

UNIT 3 LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The system of management of farm animals depends mainly on the intended scale of output, farmer's convenience, financial base and available physical resources, such as land and pasture. Thus, traditional farmers largely keep their animals on free range, which is cheap and requires little or no care thus allowing more time to be allocated to crop production. However, more advanced and capital-intensive systems of livestock management evolved in response not only to increasing human demand for animal proteins, but also to meet the rising cost of living and urbanization.

2.0 OBJECTIVES

By the end of this unit, you should be able to understand the scientific strategies for managing farm animals in Nigeria.

3.0 MAIN CONTENT

3.1 In Nigeria, there are Four Systems of Managing Farm Animals, namely

- i. Nomadic Herding: This is perhaps the first and oldest system of managing farm animals. It involves the movement of animals by man from place to place in search of water and pasture. Animals are thus exposed to various natural hazards, and are therefore poorly productive. The droppings from the animals cannot be properly used as organic fertilizer source for the farmer's crops, due to constant movement of the animals. Also, the animals have the tendency of overgrazing natural pastures and destroying

farmlands in their tracks. However, the system is simple and cheap to practice.

- ii. **Free Range System:** In this system, the animal farmer is settled in one area or village, while his livestock (especially cattle, sheep and goat) is allowed to wonder about either on their own or sometimes, under the supervision of a herdsman. Occasionally, the animals are fed on farm or kitchen wastes. In general, there is little or no care, and additional feed is rarely provided. The cost of production is low in terms of labour and cash investment, and therefore, stock production and quality are very low. The animals are exposed to hazards like in nomadic herding, resulting in very high losses and poor reproductive rates. Although the system is poor, unthrifty and traditional, it is still widely practised in many rural areas.
- iii. **Semi-intensive System:** This system can be regarded as the intermediate between the free range and intensive systems of livestock management. In this system, the farm animals are kept indoors part of the time where they are fed regularly, and sometimes allowed to graze outdoors and fend for themselves in specially allocated pastures called paddocks.
- iv. **Intensive System:** This system is the extreme opposite of nomadic herding of farm animals. In intensive system of livestock production, farm animals are kept under the most scientific management techniques, such as indoor housing all the time with optimum temperature, balanced and precise feeding, for the maximum efficiency and output of the farm animals. Although the system is very expensive and labour-intensive, it can be very profitable if properly managed. A typical example of intensive livestock management is the battery cage system of poultry production.

3.2 Ranching

This is the practice of raising grazing livestock such as cattle and sheep for meat or wool. It is also a method used to raise less common livestock such as elk, American Bison or even ostrich and emu. A ranch is an area of landscape, including various structures, given primarily to the practice of ranching. Ranches generally consist of large hectarages, but may be of nearly any size. If the ranch includes arable or irrigated land, the ranch may also engage a limited amount of farming, raising crops for feeding the animals, such as hay and feed grains. Dude ranches are ranches that cater exclusively for tourists e.g. horseback rides, cattle

drives or guided hunting. Ranchers/stockgrowers are the people who own or operate a ranch.

4.0 CONCLUSION

At the end of this unit, you have learned that the systems of animal husbandry range from the traditional system of regular movements of herded animals across ecozones and around homesteads in Nigeria, moderately organised method combining indoor and outdoor care, to highly scientific methods involving complete indoor management and highly specialised technique for rearing animals for specific benefits, i.e. ranching.

5.0 SUMMARY

The systems of managing farm animals vary with the intended scale of output and farmers' resource outlay.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

- 1) List and define the different systems of managing farm animals.
- 2) Write short notes on "ranching".

7.0 REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Agboola, S.A. (1979). *An Agricultural Atlas of Nigeria*. Oxford University Press: U.K. 248.

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