Future of Domestic Ducks in Rice Field

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ABSTRACT

According to FAO statistics Asia is the most duck meat production area of the world, whereas Southeast Asia stands at the 2nd rank after China. The major form of duck raising in the area is free ranging type with very low investment; requiring no feeding cost, no growth promoter, no specific medication and no complicated management system. Duck feeds are channeled apple snails (*Pomacea canaliculata*) and left-over rice after harvesting in the rice field. A few serious health problems of those ducks are duck plaque and fowl cholera, which could be prevented by conventional vaccination. Before Avian Influenza epizootic occurred in 2004, rice farmers were beneficial to such duck raising system, because ducks helped reducing snails damaging their rice production. Such ducks and production system reflect long genetic development of the animal and wisdom of local people. After H5N1 had broken out in Asia from industrial chicken together with ineffective regulatory control, domestic ducks were sometimes interpreted as natural reservoirs of AI virus. The future of those free ranging ducks in rice field is being shaken, as long as no proper disease control guideline for such ducks is available.