

EXPERIENCES OF VETERINARY OFFICIALS IN CARRYING OUT SHEEP HEALTH CARE PROGRAMMES IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract: The present study was conducted in Prakasam and Nellore districts of Andhra Pradesh. Data was collected through structured interview schedule. A total sample size was constituted with 30 Veterinary Officials to study their experiences in carrying out sheep health care programmes in general and vaccination in particular. The study revealed that majority of Veterinary Officials were belonged to young age and most of them were males. More than three fourth of the veterinarians had B.V.Sc & AH qualification and working as Veterinary Assistant Surgeons (VAS) with medium level of working experience. Regular contact with the veterinarian and active participation of farmers in vaccination programmes were among the major characteristics of shepherds required to prevent disease out-break as perceived by the veterinarians. Lack of required staff to carry out vaccination, illiteracy among shepherds, lack of vaccine supply as per the sheep population, lack of cooperation from shepherds especially during migratory season were the major constraints faced by the veterinary officials in carrying out vaccination programme and sheep health camps. Veterinarians felt that intensifying awareness and training programmes regarding sheep health care practices may be useful for carrying out sheep healthcare programmes effectively.

Keywords: Personal-profile; veterinary officials; constraints; vaccination.

INTRODUCTION

Sheep husbandry is an important subsidiary animal husbandry activity. It involves only low cost technology. It acts as a primary source of income and provides greatest sustainable return to the sheep farmers. The sheep are valued for both mutton and wool production, although sheep productivity in terms of both is low. The reasons for low productivity of sheep in India are poor exploitation of genetic potential of native stock, inadequate feed resources, nutritional deficiency, heat stress, poor health monitoring, inadequate marketing and credit support to sheep owners (Khan *et al.*, 2002). Moreover, animal diseases are still a major constraint on economic growth, reduction of poverty and food security. Animal diseases generate a wide range of biophysical and socio-economic impacts that may be both

direct and indirect, and may vary from localized to global (Perry and Sones 2009). In developing countries the loss of even a single animal has a significant and sometimes crippling effect on a family (Wallace *et al.*, 2014).

Diseases in sheep adversely affect the production performance of the animals and in turn, the net profit. Health care is given little attention and the sick animals are generally treated using indigenous medicines. Prophylactic health measures against prevalent diseases and antihelminthic drenching against internal parasites are the important health practices that must be strengthened in farmers' flocks to minimize losses and increase the productivity of sheep. Regular vaccination against important diseases of sheep could reduce the mortality. Farmers in favour of vaccination had greater influence from their vet, more dependent upon veterinary advice and were more likely to have received veterinary advice was reported by Defra (2011). Thus, the present study attempted to explore the personal profile of Veterinary Officials and their experiences in carrying out sheep health care programmes in general and vaccination in particular.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Prakasam and Nellore districts of Andhra Pradesh state. The Veterinary Officials who were involved in carrying out sheep health care programmes were studied purposively. Fifteen veterinary officials were selected randomly from each district resulting in a total of 30 Veterinary Officials and interviewed through face to face contact interview method. The data was collected by using a pre-structured interview schedule developed for the purpose in consultation with other experts. Following the tabulation and necessary sorting, statistical analysis viz. Frequency and percentile were used to draw the inferences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Profile of Veterinary Officials

Age: From the table 1, it was noticed that majority of the veterinarians belonged to young age (56.67%) followed by middle (30%) and old age (13.33 %) categories. The average age of Veterinary officials was 35.5 years. It can be inferred that the State Department of Animal Husbandry (SDAH) is offering appreciable employment opportunities to the most of the veterinary professionals immediately after acquisition of the required qualification.

Gender: From the table 1, it was revealed that more than two third (70%) of veterinary officials were males followed by 30 per cent of female Veterinary officials. Though veterinary profession requires more physical strength and services during odd hours in the

remote areas and frequent field visits, the female category are getting ready to work on par with the male gender and entering into the challenging profession to prove their capabilities and to serve the farming community hence the representation of the female category by 30 per cent.

Qualification: From the table 1, it was revealed that more than three fourth (86.67%) of Veterinary officials were with B.V.Sc & AH qualification followed by 13.33 per cent of Veterinary officials with M.V.Sc. The required qualification being a veterinary doctor was B.V.Sc & AH, this might be the reason for the above trend.

