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Knowledge level of dairy farmers obtaining information from digital and traditional media in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

Using various information sources, this research aimed to assess the dairy husbandry knowledge level of dairy farmers. The research was carried out in six villages that were chosen at random from the Andhra Pradesh districts of Visakhapatnam, Prakasam and Chittoor. Twenty dairy farmers were selected at random from each village and divided into two groups of ten according to their exposure to conventional and digital media. Farmers who primarily rely on digital media, such as WhatsApp and YouTube, for information were placed in the digital media group, while others were placed in the traditional media group. The sample consists of sixty farmers who utilize traditional media and sixty farmers who utilize digital media. Only 8.33 percent of digital media farmers and 31.67 percent of traditional media farmers had low level of knowledge on feeding practices, while most of the digital media (91.67%) and traditional media (76.67%) farmers had medium level of knowledge on breeding practices and the majority of digital media (60.00%) and traditional media (40.00%) groups had a medium and low level of knowledge on healthcare and management practices, respectively. Overall, the majority of those exposed to digital media (75%) and those exposed to traditional media (63.33%) had a medium dairy husbandry knowledge level.

Keywords: Knowledge level, dairy husbandry practices, dairy farmers, digital media group and traditional media group

Introduction

The significance of agriculture and dairy farming in India's economic success has been well acknowledged, considering that the nation is largely agrarian. As a fact, its rural economy is inextricably linked with dairy farming, which is critical to our country's economy. It also contributes to the increased food supply, employment opportunities, and nutritious levels. In terms of livestock, though India ranks first, with milch animals never having been considered a separate entity from agriculture but due to the restricted availability of resources to the farming community, predicted improvements in milk output per animal have yet to be achieved. The extent to which a dairy farmer's knowledge of several dairy husbandry practices such as breeding, feeding, health and animal management is latent impacts the success or failure of a dairy enterprise. Better output stems from higher levels of knowledge. In this sense, various digital media platforms (YouTube, WhatsApp) play a crucial role in transmitting the latest technical know-how, enhancing knowledge and in achieving intended national development. A key necessity for sustainable growth in the livestock and agricultural sectors is greater access to information. The flow of technical information through digital media platforms sows the seeds of development in farmer's minds. Therefore, it became imperative to determine to what extent these digital media are beneficial in boosting dairy farmers' knowledge and expertise. Having taken the aforesaid context into account, the following research was conducted to study the knowledge level of Andhra Pradesh dairy farmers sourcing information from digital and traditional media.

Materials and Methods

The current research was conducted in randomly selected 6 villages from the purposively selected Visakhapatnam, Prakasam and Chittoor districts of Andhra Pradesh. Two mandals from each of the chosen districts and one village from each of the chosen mandals were picked at random. Based on their exposure to digital media and traditional media, 20 dairy farmers were randomly selected from each selected village and categorized in two groups of 10. The farmers using digital media (WhatsApp and YouTube) as a prime source of information were categorized as digital media group while others were grouped as traditional media. The sample composed of 60 farmers using traditional media and 60 farmers dependent on digital media. Therefore, a total of 120 farmers were engaged in this study. All of the major facets of dairy husbandry were chosen and arranged for this study under three important aspects: feeding practices, breeding practices, health care and management practices. A standardized questionnaire was employed to gather data. The gathered data was assessed using simple statistical procedures.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution of dairy farmers of digital media and traditional media group according to their knowledge level regarding feeding practices

S. No.	Category	Digital media group		Traditional media group		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Low	5	8.33	19	31.67	24	20.00
2.	Medium	47	78.33	23	38.33	70	58.33
3.	High	8	13.34	18	13.00	26	21.67
	Mean	5.67		2.51		4.09	
	SD	0.816		1.22		1.018	

Table 1 revealed that the majority (58.33%) of the respondents had medium accompanied by high (21.67%) and low (20.00%) levels of knowledge on feeding practices. This was due to the fact that most of the respondents felt feeding of concentrates/mineral mixture/providing balanced feed to the animals is a cost involving process and therefore showed meager interest in acquiring knowledge on feeding practices.

