NOVEL, COST-EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR GOAT FEEDING AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT ON SMALLHOLDER FARMS

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**Abstract**

Nutritious feeding and good health conditions in goats are instrumental for sustainable agricultural production. This study identifies innovative feed and disease management methods to improve the economic productivity of herds in the rural goat farming community. It involved a small-scale farmer maintaining an integrated farm system including Jamnapari dairy goats, layer chickens and green leaves cultivation in Dulanmahara in the Western Province, Sri Lanka. Information was collected using a farmer’s interview and direct observations.

The study revealed that feeding a mixture of water, coconut poonac, rice bran, and a goat vitamin (Calfo 20) as a primary feed and Malaysian grasses (Guinea grass and Napier grass) as a supplementary feed yielded better results than feeding the dairy goats only grasses and green leaves. This improved animal growth performance, milk yield, kids’ survival, and twinning rates, resulting in increased offtake rates and better prices. This feeding strategy also addresses forage scarcity caused by weather changes and the current economic situation. From experience, a) when frothy bloat symptoms were identified, feeding the goats with sesame oil or vinegar was very successful in preventing bloat-related death, and b) warming the udder with native ‘Burulla’ leaves (Berry leaves), kept in hot water, successfully induced lactation in does. From a cost-effectiveness evaluation, these feeding and disease management strategies are economically viable for small-scale farmers and showed improved productive and reproductive performance of dairy goats. Further laboratory work involving nutritional analysis of the feed and dose optimization of the medication is warranted.

**Keywords – cost-effective, disease, feed, goats, rural**

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