

PREVALANT SHEEP MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN GUNTUR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh to know various husbandry practices followed by the Shepherds. The information was collected from 240 sheep farmers from three divisions of the district by pre tested questionnaire. It was observed that all the farmers in the area were rearing sheep extensively. Significantly more (95.00%) number of shepherds studied were providing housing to their sheep out of which 60.70% of the shepherds housed their sheep nearer to the dwelling house. Majority of the respondents (96.12%) had mud floor in the shed and 91.70% of the farmers sent their animals for grazing and the duration was about 8-10 h, while the grazing distance ranged from 2-4 km (67.90 %) to 4-6 km (32.10%). Sheep were mostly maintained on grazing without any extra feeding of concentrates. However, small number of sheep, maintained by farmers were fed little amount of concentrate. Flock mating was commonly followed and flushing was not at all practiced by the shepherds. June to August and January to March were found to be the two breeding seasons for the sheep in the area. All the shepherds studied were attending and cleaning the lambs after lambing. It might be concluded from the study that lower socioeconomic group rear the sheep for their livelihood with minimum inputs. Supplementary feeding with concentrates and dry fodder in required quantities might be practiced to obtain better growth and production performance during forage scarcity.

Key words: Sheep, Guntur district, management practices, Andhra Pradesh

Sheep husbandry is a way of life for many in rural areas of India and landless people who depend on it for their livelihood⁵. Generally shepherds follow certain traditional practices but the modern scientific practices do play a very important role in improving the production. The improved husbandry practices in livestock farming make it more sustainable and profitable livelihood

enterprise especially to the rural backward people. The information on the existing sheep husbandry scenario helps to formulate the strategies for adoption of better husbandry practices⁸. In the present study a detailed enquiry was made to study the husbandry practices followed by the shepherds in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was undertaken in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh. The district is located in the coastal region of Andhra Pradesh and situated between 15°-18' and 16°-50' of the

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Northern Latitude and 70-10' and 80°-55' of the Eastern Longitude having humid tropical climate. The district comprises total geographical area of 11,391 Sq. Kms. (4.14% of the State). The mean annual maximum and minimum temperatures were 47°C and 15°C respectively. The average rainfall was 830 mm.

For data collection three revenue divisions of the district viz., Tenali, Guntur and Macherla were considered. Four mandals from each division and four villages from each mandal were selected for the present study taking the sheep population of villages into account. Five farmers owning sheep were selected randomly from each village. A total of 240 sheep farmers were chosen at random in the study area. The selected farmers were interviewed by contacting them at their doorstep using a pre tested interview schedule developed for the purpose. Data pertaining to management practices like housing, feeding, breeding, grazing and health were collected through questionnaire. The score of individual practice was converted into percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Housing management practices:

The information collected from shepherds revealed that all the farmers surveyed in Guntur district were following extensive system of rearing of sheep. It was also observed that about half (52.90 %) of the respondents provided housing to their sheep in closed houses, and 42.10 % of the sheep rearers provided housing in open sheds whereas 5 % of the farmers did not provide any housing. Out of the farmers who were providing housing, majority (60.70 %) had their animal houses located nearer to their dwellings and the remaining (39.30 %) had their animal houses located away from their houses. These results were in agreement with the findings of ^{2,6} in Vembur breeding tract of Tamilnadu and in Rajasthan. Where in the farmers housed their

animals nearer to their houses.

Out of all the shepherds providing housing, 52.90% of them provided thatched roofs while the rest of them did not provide any roof. It was observed that none of them provided pucca roof. All the animal houses had mud floors and none of them were of pucca floors. The observations in the present study were also in accordance with ⁸ the literature available. Majority of the respondents (87.90 %) had enclosures made with bio fence material or by bamboo poles laden with thatches, whereas those of the remaining were made of wall. It was encouraging to note that majority (93.30 %) of the shepherds were cleaning the animal houses daily and very few (6.70 %) were cleaning them once in 2-3 days.

Feeding and grazing practices:

It was observed from the study that all the farmers were practicing extensive system of rearing with very little or no inputs. It was observed that the practice of migration was not common among the shepherds of this region. Rainy season was the only season during which farmers went on local migration and was mainly due to presence of crops in all the agricultural lands. It was observed that the distance which the animals covered in grazing varied between the flocks. Most of the flocks (67.9 %) covered a distance of 2 to 4 km / day during grazing and others (32.1 %) covered a distance of 4-6 km/day and none were going beyond a distance of 6 km/day. It was also noted that the duration for which the flocks were allowed for grazing varied and very small number of respondents (2.5 %) allowed their animals to graze for 6-7 h/day and most (91.7 %) grazed their flocks for 8-10 h/day. About 5.8% of shepherds grazed their animals for more than 10 h/day and these observations were in agreement with ^{3,1,7}.

Significantly more number of shepherds (89.6 %) grazed their sheep on crop leftovers in the

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fields and spilled residues after harvesting of crops in the agricultural fields. It was surprising to find that none of the farmers were giving special feeding to pregnant and lactating ewes and only a few sheep reares (4.60%) followed special feeding of rams.

Breeding practices:

Majority of the shepherds (95.00 %) selected for the study were having knowledge on the heat signs exhibited by the animals while 96.25 % were aware about the ram to ewe ratio. All the respondents surveyed were not adopting separation of males and females, flushing of breeding stock and restriction on mating. All the shepherds were resorting to flock mating and 86.25 % of them were following ram rotation. Similar observations of random unplanned and flock mating were reported^{3,4,8} in the literature. Among the shepherds practicing ram rotation, majority (64.58 %) were rotating their rams after a period of 5 years and above, small number of them (20.42 %) after 3 years while only few (1.25 %) were rotating after 2 years. Method of ram rotation followed by most of the shepherds was either by purchase (87.92%) or by exchange (12.08%). In the present study, it was revealed that the major breeding season was from June to August and minor was from January to March.

Lamb management practices:

The results indicated that majority (95.80 %) of the shepherds were cleaning the lambing area at the time of lambing and care of the lamb was taken by both women and children in about 88.30 % households surveyed and the lambs were supported by only dam's milk in all the cases. After lambing all the farmers were sending the dams to grazing rather than confining them to the house. Among the shepherds surveyed, 61.30 % of the shepherds were sending the lambs for grazing

within 30 days of lambing whereas remaining were sending them in 2 months time. The findings of present study were in contrary to those of⁷ wherein it was reported that 50% of farmers in Tamil Nadu region sent their lambs for grazing immediately after 1 day of lambing. In the survey conducted, it was revealed that none of the farmers were practicing weaning of lambs and 80 % of them were feeding lambs with tender leaves like Subabul.

Health management practices:

In the present study, it was observed that all the farmers had good knowledge about the health and disease aspects and various signs associated with a disease. Further, it was observed that all the respondents were vaccinating their sheep and followed regular deworming of their sheep. The diseases for which the animals were vaccinated included Sheep Pox, Peste des Petits Ruminants, Enterotoxaemia and Haemorrhagic Septicaemia. In the present study, state government was found to be the sole provider of different types of vaccines whereas the deworming drug was procured either from the state government or by purchase.

CONCLUSION

It could be concluded from the study that the sheep farmers were still adopting traditional methods of management practices and need to adopt scientific practices on a great scale to achieve better results for which regular training of the shepherds is needed periodically. Sheep should be supplemented with concentrate and dry fodder in adequate quantity to obtain better growth and production performance during forage scarcity.

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