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Assessment of some performance characteristics in broiler finisher chickens fed rations with or without a probiotic (RE3)

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High unemployment level among the youth, including fresh university graduates, is presently a worrying social problem in Ghana. In tackling the problem head on, the University of Cape Coast has introduced mandatory courses in entrepreneurship for all its students; this skill must be demonstrated in final year project dissertations to graduate. The subject matter for my studies, as a student of agriculture, covered profitable small-scale poultry production utilizing modern developments in the industry. Probiotics are live microbial feed supplements which beneficially affect host animal by improving microbial intestinal balance. The field study assessed effects of a probiotic (RE3) on growth performance of broiler finisher chickens. Eighty day-old Ross breed broiler chickens were brooded together for four weeks and assigned randomly thereafter to ten floor pens, representing two treatments: a broiler finisher control diet i.e. without RE3 (T2) and the same diet with RE3 incorporated at a rate of 68 ml per 45 kg of feed (T1). Birds were finished on the experimental diets for four weeks on deep litter; treatments had five replicates, each with eight birds. Birds were offered feed and water *ad libitum* and consumption of each measured daily for each pen. Weekly body weight gain and feed conversion efficiency on the feed additive were not significantly ($P>0.05$) improved compared with the control. Similarly, birds in both treatments did not show significant ($P>0.05$) improvements in feed and water intake, as well as in dressing percentage. It was concluded that inclusion of the probiotic RE3 in the diet of broilers at the finisher stage, under conditions of this study, did not have any significant ($P>0.05$) effect on the performance characteristics assessed, as claimed by the manufacturers. These results were contrary to several other studies that appeared to show positive effects of inclusion of the additive on performance. Based on results from this trial, it is recommended that small-scale poultry producers, particularly fresh graduates trying to earn a living, should exercise caution before deciding to take on the extra cost of using the additive, as profit margins are already quite small and effects of additive are reported to vary depending on sanitary conditions on farms. It might be necessary to also test samples of the RE3 on sale for their efficacy under local storage conditions

Biography

Bridgette N D Tagoe is currently an MPhil student at the Crop Science department of the School of Agriculture, at the University of Ghana, Legon. She holds a BSc degree in Agriculture from the University Cape Coast and a Diploma in Post-harvest Technology also at the University of Ghana. She is also a trained Teacher by profession with fourteen years of teaching experience.

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