

Public perception and awareness of livestock welfare: A survey among the village community in Balangoda Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Animal welfare is an emerging phenomenon, and relatively a new field to the livestock sector in Sri Lanka. The current study aims to provide a better insight into perception and awareness of livestock welfare among village community and to identify the potential, and facts that need to be considered when implementing public awareness programme. The questionnaire included five major areas such as 1. Awareness of farm animal welfare, 2. Awareness of living condition of farm animals, 3. Awareness of humane practices in livestock management, 4. Buyer's willingness to pay for livestock welfare, and 5. The requirement of awareness programme and legislations of livestock welfare. Data were descriptively analyzed by using SAS 9.4 version. Villagers were randomly selected and interviewed face to face. From 150 questionnaires, 78 of the respondents had no idea of the term animal welfare. Among the respondents, majority believed that the most important aspects of animal welfare are exhibiting natural behaviour (26%) and exposing to the natural environment (36%). Moreover, 70% of respondents believed that living condition is important to livestock. All the respondents believed that transportation is a stress factor. Overall, 90% of respondents stated that killing is painful, and they also believed that stun prior to killing is a better practice than killing conscious animals. However, 30% of respondents did not concern about livestock welfare-friendly products, and 26% did not like to pay more for those products. Everyone agreed that school children and small-scale livestock farmers should be educated about animal welfare. Few (8%) believed that education of the public on livestock welfare is difficult. Every respondent stated that the introduction of new laws needs to ensure livestock welfare and they stated that they are not aware of the current existing laws of animal welfare. In conclusion, majority of the respondents had positive attitudes on improving livestock welfare indicating that there is a good potential to implement public awareness programs on livestock welfare among the village community in the district.

Keywords: Farm animals, Humane killing, Laws in animal welfare, Public awareness

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