

Farmers' perception in employing diverse feeding practices for goats in Hambantota area

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Abstract

A baseline survey was conducted in 9 veterinary ranges in Hambantota area to identify the farmers' attitude in feeding and other management practices of goats. Hundred farmers (50 each in rural and urban) in the area were interviewed in the farm itself using a structured questionnaire. Free range system of rearing (99%) was prominent while goats were almost entirely depending on browsing. Rural farmers employed bio-diversity in feeding. The most preferable species were *Dichrostachys cinerea* (Andara), *Flueggea leucopyrus* (Katupila) and *Mimosa pudica* (Sensitive plant), while *Salvadora persica* (Maliththa) seems to be less palatable. *Cassia auriculata* (Ranawara) and *Acacia leucophloea* (Rataandara) were not consumed even during the dry period. Goats were allowed to browse from morning to evening in communal lands and at the night they were housed or tethered in a shed. Farmers indicated that, mature leaves were the most preferable part by goats during the wet season, while they refrained from consuming tender leaves and stems. Towards the dry season, browsing pattern tended to change and goats used to consume all plant parts including the bark. As a consequence a physiological disorder "bloat" became a serious problem in rural areas. Rural farmers also indicated that, goats refused to browse plants such as *L. leucocephala* (Ipil ipil). Although farmers did not know the reasons for these preferences, it is clear that, goats have a self defense mechanism in selecting/refraining from; some plants/plant parts when ample feed supply is available. In contrast urban farmers had limited opportunity to employ bio-diversity in feeding. Goats are reared under free range system as well due to scarcity of feed they used to consume kitchen waste, market waste, posters, garbage and pieces of clothes. Limited amount of fresh plant materials, either pruned from fences or brought from outside are offered to animals. Prominent species were *G. sepium* (Gliricidia), *Moringa oleifera* (Murunga) etc. Animals were given limited amount of rice bran and coconut poonac as supplements. Due to problems such as reduction of lands for feeding of goats, animal theft, predator attacks (dogs), prevalence of diseases (foot rot, Contagious Pustular Dermatitis - CPD) many farmers wanted to move away from goat farming although it is a viable livelihood industry for many years. Therefore, attention should be given through veterinary and extension personal to address the burning issues of farmers to protect the small scale goat industry.

Keywords: Goat farming, Feed resources