

EFFECT OF PROTEIN LEVEL IN THE DIET OF NAKED NECK HENS ON EGG  
PRODUCTION, HATCHABILITY AND CHICK PRODUCTIVITY

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## DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the degree of Master of Agricultural Management (Animal Production) has not been submitted by me for the degree at this or any other University, this is my own work in design and execution, and that all material contained herein has been acknowledged.

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Date

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Florence, and my father, Neam Mohlala, for supporting and raising me.

## ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to examine the effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on egg production, hatchability and chick productivity. The first part of the experiment determined the effect of protein level on feed intake, number of eggs produced, egg weight, egg white nitrogen content, egg yolk nitrogen content, egg hatchability and chick hatch-weight. A total of 25 hens aged 30 weeks were confined in cages and fed diets differing in protein content. A complete randomized design, comprising of diets differing in protein levels (P<sub>12.94%</sub>, P<sub>13.94%</sub>, P<sub>14.38%</sub>, P<sub>15.75%</sub> and P<sub>18.13%</sub> CP), replicated five times with one hen in each replicate was used. Semen was collected from one cock to fertilize all hens. Protein level had an effect on (P<0.05) feed intake and egg white nitrogen content. However, protein level of the diet of hens had no effect (P>0.05) on the number of eggs produced, egg white nitrogen content, egg yolk, egg weight, egg hatchability and chick hatch-weight. Quadratic analyses indicated that feed intake, number of eggs produced, egg weight, egg white nitrogen content, egg yolk nitrogen content, hatchability and chick hatch-weight were optimized at different protein levels of 14.7 (r<sup>2</sup> = 0.623), 14.9 (r<sup>2</sup> = 0.568), 13.9 (r<sup>2</sup> = 0.094), 18.2 (r<sup>2</sup> = 0.563), 15.1 (r<sup>2</sup> = 0.424), 15.9 (r<sup>2</sup> = 0.451) and 15.9 % (r<sup>2</sup> = 0.898) , respectively.

The second part of the experiment determined the effect of protein level of hens on productivity of their progenies from a day old up to 13 weeks of age. A total of 95 chicks hatched from the first part of the study were assigned to 20 floor pens according to the number of chicks hatched. Chicks had an average initial live weight of 35 ± 2 g per bird. The chicks were fed the same commercial grower diet and fresh water *ad libitum* up to seven weeks of age. Protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens had an effect (P<0.05) on feed intake, live weight and feed conversion ratio of chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age. However, protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens had no effect (P>0.05) on growth rate and mortality of chickens from a day old to seven weeks of age. Feed intake, feed conversion ratio, growth rate and mortality of chickens were optimized at

different protein levels of 15.8 ( $r^2 = 0.298$ ), 16.1 ( $r^2 = 0.236$ ), 16.1 ( $r^2 = 0.077$ ) and 14.3 % ( $r^2 = 0.617$ ), respectively.

Protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens had no effect ( $P > 0.05$ ) on feed intake, growth rate and feed conversion ratio of both their male and female progenies between eight and 13 weeks of age. Protein levels of the diet of hens had an effect ( $P < 0.05$ ) live weight of their male progenies and carcass weights of both their male and female progenies at 13 weeks of age. However, the level of protein of the diet of hens had no effect ( $P > 0.05$ ) on live weight of their male progenies, and breast meat yield, breast meat nitrogen content and fat pad weight of both their male and female progenies at 13 weeks of age. Live weight, breast meat yield, breast meat nitrogen content and fat pad weight of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age were optimized at different protein levels of the diets of hens of 18.9 ( $r^2 = 0.666$ ), 15.6 ( $r^2 = 0.081$ ), 15.4 ( $r^2 = 0.786$ ) and 17.7 % ( $r^2 = 0.775$ ), respectively. Similarly, live weight, carcass weight, breast meat yield, breast meat nitrogen content and fat pad weight of their female progenies at 13 weeks of age were optimized at different protein levels of 15.7 ( $r^2 = 0.294$ ), 15.4 ( $r^2 = 0.180$ ), 15.8 ( $r^2 = 0.059$ ), 15.1 ( $r^2 = 0.882$ ) and 16.1 % ( $r^2 = 0.405$ ), respectively.

It is concluded that protein level of the diet of the hen may affect its productivity and that of its progeny. However, the calculated protein levels for optimum productivity will depend on the production parameter in question.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	iv
Abstract	v
Table of contents	vii
List of tables	ix
List of figures	xii
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background	2
1.2 Problem statement	2
1.3 Motivation	3
1.4 Objectives	3
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.0 Literature review</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Biochemical functions of protein	5
2.3 Effect of dietary protein level on egg production and composition	5
2.4 Effect of dietary protein level on egg hatchability	9
2.5 Effect of dietary protein level of the hen on chick productivity of indigenous chickens	9

