

Animal Health Care in Small Holdings

M.Krishnan Nair

In our country, in the animal husbandry sector even though large commercial operations are existing in certain segments as in poultry production, by and large it is centered on small producers with limited land holdings with all the attendant constraints. To exploit animal resources to the maximum in a sub optimal resource availability, our attention should be to develop the genetic material to the potential of the environment and the resources that area be provided; So the goal should not necessarily be to maximise animals in terms of quantity or efficiency, but to utilise a combination of products that are available for a balance of return of diversified products. In short it means that there is no point of aiming high technology operations when there is a possibility of resource crunch. This applies also to animal health care.

It is high time that a comprehensive health care system replaces the present mode of treatment, containment and control of diseases. This should be all the more true for a small farmer with limited land holdings and other resources. Even now there are many diseases which can decimate the financial stability of such a farmer by outright mortality or continued morbidity. The per unit cost of providing veterinary aid in a domestic setup is comparatively very high than in large commercial operations.

Even though there are many diseases affecting all sections of livestock, I would consider foot and mouth disease and mastitis as very important for cattle. Where as large poultry farmers have the know-how and resources to regularly vaccinate their birds against Raniket disease and Marek's disease. The farmers with a few birds in his backyard rarely possess that capability

The present system of disease investigation, treatment and control should be replaced by a concept of disease surveillance monitoring and prevention. The cutting edge diagnostic systems involving biotechnology and molecular biology, though necessary, are very expensive at present. The many outbreaks of FMD reported from many parts of the country are mainly due to failure of

timely vaccination, or improper vaccination or use of inappropriate vaccines. Similarly mastitis, which has become a great scourge causing great economic loss, can to certain extent be prevented by taking simple measures like good cow shed hygiene, and adopting teat dipping and dry cow therapy. Morbidity and loss of production due to endoparasites is another situation where a regular protocol of administration of antihelmintics which can be prevented. This means maintenance of animal health is mainly depended on the package of information that is available to the farmers. Sadly, the diffusion of such information rarely permeates into a small holding setup and so are rarely adopted.

So instead of the fire fighting operations when there is occurrence of diseases the attempt should be for surveillance, monitoring and prevention of diseases. The disease investigation units should be reoriented to take up this new mandate; advising the farmer on proper management practices including feeding and health care should be considered as priority areas. There is a necessity for special stress on calf management to prevent diseases like diarrhoea due to E.coli, and corona and rotaviruses.

Different areas in our country, in addition to cattle, have other animal components like goats, swine and poultry. In small units infectious diseases are not very common even though there are endemic areas where mycoplasmosis, parainfluenza infections and chlamydiosis occur. Good management can reduce the occurrence of helminthiasis, coccidiosis and John's disease in goats.

The surveillance unit should advise the farmers on the preventive measures to be adopted against the commonly occurring diseases like Black Quarter, Haemorrhagic Septicaemia, and Anthrax. Occurrence of diseases like Brucellosis, Leptospirosis, Rinderpest, Babesiosis and Theileriosis needs constant monitoring. Forecasting of emerging disease like infectious bovine tracheitis, Bovine malignant catarrh, Bovine viral diarrhoea, swine fever and other conditions is absolutely necessary. periodic screening of

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Dr.M.Krishnan Nair
Former Dean
College of Veterinary and
Animal Sciences,
Mannuthy