

CONSTRAINTS IN DAIRY FARMING AS PERCEIVED BY CATTLE OWNERS OF MEGHALAYA

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of dairy management as an alternative source of income generation is yet to gain momentum in north eastern part of India. This is mainly because of the nonconsumption of milk by the local people. Of late, the non tribal farmers residing in different rural areas of Meghalaya are taking up this venture on commercial basis. The improvement of livestock production mainly depends on the management aspect practiced by the farmers through resources available with them, external support provided to them etc. Hence, it is imperative to know the problems, they encounter in different aspects of cattle management.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in two selected villages of Umsning Block of Ri-bhoi District, Meghalaya during 1997 to 1998. These two villages are having 160 household out of which 56 belong to non-tribal persons (Nepali and Baari) engaged in dairy enterprise. Data were collected from the entire population of cattle owners of those two villages. A specially developed questionnaire containing four major aspects viz. feeding, health care, breeding and marketing was administered for this purpose. The farmers were asked to enumerate different problems on the basis of importance. Data so collected were analysed by using percentage analysis method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained through ranking of the constraints related to feeding, disease prevention and controls, breeding and marketing aspects of dairy farming are discussed below :

Feeding constraints

It was observed (Table 1) that the cattle owners faced acute problems in feeding their cattle and 92.85% indicated that it was the major constraint in cattle rearing. Scarcity of green fodder was ranked as the second most major constraint by 85.71% of the farmers. As the cattle owners did not possess any cultivable land, they could not grow fodder in any season of the year which forced them to purchase expensive green fodder.

Constraints of disease prevention and control

Table 2 shows that high cost of veterinary services was the major bottleneck in dairy management. Almost all the respondents (98.21%) had pointed out that this high cost severely

affected their enterprise following by inadequate knowledge about the symptoms of various diseases and vaccination schedule (80.35%) and farmers inability to treat their animals in time (50.00%). Distance to veterinary hospitals was another major concern for 62.50% of farmers.

Breeding constraints

Regarding breeding aspects, inability of farmers to bring animals for AI/Natural service in time was the main constraints perceived by 75% farmers followed by non availability of healthy bull (53.57%). Another major aspect in repeat breeding problem indicated by 42.85% farmers.

Marketing Constraints

Lack of remunerative price was main problem in cattle rearing as indicated by 75% farmers followed by absence of fixed customers of milk (67.85%). At the same time non uniformity in payment also hampered the profitability of this enterprise (58.92%).

Maintenance of cross-bred cattle needs around support system to extract the benefit from it. As crossbred cattles are more susceptible to different disease and the feed should also be balanced for their growth and milk producing capacity, proper health care system is the fundamental need for either AI facility or the availability of healthy bulls in the required time. The dairy farmers even after investing a lot of monetary resources in this venture, unable to get the proper remuneration due to the absence of fixed market. The Meghalaya Milk Producers Cooperative Society should involve itself at the earliest to provide all sorts of help to those farmers solely dependent on this dairy venture.

Table 1 Ranking of constraints faced in feeding by the cattle owners

Constraints	Frequency	Rank
High cost of feed	52 (92.85)	I
Ignorance about balanced feeding	18 (32.14)	V
Scarcity of green fodder	48 (85.71)	II
Poor quality roughage	22 (39.28)	IV
Non-availability of chaff cutter	15 (26.78)	VI
Non-availability of land to grow fodder crop	45 (80.35)	III

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Table 2. Ranking of disease prevention and control perceived by cattle owners

Constraints	Frequency	Rank
High cost of veterinary services	55 (98.21)	I
Inadequate knowledge about the symptoms of various diseases and vaccination schedule	45 (80.35)	III
Farmers inability to treat their animals in time	28 (50.00)	V
Emergency service	52 (92.85)	II
Distant Location of veterinary hospitals	35 (62.50)	IV

Figures in parenthesis indicate pe percentage.

Table 3. Ranking of breeding constraints perceived by the cattle owners

Constraints	Frequency	Rank
Non-availability of healthy bull	30 (53.57)	II
Inability of farmers to bring their animals for AI natural service timely	42 (75.00)	I
Repeat breeding problem	24 (42.85)	III
Non-availability of pregnancy diagnosis facility	21 (37.50)	IV
Distant location of bull owners' house / ai centre	18 (32.14)	V
Lack of conviction towards AI	15 (26.78)	VI

Figures in parenthesis indicates percentage.

Table 4. Ranking of marketing constraints perceived by cattle owners

Constraints	Frequency	Rank
Selling of milk	38 (67.85)	II
Absence of milk cooperative	23 (41.07)	V
Route in some areas	42 (75.00)	I
Farmers are not getting	33 (58.92)	III
Remunerative price	26 (46.42)	IV
Delay in payment	18 (32.14)	VI
Far off marketing place	15 (26.78)	VIII
Lack of transport facility		
Need of permission from village headman for selling of cow dung		

Figures in parenthesis indicates percentage.