

Tapping the knowledge of women in small ruminant disease surveillance and management

Key messages and solutions

- Effective small ruminant disease management should recognize the contributions of women and men to disease surveillance and reporting; this knowledge forms a complementary whole.
- Interventions should draw on the women's – as well as men's – knowledge on post mortem and clinical signs.
- Female and male model farmers should be trained in disease diagnosis and management, and followed up over time.
- Gender-disaggregated evidence of farmers' attitudes to reporting disease and their understanding of risks should be gathered.

Benefits

- Inclusive farmer-based small ruminant disease surveillance may overcome the current limitations of conventional disease surveillance.
- Understanding the role of women in disease surveillance aids design of gender responsive interventions.
- Farmers awareness about small ruminant diseases and their capacity to collect appropriate information or animal disease data is improved.

Problem statement

- The potential of small ruminant production is undermined by low capacity to monitor and control diseases, and avert losses to farmers and impacts on their livelihoods
- Women play a significant role in small ruminant production but the ways in which they manage the health of animals under their care is under-studied
- Gender differences in opportunities and constraints affect their engagement in disease surveillance and management
- Currently, we do not know much whether men and women notice and report disease differently, or whether women's engagement in disease surveillance has the potential to bring about gender equality in livestock production



Evidence

- Depending on their roles in production, men and women farmers are in a better position to diagnose certain diseases and their transmission pathways.
- Perception of surveillance benefits, farmers' knowledge, motivation and trust, and functioning of institutions are key considerations when designing a successful farmer-based small ruminant disease management program.
- The detection of overt clinical signs in small ruminants may not require special training as observations are reflected in the local names of animal diseases.
- Women are usually more intensively involved in certain activities in small stock production than men, hence their knowledge of diseases is extensive and invaluable.



Suitability

- The intervention is appropriate for mixed crop-livestock, pastoral and agro-pastoral communities with disease epidemics. Social capital - mutual trust, norms, reciprocity and confidence - must exist among community members to aid proper management of small ruminant diseases. The intervention contributes to food security, human nutrition, improved livelihoods and gender empowerment.

Resource requirements (low to high)	
Land	○○○○○
Water	●○○○○
Labour	○○○○○
Cash	●●○○○
Access to inputs	○○○○○
Knowledge and skills	●○○○○

Impact areas (low to high)	
Food security	●●●●●
Human nutrition	●●●○○
Employment and livelihoods	●●●○○
Natural resources base	○○○○○
Gender empowerment	●●●○○
Market linkages	○○○○○

Value chain focus



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