

Animal production system of small farms in the Kaski district of Nepal

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to describe livestock production on small farms in the Kaski district of Nepal, with the goal of identifying areas where animal health and productivity could be improved. Eight-five randomly selected farms from four different Village Development Committees were visited from June to July 2010. Farmers were interviewed and premises and animals visually inspected on all farms. Feed samples were collected from a subset of farms. The result showed that most commonly kept species were water buffalo (used for milk and meat), cattle (used for milk and labor) and goats (used for meat). Average milk production levels were 4.6L/day for water buffalo and 1.8L/day for cattle. All animals were milked manually, no calves were weaned, and only one farm practiced artificial insemination. A majority of cattle and goats had access to pasture, and a majority of farms fed their working or producing animals concentrates, however nutritional input was insufficient in terms of energy, protein and micronutrient content to increase levels of production. Goat- raising was the most profitable endeavor, followed by water buffalo and cattle. Livestock have the potential to contribute significantly to improved livelihoods of farmers in terms of both income generation and non-tangible benefits. However, we found that significant constraints on livestock production exist, including insufficient nutritional levels, a lack of preventive care resulting in animal disease, and low reproductive efficiency. Furthermore, cultural considerations reflecting attitudes toward cattle shape farming in ways that may limit production. However, targeted interventions that improve animal health and productivity are possible without being cost prohibitive.