Creating awareness among stakeholders: a way forward for successful adoption of Animal Identification through Ear tagging

Ear Tagging of Animals with Unique Identification Number?

Most Important Requirement for Scientific Breed Development Programmes, But a difficult Challenge to overcome.

Compiled by AB Group, NDDB

Background

Under National Dairy Plan I (NDP I), Pedigree Selection (PS) programmes for Gir cows and Jaffarabadi buffaloes are being implemented since November, 2012 by Sabarmati Ashram Gaushala, Bidaj (SAG, Bidaj) in Bhavnagar and Junagadh districts of Gujarat. These projects are often referred to as Indigenous Breed Development Programmes.
In the native tract of most of the indigenous breeds, AI infrastructure is not well developed, primarily because AI was not very popular among the farmer owners of these indigenous breeds. Absence of an efficient, dependable AI service delivery system coupled low popularity of AI has led to availability of scrub bulls in the vicinity leading to genetic deterioration in the breeds. In the absence of an elaborate AI infrastructure, it is not possible to implement a Progeny Testing (PT) programme. Therefore, Pedigree Selection (PS) is the preferred method for production of bulls of these breeds. Like in the breeding tracts of other indigenous breeds, AI infrastructure in the Gir and Jaffarabadi areas was not well established. Hence, for implementing the project, SAG has established its own AI network to cover around 900 Villages, comprising a team of around 100 project personnel.

Selecting the best bulls based on the performance of their Parents and Grandparents (milk production of dams in case of milk production traits) forms the basis of PS projects. It is thus important to measure and record the performance of large number of animals in an area. From this pool of recorded animals, best animals are identified and selected.

For maintaining complete records of individual animals in computerized database for further analysis, it is necessary that each animal is identified with a unique 12 digit ear tag digit number. Information Network for Animal Productivity and Health (INAPH) is used for recording the individual animal wise information. Best animals are then selected by analyzing the information thus collected in INAPH.
Identification and subsequent follow up thus depends on successful ear tagging and registration.

Problems:
One of the major problems faced during project implementation was resistance and reluctance of the farmers/animal owners to allow Ear Tagging of their animals due to various beliefs and factors, such as:

1. SAG, the EIA implementing the project, was a new entrant in the area, due to which the farmers were unaware about the EIA and hence did not have confidence and trust.
2. Farmers' belief that motive behind Ear Tagging and the implementing of the project were for the benefit of the EIA and not for the farmers.
3. Aesthetic appearance of the Animal is reduced/lost due to Ear Tags
4. Physical Injury to the ear of the Animal during the process of tagging
5. Lack of awareness among the farmers regarding benefits of unique identification and traceability of animal.
6. Lack of knowledge among farmers about scientific animal husbandry practices
7. Social belief among farmers that animals with Ear Tags are generally procured through loans from banks and hypothecated, these animals are covered under Insurance from Insurance Agencies
8. Re-sale value of the Animals depreciates if it is Ear Tagged

Consequences:
1. Unique Identification of the Animal and Registration in INAPH was not possible
2. Subsequent follow up of the Animal for breeding activities was not possible in the field.
3. Physical Targets of Artificial Inseminations in the Project could not be achieved.
4. Performance recording of the Daughters could not be done due to reluctance and resistance for Ear Tagging of the female Calf on or after Calving.
5. Indiscriminate breeding through Natural Service

Actions Taken:
1. Training on "Ear Tagging" was imparted to the AI Technicians.
2. Extensive extension work regarding benefits of the implementation of project in general and ear tagging in specific was undertaken at the villages through "Village Awareness Meetings", Calf Rallies" and "Infertility Camps".
3. Identification of progressive farmers and Gaushalas and awareness generation regarding unique identification and traceability of animal. They acted as catalyst for further increasing ear tagging in the project area.
4. The learning during awareness activities were further reinforced through a workshop on "Genetic Improvement of Gir Cattle" was organized on 2nd Jan 2016 at KVK Ground, Ambuja Campus, Kodinar, inviting experts from various organizations. This helped in creating mass awareness among the farmers regarding the benefits of PS programme, indigenous breed development and related animal husbandry practices.

Farmers attending the workshop on "Genetic Improvement of Gir Cattle"

Presentation by expert in the workshop on "Genetic Improvement of Gir Cattle"

Success story- from project on "Production of High Genetic Merit Gir and Jaffarabadi Bulls through Pedigree Selection" under National Dairy Plan, implemented by SAG Bidaj- Compiled by Animal Breeding Group of NDDB

Achievements:

Since the beginning of the Project in November 2012, with the help of the field force team members and cooperation from the farmers, it is observed that the number of registration and artificial insemination recorded has increased significantly from a nominal during initial year. From the present experience, it may be concluded that an extensive awareness programme is the key factor in success of any project involving farmers.

SAG PS Project:
Animal Registrations and Artificial Inseminations
Nov 2012 to Dec 2015

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