

Observations on nomadic trends in Bahawalpur City of Pakistan with reference to meat and milk production

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Abstract

Bahawalpur City a booming and well furnished city of Bahawalpur District lying adjunct to the border of the Cholistan desert. A relatively small and economical City of Pakistan, furnished by almost all facilities of daily life. Shepherds and nomads usually migrate from nearby Cholistan desert. This study encompasses those shepherds and nomads who keep sheep and goats for their livelihood. There are about 200 such families currently operating in the suburbs of the City. They own sheep and goats of mixed variety. Their goats kid after natural mating and supply around 1 to 2 litres of milk in a day. This milk is sold at the local tea stalls and milk stalls. Male kids are reared conventionally by their mothers (natural nursing) till 1-2 years of age and sold to the Eid market in Lahore, Faisalabad etc. The goats and sheep graze the municipal garbage disposal tankers. The sheep and goats eat the human waste like cut vegetable peeling, leftover food items, and dried fallen leaves and even disposed of paper. The daily cost of food for the animals is Rs. 0/- for that day and minimal feed cost results in good profit.

Keywords: Goat, Sheep, Citinomads, Metronomads, Bahawalpur City

Introduction

Goat and Sheep Population in Pakistan have been estimated to be 56.7 and 27.1 millions, producing 700,000 and 35,000 tonnes of Milk respectively and in Cholistan, 266,096 and 362,858 goats and sheep thrive respectively.

The length of the desert is about 480 Km and breadth is from 32 to 192Km. The desert is situated in South-West of Punjab province (Pakistan) spread over an area of 26,000 square kilometers with patches of highly saline soils and brackish sub-soil aquifer (water) located between latitudes of 27° to 42° and 29° North and longitudes 57° to 60° East.

Bahawalpur (population 0.79 Million) a booming and well furnished city of Bahawalpur District lying adjacent to the border of the Cholistan desert. A relatively small and economical city of Pakistan furnished by almost all facilities of daily life, a medical college, veterinary college, pharmacy faculty, a world class university, an engineering college and one of the finest schools of the world (Sadiq Public School). A unique trend has been observed in the area. Shepherds and nomads who dwell in the city usually migrated from nearby Cholistan tract. This study encompasses those shepherds and nomads who keep sheep and goats

for their livelihood. We proposed a term 'Citinomads/ Metronomads' for them. For desert people of Cholistan, Cholistan cattle, sheep, goat and camel is a beloved companion, source of milk and meat, transport, sport (racing), recreation (dancing), thus, play an important role in the socioeconomic uplift of nomads.

In Pakistan's context, goat has been a neglected species. In fact, it attracted such great attention in the early 1960s, during the regime of President Ayub Khan that a decision was taken at the highest level that this animal be exterminated; special laws to this effect were enacted. For every sheep slaughtered, three goats were to be slaughtered. But, proving the resilience of goat, despite all the prejudice and all the bureaucratic snares, goat not only survived but thrived also.

Methodology

Pictographic survey was conducted of 10 families from Satellite Town and 5 families of Model Town area of Bahawalpur City on a performa designed to check the socioeconomic standing of the metronomads of Bahawalpur City. Population of the total number of families operating in Bahawalpur City was estimated by the information furnished by the 15 families under study. Swot analysis was done with the information

procured by these performa. Careful observations were taken on the travelling and dietary patterns of the roaming flocks.

Results and Discussion

Families and Numbers

There are about 200 such families currently operating in the developing/developed suburbs of the city. Hosting 25 and 100 sheep and Goats of mixed variety respectively. Fifteen of these families were extensively studied during the period of research and complete data were collected from them. The families live in a joint family system housing the elder parents and 5-6 mature married siblings with their children.

Type of Animals/Nutritional Status

Most of the flocks with these shepherds are unique in the sense that they comprised of sheep, goat and cattle. Sheep flock was comprised of 40% of the total herd (mostly Khadri/Buchi breeds). While goat contributed 40-45% of the total herd (Mostly Beetle, Cheeni, Nachi, Teddy random crosses). Almost 5% was constituted mixed Cholistani cattle or a Cholistani/Sahiwal cross.

