

Animal Husbandry in Ancient India

Pre Vedic → Dog, Cow, Goat

Vedic → Cow

Mauryan Era → Cow, Buffaloes, Bull

Medieval Era → Horses

Animal husbandry today is critically important for national development, it contributes to about 36% of India's GNP. But animal husbandry ^{has} had a long tradition in this country.

In the old Stone age (10,000 BC) dogs were the first domesticated animals. There after in the new stone age (7500 to 6500 BC). Other ^{new} farm animals like horse, cow, sheep and goat were domesticated. Evidences from Mohen-jodaro show that indigenous breeds of cattle originated in India and were brought by Aryans. The order of domestication in India, as recorded in ancient times was Dog, goat, sheep, cow, Buffalo, pig, Elephant, horse, Camel, and ass.

In the vedic ~~era~~ era however cow was the most important domesticated animal as numerous products from its milk, urine and skin was used for medicines, food and manure. Cow is referred to as aghnya, which means not to be killed but to be raised and protected.

In the post vedic era animal husbandry was made more organised and institutionalised. There was a superintendent of cows who supervised herds of milk milch cattle, cow

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^{herds} ~~herds~~ man. Then buffalo ^{herds} men and chumers. The herds included equal no. of milch cow, pregnant cow, aged cows, Heifers and calves. Crippled cows and cows difficult to milk were kept in special herds.

Kautilya's Arth Shashtra mentions that cow is integral component of the State. The king was supposed to visit the cows, observe them and salute both cow with her calf and bull by circling round them before going to the court. Then he also mentions the need of providing breeding bulls in herds of cows.

In medieval times the focus of domestication changed towards ^{elephants} ~~elephants~~ horses and special breeds of cows. Devendra II of Vijaynagar Empire had taken great efforts for catching, taming, feeding and breeding of elephants. Cow slaughter was banned. Special breed of cattle, Mallikar cattle which was poor in milk production but important in times of drought was specially bred.

At King Akbar collected 12,000 horses from Iraq, ~~Iran~~ Iran, Turkey, central Asia and Arabia and developed ~~Ind~~ indigenous breeds in India. Goat breeds of Bengal and ^{Kuchi} ~~Kuchi~~ Bihar are also mentioned in medieval texts. In ~~go~~ Gujarat bullock was an important animal which travelled 80 miles a day and even surpassed horses. It

Thus it can be observed that animal husbandry was an important activity in ancient times. well developed norms of feeding, breeding and health care were developed around them.