KNOWLEDGE LEVEL OF FARM WOMEN OF WAYANAD DISTRICT, KERALA, ABOUT RABBIT REARING

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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted in WAYANAD district of Kerala on the knowledge of farm women about rabbit rearing. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 34 farm women who had been selected for loans to set up rabbit units in 2006 under the State Poverty Eradication Programme from the three taluks. Knowledge of rabbit farming was assessed by preparing an arbitrary knowledge test containing 26 items. It was found that most of the women had good knowledge regarding breeds and housing. But fewer women had correct knowledge about breeding, feeding and management of rabbits.

Key words: Farm women, Rabbit rearing.

INTRODUCTION

Rabbit production has already attained commercial status in many parts of the world including India. It has the potential to become a major source of subsidiary income for the farming households. This enterprise has the added advantage of opening new vistas of self-employment to educated youth in particular and to others in general either as a whole time profession or as a backyard enterprise. Small broiler rabbit units are an important source of subsidiary income and employment for farm women besides improving their diet. However, rabbit keeping requires specialized training and technical skills.

In Kerala the rabbit industry is still in its nascent stage. As a part of promoting income generating activities among women, the State Poverty Eradication Mission had embarked on a scheme to promote rabbit rearing. It was against this background that the present study was undertaken.

Data on the knowledge of farmers of Kerala about important aspects of rabbit rearing is conspicuous by its absence. This is alarming since there is a complex but important relationship between the rate of knowledge about an innovation in a system and its rate of adoption. In one sense, the level of knowledge at any given time is an indication of the total amount of information about the innovation available to the average individual in the system (Rogers, 1983).

Also farmers’ knowledge about an enterprise has been reported to be an important factor affecting production and disease incidence. Awajobi et. al. (2007) also observed that inadequate information on rabbit management was a serious problem cited by farmers in Nigeria. Thus a study with the specific objective of assessing the knowledge of farm women about rabbit rearing was undertaken.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Wayanad district of Kerala state was selected purposively for the study. Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select 34 farm women from among the list of women...
from the three taluks of Wayanad district, viz. Mananthavady, Sultan Bathery and Vythiri who had been selected for loans to set up rabbit units in 2006 under the State Poverty Eradication Programme. Knowledge of rabbit farming was assessed by preparing an arbitrary knowledge test. Initially, a list of 58 items related to rabbit rearing was prepared through review of literature and discussion with experts. These items were subjected to judges rating on a three point continuum based on which 26 items with individual mean scores above the mean of means were selected. The final set of 26 items formed the knowledge test which was administered to the group of selected farmers after pilot testing in a totally different sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge about selection of breeds:
Analysis of the data revealed that women had good knowledge regarding the breeds of rabbit used for different purposes. About 94 per cent of the women could name two meat varieties correctly and 88 per cent knew the name of a breed reared for fur.

Knowledge about housing of rabbit: More than 90 per cent of the women studied had known the best material that could be used for the floor of the rabbit hutch. However, only 38 per cent could mention the dimensions of a nest box. Around forty-four per cent could correctly mention the space requirement for an adult male rabbit while around half of them knew the space requirement of the kindling cage. Most of the women (79%) had correct knowledge about the most appropriate material that could be used for roofing in the rabbit hutch.

Knowledge about breeding management of rabbits: Findings of the study revealed that only 38 per cent of the women studied knew the optimum male female ratio. Most of the women (91.1%) knew the light requirement for rabbits. Most of them (79%) were aware of the breeding strategy of taking female rabbit to male rabbit’s cage for mating. About half of the respondents had good knowledge regarding the age at which the female rabbit could be bred. Only 41 per cent of the respondents knew the signs of successful mating in rabbits while just over two thirds (67.6%) of the women knew the maximum number of times that a male rabbit could be bred in a day.

Knowledge about feeding of rabbits: Perusal of Table 4 revealed that most of the women (85%) had known the frequency of feeding bunnies. However, just over half (52.9%) of the women knew the amount of green grass required for an adult female rabbit per day. Feed requirements account for a sizeable chunk of the expenditure on farms and imparting correct knowledge on this area could help to reduce expenditure on this account and improve the profitability of such enterprise.

Knowledge about management of rabbits: Slightly less than one third (32.3 per cent) of women were aware of the age of weaning in rabbits. However, more than ninety per cent knew the gestation period of rabbits. About 85 per cent of the women knew the need for restriction of visitors to the farm as well as the need for provision of clean drinking water to avoid cannibalism in rabbits. Cheeke, et al (1982) pointed out that restriction of visitors was a good policy in commercial rabbit farms as they bring disease organisms with them. Less than half of the women knew the temperature that should be maintained inside the rabbit hutch. Knowledge about this important parameter could help in minimizing

| TABLE 1: Distribution of respondents based on knowledge about selection of rabbit breeds. |
|-----------------|-----|-----|
| Item            | f   | %   |
| Any two varieties of rabbit reared for meat | 32  | 94.1|
| Any one variety of rabbit reared for fur     | 30  | 88.2|

| TABLE 2: Distribution of respondents based on knowledge about housing of rabbits. n=34 |
|-----------------|-----|-----|
| Item            | f   | %   |
| The appropriate flooring material for a rabbit hutch | 31  | 91.1|
| The appropriate roofing material for a rabbit hutch  | 27  | 79.4|
| Space requirement of kindling cage                  | 17  | 50  |
| Space requirement for an adult male rabbit          | 15  | 44.1|
| Space requirement of a nest box                     | 13  | 38.2|
Knowledge about marketing of rabbits:

Regarding marketing of rabbits only 41 per cent of women could correctly mention the age at which rabbits were sold for meat. Majority (about 80%) of the women considered inadequate slaughter facilities or lack of business as the major constraint in this sector. Against this background measures to strengthen such facilities could help the industry besides being a support to numerous farm women who have taken up rabbitry as a livelihood. Awojobi et al. (2005) observed that farmers in Nigeria had reported poor market for products as an important constraint. It is important that women know the correct age of sale of rabbits since maintaining the animals beyond this age could affect the economic viability of this enterprise as well.

Knowledge about disease of rabbits:

Results of the investigation shed light on the fact that most of the respondents (73.5%) could name a disease that occurred among rabbits.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicated that in certain domains women had high knowledge where as this was lacking in certain crucial areas. The success of an enterprise depends on the farmer’s ability to minimize mortality and to maximize returns by increasing the efficiency of using inputs and for this correct knowledge about certain important parameters could be a defining criterion. The knowledge deficient areas identified could also be the focus of future training programmes as well.

REFERENCES


