



A chicken seller at Pasar Besar Kuantan displays the price of chicken. Pic by Farizul Hafiz Awang

# Illness led to deaths of chickens

**CHICKEN SUPPLY:**  
Shortage allowed middlemen to raise prices

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**C**HICKEN breeders are blaming infectious bronchitis for the deaths of between 15 and 20 per cent of chickens nationwide, which resulted in the sudden hike in prices.

Breeders claimed they suffered huge losses when hundreds of thousands of chickens died due to the illness about six months ago.

Selangor Chicken Breeder Association chairman Datuk Ishak Mat Arif said he lost an average of 100,000 out of 500,000 chickens every 55 days in the last six months, resulting in insufficient supplies.

"This allowed middlemen to raise prices.

"The supply of chicken for this Hari Raya Aidilfitri season was not enough and, with the high demand, middlemen raised the price of chicken," he said, adding that breeders were not involved in the poultry business.

"Our task is to breed chicken and sell them to middlemen.

"We should not be blamed for the price hike," he said, when contacted by the *New Straits Times*.

Ishak said his association was in discussion with the Department of Veterinary Services on

how to tackle the outbreak.

DVS director-general Dr Kamarudin Md Isa said the high number of deaths was due to the imperfect vaccination programme.

"Based on our observation and discussions with various parties, we can conclude that there are weaknesses in the hatchery farm where vaccinations were not carried out properly.

"Infectious bronchitis can be prevented through the proper use of vaccine," he said, adding that stress was one of the factors that had led to the disease.

Kamarudin said farm operators needed to reduce stress among chickens.

"We are expecting the next cycle of chick supplies to be better. Supplies should be handled properly to minimise stress."

Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin said there was enough supply of chicken for Aidilfitri.

"The Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Ministry told us that the supply of chicken was not only sufficient for local consumption but was enough to be exported as well.

"Reports about diseases have not been proven and, if there was such a thing, it is a minor occurrence," he said.

Hamzah urged all quarters, including suppliers and traders, to be fair when setting the price of chicken as the festive period price control scheme ended on the first day of Hari Raya.

"An extension of the price control is not possible. I urge people to play their roles in ensuring the price stays affordable."