

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF MANIPURI PONY OWNERS*

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ABSTRACT

A study was taken up to generate research based information on various socio-economic profiles of Manipuri Pony owners. During the survey, 215 Manipuri Pony owners and farmers from 3 districts were interviewed using questionnaire. The study on various socio-economic parameters revealed that most of the pony owners belong to 15-55 years age group. About 76.74% of them had passed at least class VIII. In majority of the cases (62.33%), the holding size was 1 animal followed by 23.26% with 2 animals. The survey also revealed most of the owners (56.74%) were not having any land (landless) while 32.56% maintained land up to 1 hectare. It was also known that Pony owners didn't receive any economic return from pony rearing at present unlike other livestock like dairy, poultry and piggery. The survey further revealed that majority of the pony owners are economically backward and 59.92% of the pony owners depended for their livelihood on agriculture and allied activities.

Key Words : Manipuri Pony, Socio-economic, Population.

The Manipuri Pony breed is well known as a perfect Pony for the royal game of Polo. However the population of this magnificent animal is decreasing at an alarming rate³. As per 17th Quinquennial Livestock Census, the population of the breed recorded was 1893¹. In view of small population size, the need of the hour is to take up holistic approach to conserve this precious animal. While planning sustainable management of an endangered breed, it is felt necessary to study various factors responsible for the reduction of the population of the breed. However, no research-based information in scientific literature on Manipuri

Pony population could be traced until recently. As socio-economic condition of the animal owners is also one of the factors responsible for the decrease of population of a breed, the present study on socio-economic profile of the Manipuri Pony owners has been taken up as an important area of research and also to recommend suitable strategies for development of this precious breed.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Depending on the availability of Manipuri Pony population, a survey was conducted in 36 villages of the 3 districts of Manipur State. Pony owners and farmers (215) were interviewed using well prepared questionnaire. Data relating to age group, family size, gender involved in horse keeping, literacy, land holding size, animal holding size, source of income were recorded. The

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information given by the farmers were recorded and data was processed statistically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socio-economic profile in respect of age group, number of family members, gender involved in horse keeping, literacy, animal holding size, land holding size and source of income is shown at Table 1 and 2.

From the survey, it was revealed that most of the pony owners belong to 15-55 years age group. Some people below and above this group also showed their keen interests in pony rearing. However, maximum number of pony owners (73.02%) belongs to the age group of 15-35 years while 22.79% was found in the age group of 36-55 years. Rearing of ponies by the age group ranging from 15 to 55 years in this study clearly indicated that almost all active people are showing keen interest in pony keeping.

The number of members in the pony owner's family usually ranges from 1 person to 15 persons. Maximum number of family of pony owners (51.16%) had family size ranging from 1-5 members followed by 45.12% of families having 6-10 members. Both joint and nuclear family systems are observed among them.

Regarding the gender involved in pony rearing, apart from the pony owner, female members of the family were also showing keen interest in pony rearing. The survey revealed that in 93.49% of the cases, both male and female members of the family were found to be involved in rearing. The ponies were found to be reared by male members only in 6.51 of the cases. Rearing of ponies by both male and female members of the family showed that horse rearing was a part of life of the people of Manipur in the past.

From the survey, it was also revealed that most of the pony owners did not belong to highly educated group. However, about 76.74% of them had passed at least class VIII.

The animal holding size of the pony owners generally ranged between 1 to 5 animals, with few of them(1.86%) having more than 5 animals. In majority of the cases (62.33%), the holding size was 1 animal followed by 23.26% with 2 animals.

The survey also revealed that the land holding profile of the pony owners generally ranged from no land to 5 hectares. Majority of the owners (56.74%) were not having any land (landless) while 32.56% maintained land up to 1 hectare.

Regarding the source of income, majority of the pony owners are economically backward. Their main source of income is self-employment ranging from agriculture including livestock rearing, fishery and other occupations such as carpentry, running of auto taxi, small contract job, grocery etc. However, very few well to do people also rears pony which is due to their passion for horse riding and polo. It was also known from the study that 59.92% of the pony owners depend for their livelihood on agriculture and allied activities while 27.37% earned their income from service business such as carpentry, auto taxi, grocery etc. Few of the animal owners (7.26%) were observed to be working as employee in government offices.

The survey revealed that most of the pony owners belong to socio-economically poor groups and as such it was difficult for them to maintain the animal. Most of the owner reported that they didn't receive any economic return from pony rearing unlike dairy, poultry and piggery. Out of their love for Polo game in many instances and as pack animal in some case, they still show interest and continue to rear the pony.

Table 1. Socio-economic profile - Age group, family size, gender involved in horse keeping and literacy

| Age group | | | Family Size | | | Gender involved in horse keeping | | | Literacy | | |
|-----------|-----|------------|-------------|-----|------------|----------------------------------|-----|------------|------------------|-----|------------|
| Age | No | Percentage | Member | No. | Percentage | Gender | No. | Percentage | Class | No. | Percentage |
| 10-14 | 02 | 0.93 | 1-5 | 110 | 51.16 | Male only | 14 | 6.51 | Below class VIII | 50 | 23.26 |
| 15-35 | 157 | 73.02 | 6-10 | 97 | 45.12 | Both male and female | 201 | 93.49 | Class VIII | 165 | 76.74 |
| 36-55 | 49 | 22.79 | 11-15 | 8 | 3.72 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| >55 | 7 | 3.26 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |

Table 2. Socio-economic profile - Animal holding, land holding size and source of income

| Animal Holding size | | | Land Holding Size | | | Source of Income | | |
|---------------------|-----|------------|-------------------|-----|------------|--|-----|------------|
| Range | No | Percentage | Hectare | No. | Percentage | Occupation | No. | Percentage |
| 1 | 134 | 62.33 | Nil | 122 | 56.74 | Agriculture including animal husbandry | 106 | 59.22 |
| 2 | 50 | 23.26 | Upto 1 hectare | 70 | 32.56 | Service such as carpentry, auto taxi, grocery etc. | 49 | 27.37 |
| 3-5 | 27 | 12.59 | 1-2 hectare | 12 | 5.58 | Contract Job | 11 | 6.15 |
| > 5 | 4 | 1.86 | 2-5 hectare | 11 | 5.12 | Government employee | 13 | 7.26 |
| - | - | - | > 5 hectare | - | - | Unrecorded | 36 | - |

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that majority of the pony owners belong to socio-economically poor groups and as such it was difficult for them to maintain the animal. Further, as the owners didn't receive any economic return from pony rearing at present unlike other livestock like dairy, poultry and piggery, strategies should be developed at the earliest for

generating technologies to utilize the animals of Manipuri Pony breed in income generating agricultural activities of Manipur state. The scientific development of Pony Cart and Pack Saddle, based on appropriate physiological and biochemical studies for use in valley and hill areas, respectively will be one of the befitting answer to check drastic decline of Manipuri Pony population.

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