STATUS OF DAIRY FARMING IN KARUR DISTRICT OF TAMIL NADU

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ABSTRACT

A study has been conducted in Karur District of Tamil Nadu state, to find out the status of dairy farming in rural villages. A sample size of 400 farmers was selected randomly. An interview schedule was prepared and pre tested to collect the data from the farmers regarding the general management practices on feeding, breeding health care and, production performance of the dairy animals and the constraints involved in dairy farming. The findings of the study indicated that the farmers adopted the technologies like artificial insemination (60 per cent), concentrate feeding (75 per cent), deworming and vaccination to the dairy animals (88 per cent). The animals were in the lactation length for 240-300 days and the average yield for cows was from 1400 - 1600 lts and buffaloes 1200-1400lts. Lack of veterinary services and absence of veterinary dispensary, high cost of feed, lack of organized milk marketing channels, lack of knowledge in scientific practices and the high cost of treatment were the constraints felt by majority of the respondents in keeping livestock.

Key words: Constraints, Dairy farming, Scientific management.

INTRODUCTION

Livestock rearing in rural villages of India is an age old practice and the farmers possess cattle, sheep and goats and poultry with agriculture. The byproducts of each other act as compliment to one another. India's milk production is 112.5million tones during 2010-11 compared to 17 million tones in 1950-51. But the increasing feed cost, mechanization of agriculture, decreasing pasture land and non remunerative price for milk makes the farmers not to rear dairy animals. The major reasons for the loss in dairy farming in India are the animals are not in milk throughout the year, disease outbreak and sudden death of the lactating animals and cost of the feed ingredients. Occurrence of any of the above risks can lead to a reduction of already low household income and would probably force the family to abandon dairy faming. Another major concern is the farmers are rearing animals since long time but their knowledge in the scientific livestock management practices is limited. To assess the status of management of dairy animals in rural villages a study has been conducted in Karur District of Tamil Nadu state.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present study, the Karur block of Karur District was purposively selected since it had high milch animal population. From the selected block, five villages were randomly selected and from the selected villages the livestock farmers who own a minimum of two milch animals were selected and a total of 400 farmers was the sample size of the study. An interview schedule was prepared and pre tested to collect the data from the farmers regarding the general management practices on feeding, breeding health care and production performance of the dairy animals and the constraints involved in dairy faming. The data were collected by personal interview with the respondents. The collected data were analysed statistically and presented.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Socio-economic characters of the respondents:

It was found that 69.5 per cent of the respondents belonged to the age category between 37 – 59 years. Majority of the respondents were illiterates (32.75 per cent) and had up to primary

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education (30.5 per cent). Around 52 per cent of the respondent's occupation was agriculture and animal rearing and 28 per cent of the respondents had some other employment in industries or factories with agriculture and animal husbandry. It is obvious that 75.5 per cent of the respondents had the income level between Rs. 24000-45500/- per annum and majority of the respondents were the marginal farmers (75.5 per cent) ie. land size up to 1ha. The total livestock population with the respondents was 596 crossbred cattle, 67 indigenous cattle, 726 buffaloes, 95 sheep, 631 goats, 34 bullocks and 2507 poultry species.

II. Management practices followed by the respondents

i.Feeding Management: In the study area 75 per cent of the farmers were providing concentrate feed to the dairy animals in varying quantities depending on the milk yield and the cost of feed. The cost of the concentrate feed differed between Rs.10-15/- based on the type of feed ingredients included in the concentrate feed mixture. If the feed contained the grains or oilcakes which were locally grown or available abundantly then the cost was low. Regarding the source of concentrate feed, 31.25 per cent prepared their own concentrate mixture whereas 56 per cent of the respondents bought the concentrate feed from the branded feed companies. Eighty five per cent of the farmers provided the agriculture byproducts like sugarcane tops and hay to their animals whereas 41 per cent of the farmers cultivated the green fodder, Hybrid Cumbu Napier grass (Co3) for their dairy animals. Further majority of the farmers (85.5 per cent) allowed their animals for grazing.

