

# GROUP FORMATION AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS IN FARM ANIMALS

## LPM-609(Unit-III)

Lecture - 2



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# Social Relationships in Farm Animals

- Within social groups, animals which are kept together quickly form habits of responding to each other.
- Their behaviour becomes regular and predictable, and such behaviour between two individuals is called a **social relationship**.
- Some of the more important social relationships are as follows:




# 1. Care-dependency Relationships

- ▶ This is the usual relationship developed between mother and offspring.
  - ▶ In sheep and goats, the young animals are allowed to stay with its mother for a long time.
  - ▶ Such relationship becomes very strong and persists into adult life.
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## 2. Dominance-subordination Relationships

- When two strange adult animals meet for the first time, they are likely to respond by mild or severe fighting.
- As a result, one animal loses and the other wins.
- This behaviour is quickly reduced to habit, usually with the result that one animal, the dominant one, always attacks or threatens, while the subordinate animal submits or avoids contact.
- This relationship is a solution for the problem of conflict and competition, and usually results in relatively peaceful behaviour.

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- However, some pairs simply form a habit of attacking each other whenever they meet.
  - When young animals are reared together, there is a tendency to form habits of peaceful behaviour and dominance may never appear.
  - If dominance does appear between young animals, it is likely to develop without severe fighting.

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- ▶ In the management of farm animals, placing like-sexed strange adults together often results in severe fighting, because dominance relationships have not yet been established.
  - ▶ In most groups, a stable dominance organization gradually develops and reduces overt fighting.
  - ▶ If strangers are introduced into such a group, social disorganization results in the outbreak of serious and injurious fighting.
  - ▶ In a flock of hens, egg production and the rate of physical growth will decline.




### 3. Sexual Relationships

- ▶ Formed between adult males and females.
- ▶ Very weak and uncertain in the herd animals or relatively strong in some carnivores.
- ▶ Fox breeders frequently have difficulty in getting males to mate with more than one individual.
- ▶ In female dogs, mating preferences often develop.
- ▶ No such difficulty is found in species where the males normally mate with many females, as in the large herd animals.




## 4. Leader-Follower Relationships


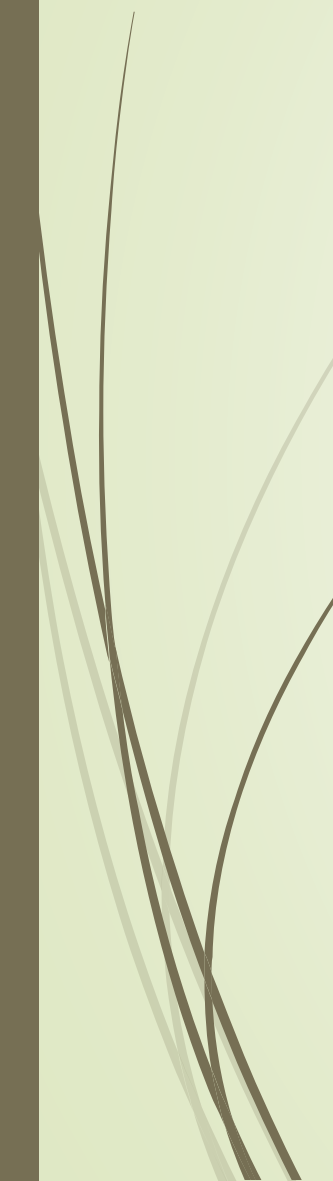
- More important in sheep, goats, cattle and horses.
- The young animals follow their mothers and later generalize to all older individuals and finally, older animals tend to be the leaders.
- Leader-follower relationships also occur between young domestic birds and their mothers and are particularly prominent in geese and ducks.
- The occurrence of social relationships depends upon the natural social behaviour patterns of the species concerned.

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- ▶ Leader-follower relationships are very strong in sheep, where lambs follow their mothers from birth.
  - ▶ But are quite weak in dogs, where the pups are not physically capable of following adults on extended trips until several months of age.
  - ▶ Leader-follower relationships should be distinguished from dominance, in which one animal may drive or herd another rather than lead it.

## 5. Relationships between different species

- Social relationships are normally formed between members of the same species.
- But in special circumstances, can be developed between two different species.
- In domestication this tendency has important consequences, partly because of the close association between man and domestic animals.
- Such interspecific relationships can be produced artificially, as when a hen is given a setting of duck eggs.

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- Many bizarre relationships occur spontaneously in captive animals.
  - In one case, a cat with kittens was offered live domestic mice; she responded by taking them into her nest box and attempting to treat them like kittens until they escaped.
  - Social relationships can also be transferred to human beings.
  - An animal caretaker normally forms a care-dependency relationship with the animals under his charge.
  - In order to do his job successfully, he must also form a dominance-subordination relationship in which he is the dominant individual.

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- ▶ In a relationship with a dog, the master may form a leader-follower relationship, although this is sometimes difficult to do because of the native behaviour patterns of the species.
  - ▶ Many breeders of milk goats make a practice of removing a kid immediately after birth so that the first milking is done by the caretaker.
  - ▶ The mother forms an affectionate relationship with the milker, making milking much easier and in effect adopts the milker in place of her kid.
  - ▶ In this case, the human takes the dependent role in a care-dependency relationship.





**THANKS**

