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Knowledge and Risks of Zoonotic Diseases among Livestock Farmers in Budgam District of Kashmir Valley, India

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A B S T R A C T

Majority of the respondents belonged to middle age group 30-50 years (65.94%), mostly were illiterate (81.88%), farming was the main occupation(61.88%), and had their herd size up to 4 animals (96.56%). Contact with inter personal communication sources was found medium among (59.19%) respondents , participation in extension activities was low found in (99.69%), and mass media support was also found low among (92.19%). Regarding transmission of zoonotic diseases (48.13%) were aware. About (15.94%) of livestock farmers were aware of rabies, brucellosis, tuberculosis, anthrax, bird flu, echnicoccosis and swine flu. About (15.31%) agree of the transmission of zoonotic diseases to human beings through contaminated milk, meat, egg, air, feed, or through contact with infected animals. About (37.50%) of respondents had knowledge regarding risks of zoonotic diseases from various activities related with livestock rearing. Overall knowledge level was found low to medium level categories, whereas overall risk level was medium among livestock farmers.

Introduction

Zoonoses are defined as those diseases that are naturally transmitted between people and vertebrate animals. Zoonoses constitute a diverse group of viral, bacterial, ricketssial, fungal, parasitic, and prion disease with a variety of animal reservoirs, including wild life, livestock, pet animals, and birds (Nkuchia *et al*., 2007). The transmission may occur through direct contact with the animal, through vectors such as mosquitoes, fleas or ticks or through food or water contamination. Zoonotic diseases have both direct and indirect effects on livestock health and its production (Smiths and Cutler, 2004).

Zoonotic diseases cause morbidity and mortality in people, and is also imposing significantly losses to the livestock sector that account about 75% all emerging pathogens. When it comes to the reality people who are

from farming community are often exposed to zoonotic risks. The agriculture and animal husbandry are the two main occupations which expose farmers to a number of dreaded zoonotic diseases and their potentially disastrous impact on human health is a growing concern around the globe (Woolhouse and Sequeria, 2005) annually.

Since zoonotic infections remain age-long, many factors including increase contact between animals and humans continue to play a key role in their emergence and persistence. Environmental changes due to natural calamities and manmade activities, customs and traditions followed by different people in various countries, increase in human population, urbanization and increased movement of wild animals towards human habitations due to deforestation, are some of the factors responsible for spread of the zoonotic diseases.

In most of the under developed and developing countries farming practices, low education level, culture and eating habits, presence of reservoir population, inadequate disease control programmes and lack of knowledge about disease burden have been mostly reported to be associated with persistence of zoonotic diseases (Asbjer, 2009).Lack of knowledge and awareness with regard to zoonotic diseases is one of the most important reasons for the frequent outbreaks of zoonotic diseases in people in general.

Materials and Methods

Budgam district was purposefully selected for the study. A list of 8 blocks chosen for the study was randomly selected. From the selected 8 blocks, randomly 2 villages were selected from each block. Thus, a total 16 villages were randomly selected in all. From each randomly selected village, 20 respondents were taken into confidence and total respondents were 320. The data was tabulated and analyzed using statistical package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 20 developed by IBM Company, USA.

Results and Discussion

Socio-personal and socio-economic characteristics of livestock farmers

Regarding socio- personal characteristics, it was found that majority of the respondents were from middle age group though probably this age group has the enthusiasm of youth and experience of old which can be said to be a good blend for having well knowledge and awareness.

By analysis on gender it was found more males were involved in livestock rearing practices. Similar findings were observed by Folayan (2013) and Oluwafeni (2015) who reported that livestock rearing is a gender sensitive (a male domain) and the majority were active in their middle ages.

The community status depends upon the educational level of the members and this study revealed that most of the respondents (81.88%) were illiterate which clearly indicates that livestock owners had less knowledge and awareness about zoonotic diseases and associated hazards. The findings were also in agreement with the findings of Mahdi and Ali (2002) studied that majority of illiterate and middle aged group was fatal for zoonotic diseases.

It was also revealed from the study that majority of the farmers were having marginal land and there is a high significant variation regarding land holdings. Probably this is the reason why along with agriculture the farmers keep livestock as supportive income.