CAMEL BREEDING MANAGEMENT AMONG THE SOMALI, SAKUYE, GABBRA AND RENDILLE PASTORALISTS OF NORTHERN KENYA

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Introduction

• Camels are key livestock species in pastoral production systems in the arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya.
• Camels are important for food security and transport.
• Over 90% of camels in Kenya are owned and managed by pastoralists. Camels keeping has been adopted by traditional cattle keepers after realizing their value thus a high demand for camels.
• Pastoral camel keepers are concerned over their declining performance.

Methodology

• A survey was conducted in Turbi, Merille, Thambas and Dabel to gather data on breeds of camels kept, age bulls and heifers attain reproductive maturity, number and sources of breeding bulls, age of retiring breeding bulls, how to discourage inbreeding.
• A semi-structured questionnaire was used to gather the data from 240 respondents across the four study communities. Systematic random sampling was used to identify the respondents. Data were analyzed using SPSS version 12.

Results

• The dominant breeds kept by Sakuye and Somali communities are Somali-breed while Gabbra and Rendille mainly kept their own breeds (Table 1).
• Gabbra heifers and bulls attained reproductive maturity earliest followed by the Sakuye, Somali and Rendille (Table 2).
• Breeding bulls range from one to four in herds and are sourced within own herds and those of neighbours (Table 3 & 4).
• Sakuye retire their bulls earlier among the study communities (Table 5).
• Bulls are restrained traditionally from mating mothers but not siblings and offspring (Table 6 & 7).

Conclusion

The study concluded that the Somali camel is the preferred breed of camel. To prevent inbreeding, the study recommends timely sweeping of bulls and sourcing for bulls from distant areas and retiring bulls at age of 10 years to prevent them mating their offspring.

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References