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Maintaining health of dairy animals during winter season

Presently there are 6,000 co-operative milk societies in Haryana

Becoming aware: At a training camp for cattle growers.— Photo: Special Arrangement

Though reasons such as water shortage, shrinking space, maintenance expense, and low price for milk at the cooperative milk societies are some reasons attributed to the decline in cattle rearing among several farmers in southern states, in Haryana, farmers have been able to cope with these problems.
"In Haryana, presently there are 6,000 co-operative milk societies out of which 1,300 units are being entirely run by women. In our State, unlike in southern parts of the country, cattle and land are not directly linked. Even those who possess no land rear 2-3 buffaloes or cows and supply the milk to the societies and earn a decent income," says Dr. Rajinder Singh, Sr Extension Specialist (Animal Sciences), Lala Lajpat Rai University of Veterinary and animal Sciences. Extension Centre, Rohtak, Haryana.

Two categories

The Livestock farming systems in the State can be broadly divided into two types: Buffalo based and cow/crossbred cows farming systems. Milk societies in Haryana pay Rs. 28.35/litre for buffalo and Rs 22.95 for cow's milk. If the milk contains 10 per cent fat with 8.8 SNF (saturated non fat), then the farmer gets about Rs. 42 per litre. More the fat content higher the price. The cooperative system has launched an attractive system for milk suppliers. If SNF is extra then farmers are paid 10 paisa extra. Buffalo breeds have provide a higher fat percent (6-7 percent) than cow's milk (3-4 percent). To maintain optimum level of fat and SNF, several farmers have been trained by the extension department of the University to particularly maintain this level during winter, because during the cold season temperature falls below zero degree, badly affecting the health of the dairy animals and their milk yield.

Affects production

During this season many animals often refuse to eat, become feverish and pneumonitic. This affects the milk production, health and reproduction of the animal. Normal cow and buffalo body temperature ranges between 101-102 degree Fahrenheit and suitable ambient temperature is 65-75 degree F. Severe cold surroundings result in increased energy loss, which has to be compensated by giving extra calorie-rich feed and special care. Breed, nutrition, age, state of lactation, gestation effects and management are the main factors affecting SNF and fat percentage. Nutrition, especially balanced rations, fortified and supplemented with protein ingredients like whole cotton seed or cakes, becomes important. Rations containing about 17 per cent fibre in the animal feed are also helpful to increase fat percentage in milk. Concentrate mixture should comprise grains (40 per cent), oil cakes (32 per

cent), brans (25per cent), mineral mixture (2per cent) and common salt (1 per cent). Apart from this the extra energy-rich grains at approximately 0.8 per cent of body weight should be fed to counter the stress of cold for maintaining normal milk production and other activities.

Water availability

Water, possibly lukewarm, should be clean and available four times a day at their drinking time. “In the morning, the quantity of milk is more when compared to the milk produced in the evening and the percent of fat is the opposite,” explains Dr. Rajinder Singh. Rohtak, Hisar, Bhiwani, Jind, Jhajjar and Sonepat districts produce fodder crops, cereals, and ultimately crop residues. Buffalo is the sole milch animal in these regions. Contrary to this, some rain-fed areas like Mahendergarh, Rewari, Gurgaon, Faridabad and Mewat districts — have less crop residues.

No difference

Here the animal feed depends mainly on dry fodder, compound feed and seasonal greens. But the milk production does not seem to show any big difference. Haryana is supporting cattle farmers (both cow and buffalo) to take up crossbred rearing for milk production by providing imported semen for breed improvement and development at their doorsteps. Farmers are also made aware about the importance of conserving green grass into hay and silage for making them available round the year.

Silage

“Silage is a simple method where the grass or dried straws are packed tightly in plastic barrels or cement cisterns and the containers closed tightly. After some weeks this can be used as feed for the animals. “Sometimes a small amount of jaggery can be diluted and sprinkled over the silage and then closed inside the barrel to be used later. We find that the animals love the taste of this feed,” he says. Till date the University has trained more than 800 unemployed youth, women, and farmers on scientific dairy farming as a method of increasing milk productivity and self employment.

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