

Ram Lamb Rearing as Livelihood Option for Landless Women

Livestock has always provided the much needed resilience to rainfed farming in most drought-prone regions of the country. Among livestock sheep and goat are an important means of livelihood for small farmers and landless. However, over time the importance of livestock to rainfed farming was overlooked and as a result the livelihoods of small holder families started to wither away. In order to establish the importance of livestock in the livelihoods of the poor and landless, the project piloted ram lamb rearing as livelihood option. From Ibrahimpur cluster of Ranga Reddy district, two Self Help Groups (SHGs) viz. Thulja Bhavani and Bhavani having 8 and 9 tribal women beneficiaries were selected and capacity development programme was conducted on ram lamb management and production. About 48 and 54 Nellore cross ram lambs aged 3-4 months were procured, insured under Jeevakranthi Scheme and distributed to Thulja Bhavani and Bhavani SHGs on 50 : 50 cost sharing basis initially. Trained Para worker were encouraged to take up periodical vaccination and deworming as per the advice of the local veterinary Surgeon (VAS). As an action research intervention, faecal samples were collected from each flock at monthly intervals to assess worm dynamics and worm burden and suggest appropriate deworming schedule. Effect of supplementation of concentrate mixture on daily average weight gain and final weight gain on ram lambs was evaluated under village situation to demonstrate the advantage of feed supplementation and deworming.



A land less women rearing ram lambs

All the ram lambs were reared for about 6 months on semi-intensive system of management with supplementation of concentrate mixture at evening. After 6 months rearing of the lambs, the animals were sold in the local market @ Rs.100 per kg live weight. Live weight gain of ram lambs reared by tribal women was compared with similar age group ram lambs in the village at monthly intervals. Live weight gain (kg) over a period of 6 months was 15.6-18.96 in ram lambs of the women group, where as 8.9-10.7 in other ram lambs in the village. Similarly, the net income (Rs.) per ram lamb ranged from 1800-2150 and 975-1495 in case of tribal women and other villagers, respectively. On an average, the villager could able to get Rs. 41 per ram lamb, where as the tribal women who followed the scientific feeding, health and management practices got Rs. 54 per ram lamb. A flock size of 5-6 ram lambs gave an income of Rs. 7800-10080 to the tribal women. Regular screening of faecal samples for worm dynamics and worm burden in selected flocks revealed highest worm infestation from May to July. The learnings from the study indicated that drenching of deworming drug according to the worm dynamics and worm burden along with appropriate

management practices would help achieve higher weight gain in small ruminants. Further, supplementation of concentrate mixture resulted higher daily average gain and final weight gain in Nellore cross ram lambs and improved the over all profit. This raised enthusiasm of the villagers in the cluster and the otherwise reluctant tribal farmers have come forward to adopt scientific feeding and health care practices to small ruminants for higher productivity and income.