Though the concentrate feeding was in practice, but it was not in correct quantity. Based on the availability and cost of the feed they were feeding the animals. When animals were in milking the farmers fed up to 8-10 kgs of concentrate feed. They didn't know the quantity of feed to be fed to the milking, pregnant and dry animals. The main purpose of keeping dairy animal was to produce milk for home consumption by converting free feed stuff into milk and also provide the female members of the family with an income generating activity.

ii.Breeding management: It was found that 71 per cent of the animals in study area showed the regular signs of estrum. Sixty per cent of the farmers followed artificial insemination to breed the animals. However 16 per cent of the farmers practiced both Artificial insemination and natural service and 22 per cent of the respondents practiced natural service alone since the veterinary dispensary is far off from their place and they couldn't afford the cost of calling the private veterinary doctors. Among the farmers who were practicing artificial insemination, were mainly by inviting the veterinarians to their homes (63 per cent) and farmers opined that mostly the animals became pregnant by one or two inseminations (81 per cent). They were unaware of a calf / year from a cow.

iii. Disease prevention and control: Though majority of the farmers (88 per cent) were utilizing the facilities of deworming and vaccination against contagious diseases in the livestock camps organized regularly by the State Department of Animal Husbandry, reluctance was seen with 12 per cent of the farmers towards deworming and vaccination. If the animal became sick, the treatment was done mainly by veterinarians that too by home call method (59 per cent) than taking the animals to veterinary dispensaries (41 per cent) since it is far off from the villages. Farmers were aware of the importance of vaccination since outbreak of contagious diseases cause heavy economic loss by reduction in milk yield. Similar finding were also reported by Tiwari *et al.* (2009) and Thirunavukarasu and Kathiravan (2010).

iv. Production performance of the animals and the marketing methods: It was found that 75 per cent of the animals were in the lactation length for 240-300 days and the average yield of cows were from 1400 - 1600 lts and buffaloes 1200-1400lts. Similar findings were also reported by Patro and Bhatt (1979). Since there is no milk organized milk marketing channels available in the villages all the farmers compulsorily sold their milk to milkman only with the low rate of Rs.15/- for cow milk and Rs. 20/- for buffalo milk per litre.

v. Constraints faced by the farmers: Almost all farmers felt that lack of veterinary services and absence of veterinary dispensary were the major constraints in maintaining proper health care of the animals. Similar findings were reported by Meena

and Malik (2009). The next major constraints ranked by the respondents were the high cost of the feed followed by the absence of organized milk marketing channels and low price for milk. High cost of feed was also identified a constraint in keeping dairy animals in a profitable manner by Ganai *et al.* (2008) and Patil *et al.* (2009). Meganathan *et al.* (2010) accorded that lack of marketing infrastructure for dairy products and Subhadra *et al.* (2009) found low price for milk were the constraints in managing a commercial dairy farming. Lack of knowledge of scientific practices and the high cost of treatment were also the constraints felt by the farmers in maintenance of livestock. The farmers lack knowledge about scientific management practices and they never attended any training programme regarding dairy farming.

CONCLUSION

It was found that the study area lacked the infra structure facilities like veterinary dispensary and milk co-operative societies, frequent health camps and mobile veterinary units which might solve the problems of the farmers in protecting their animal's health. Co-operative milk society may be established in the places where milk production was more which enhance continuous milk supply and better price for milk. If the services were available at doorstep almost all the farmers would utilize the facility and improves the production and reproduction performance of the animals. Subsidized services by the Government may play a major role in motivating the farmers in successful dairy farming. It was also accepted by Basunathe *et al.* (2010).

It was found from the study that though the farmers maintained the animals by adopting the technologies like concentrate feeding, artificial insemination, vaccination and deworming, they faced constraints in expanding the herd size into a commercial manner. They were unaware of a calf / year from a cow and low cost concentrate feeding. To convert the traditional dairy farming into commercial dairy enterprise, introduction of scientific interventions in dairy farming with proper motivation and entrepreneurial behaviour development should be taken care. The extension activities in dairy farming should be designed in such a way to teach the scientific interventions and update the technical knowledge and skill in scientific dairy management and clean milk production would be helpful to develop a commercial and profitable dairy enterprise.

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