

World Association for Transport Animal Welfare and Studies (TAWS)
**The challenge of improving transport animal welfare in the world:
ways forward**

Workshop held 24 April 2003, Silsoe Research Institute, UK

**Report of discussions relating to ethnoveterinary, complementary
and low cost treatment and management of working animals: key
factor to improve animal welfare**

Facilitator/rapporteur: Getachew Mulugeta

Most important points made:

- Identification of the major health problems and prioritising them.
- Collection and identification of locally available medicinal plants and other management practices and prioritising them.
- Validation of medicinal plants and other management practices
- Conservation and propagation to make their use sustainable
- Education at all levels.

Main conclusions reached or objectives set

- Lack of money, unsatisfactory results of technology transfer, and the recognition that the conventional methods have not reached the poor have forced governments and NGOs in many countries to look for alternative or complementary approaches.
- Farmers closely observe their animals and environment. They know when an animal is sick. They have names for the different animal diseases in their own local language and know animal of which age and sex are commonly affected.
- Over centuries, through trials and error and deliberate experimentation, farmers have developed a wide spectrum of prevention and treatment methods. These include the use of medicinal plants and many other management practices.
- Many studies have shown that farmers' or animal keepers' knowledge provide a valuable resource for development
- Therefore the use of indigenous knowledge of the local animal keepers in solving most of the animals' health problems should be the key issue.
- For identification of the animal health problems, collection and identification of herbal medicine and other management practices and to prioritise them farmers, animal healthcare providers, extension workers or trained personnel from the local people and other stakeholders (governmental and NGOs) must work as partners.
- The identifications and prioritisation must not be only the conventional interviews and surveys formulated by outsiders since this is influenced by what the outsiders expect to find in a community and not what the community wants in a real situation. The approach must be in contrast to the transfer of technology (TOT) approach to development, which tends to concentrate on animal and technology and give little or no attention to the owners or users.
- Therefore, the recognition that what people already know and do now is must be the logical starting point for any intervention because rural people have knowledge and skill that are often superior to outside knowledge and skills for

their particular circumstances. It is a matter of improving and developing it though not always easy since indigenous knowledge is holistic in the sense that it has cultural, social, economic and often religious linkages.

- The process of information collection in this context has to be very different from western scientific research. Obtaining information from the local people should be a participatory approach, which enables the farmers to define their needs from their own perspective and brainstorming their valuable local knowledge on medicinal plants and other management practices. Methods can be modified and adapted to meet specific situation and objectives according to the local situations. Only through the active participation of traditional healers and livestock keepers can a complete picture of the local know how be obtained and useful materials produced and disseminated. The involvement of local governments and incentives for the animal keepers to obtain the accurate information is essential.

Validation

- Many of the plants used in animal are also used in human ethnomedicine. Screening the literature for valuable information can help avoid unnecessary cost in plant validation. Databases and new technologies such as CD ROMs will make this easier in the future. However, there are certain evidences that crude botanicals have pharmacological action that vary according to places, time of collection, storage method and season of the year. Therefore, there might be a need to validate medicinal plants according to their localities.
- Not only medicinal plants but also other management practices and technologies need to be validated
- The creation of an international and national body for centrally controlled database, validation system and credibility is one key area to be looked at.

Conservation and propagation:

- Most indigenous knowledge of herbal medicines and other management practices are stored in people's memories and is passed on from generation by words or mouth. Systematic gathering and recording of these and their evaluation is a task that needs to be done once. If indigenous knowledge is allowed to be forgotten, it will be lost, possibly forever. It should be given greater attention to knowledge conservation.
- The establishment of botanic gardens for veterinary medicinal plants should be the main area to be focused at and encouraging the farmers to have their own botanic garden
- Disseminating the results is one crucial area to implementation by the stakeholders and local government concerned bodies to keep sustainability.

Extension works (Education)

- Although most of animal keeper's knowledge provide a valuable resource for development, not all of them are useful.
- Local people, particularly animal keepers, extension workers need to be trained on the advantage and disadvantage of medicinal plants and other management practices
- Training also on ways of collecting and handling medicinal plants for the animal keepers.

- Education and awareness raising about the ethnoveterinary knowledge should start at the primary and secondary schools.
- Complementary medicine must be encouraged to be included in a veterinary curriculum.
- The creation of regional or local extension and training centres are recommended.
- The long-term objective should be to improve the ability of the farmers to develop and maintain their ethno-veterinary knowledge resources and other useful management practices.

The collaboration of NGOs of common interest, other international organizations and local governmental bodies like the ministries of agriculture and veterinary schools should be the way forward for its practicality and sustainability. Initiative must come from NGOs and other international organizations with promising financial supports.