

Cattle Improvement during the Colonial Period in Madras Presidency

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Abstract - Agriculture and Livestock always goes together. Cattle improvement was the main concern during the colonial period and the British contributed a lot. Mr. Robertson, Sir William Denison and V.S. Thacker contributed their time and energy for this cause. Various types of hot resistant bulls and cows were reared. Stock farm in Saidapet, Hosur Remount Depot and Coimbatore veterinary farm played their role effectively to protect the livestock. Veterinary department was established and many officials worked tirelessly to improve the cattle life in Madras. People also got awareness by learning from publications, exhibitions and in fairs. Farmers applied new method of growing fodder crops. Thus, Britain though in administration, they reconstruct, revive and reform South Indian cattle system.

Keywords - Agriculture, Livestock, Cattle, Veterinary.

Introduction:

At the advent of British in India, they were mainly focusing their attention on commerce. Remarkable goods from India, such as clove, pepper, cardamom, turmeric, and indigo were imported to Europe. They wanted to establish their colonies. So, they waged many wars and annexed many Indian states and they began to rule.

They aimed to extract revenue from Indians. The source of revenue was available mainly from lands. They stepped down deeply towards agriculture. Agriculture and livestock are inseparable in India. Cattle are required for cultivating millions of acres, lifting water from wells, transporting of produce from the field to market. Milk is though an important but it was a secondary concern. The Royal Commission of Agriculture in India had observed that in the most parts of the world, cattle are valued for food and for milk.

But in India, the primary purpose of cattle was a drought animals used for tilling, the dairy, and flow of cart. Without ox no cultivation is possible, without it no transportation of grains. India possessed largest cattle population of any country in the world.¹ The total cattle population of India was estimated 245 millions, while it was to Madras, the total cattle population according to the cattle census in 1944 was 22 millions.² In addition, the presidency had 40 million other livestock, comprised over 10 million sheep, 6 million goats. This presidency had one-fourth of the total of the total number of livestock in India. Agriculture is mainly depending on cattle labour.

When the Agriculture Department was opened in 1871,³ veterinary branch was also established as a part of Agriculture Department. Veterinary Department consisted of Director and other officials. Many dispensaries were also opened in 1900. In 1903, veterinary college was opened in Madras. They contacted ryots to provide necessary help during the diseases seasons. Many veterinary institutions were administered by dual system of Central Government and Local Bodies.

Role of noted persons in cattle improvement:

Mr. Robertson was the outstanding person to improve cattle in Madras presidency. He emphasized that the use of animal manure to the crops would definitely increase the production. He aimed the rational treatment and development of livestock. The first requirement for the dissemination of agricultural knowledge to the farmers should absolutely go to gather with livestock information.

Sir William Denison, Governor of Madras undertook sound steps to establish Department of Agriculture in 1863 in Madras. In his annual report to the government, he stated the necessity for improving the indigenous breeds of Livestock.⁴ He also recommended establishing breeding farm at Madras. Government approved to purchase young stud bulls and should be kept in Government Depot. They were sent out for stud purposes into certain districts.⁵

Mr. V. S. Thacker investigated the nature of cattle diseases in Madras presidency. He became the liaison officer between the ryots and government. In 1864 he was deputed to Coimbatore to investigate the nature of cattle and ascertain the most suitable mode of curing the diseases. Government resolved to employ Thacker for the purpose of investigating cattle with fixed salary. He sent report vividly of his operation to government.

He issued manual regarding symptoms and treatment of the different diseases met with livestock. His project on cattle disease were appreciated and granted by the Secretary of State. Until 1871, he did a lot with enlightened results.

Types of Belles:

Ongole breed was famous in Guntur and Nellore for farm work. It was also good for milking. It was best for Madras area. Many were sold under the premium scheme. These breeds of cattle were under Research. For this purpose at Chintaladevi in Nellore, a farm was started in 1918. For Research in buffalo, there was research station in Guntoor. Milch breed were under the study in Coimbatore.

Kangayam bull is the best draft animal, but these were poor milkers. In Hosur, attempts were made to increase milk in Kangayam cow.⁶ Hallikar breed is a Mysore breed. It was also under research on hybridization. Alambadi is breed of cattle in Coimbatore, Salem and in Chittor. Veterinary department purchased 22 cows and 2 bulls of Hallikar in 1935 and maintained in Housr.

Scinde bulls are kept for milking. Co-operative societies, Agriculture Association and private individuals received annual government grant of Rs. 100 for efficient maintenance. They ate guinea grass, elephant grass etc...

