The study was conducted in Wayanad district of Kerala state which was selected purposively for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select three wards from Kotathara Panchayat of Vythiri Taluk of the district from which a proportionate stratified sample of 60 dairy farmers were selected. A pre tested interview schedule was used for data collection in January 2006. The study revealed that there was not strict preference for any particular month to attend the training programmes for nearly all the respondents. The study revealed that the most preferred area for training was on preparation of concentrate mixtures using unconventional feeds while trainings on fodder cultivation were least preferred. Training on selection of dairy cattle was ranked third among the nine domains identified. With regard to the frequency of attending training programmes slightly more than half of the respondents (52.6 per cent) preferred to have a training programme once in two months whereas 43.5 per cent preferred to attend a training programme once in a month and a meagre 3.5 per cent preferred to attend a training programme twice a month.

INTRODUCTION

Training provides opportunities for farmers to enhance their knowledge and skills as well as developing their self confidence to adopt scientific practices in dairy farming. However, such training programmes will be effective only if they are based on the felt needs of target groups. The Department of Animal Husbandry, Government of Kerala conducts training programmes and awareness camps as part of its extension activities. However, in order to be effective it is important to know whether these programmes are in line with the actual needs of the farming community. Keeping in mind the above facts, an investigation to assess the preferred training needs of dairy farmers was undertaken.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study was conducted in a Wayanad district of Kerala state which was selected purposively for the study. Simple random sampling was used to select three wards from Kotathara panchayat of Vythiri taluk of the said district and a proportionate stratified sample of 60 dairy farmers were selected from a list of farmers who had attended training programmes conducted by the Animal Husbandry Department from the selected panchayat. A pre tested interview schedule was used for data collection in January 2006. Training needs was assessed by asking the respondent to indicate whether the domain was needed or not needed for which scores of 1 and 0 were assigned respectively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All the respondents were engaged in animal husbandry and allied activities. The average age of the respondents studied was 40 years and 8 months. Just over twenty per cent of the respondents were women while the remaining were male. Regarding the information utilization pattern for 89 per cent of the respondents, the veterinarian was the first choice for animal husbandry information while for 45.6 per cent the livestock inspector was the second preferred choice. Nearly seventy two per cent of the respondents reported that the newspaper was the most often used source of animal husbandry information while for 10.5 per cent and 17.5 per cent the newspaper was their second and third choice respectively. Just over half the respondents indicated the radio

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as their first choice for animal husbandry information while for the remaining 26.3 per cent and 22.3 percent it was their second and third choice respectively.

b. Preference of respondents about month and frequency of attending training programmes

Less than one fourth (22.8 %) of the respondents indicated that they had attended a training programme at the Veterinary Hospital. Regarding their preferred month for trainings, there was no strict preference for any particular month to attend the training programme for nearly all the respondents. This could be due to the fact that dairying is a venture providing employment throughout the year and there is no specific peak work season. This finding is in contrast to that of Sharma (1995) and Malik (1997), who observed that farm women in Himachal Pradesh and Kurukshetra respectively did have certain preferred months for attending trainings!

With regard to the frequency of attending training programmes, (Table 1) slightly more than half of the respondents (52.6 per cent) preferred to have a training programme once in two months whereas 43.5 per cent preferred to attend a training programme once in a month and a meagre 3.5 per cent were very enthusiastic preferring a frequency of a training twice a month.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of attending the training programmes</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once in 2 months</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>43.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice in a month</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These findings point to the fact that the farmer has understood that training is not a one time affair instead; it is a continuous process of learning new skills and developing new capabilities. For this, trainings have to be conducted continuously on a regular and periodic manner.

The results of the investigation revealed that among the nine training areas suggested, ninety per cent of the respondents ranked feed mixing and preparation of concentrate mixtures using unconventional feeds as their most preferred area of training.

This finding is in line with that of Pushpa and Seetharaman (1999) who made similar findings among poultry farmers of Tamil Nadu. These findings reflect the fact that the high cost of feed is a major constraint faced by the dairy farmers in the district. Training on fodder cultivation however was the least preferred area. This finding has been endorsed by other researchers (George et al., 1990) who reported that fodder has failed to make a mark in the minds of the dairy farmer in Kerala. Trainings on disease management were ranked second. This finding is similar to that of Shanty (1991). Selection of dairy cattle was ranked third among the nine domains identified while scientific housing and breeding management of dairy animals were ranked fourth and fifth respectively. Trainings on deworming schedules and control of parasites, loans and insurances and milk marketing were ranked sixth, seventh and eighth respectively.

REFERENCES