2.6 Conclusion	10
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.0 Materials and methods</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1 Study site	12
3.2 Preparation of the house	12
3.3 Experimental procedure, dietary treatments and design	12
3.4 Data collection	14
3.5 Chemical analysis	15
3.6 Statistical analysis	15
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.0 Results</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>5.0 Discussion, conclusions and recommendation</b>	<b>66</b>
5.1 Discussion	67
5.2 Conclusions	72
5.3 Recommendation	74
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>6.0 References</b>	<b>75</b>



## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
3.01	Nutrient composition of the diets for Naked neck hens (units are in g/kg DM except energy as MJ ME/kg DM feed and dry matter as g/kg feed).	13
4.01	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on live weight (kg/hen), feed intake (g/hen/day), number of eggs over 10 days (eggs/ hen/10 days), egg weight (g/egg), egg yolk nitrogen content (%), egg white nitrogen content (%), egg hatchability (%) and chick hatch-weight (g/chick)	20
4.02	Protein levels (%) of the diets of Naked neck hens for optimal feed intake (g/bird/day), number of eggs over 10 days (eggs/bird/10 days), egg weight (g/egg), egg yolk nitrogen content (%), egg white nitrogen content (%), egg hatchability (%) and chick hatch-weight (g/chick)	28
4.03	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on feed intake (g/bird/day), growth rate (g/bird/day), feed conversion ratio (g DM feed/g live weight gain) and mortality (%) of their chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age	30
4.04	Protein levels of the diets of Naked neck hens for optimal feed intake (g/bird/day), growth rate (g/bird/day), feed conversion ratio (g DM feed/g live weight gain) and mortality (%) of their chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age	36
4.05	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on dry	37

	matter intake (g/bird/ day), dry matter digestibility (%), apparent metabolisable energy (MJ/kg DM), nitrogen retention (g/bird/day) and live weight (g/bird), of their progenies at seven weeks of age	
4.06	Protein levels of the diets of naked neck hens for optimal dry matter intake (g/bird/day), dry matter digestibility (%), apparent metabolisable energy (MJ/kg DM), nitrogen retention (g/bird/day) and live weight (g/bird/day) of their progenies at seven weeks of age	43
4.07	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on feed intake (g/bird/day), growth rate (kg), feed conversion ratio (g DM feed/g live weight gain) and mortality (%) of their progenies from eight to 13 weeks of age	46
4.08	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on live weight (g/bird), carcass weight (g/bird), breast meat yield (g), breast meat nitrogen content (%) and fat pad (g) of their progenies at 13 weeks of age	47
4.09	Protein levels of the diets of hens for optimal live weight (g/bird), carcass weight (g/bird), breast meat yield (g), breast meat nitrogen content (%), and fat pad weight (g) of their progenies at 13 weeks of age	58
4.10	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on dry matter intake (g/bird/day), dry matter digestibility (%), nitrogen retention (g/bird/day), apparent metabolisable energy (MJ/kg DM) and live weight (kg/bird) of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	59

4.11	Protein levels of the diets of Naked neck hens for optimal dry matter intake (g/bird/day), dry matter digestibility (%), apparent metabolisable energy (MJ/kg DM), nitrogen retention and live weight (kg/bird) of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	65
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## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
4.01	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on feed intake	21
4.02	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on the number of eggs produced over 10 days	22
4.03	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on egg weight	23
4.04	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on egg yolk nitrogen content	24
4.05	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on egg white nitrogen content	25
4.06	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on egg hatchability	26
4.07	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on chick hatch-weight	27
4.08	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on feed intake of their chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age	31

4.09	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on growth rate of their chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age	32
4.10	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on feed conversion ratio of their chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age	33
4.11	Effect of protein level of the diets of hens on mortality of the chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age	34
4.12	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on live weight of their chicks from a day old up to seven weeks of age	35
4.13	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on live weight of their progenies at seven weeks of age	38
4.14	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on dry matter intake of their progenies at seven weeks of age	39
4.15	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on dry matter digestibility of their progenies at seven weeks of age	40
4.16	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on apparent metabolisable energy of their progenies at seven weeks of age	41
4.17	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on nitrogen retention of their progenies at seven weeks of age	42

4.18	Effect of protein level of the diets of Naked neck hens on live weight of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	48
4.19	Relationship between protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens and carcass weight of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	49
4.20	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on breast meat yield of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	50
4.21	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on breast meat nitrogen content of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	51
4.22	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on fat pad weight of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	52
4.23	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on live weight of their female progenies at 13 weeks of age	53
4.24	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on carcass weight of their female progenies at 13 weeks	54
4.25	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on breast meat yield of their female progenies at 13 weeks of age	55
4.26	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on breast meat nitrogen content of their female progenies at 13 weeks of age	56

4.27	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on fat pad weight of their female progenies at 13 weeks of age	57
4.28	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on dry matter intake of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	60
4.29	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens of dry matter digestibility of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	61
4.30	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on apparent metabolisable energy of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	62
4.31	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on nitrogen retention of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	63
4.32	Effect of protein level of the diet of Naked neck hens on live weight of their male progenies at 13 weeks of age	64