Designation: From the table 1, it was revealed that majority (90%) of Veterinary officials were working as Veterinary Assistant Surgeons (VAS) followed by 10 per cent of Veterinary officials working as Assistant Directors (AD). This trend is due to the existence of more Veterinary Dispensaries (VD) at the village cluster / mandal level to serve the farming community whereas, next higher positions i.e. AD were existing at the municipality levels only.

Working Experience: From the table 1, it was noticed that more than half (60%) of Veterinary Officials were having medium level of working experience followed by an equal percentage (20%) of veterinary officials with low and high levels of working experience. The Veterinary Officials of the study area belongs mostly to young and middle age group hence is the medium level of working experience.

Characteristics of shepherds required to prevent disease out-break as perceived by the Veterinary Officials

It was evident from the (table 2) that majority (93.33%) of veterinarians perceived that 'regular contact with the veterinarian' was the major characteristic of shepherds required to prevent disease out-break followed by 90 per cent of veterinarians stating that 'active participation of farmers in vaccination programmes' was required. About 86.67 per cent of veterinarians opinioned that 'attending sheep health camps' was also important and whereas, an equal number of veterinarians (80 %) felt that 'better knowledge of diseases occurring in sheep' and 'adoption of recommended practices were the characteristics of shepherds required to prevent disease out-break. However, more than half (56.67%) of the veterinarians were of the opinion that 'having good information seeking behaviour' was one of the characteristic of shepherds required to prevent disease out-break.

Veterinarians were of the opinion that regular contact of the shepherds with the veterinarian leads to active participation of farmers in vaccination programmes and utilization of sheep

health camps. They also expressed that farmers should have more information seeking behaviour which in turn improves the knowledge about sheep diseases and adoption of recommended practices by the shepherds.

Constraints faced by the Veterinary Officials in carrying out vaccination programme and sheep health camps

Majority (93.33%) of veterinarians expressed that 'lack of required staff to carry out vaccination' was the major constraint faced by them in carrying out timely vaccination programme and conduct of regular and required sheep health camps. The SDAH should take necessary steps to increase the availability of veterinary manpower as per the growing livestock population.

More than three fourth (83.33%) of the veterinarians felt 'illiteracy among shepherds' was also major constraint in carrying out sheep related activities. The government should give importance to reduce illiteracy among shepherds and take necessary steps. Various audio-visual mass media can be utilised to educate the shepherds about sheep farming activities. Adult education programmes can also concentrate on this group during non grazing hours and in accordance with the shepherds convenient time to have maximum participation and to yield good results.

An equal (50 %) percentage of the veterinarians found lack of vaccine supply as per the sheep population and lack of cooperation from shepherds especially during migratory season were also the constraints faced by them while carrying out vaccination programme and sheep health camps. The SDAH should provide vaccines as per the requirement as the flock size is increases every year and also to conduct vaccinations to the sheep flock in the migratory areas through employing more technical staff in order to make availability of vaccines to all the sheep and to have cooperation from shepherds especially during migratory season.

More than one third (36.67%) and one third of veterinarians felt timing of vaccination and transportation to remote areas, respectively were the constraints faced by them while carrying out vaccination programme and sheep health camps. More allocation of funds, manpower and transportation to remote areas by the SDAH may limit these constraints.

'Low budget allocation for farmer awareness and motivation campaign' and 'lack of infrastructure to maintain cold chain of vaccines', were the constraints faced by them while carrying out vaccination programme and sheep health camps as expressed by 30 per cent and 20 per cent of veterinarians, respectively (Table 3). To avoid these constrains more budget allocation by the SDAH is required.

Suggestions given by the Veterinary Officials for effective implementation of sheep healthcare programmes

Two third (66.67%) of the veterinarians felt that intensifying awareness and training programmes regarding sheep health care practices may be useful for carrying out sheep healthcare programmes effectively. 'Allocation of more number of fodder plots to sheep societies to reduce migratory period' and 'strengthening of veterinary man power to carry out vaccination' were also the suggestions given by majority i.e. 63.33 per cent of veterinarians. Adoption of measures for range land improvement was critical to development of small ruminants, including improving the productivity of common grazing lands and creation of livestock watering points was also suggested in the National workshop on strengthening small ruminant based livelihoods (DAHD&F and SAPPLPP 2015). However, 30 per cent of veterinarians were of the opinion that 'educating the shepherds about indiscriminate use of antibiotics and crude methods of treatment' will be useful, followed by an equal per cent (16.67%) of veterinarians suggested for the 'provision of sufficient vaccines to cover all sheep population' and 'wider publicity and conduct of more sheep health camps'. Whereas, an equal per cent (13.33%) of veterinarians suggested for 'more availability of simple diagnostic kits for better services' and 'allocation of proportionate budget for providing medicines to shepherds'. Very few per cent (03.33%) of veterinarians suggested for the 'supply of infrastructure to maintain cold chain of vaccines' (Table 4).