Age and Sex of Animals

Most of the sheep and goats in a herd were mature and of breeding age with the exact number of young ones which are reared in the house till weaning and are mature enough to traverse the city roads. 3-4 male sheep and goats are also part of the herd and they usually look after the herd and serve the female goat during oestrus.



Area of Shepherding

Of the 15 families studied, 10 were studied in Satellite Town and 5 families were from Model Town. Most of the shepherding families are resident of the developing and the thickly populated areas of the city. In the 5 Km suburbs of the Bahawalpur city the trend strengthens and the number of animal holding increases.



Age and Sex of Shepherds

These shepherds come in all ages and sizes but mostly are the young boys and girls. Female participation is a must and 75% of the shepherds are females, even the mentally retarded female or male teenager will actively participate in this daily run to fetch food for the household.

Travelling and Time of Shepherding

Interesting fact about the Bahawalpuri system of nomading is that the goats are shepherded on the roads and they have located specific tracts for each shepherd's goats. The day starts at 4.00 am and the sheep and goats graze the garbage sites located in the 5-10 km radius. The evening round starts at 4.00 pm till the goats are furnished with food through the day.



Nutrition

The goats and sheep graze the municipal garbage disposal tankers where the garbage is posted along the side of the tankers and not in it. The sheep and goats eat the human waste like cut vegetable peelings, tea leftover, leftover food items, fruit peelings, dried fallen leaves and even disposed off papers, baby pampers. A day without such feasting is alternated by cutting down a branch of green tree by a shepherd blade/pole. The daily cost of food for the animals is Rs. 0/- for that day and minimal feed cost results in good profit.



Breeding

Their goats after natural mating giving birth to 1-2 kids (twining ratio of 25%) which are nursed by the mother. The average kidding cycle ranges from 5-6 months. The six month old male goat may be sold to the local butcher fetching Rs. 2000-3000 (almost 30\$) per kid.



Milk

Females supply around 1 to 2 litres of milk in a day. This milk is sold at the local tea stalls and milk stalls which are mixed with the cow/buffaloe milk and blended together after boiling. A herd normally of 25 female goats produce about 25-50 litres of milk which is sold in the market @ Rs. 15-20/liter (2010) and Rs. 25-30.00/liter (2011) bringing in daily bread and butter on regular basis. Larger herd means more money.

Meat

Male kids called pathas are sold at age of 6 months (Rs. 3,000/kid) to 1 year (Rs. 8-10,000/kid) to the local butchers. Older pathas are sold at age of 1-2 years to the local butcher @ Rs. 8-10,000/patha this need is felt for household emergency or in the case of sick animals. The need to go to the veterinarian is much felt but to spend money to buy medicines is not very common with these households. Male kids are reared conventionally by their mothers (natural nursing) till 1-

2 years of age and sold to the Eid market in Lahore, Faisalabad and other cities. Majority of the customers in Metropolis like Lahore have developed a unique taste for Bahawalpuri goat. In metropolises, the average sale of the goats for Eid-ul-Azha ranges from Rs. 20,000-25,000/goat. Majority of the customers in metropolis like Lahore have developed a unique taste for Bahawalpuri goat mutton.



Benefit Cost Ratio

Due to low or none feeding cost, after sale of milk and pathas an average monthly income of Rs. 40,000/- is minimum as far as 35 healthy productive goats are concerned.

Swot Analysis

The following weaknesses have been observed in the Cholistan especially Bahawalpur City and also some of the factors that are responsible for low productivity are as follow:

- Inadequate nutrition,
- Death and depreciation because of diseases and parasites.
- Unorganized marketing of live animals and products,
- Inadequate research on breeding of improved stock,
- Undefined production objectives,
- Inadequate financial resources for goat research and development programs,
- Lack of proper infrastructure and properly integrated farming system, and
- Inadequately trained labour
- Zoonotic threat to and from the human population.

Unless special attention is paid to removing these constraints, goat production will not progress on proper scientific lines.

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