

Factors influencing choice of veterinary service provider by pastoralist in Kenya

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Abstract This study analyzed the determinants for choice of animal health providers in a semiarid pastoral area with an aim of identifying specific attributes that could be targeted for intervention to enhance pastoralist access to quality veterinary services. The data were collected through administration of semi-structured questionnaires to 350 randomly selected household heads in different locations in Narok County of Kenya. Most of these respondents had no formal education (66.9 %), and most households were headed by men (88.9 %). The men were in control of sales (84.2 %), purchases (83.7 %), and treatment of sick cattle (70.3 %), while women were responsible for milking (83.8 %). Animal health services were delivered by drug stockists (87.76 %) and government veterinarians (12.24 %). The time spent while seeking animal health services and transport cost were specific attributes with impact on the probability of choice for service providers. Although distance covered to the preferred service provider was a significant attribute, it was inversely related to the probability of choice. The other factors including herd sizes, age and sex of household head, cost incurred per visit, level of education of household head, and the number of visits did not have

significant impact on choices. These findings support commercialization of veterinary services in marginalized areas where the delivery of essential animal health services such as disease control programs are often viewed as a public good. In order to enhance delivery of veterinary services in these areas, it is proposed that public and private means are investigated to support qualified veterinarians and to strengthen the activities of untrained personnel operating drug outlets.

Keywords Pastoralism · Animal health services · Livestock policy · Kenya

Introduction

The pastoralist communities living within east Africa have been described to be faced with more challenges in their way of life due to population growth; loss of grazing land to crop agriculture, ranching, game parks, and rapid urban growth; increased commoditization of the livestock economy; and dislocations brought about by drought and famine (Elliot 2001). In addition, these pastoralists face challenges on access to affordable and reliable veterinary services (Leyland and Catley 2002; Okwiri et al. 2002).

The delivery of animal health services in marginalized areas have been hampered by several challenges including lack of resources by government and the low incentives for setting up private practices (Leonard 2004; Ngeiywa and Masake 2009). Following the introduction of structural adjustment program by the World Bank, which proposed privatization of veterinary services, the growth of private veterinary delivery system was not uniform across different livestock systems (Oruko et al. 2000). In the smallholder production system where there was ready market for livestock and livestock products and where farmers were considerably wealthier

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