The sheep development agencies from both Government and NGO sectors should consider the suggestions given by the veterinarian who were actually involved in carrying out the sheep health care programmes and directly rendering the services to the sheep farming community at the field level.

Conclusion

Veterinarians were of the opinion that regular contact of the shepherds with the veterinarian leads to active participation of farmers in vaccination programmes and utilization of sheep health camps. They also expressed that farmers should have more information seeking behaviour which in turn improves the knowledge about sheep diseases and adoption of recommended practices by the shepherds. Lack of required staff to carry out vaccination, illiteracy among shepherds, lack of vaccine supply as per the sheep population, lack of cooperation from shepherds especially during migratory season were the major constraints faced by the veterinary officials in carrying out vaccination programme and sheep health camps. Veterinarians felt that intensifying awareness and training programmes regarding

sheep health care practices may be useful for carrying out sheep healthcare programmes effectively. The sheep development agencies from both Government and NGO sectors should consider the suggestions given by the veterinarian who were actually involved in carrying out the sheep health care programmes and directly rendering the services to the sheep farming community at the field level.

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Table 1: General Profile of Veterinary Officials

n= 30

S No	Profile characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age		
	Young (25-34)	17	56.67
	Middle (35-44)	09	30.00
2	Gender		
	Male	21	70.00
	Female	09	30.00
3	Qualification		
	B.V.Sc&AH	26	86.67
	M.V.Sc	04	13.33
4	Designation		

5	VAS	27	90.00
	AD	03	10.00
	Working Experience		
	Low(<04)	06	20.00
	Medium (04-16)	12	60.00
	High (>16)	06	20.00

Table 2: Characteristics of shepherds required to prevent disease out-break as perceived by the Veterinary Officials

n=30

S.No	Statements	Yes	No
a)	Should regularly contact with veterinarian	28 (93.33)	02 (06.67)
b)	Active participation of farmers in vaccination programmes	27 (90.00)	03 (10.00)
c)	Better knowledge of farmers regarding diseases of sheep	24 (80.00)	06 (20.00)
d)	Having good information seeking behaviour	17 (56.67)	13 (43.33)
e)	Adoption of recommended practices	24 (80.00)	06 (20.00)
f)	Attending sheep health camps	26 (86.67)	04 (13.33)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

Table 3: Constraints faced by the veterinarians in carrying out vaccination programme and sheep health camps

n=30

S.No	Statements	Frequency	Percentage
a)	Timing of vaccination	11	36.67
b)	Lack of vaccine supply as per the sheep population	15	50.00
c)	Lack of infrastructure to maintain cold chain of vaccines	06	20.00
d)	Lack of required staff to carry out vaccination	28	93.33
e)	Transportation to remote areas	10	33.33
f)	Low budget for farmer awareness and motivation campaign	09	30.00
g)	Lack of cooperation from shepherds especially during migratory season	15	50.00
h)	Illiteracy among shepherds	25	83.33

Table 4: Suggestions given by the Veterinary Officials for effective implementation of sheep health care programmes

n=30

S.No	Statements	Frequency	Percentage
a)	Intensifying awareness and training programmes regarding sheep health care practices	20	66.67
b)	Supply of infrastructure to maintain cold chain of vaccines	01	03.33
c)	Strengthening of veterinary man power to carry out vaccination	19	63.33
d)	More availability of simple diagnostic kits for better services	04	13.33
e)	Education of shepherds about indiscriminate use of antibiotics and crude methods of treatment	09	30.00
f)	Allocation of more number of fodder plots to sheep societies to reduce migratory period	19	63.33
g)	Allocation of proportionate budget for providing medicines to shepherds	04	13.33
h)	Provision of sufficient vaccines to cover all sheep population	05	16.67
i)	Wider publicity and conduct of more sheep health camps	05	16.67