

## Livestock health management practices in the commercial dairy farms

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### Abstract

The study was conducted on herd health management practices on 90 commercial dairy owners of the urban area of Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh. Disposal of dry buffaloes to butchers, non existence of heifers, high calf mortality due to various diseases and malnutrition and sale of male buffalo calf to butchers indicate a very poor herd management in these commercial dairy farms which need to be urgently improved to conserve the good quality buffalo germplasm. Results of the study depicted an alarming scenario of herd management in these farms.

**Keywords:** Buffalo, Calf mortality, Dairy farms, Herd health management.

Procurement of healthy and high yielding animals and culling of unproductive animals is an important activity for a commercial farm (Sharma and Mishra, 1987). The rural dairy owners rearing one or two animals in the backyard of their home hardly bother to procure high yielding animals and cull low productive animals (Tiwari *et al.*, 2006). Presently commercial dairy farms are mainly mushrooming in the periurban and urban areas of the metros and big cities with herd size of 2-100 milch animals. This paper reports herd health management practices of these owners.

The present study was conducted among the commercial dairy owners of the urban area of Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh. Total 90 commercial dairy owners were divided into 3 categories, i.e. small (2-10 milch animals) medium (11-20 milch animals) and large (above 20 milch animals). These were randomly selected from different wards and their animal purchase and disposal pattern including the herd structure, purchase of various categories of animals viz., non descript cattle and buffalo, crossbred cattle and improved buffalo and the pattern of disposal of various categories of animals, viz. dry cattle and buffalo, male and female calves, their mode of disposal, general management of

animals and health care of adult and young stock were studied.

All the dairy farmers had milch buffaloes and most of them had improved animals with major characteristics of Nili ravi and Murrah and only 37.77% of the total sample had milch cattle and further most of them (21.11 %) had cross bred cows. The calves were very few in numbers in these dairies and only 22.22% of the dairy owners had cattle calves while 33.33% had buffalo calves. The proportion of cattle calves to milch cows was 58.88% whereas in case of buffalo calves, it was only 33.33% indicating that buffalo calves are neglected more.

The heifers were in only 14.4% of farms while dry cows and buffaloes were in 4.44 and 7.77% farms. Pathak (2003) also reported that the dairies in the periurban and urban areas of India prefer to keep only lactating buffaloes with good production potential. Majority of the owners purchased mostly the crossbred cattle (45.17%) and improved buffalo (67.06%) from other states like Punjab and Haryana and non-descript cattle and buffaloes were procured from the local market of Bareilly district (86.67% and 86.11%, respectively) such as Rithoura, Deochara and Meerganj.

Majority of the farmers replaced the milch animals when the milk production

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reduced to 3-4 lit/day as they had to maintain the production through out the year to meet the consumer demand. Majority of the dairy farmers sold these low producing animals. Total 52.94% cattle owners and 54.44% buffalo owners sale low producing animals while others did not sell animals. Of them 53.06% sold low producing buffaloes to the villagers while 34.69% sold to the butchers, while the cattle were mostly sold to the villagers. Similar pattern of disposal of animals was reported by Pathak (2003) and Soliman and Mashhour (2003).

The disposal pattern of the animals which are not sold revealed that mostly these were either given on contract to other farmers (as reported by 85.36% buffalo owners and 62.5% cattle owners) or were reared by themselves (7.31% cattle owners and 25% buffalo owners) or were sent to their village counterparts (7.32% cattle owners and 12.5% buffalo owners).

Majority of these dairy owners were not interested in rearing the calves and buffalo calf mortality was very high (81.09%) primarily due to ascariasis, diarrhoea, pneumonia, and malnutrition. Similarly high mortality rate in neonatal buffalo calves was reported by Sharma *et al.* (1984). They sold off the male cattle and buffalo calf if they remained alive. The female cattle and buffalo calf were also sold by 91.67% and 75.56% dairy owners. The male and female buffalo calves were mostly sold to the butchers (81.11% and 72.22%, respectively) while the female cattle and buffalo calves which were not sold were either reared by the dairy owners themselves (50% and 66.67%, respectively) or were sent to their village counterparts.

These commercial dairy owners were very much aware about the importance of vaccination and timely treatment and were providing very good health care to their milch animals. Majority of the dairy owners (81.09%) were vaccinating their animals against HS and FMD and 84.44% paid

immediate attention to call a veterinary doctor when their milch animal fell sick but most of them (84.44%) did not isolate the sick animals from the herd.

Overcrowding of animals is a common phenomenon that was observed in most of the dairy farms due to shortage of land in these farms. Poor hygienic scenario in and around the farms with poor housing and sanitation was noticed. Majority of these farmers (54.44%) are disposing the dung and waste material nearby animal houses leading to unhygienic conditions. Regarding feeding practices they are providing wheat straw and high quantity of concentrates to milch animals regularly but most of them are not feeding green fodder.

The calf mortality was very high in these farms due to poor health management of the calves. Similar findings have been reported by Mandape *et al.* (1999) and Tiwari *et al.* (2007) also. Almost all the dairy owners did not cut or disinfect the naval cord and one teat full milk was provided by only 2.22% of the dairy farmers to the calves and most of these farmers belonged to the small dairy farms (6.67%).

The present study depicted that the commercial dairy owners do not prefer to rear dry animals and calves and replace the milch animals when the milk production reduces.

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