Management measures for buffaloes

R. Radhika

In India Buffaloes contribute more milk than any other species. Yet they have been neglected due to false prejudices. Buffaloes have been a major source of income for the tropical poor from time immemorial. Their docility, ability to convert cheaper roughage, better keeping quality of milk due to lactoperoxidase system, higher fat percentage and resistance to diseases make them most suitable for sustainable dairy farming. The fact that buffaloes secrete lowest quantity of radioactive debris through their milk (World Buffalo Congress, 1986) is a strategically important factor. Areas where plenty of back waters, lakes and marshy land are available mixed farming of buffaloes with aquaculture can be practiced.

Dr. R. Radhika, MVSc
Veterinary Surgeon
Dist. Veterinary Centre
Thrissur

Distribution of Buffaloes:

Over 95% of the 140 million buffaloes of the world thrive in tropics. Indian buffaloes, viz, Murrah, Nili-Ravi, Mehsana, Surti, Nagpuri, Jaffarabadi and Egyptian water buffaloes are found in drier parts of the tropics, where as low milk producing swamp buffaloes are found in higher rainfall areas.

The age at first calving

The age at first calving is governed by a number of factors, such as, the age at maturity, conception rate, gestation length etc. It is considerably influenced by feeding and management practices. In buffaloes it is generally higher than that reported in cattle because of its slow growth rate, low fertility and longer gestation period. Singh and Singh (1970) has pointed out that buffaloes whose first calving is 40-42 months produce more than 1800kg milk in the first lactation.

Feeding management

Proper nutrition plays an important role in increasing productivity in terms of growth, draught power, milk production and reproduction. In many situation the animal adjusts its breeding behaviour as per the availability of the feeds. Buffaloes are known to be efficient converter of poor quality roughage and can sustain on crop residues with little supplementation of green legumes, concentrates, minerals and salt. This is largely attributed to difference in rumen microflora and greater count of microorganisms. Buffalo rumen bacteria convert ammonia to glutamate at a higher rate. Milch animals must be given production allowance of one-kg concentrate mixture for every 2-2.5 kg of milk produced over and above maintenance allowance.

Summer management

Environment plays an important role in production of farm animals. Thermoregulatory mechanism of buffalo is comparatively poor and is vulnerable to extreme climatic conditions. Low estimate for heat tolerance in buffaloes is due to their large size, dark body colour and small number of sweat glands. Reproductive problems including the incidence of silent heat is more seen in buffaloes during summer. There is lack of good progeny tested bulls although some efforts are being made at Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana and Central Institute of Buffalo Research in Hissar. A study conducted by ICAR in 1961 at Mathura Veterinary College has revealed that majority come in to heat during August to October. Symptoms of heat in buffaloes are very weak and less

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