



## Indigenous Chickens of India and Their Performance Characteristics

J. Subhashini<sup>1</sup> and R. Vinoth<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1 & 2</sup>Teaching Assistant, Institute of Agriculture, Kumulur

Corresponding Author: [subhabvsc@gmail.com](mailto:subhabvsc@gmail.com)

### **Introduction**

Indigenous chickens play an important role in the rural economy of the most of the developing countries. These indigenous chickens are well known for their climatic adaptability, disease resistance. They are comparatively hardier and needs less health care than exotic breeds. Some of the indigenous breeds of chicken are Aseel, Kadaknath, Naked neck, Frizzle, Nicobari, Ghagus, Busra, Chittagong, Miri and Brown desi etc.

### **Aseel**

Aseel is the indigenous chicken breed of India which is well known for its hardiness, high stamina, majestic gait and fighting qualities. The breed is the native of Andhra Pradesh. The word Aseel means pure. The remarkable endurance of this breed is even during the most critical stages of fight the bird prefers death to dishonour. The Aseel is therefore known to all game lovers all over the world due to its specific characteristics. The Aseel has short, broad breast, straight back and close-set strong tail root. The important feature of this bird is the thick and long neck, long and slender face (without feathers), short beak, short and small comb, ear lobes and the absence of wattles. The legs of this breed are long, strong and straight. The Aseel cock comes in many colours like red (known as Dega), golden and red spotted plumage (known as Reza), blue black (known as Mazzara), spotted (known as Poola Mazzara), white and black spots (known as Savala), pure black (known as Kaki), hen like colouring (known as Petta maru) and white colour (Settuva). The average weight of two-year-old full-sized adult male varies between 5 to 8 kg. The average weight of a hen varies between 3 to 4 kg.

The bird Aseel is large built with noble looking and dignified appearance. The wattles are rudimentary. Pea comb is mostly found. The beak is short and well curved. The face is long and not covered with any feathers. Eyes are compact, well set and has bold look. The neck is long uniformly thick not fleshy. The general feathering is close, scanty and almost absent in the breast. The plumage has no fluff and the feathers are tough. The tail is small and legs are strong, straight, clean and set well apart. The birds have been traditionally bred for meat quality. They are not prolific layer with 36 to 60 eggs laid per year.

### **Performance characteristics**

- Body weight at 20 weeks of age: 1.2 kg
- Age at sexual maturity: 196 days
- Annual egg production: 92 numbers
- Egg weight at 40 weeks: 50 g
- Fertility: 66 %



- Hatchability: 63 %

### ***Kadaknath***

The bird Kadaknath is known as “Karuknozhi” in Tamil as the bird is having black flesh. The home tract of this bird is districts of Madhya Pradesh and adjoining districts of Rajasthan and Gujarat where the breed is popularly known as “Kalamasi”. These breeds are mostly reared by tribals and rural poor people in olden days, but now the breed is reared most of the people due its medicinal properties. The bird is considered to be sacred bird and offered as sacrifice to goddess after diwali.

Day old chicks are bluish to blackish in colour with irregular stripes on its back. The adult plumage varies from silver to gold beads to blue black without any beading. The skin, beak, shank, toes and soles of feet of males and females are dark grey colour. Even the comb, wattles and tongue also show as purplish blue. The specific feature is the shining blue tinge of ear lobes. The peculiarity of this breed is that the majority of the internal organs show the characteristic black pigmentation. The varying degree of blackish colouration is also found in the skeletal muscles, tendons, nerves, meninges, brain and bone marrow. The black colour of muscles and tissues is due to the deposition of melanin pigment a condition known as “fibromelanosis”.

The flesh of this breed though black and unattractive to look at, it is considered not only as delicacy but also of medicinal value. The Kadaknath blood is used in the treatment of chronic heart disease in human beings. The meat and eggs are richest source of protein and iron.

### ***Performance characteristics***

- Body weight at 20 weeks of age: 0.9 kg
- Age at sexual maturity: 180 days
- Annual egg production: 105 numbers
- Egg weight at 40 weeks: 49 g
- Fertility: 55 %
- Hatchability: 52 %

