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Formulation of balanced feed for working equids under field conditions

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Owners in India often experience difficulties with availability and affordability of appropriate feed for working equids. Owners' lack of knowledge and awareness of deleterious effects of nutrient deficiency/imbalanced feed may lead to ailments including nutritional hyperparathyroidism with symptoms of bilateral facial swelling, dyspnoea, intermittent shifting lameness, joint pain on palpation.

The Brooke Hospital for Animals, India developed software that predicts the optimal nutritional contents of different types of feed based on analyses of equids' nutritional needs. The computer based feeding software (CBFS) is a simple tool which calculates the actual feed requirement of an equid based on body weight, work type and work duration in terms of essential nutrients such as- dry matter, digestible energy, crude protein, carbohydrates and minerals like calcium and phosphorus. This analysis facilitates a discussion with the owner regarding any potential gaps in current diet. This software was piloted on 14 equids in Manpur village of Bulandsahar district over a 4 week period. During this process, the owners were encouraged to combine suitable ingredients (e.g. maize, gram husk, barley) in a user friendly balanced feed formula considering seasonal availability, cost and nutritional requirements. Owners observed their equids to have shinier body coat, enhanced work efficiency and increased alertness. Feed palatability also seemed improved. CBFS feed formulated also halved their current investment i.e. INR 20/- against INR 40/-per kilogram.

The local regional equine welfare association of 12 villages organised exposure for other owners to Manpur, resulting in adoption of this practice by 100 additional owners.

Biography

Jogen Kalita, a veterinarian from Assam Agricultural University (AAU) started his career with a reputed Indian social sector NGO-PRADAN in 2000. He worked in Purulia and Bankura districts of West Bengal for enhancing livelihoods of the poorest communities through organizing them into SHGs, clusters and federations. In PRADAN, he was promoted as Team Leader in Vidisha (Madhya Pradesh) in 2008. In 2011, he joined Brooke Hospital for Animals, India (an international charity working for welfare of working equids) as Program Development Manager that involves leading a region comprising of 10+ district units and extending strategic, administrative and operational support.

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