Table 2: Distribution of dairy farmers of digital media and traditional media group according to their knowledge level regarding breeding practices.

S. No.	Category	Digital media group		Traditional media group		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Low	4	6.67	12	20.00	16	13.33
2.	Medium	55	91.67	46	76.67	101	84.17
3.	High	1	1.66	2	3.33	3	2.5
	Mean	6.367		3.983		5.175	
	SD	0.636		1.200		0.918	

From Table 2 it was observed that the majority (84.17%) of the respondents had medium followed by low (13.33%) and high (2.5%) levels of knowledge on breeding practices. This was attributed to the fact that most of the respondents were unaware of selection of animals, ideal calving interval, optimum time for the expulsion of placenta and reproductive problems like cervicitis, repeat breeding, retention of placenta etc., in the study area.

Table 3: Distribution of dairy farmers of digital media and traditional media group according to their knowledge level regarding health and management practices.

S. No.	Category	Digital media group		Traditional media group		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Low	20	33.33	24	40.00	44	36.67
2.	Medium	36	60.00	19	31.67	55	84.17
3.	High	4	6.67	17	28.33	21	17.5
	Mean	7.2		2.43		4.815	
	SD	1.116		1.357		1.258	

Table 3, showed that majority (45.83%) of the respondents had medium followed by low (36.67%) and high (17.5%) levels of knowledge on health care and management practices. At this juncture, the State Veterinary University and State Animal Husbandry Department may involve and enlighten farmers on prophylactic and curative measures.

Table 4: Distribution of dairy farmers of digital media and traditional media group according to their knowledge level regarding dairy husbandry practices.

S. No.	Category	Digital media group		Traditional media group		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Low	9	15.00	13	21.67	22	18.33
2.	Medium	45	75.00	38	63.33	83	69.17
3.	High	6	10.00	9	15.00	15	12.5
	Mean	19.23		8.933		14.08	
	SD	1.769		3.40		2.58	

It was apparent from Table 4 that most (69.17%) of the respondents had medium followed by low (18.33%) and high (12.5%) levels of overall knowledge regarding dairy husbandry practices. This aligns with the fact that most of the respondents had medium level of social participation, exposure to mass media and extension contact. If the state and district animal husbandry departments make use of various ICT and social media tools in order to disseminate information about various dairy husbandry practices, in a brief, understandable and appealing way they can then improve their scientific understanding of dairy husbandry practices and skills which will eventually improve their knowledge levels regarding dairy husbandry practices.

Table 5: Comparison of digital and traditional media groups according to their knowledge level through digital and traditional media

S. No	Variable	Mean scores		S.D		'Z' value
		Digital media group	Traditional media group	Digital media group	Traditional media group	
1.	Knowledge	19.23	8.93	1.76	3.40	20.73**

As seen in Table 5, the mean scores of the knowledge level for the digital media and traditional media groups show that the mean score of the digital media respondents was significantly higher than that of the traditional media respondents. This could be attributed to the increase in knowledge levels of dairy farmers of digital media group regarding various dairy husbandry practices like preparation of concentrate feed using locally available ingredients, quantity of green fodder to be fed, selection of dairy animals, interval between two successive calvings, vaccination, symptoms of diseases like BQ, HS, FMD,

measures to control mastitis and correct method of milking etc.

Conclusion

The present investigation ascertained that Andhra Pradesh dairy farmers possess a medium level of knowledge regarding dairy practices with room for improvement in breeding and feeding aspects. The perception of feeding practices as financially burdensome and a lack of knowledge regarding breeding and healthcare adds to this knowledge gap. Fortunately, the study identified a silver lining: digital media as a powerful tool for knowledge dissemination. Farmers who relied on digital media for obtaining information displayed significantly higher knowledge concerning dairy husbandry practices. Therefore, state and district animal husbandry departments should leverage social media platforms and ICT to effectively cater clear and engaging information on essential dairy husbandry practices. This will offer farmers with the knowledge and skills ought to improve their livelihood.

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