Stock Farm in Saidapet:

It was situated in Southeast of the Saidapet farm. Many steps were taken to improve the farm – stock of the presidency. Cattle improvement, working cattle and milk production were the main concern of the Saidapet farm. The Aden breed, Kerry cow, Nellore and Punganore breeds, Australians cows, berogly – ceride were brought to research. Butter-cheese making, sheep rearing, management of flock, wool production, pigs, poultry, fodder crops were the main concentration of the stock farm in Saidapet. Students of Saidapet Agricultural College were educated veterinary science also. Qualified veterinary surgeons were appointed. Animal physiology, Anatomy, pharmacy and General practice were taught students. They were taken to nearby villages for the purpose of showing them the contagious diseases of the cattle.⁷

There was store house of cattle food, chaffing was done. Separate sheds for sheep, cattle and poultry houses were built. Opens sheds also built. Cow shed separately for each two bullocks was the construction model. Square stand was built to keep the artificial food. Trough was built to keep the fodder. Separate shed for sheep also built.

Many types of cattle were brought in farm. Tilling works were carried with ox. Sheep were largely raised in the farm. The farm official induced the famers to grow fodder crops. 28,316 cattle and 16929 sheep which survived in Saidapet Taluk in the 1877, which were taken care by Saidapet farm official to protect from drought and hotness.⁸

Hosur Remount Depot:

It was widely covered by 1660 acres of land, most of which were pasture lands. It was established in 1824 as Army Remount Depot by British for rearing and breeding livestock. The main purpose for the establishing this farm was to rear horses which were trained for army purposes. Later it was turned as Research unit for Livestock.

In 1885, site of Hosur was approved. Later it was constructed as Livestock farm. It was under the Animal Husbandry unit. Hosur in Kanarese language mean new town. A large fort was situated in this town. The aim of depot was to cross the various breed to rear bulls, Stock depot was famed in 1888 at Hosur. It was for the location of distribution of stud animals. Young cattle was purchased and reared and subsequently distributed for stud purposes. These arrangements were carried by Agriculture Department. In 1889, it consisted of military veterinary officers of the horse breeding establishment and few isolated officers were employed in the various provinces. Horse and mule were cared in 1903. In 1924 it became modified as Livestock Research Station.⁸

Coimbatore Farm:

When the Coimbatore Farm was established in 1906 the care was given to livestock. Veterinary hospital was attached with Central farm. Veterinary Assistant surgeon was appointed to train students towards cattle knowledge. Much number of animals was inoculated. Number of castrations performed. The dairy was attached to the central farm. Stud bulls had been maintained. They contacted the cow – owners of neighboring villages.⁹

White Leg- horns, Rhode Island Reds, Light Sussex's were popular poultry stock attracting many visitors in Coimbatore. A large no of birds were sold besides eggs for hatching purposes. Various combinations of the fodders were grown. Various experiments had been conducted and records were maintained of the protein entering.

Enactments:

Agricultural Department enacted certain laws to improve the standard of living of cattle.

- 1) The Madras cattle Disease Act of 1866 was passed. – As per this Act, ryots should be given notification to government if any diseases occurred.
- 2) The Livestock Importation Act was passed in 1898.
- 3) The Glandous and Farcy Act was passed in 1899.
- 4) Livestock Improvement Act 1940. It was an important one. According to this Act, there was an elimination of scrub bulls in the villages. This act also emphasized the compulsory castration. This act stressed that no person can keep, without license from Director of veterinary service or authorized officers, but no fee charged for such license. The people those who were not obliged were fined by Rs.50.¹⁰

Veterinary Surgery:

In 1870, Board proposed to start school of veterinary surgery. Trained men were appointed to each district. 26 cattle surgeons were appointed to work with Mr. V.S. Thacker and started a training school. In 1873, Board brought forward the question of employment of special veterinary officers for Madras presidency and the government discussed and appealed the military department for the service of a veterinary surgeon, Mr. G. Western was appointed of as inspector of cattle disease in march 1875.¹¹ He submitted a report vividly. Later on there was a severe step to control the diseases.

Fodder:

Peria manjal cholam was distributed in Salem as a fodder crop. Lucerania were advocated for milch cows. The preparation of silage has been demonstrated in many cases. Various fodder crops were under trial investigations proved that maize was by far the best fodder for increasing the milk yield. Fodder such as cholam, Lucerne, guinea grass, elephant grass, pillipesard, 'teosinte' and maize were recommended to grow. It was found that guinea grass gave heavy cutting after the outbreak of South-west monsoon.

Conclusion:

Breeding of cattle by government was as a general practice by which crossing different breeds with a view to improvement. The duties of the officers were to prove better results. The entire presidency was sub – divided into divisions, which were connected with the betterment of the life of cattle in all parts of presidency.

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