

Farmers' Response to Balanced Feeding for Dairy Animals

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ABSTRACT

The study revealed that 10 per cent of dairy farmers adopted ration for milch animals. The cows and buffaloes were not adequately fed with green fodder and concentrates. The dairy animals were mainly maintained on whatever byproducts available in the farm. The green roughage fed to the animals was non-leguminous in nature. High cost of concentrates, lack of knowledge on the importance of scientific feeding, not pursuing dairying as a business proposition and less or no profit in the dairy enterprise were most frequently expressed as the reasons for not adopting balanced ration.

INTRODUCTION

Cows and buffaloes are the primary sources of milk production in India. Milk production can be increased only through undertaking systematic and scientific cattle development programmes like better breeding, feeding and management. It is realised that genetic potentialities developed in animals through the use of exotic bulls will be expressed in terms of milk production only when they are given optimum feed (Narang and Keker 1973). Thus feeding aspect occupies the foremost position in increasing the milk production. It is therefore worthwhile to analyse the feeding practices as adopted by the

dairy farmers. This study was undertaken with a view to know the most commonly used cattle feed, whether farmers meet the requirements of cattle feed throughout the lactation period, whether the milch animals are fed with recommended doses of cattle feed and to enquire into the reasons for non-adoption of balanced ration.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was undertaken in four milk collection centres purposively selected out of 58 centres forming the milk shed area of the Coimbatore Co-operative Milk Supply Union. Out of 249 dairy farmers in these four

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centres, a sample of 120 farmers was drawn by proportionate random sampling procedure. Data were collected by personal interview with the help of a structured schedule.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Balanced ration consists of roughages and concentrates. Roughages include both dry and green fodder. If dry fodder, a quantity of 12–15 kg per animal per day is needed. If green fodder, 40–50 kg is required. The requirement of concentrates is 3 to 4 kg. Concentrates consist of groundnut cake (40 parts), cotton seed (20 parts), rice polish (18 parts), wheat bran (10 parts), maize grain (10 parts), mineral mixture (1 part) and common salt (1 part). The dosage of concentrate also varies depending on the milk yield.

The dairy farmers were asked whether they were adopting the above balanced ration. Only one in every 10 was found to use balanced ration for milch animals (Table 1).

The use of the above roughages indirectly reflects the principal crops grown by the farmers. The dry and green fodders used are obtained from the farms. It can be inferred that the cows and buffaloes are mostly maintained on whatever byproducts available in their farm. No farmer has set

Table 1. Different types of cattle feed used by dairy farmers

N=120	
	Percentage of farmers
1. Dry fodder	
Cholam straw	97.5
Ragi straw	35.0
Maize straw	11.7
Paddy straw	10.8
Groundnut haulms	10.0
2. Green fodder	
Grasses	82.5
Sugarcane tops	71.7
Cholam	25.0
Ragi	14.2
Pulses	5.8
Maize	5.8
Lucerne	2.5
3. Concentrates	
Groundnut cake	92.5
Rice bran	84.2
Cotton seed	47.5
Common salt	45.0
Dhal husk	20.8
Mineral mixture	1.7

apart lands for raising green fodders. With reference to concentrates, data show that majority of dairy farmers ranging 84 to 93 per cent is feeding the animals with groundnut cake and rice bran. A little less than half of the farmers use cotton seed and common salt. Dhal husk is fed to animals in the case of 21 per cent of farm families. There are just 2 per cent of farmers adding mineral mixture to the cattle feed ration.

The farmers found it possible to feed milch animals with one or the other concentrate for the entire lactation period. But only 24.2 per cent of them could supply green fodder for that period. A majority of the dairy

farmers stated that they had used green fodder as and when it was available as byproduct of the farm but not regularly. Most of them (94 per cent) are able to supply dry fodder throughout the lactation period (Table 2).

Table 2. Cattle feed used during lactation period

Cattle feed	N = 120	
	Throughout the lactation period (per cent)	For part of the lactation period (per cent)
Dry fodder	94.2	5.8
Green fodder	24.2	75.8
Concentrates	100.0	—

The milch animals are mostly underfed with green fodder and concentrates. Among 120 farmers, only 10 per cent are feeding their animals with recommended dose of concentrate or over dose of it. In the sample farmers, there are also 12 per cent who had even opted to maintain milch animal without any major concentrate. Green fodder requirement is adequately met with by about 21 per cent of farm families. Most of them do not find any difficulty in meeting complete requirement of dry fodder (Table 3).

Farmers specified a number of reasons for not using balanced ration

for dairy animals. A majority of dairy farmers (57 per cent) are not enthusiastic in feeding the animal with adequate quantity of concentrates because of their high cost. Thirty-eight per cent are of the view that balanced feeding is not economical as the cost of milk is not commensurating with the cost of cattle feed. About 21 per cent revealed their lack of knowledge about balanced feeding as the reason for not using proper feed. Fifteen per cent of farmers expressed the financial difficulties in maintaining animal with scientific feeding. A little less than 10 per cent stated that they are satisfied with the present level

Table 3. Quantity of different cattle feed used by dairy farmers

N = 120

Cattle feed	More than recommended	As recommended	Less than recommended	Not used
Dry fodder	42.5	49.2	8.3	—
Green fodder	8.3	12.5	79.2	—
Concentrates	1.7	8.3	78.3	11.7

Table 4. Reasons for not adopting balanced ration

Reasons	Percentage
High cost of concentrates	56.7
Not profitable	38.3
Lack of knowledge	20.8
Lack of finance	15.0
Satisfied with the present milk yield	9.2
Not habitual	7.5
Milk mainly for house consumption	6.7

of milk production obtained with certain arbitrary ration of cattle feed. About 8 per cent farmers opined that

a balanced ration is not habitual for them. As the animals are mainly maintained for house consumption, 7 per cent of farmers are not interested in increasing milk production by feeding with balanced ration.

REFERENCES

- NARANG, M. P. and M. L. KAKER. 1973. Feed your livestock green fodder. *Gosamvardhana* 21: 20—22.