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Challenges for Agricultural Research”

Ethnoveterinary Medical Traditions and Methodology for their Documentation, Assessment and Promotion

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Abstract

Nearly 70 % of the world's rural poor depends on livestock as a critical component of their livelihood. It is estimated that approximately Rs 50 billion are lost annually on account of livestock diseases in India. Modern veterinary health delivery is facing many constraints such as high treatment cost, inaccessibility and presence of antibiotic and hormonal residues in the milk and other animal products. Veterinary services have a crucial role in controlling highly contagious diseases and zoonotic infections, which have implications for human health as well as that of livestock. The Indian subcontinent has rich ethnoveterinary health traditions which are the products of decades of experiences. These traditional medicines can be used for the animal health care that can cut down the cost considerably. Moreover they are readily accessible to the ordinary farmer. The key challenges are to find out the effectiveness and contemporary relevance of these practices. The modern laboratory and clinical studies for validation involve long time and huge resources. The worldview of the theoretical foundation of modern science and the traditional knowledge are completely different. Therefore, it is necessary to have an assessment which involves world view which is nearly similar to the traditional knowledge and practices. An Ayurveda/Mrugayurveda based Assessment methodology was developed in order to find the safe and efficacious ethnoveterinary practices in select locations of South India. A total of 116 plant species for 19 health conditions that are commonly seen in cattle were taken for assessment in different geographical locations. The basic principle of this assessment is a consensus of opinion among different medical systems about the management of a health conditions. It was found that nearly 70 % of the practices had supportive evidence from Ayurveda (one of the Indian systems of Medicine) and modern pharmacology on their prescribed uses.

Keywords: Endogenous livestock development, ethnoveterinary health traditions