

The socio-economic impact of important camel diseases as perceived by a pastoralist community in Kenya

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Abstract

This paper presents the results of a study conducted in a pastoral community in Kenya using participatory appraisal approaches. The objective of the study was to assess the socio-economic impact of camel trypanosomosis (surra) according to the perceptions of the pastoralists. Four livestock grazing units were conveniently selected and in each of them, three groups of key informants comprising five to eight persons were selected for the participatory exercises. Five camel diseases were listed in order of importance according to their severity and frequency of occurrence including trypanosomosis, mange, non-specific diarrhoea, tick infestations and haemorrhagic septicaemia. The losses listed as incurred due to the five diseases were: losses in milk, meat, blood, fats and hides, dowry payments, and depreciation in sale of animals, losses due to infertility and abortions, and losses due to the cost of treatment. There was good agreement ($P < 0.05$) between the informant groups on the losses incurred as a result of the diseases for all the selected loss indicators. Surra and mange were given high median scores on all the indicators while non-specific diarrhoea, tick infestations, and haemorrhagic septicaemia received moderate median scores. Based on the study findings it is concluded that the camel plays a central role in the lives of Turkana pastoralists and that surra has a devastating social and economic impact. There is a need for veterinary and policy decision-makers to focus more attention on the control of surra in this arid and semi-arid area of Kenya.