	0.16 (3)	0.3 (1)

**Table 4:** Major challenges of chicken production in the study area.

Index = sum of [3 for rank 1 + 2 for rank 2 + 1 for rank 3] for particular trait divide by sum of [3 for rank 1 + 2 for rank 2 + 1 for rank 3] for all traits.

#### Chicken Diseases and Control measures

About (70%) NCD (local name: Wararshe or Fengel ("kofis"), (4.44%) fowl pox (local name: Wotete) and (4.54%) coccidiosis (local name: maze) from highland. Whereas, about (46.67%) NCD (Wararshe or Fengel ("kofis"), (28.89%) fowl pox (Wotete) and (3.33%) Coccidiosis (maze) from midland were type of common disease, respectively (Table 5). This survey result showed that about (93.33%) and (61.80%) in highland, whereas, (6.67 %) and (7.87%) from midland of the respondents stated that early rainy (March-Jun) and

rainy season (Jun-Aug), respectively were season of chicken mortality due to disease outbreak. As the interviewed farmer respondents elicited that about (80%) and (60%) due to disease were caused for chicken death in high and midland agro ecologies, respectively. Information obtained from farmers during survey and group discussion that due to lack of veterinary services almost all exotic chicken owners have traditionally experienced to treat their sick chickens in both agro ecologies. Provision of lemon, fetto, areki and onion to sick chicken were the widely used traditional treatment in both agro ecologies. This result indicated that poor coverage of veterinary services might be negatively affected the production and productivity of exotic chicken breeds in both agro ecologies

Parameters	Agro Ecology		
	Highland % (N)	Midland % (N)	Cumulative % (N)
Local name of disease (%)			
NCD (local name: Fengel)	70 (63)	46.67 (42)	58.33 (105)
Fowl pox (local name: Wotete)	4.44 (4)	28.89 (26)	16.66 (30)
Coccidiosis (local name: Maz)	4.54 (4)	3.33 (3)	3.88 (7)
Mortality in age group (%)			
Chicks < 2 month	96.67 (87)	86.67 (78)	91.67 (165)
Layers	3.33 (3)	13.33 (12)	8.33 (15)
Cause of death (%)			
Disease	80 (72)	60 (54)	70 (126)
Predator	20 (17)	8.89 (36)	7.22 (54)
Disease symptom (%)			
Diarrhea	4.44 (4)	52.22 (47)	28.33 (51)
Dropping of wings and heads	91.11 (82)	33.33 (30)	62.22 (112)
Circling and paralysis	4.72 (4)	14.44 (13)	9.44 (17)
Season of chicken mortality (%)			
Early rainy (March-Jun)	93.33 (84)	61.80 (55)	77.56 (139)
Rainy season (Jun-Aug)	6.67 (6)	7.87 (7)	7.22 (13)

**Table 5:** Cause of deaths, disease symptoms and local name of chicken disease in Banja and Burie districts through survey.

### Opportunities

The main opportunity to increase chicken production and productivity is selection of indigenous chicken ecotypes and crossbreeding or upgrading by introduction of cocks, pullets and/or fertile eggs of high egg producing strains. Designing appropriate production system in respective urban, per-urban and rural areas would increase production and productivity. Generally, the productivity of scavenging village chicken could be enhanced by relatively simple changes in management techniques (feeding, housing and health care) that promote improvement in productivity and reduction in mortality.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Bovans-Brown, Bovans-White (commercial layers) and Potchefstroom Koekoek (dual purpose) breeds are the most distributed exotic chickens from Banja and Burie districts of high and midland agro ecologies, in addition to their production constraints are identified. The result revealed that exotic chickens in both study areas were exposed for high mortality due traditional farmers' management practice. The current finding revealed that having a huge number of exotic chicken breed populations distributed in the region, but this situation is a paradox. Majority of distributed exotic chickens were kept in traditional/backyard production system with low inputs in both

study areas. Disease, predator, feed shortage and poor extension services were the major barriers for distributed exotic chicken production in both study areas. Due to low supply of inputs like veterinary service (vaccine) almost all exotic chicken owners have traditionally experienced to treat their sick chickens in the study areas. The study districts should set pre-vaccination scheduled program in chicken before and after distribute of DOCs to backyard producers to reduce the mortality rate. Designing appropriate production system and management in respective urban, per-urban and rural areas could help so as to increase production and productivity of exotic chickens.

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