### ***Naked Neck***

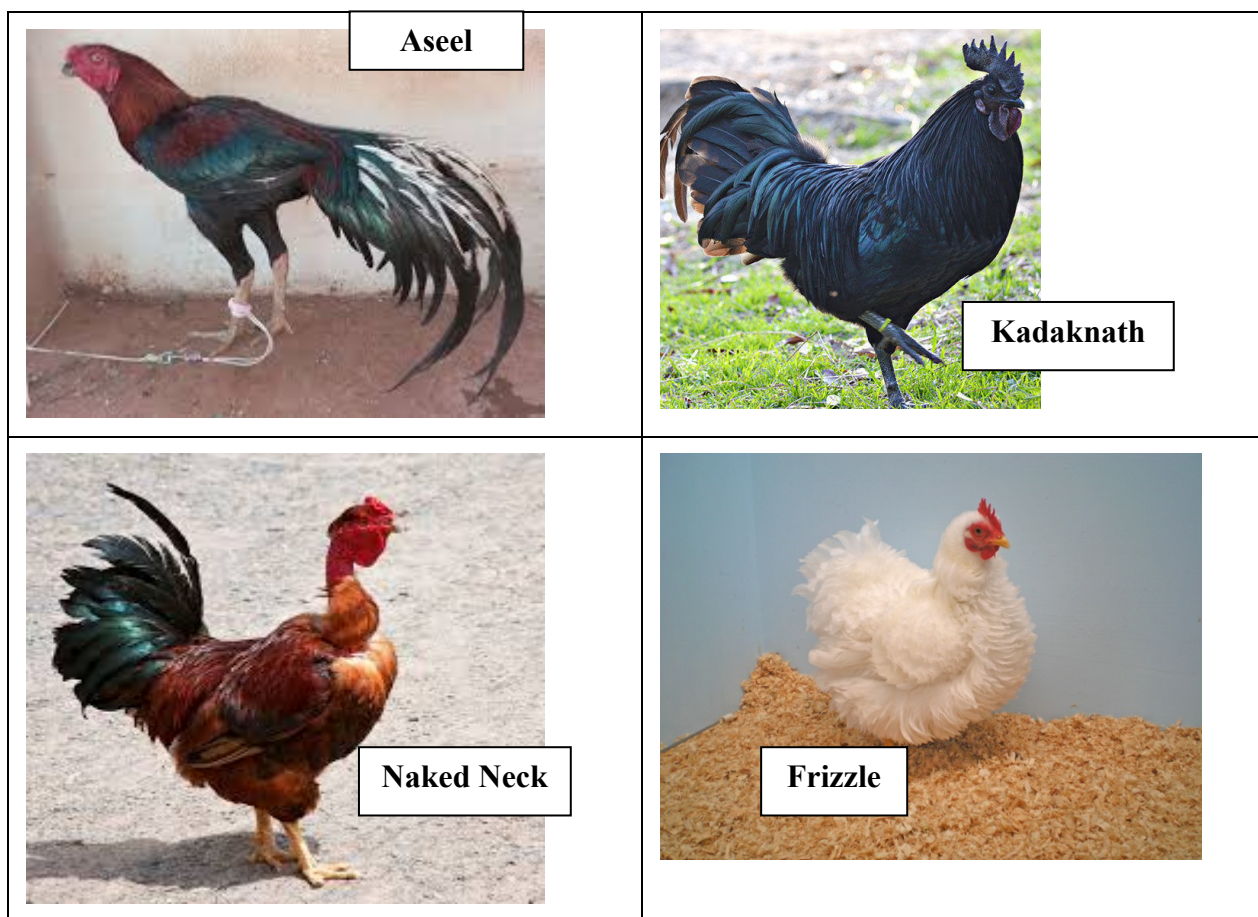
Naked neck is comparatively larger in built with long cylindrical neck. The home tract of this breed is Trivandrum region of Kerala but the breed is also available through hot and humid coastal area including Andaman and Nicobar Island and north eastern states of India. Peoples of those regions have greater affinity for naked neck birds thanks to their better adaptability to the recent and humid climatic condition also as for better taste and flavour of meat.

As the name indicates the neck of birds is fully naked or only a tuft of feathers is seen on the front of the neck above crop. The resulting bare skin becomes reddish particularly in males as they attain sexual maturity. General body feathering is also reduced. Various types of comb such as pea, rose, walnut and single combs are seen. The beak is short and well curved. The face is long and not covered with any feathers. The eyes are compact and well

set. The skin is thin and pinkish in colour. Main plumage colours are brown, black, white and mixture of brown and black. Due to reduced feathering the birds are able to tolerate the tropical stress. Among all the Indian native breeds of chicken it lays the largest size eggs.

**Performance characteristics**

- Body weight at 20 weeks of age: 1.0 kg
- Age at sexual maturity: 201 days
- Annual egg production: 99 numbers
- Egg weight at 40 weeks: 54 g
- Fertility: 66 %
- Hatchability: 71 %



**Frizzle**

Frizzle birds are found all over the hot and humid coastal areas including Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Good numbers of these birds are also available on high altitudes hilly tracts of North eastern states. It is said that these birds have better adaptability to hot and humid climatic regions.

Frizzle birds have oval body with well-developed comb and wattles. The skin of the birds is thin and pale pink in colour. The beak and shanks have no relation with plumage



colour and are creamish pale in colour. The birds have single comb and ear lobes are well developed with white spots on them. The eyes are bright and well developed. Plumage colour varies among birds but the most common colours are white, brown, black and mixed colour.

### ***Performance characteristics***

- Body weight at 20 weeks of age: 1.0 kg
- Age at sexual maturity: 185 days
- Annual egg production: 110 numbers
- Egg weight at 40 weeks: 53 g
- Fertility: 61 %
- Hatchability: 71 %

### ***Conclusion***

Despite of the drastic increase in the import of high yielding strains from across the world the local birds still retain preference in its native environment. Indigenous chickens still enjoy the favour of the local people mainly due to its special capabilities such as adaptability to unfavourable environments and resistance to tropical diseases.