

## **Role of Vets in Animal Husbandry Sector post COVID19**

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Next 18-24 months will be challenging not only for global economy but also for Indian farmers. Animal husbandry activities brings daily and regular income in life of farmers. It will take time to revive consumption of animal proteins in HORECA segments. So demand for animal proteins like milk/products, chicken, mutton, eggs and fish will be lower at least by 30-50% in short term.

Vet is the most important person in life of Indian farmers. He will have to play role of three people – Veterinarian, Extension worker and Trainer (VET) for betterment of animal husbandry sector. We will have to keep our animals healthy as usual. We will have to help our farmers to improve productivity per animal and to reduce cost of production of animal proteins. During lockdown, only those products could reach urban kitchen where supply chain was in place. Farmers needs to be motivated to form Farmer Producer Companies and to build product wise supply chains which includes procurement of animal proteins, primary or secondary processing to increase shelf life and to do value addition, branding and marketing, logistics etc. so that consumers get product of right quality at right price. Farmers should get maximum share out of rupee spent by consumers.

Many vets are already working with poultry sector. Although poultry production is at par with international level and India is number three in egg production and number four in broiler production in the world, it suffered most before and during lockdown period. False messages on social media brought chicken consumption to almost 10% of normal during February 2020. Due to efforts by Government and private sector, it started picking up in second week of March, but again went down during lockdown period due to lack of supply chain and logistics issues. Only 5% of chicken are processed and sold in chilled or frozen form. Rest is sold as live chicken. There is need to do active promotion of chicken and egg consumption in India. There is need to increase share of processed chicken. There are many misconception about eggs and chicken among consumers. Vets can play important role in growth of poultry sector in short term and long term period.

In dairy farming, vets should educate farmers on how to buy/sell animals, calf rearing, feeding, loose housing, breeding and improved management practices. This will help to reduce intercalving period. Farmers should be educated about fodder production, conservation in form of silage and hay and ration balancing. Farmers should be motivated to feed balanced cattle feeds instead of feeding raw materials directly. Hydroponics and azolla production should be promoted.

Vets should become entrepreneur in field of animal breeding. There is growing demand for desi cow milk. There is need of scientific breeding and grading up of our desi cows and buffaloes. There is need

of good quality sexed semen, use of ET and IVF. Cross breeding will continue to increase productivity of our nondescript animals. Vets should start feed mills to manufacture and sell balanced cattle feeds. There is need to promote goat farming and marketing of goat products. It will open new avenue for landless and marginal farmers.

Vets should also spend time and money on skill development. They can take help of veterinary colleges, associations like CLFMA of India, PFI and IDA, NDDB, ICAR Institutes and private companies. Both vets and farmers needs to learn many things from consumers. There is need to promote animal protein consumption in rural India as well. Presently production is in rural area whereas most of the consumption happens in Urban India.

Young Vets should start startups instead of looking for jobs. Startup India and many private venture capital companies are helping startups in animal husbandry sector. Institutes like NAARM, IVRI and NDRI have started incubation centers for startups. Few examples of startups in animal husbandry sector are Teplu, Shekru, Zoofresh, Humpy A2, Sumbran goat farm, powergotha, Milk Mantra, etc.

Vets should make list of success stories in different fields of animal husbandry. He/she should have knowledge about government schemes and should do handholding of farmers to get maximum benefit out of it. This will help weaker section of the society to do profitable animal agriculture.

FSSAI has brought out standards for milk and milk products last year. They want to control antibiotic residues and mycotoxins (eg. Aflatoxin) in milk. There is need to promote use of herbal plants to treat common diseases. Farmers should be educated not to sell milk of sick cows where antibiotics are used. Conventional ways of training and social media should be used to reach large number of farmers. Every farmer has smart phone now a days and during lockdown he has learnt how to use social media like youtube, whatsapp and Facebook, etc. Vets should help NGOs working with farmers to improve profitability and productivity of animal husbandry sector. There should be trust among all stakeholders who intends to work with farmers.

Zoonotic diseases will play very important role in coming days while selling animal proteins. Farmers and consumers needs to be educated about it. Vets are best people to write and implement various policies of state and central governments. Consumption of animal protein will help to increase immunity of Indian population. There is wrong propaganda by various animal welfare organizations which may affect consumption of animal protein and thereafter profitability of farmers. Vets should educate all stakeholders about it. Vets should spare some time to write articles and print it in various media to reach farmers.

So apart from regular duties, vets should spend at least 10 hours every week to help our farmers in next 18-24 months to fight bad impact of COVID19 on animal husbandry sector.