

SHORT COMMUNICATION

Perception of Veterinarians towards the Services Rendered by Animal Husbandry Assistants through Farmers Assurance Centers (*Rythu Bharosa Kendras*)

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ABSTRACT

Livestock farming plays a pivotal role in India's agricultural sector, contributing significantly to the nation's GDP. To enhance the quality of services for livestock farmers, the state government of Andhra Pradesh has established *Rythu Bharosa Kendras* (RBKs) or what is called Farmers Assurance Centers (FACs) at every Panchayat. The study focuses on veterinarians' perception on the services provided by Animal Husbandry Assistants (AHAs) through RBKs. Data was collected from 45 veterinarians from nine districts using structured interview schedule and statistical analysis was employed to assess the perception of veterinarians. The findings revealed that significant proportion of veterinarians had medium level of perception. The challenges faced by AHAs identified were inadequate knowledge and skills and limited hands-on experience. It is concluded that the State Animal Husbandry Department should organize refresher training programs for Animal Husbandry Assistants and Veterinarians should assess AHAs performance regularly and guide them in providing better services.

Key words: Animal Husbandry Assistants, Perception, *Rythu Bharosa Kendras*, Veterinarians.

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INTRODUCTION

In India, Animal Husbandry is an integral part of agriculture. Livestock sector, a rapidly growing sub-sector, contributes significantly to the nation's income. In 2022-23, the livestock sector contributed 4.66 % of the total GVA, significantly boosting the per capita availability of milk, eggs, and meat (Dash, 2017; PIB, 2024). Livestock, besides producing products, contributes to agricultural activities through draught power, organic manure and serves as a fuel source for household needs. Good production, better nutrition, regular health care and extension services, which all contribute to the overall livestock production. However, livestock are unable to produce to their full potential due to lack of knowledge in feeding, breeding, health and management practices among farmers.

Andhra Pradesh being an Agrarian State, the Government primarily focuses on agriculture and allied sectors with emphasis on farmers' welfare. A resilient integrated platform at village level is essential for meeting service delivery demands, ensuring the provision of advisory services that cater to specific requirements of each farmer. In pursuit of this goal, *Rythu Bharosa Kendras*, also called as Farmers Assurance Centers, were established on May 30, 2020. Functioning at village level, these centers serve as comprehensive hubs, acting as one-stop destination for farmers by offering a wide range of services and facilities (Anuhya *et al.*, 2022; Chowdary *et al.*, 2022). Livestock farmers are benefited from hassle-free services at their doorstep through these centers (Reddy,

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2020). Animal Husbandry Assistants (AHAs) play a crucial role in providing services such as vaccination, deworming, first aid, artificial insemination, pregnancy diagnosis etc. under veterinarians' guidance. This study aims to measure the perception of veterinarians associated with service delivery provided by Animal Husbandry Assistants through Farmers Assurance Centers in Andhra Pradesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research employed an *ex-post facto* research design to conduct a study in Andhra Pradesh, India, a state predominantly reliant on agriculture and livestock for its economy. Andhra Pradesh is comprised of three regions,

Uttar Andhra (North-coastal), Central Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema, encompassing a total of 26 districts. The study randomly selected nine districts for investigation, namely Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Vishakhapatnam from the North-coastal region; Bapatla, East Godavari and West Godavari from the Central-coastal region and Kadapa, Sri Satyasai and Tirupati districts from the Rayalaseema region. Within each district, five Veterinary Assistant Surgeons (VASs) were randomly selected through simple random sampling. Data was collected through structured interview schedule directly from the VASs. To determine the perception of veterinarians towards the services provided by Animal Husbandry Assistants (AHAs) through *Rythu Bharosa Kendras*, the study employed a three-point continuum, assessing the aspects related to health, breeding and extension services. The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, such as frequency, percentages, mean, and standard deviation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Veterinarians

Almost two-third (62.22%) of the veterinarians working in the study area were young and 66.67 % were graduates. Overwhelming majority (97.78%) of the veterinarians were working as Veterinary Assistant Surgeons and 95.56 % of the veterinarians were working at Veterinary Dispensaries (VD). Nearly two-third (64.45%) of the respondents had medium level of experience and most of the veterinarians (86.67%) had 1 to 7 number of AHAs under their control (Table 1). The above findings were in accordance with Channappagouda (2009), and Hamdani (2013).

Table 1: Demographic profile of veterinarians

Factor	Variable	Frequency	%
Age	Young	28	62.22
	Middle	15	33.33
	Old	02	04.45
Qualification	Graduate	30	66.67
	Post graduate	13	28.89
	Doctorate	02	4.44
Designation	Veterinary Assistant Surgeons (VAS)	44	97.78
	Assistant Director (AD)	01	2.22
Experience	Low	10	22.22
	Medium	29	64.45
	High	06	13.33
AHAs under control	1 to 7	39	86.67
	8 to 14	06	13.33

Perception of Veterinarians towards the Services Provided by AHAs

Health Services

Results from the Table 2 depicted that majority of veterinarians perceived that AHAs were showing poor performance in first aid, vaccination and deworming services. This could be due to inadequate knowledge and experience in diagnosis and treating complex health issues in livestock, unable to cover the entire livestock in their jurisdiction regarding vaccination and deworming. Refresher training programmes should be conducted to AHAs to equip them with necessary skills required for providing better health services, improving their knowledge on importance of preventive health care. Nearly half (46.67%) of the veterinarians opined that AHAs are showing average performance in treatment and follow-up of the sick animals, this might be due to their heavy work load which leads to limited time for devoting to each case. Also, 46.67 % of the veterinarians felt that AHAs are good in implementing ration balancing programme as they might be educating livestock farmers on the preparation of low-cost ration using locally available ingredients.

Breeding Services

Table 3 reflects that more than half (51.11%) of the veterinarians expressed that AHAs are showing average performance in following right time for artificial insemination and follow-up of infertility cases. The reason might be the unavailability of AHAs for performing AI at right time and they may also have less experience and inadequate knowledge in handling the infertility cases. Whereas 44.44 % of the veterinarians expressed that AHAs are showing poor performance in AI and identification of estrus. This could be attributed to their limited hands-on experience in AI and lack of technical knowledge about complex reproductive processes in livestock, leading to difficulties in identifying estrus. AHAs require training in AI and infertility case management, but their trainings may not be as extensive as that of veterinarians.

Extension Services

From Table 4, it can be understood that nearly two-third (62.22%) of the veterinarians stated that AHAs are showing poor performance in identifying beneficiaries for government schemes and distributing inputs. The reason may be attributed to a lack of effective communication and persuasion skills. Improvement in these is vital to provide better extension services. Moreover, farmers need to be motivated by AHAs to create awareness and encourage participation in various livestock related programmes. AHAs should encourage farmers to attend *Pasu Vignan Abadi* that are conducted by veterinarians to improve their knowledge. Sharing success stories and explaining the benefits for attending the *Pasu Vignan Abadi* to the farmers may result in greater chance of their participation.



Table 2: Perception of veterinarians towards health services provided by AHAs

Health Services	Good performance		Average performance		Poor performance	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
First aid	03	6.67	14	31.11	28	62.22
Vaccination	03	6.67	09	20.00	33	73.33
Deworming	03	6.67	10	22.22	32	71.11
Castration	16	35.56	23	51.11	06	13.33
Treatment of sick animals and follow up under guidance of concerned veterinarian	03	6.67	21	46.67	21	46.67
Attending disease outbreaks	07	15.56	13	28.89	25	55.56
Assistance in safe disposal of dead carcass	12	26.67	17	37.78	16	35.56
Implementation of ration balancing programme	21	46.67	14	31.11	10	22.22
Promotion of cultivation of fodder/ distraction of fodder slips	11	24.45	19	42.22	15	33.33
Assistance in identification of animals	07	15.56	12	26.67	26	57.78

Table 3: Perception of veterinarians towards breeding services provided by AHAs

Breeding Services	Good performance		Average performance		Poor performance	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Artificial Insemination	07	15.56	18	40.00	20	44.44
Following right time of AI	06	13.33	23	51.11	16	35.56
Identification of estrus	05	11.11	20	44.44	20	44.44
Follow up of infertility cases	11	24.45	23	51.11	11	24.44
Monitoring of reproductive cycle of all breedable bovines	13	28.89	20	44.44	12	26.67
Recording of calf births	13	28.89	19	42.22	13	28.89

Table 4: Perception of veterinarians towards extension services provided by AHAs

Extension Services	Good performance		Average performance		Poor performance	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Carryout awareness of farmers programmes	07	15.56	15	33.33	23	51.11
Attending animal health camps and follow-up	05	11.11	13	28.89	27	60.00
Assisting in conduct of cattle shows, milk yield competitions, calf rallies, etc.	10	22.22	13	28.89	22	48.89
Prompt updation of livestock census	13	28.89	16	35.56	16	35.56
Helps in identification of beneficiary farmers for different government programmes/schemes	07	15.56	10	22.22	28	62.22
Timely issuing animal health cards provided by animal husbandry department	13	28.89	11	24.44	21	46.67
Motivation of farmers through <i>pasu vignanabadi</i>	02	26.67	10	22.22	23	51.11
Distribution of various inputs	05	11.11	12	26.67	28	62.22

Overall Perception of Veterinarians

Overall, more than two-third (68.89%, 31/45) of the veterinarians had a medium level of perception followed by 17.78 % (8/45) had a low level of perception, while 13.33 % (6/45) had a high level of perception towards the services offered by AHAs through RBKs. The results are in line

with Kumar and Meena (2021) as most of the respondents exhibited a moderate level of perception regarding the services provided by para-veterinary professionals.

In general, the study revealed that majority of the veterinarians had medium level of perception regarding the services provided by Animal Husbandry Assistants through

Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs or FACs). State Department Animal Husbandry (SDAH) should provide necessary trainings regularly for AHAs to improve their knowledge and skills in providing the services and veterinarians should be encouraged to conduct periodic assessments of AHAs' performance. This evaluation process can help identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement. Constructive feedback and ongoing communication channels between veterinarians and AHAs can foster a collaborative environment, leading to a more effective and well-coordinated delivery of services through RBKs. Overall, a commitment to continuous improvement and mutual collaboration will contribute to the overall success of animal husbandry services in the region.

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