

Gir cattle management by Kathewari

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ABSTRACT

A detail study was carried out on Gir cattle management by Kathewari in Akola district (Maharashtra). During the study, 37 Gir cow herds were studied for herd size, feeding, breeding and management practices adopted by Kathewaries (Maldharies) and their family status. From the study, it was revealed that, majority of the herds (59.50 per cent) were having herd size in the range of 21 to 40 animals, 54.05 per cent herd owners adopted practice of feeding dry fodder and concentrate along with grazing, 62.16 per cent herd owners fed 2 to 3 kg concentrate to the milking cows. All the herd owners adopted natural service for breeding their cows. Their wives and children in management and milking of animals assisted herd owners. Majority of Kathewaries were uneducated and awareness about education was very low in Kathewaries.

KEY WORDS : Kathewari, Natural service, Family status, Gir cattle

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INTRODUCTION

The Gir is a famous milk producing cattle breed of India. The original home tract of Gir breed is the Gir forest of Gujarat. In Maharashtra, there are approximately 40 lakh migrated Gir animals found settled in Vidarbha, Khandesh and Marathwada regions (Anonymous, 2005)

Gir herds are maintained by Kathewaries (Maldharies). They adopt their own traditional practices for rearing, feeding, breeding and disposal of milk and manure. Therefore the study was undertaken to investigate, how Gir herds are reared by the Kathewaries.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

During the period of investigation, 37 migrated Gir cattle herds covering 1110 Gir animals in Akola district of Maharashtra were studied.

The data related to the study were collected by personal

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contacts and interviews in the form of questionnaire with individual herd owners. The data were collected on herd size, feeding practices, management practices, breeding procedure, involvement of family members in herd rearing and family status of Kathewaries. The data were tabulated and analyzed by simple tabular technique.

The data collected were grouped in various groups and percentages were drawn for each group to work out majority values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected on herd size was grouped in three groups as indicated in Table 1. Most of the herds were having size in the range of 21 to 40 animals (59.5 per cent).

Table 1: Gir cattle herd distribution according to herd size

Herd size (No. of animals)	Number of herds	Percentage
Upto 20	07	18.92
21 to 40	22	59.5
Above 40	08	21.5

The collected data on feeding practices (Table 2) revealed that most of the Kathewari herd owners followed the practice of feeding dry fodder, concentrate along with regular grazing. Dry fodder fed consisted of jowar kadbi, sunflower husk, dry grasses, wheat straw etc, whereas

sugarcane tops and bund grasses were amongst the commonly used green fodder.

Feeding practice	No. of observations	Percentage
Grazing only	-	-
Grazing + concentrate feeding	10	27.03
Grazing + dry fodder + Concentrate feeding	20	54.05
Grazing + green fodder	-	-
+Dry fodder + Concentrate feeding	7	18.92

Majority of the herd owners (62.16 per cent) adopted practice of feeding 2 to 3 kg concentrate to their milking cows. Concentrate feeding was only adopted for milking cows. Dry cow's heifers and bullocks were not fed concentrate. Cotton seed cake, turchunni, ground pulses were amongst the commonly used concentrate material (Table 3).

Rate of concentrate feeding (kg)	No. of observations	Percentage
Up to 1 kg	3	8.11
2 to 3 kg	23	62.16
4 to 5 kg	11	29.73
More than 5 kg	-	-

Management practices:

Maldhari tribes commonly known as Kathewari were found to be involved in rearing of Gir cattle. They had migratory habit and they moved with their herd from one place to another in search of grazing. During migration, they stay on fallow land with their herds. Herd owners did not provide permanent shelter to their cattle. Milking cows, dry cows, heifers and breeding bulls were kept in an enclosure protected with thorns. Young suckling calves were kept in separate enclosure. Kathewari grazed the herds whole day on fallow fields, remnants of crops and pastures. Kathewaries controlled the herd by producing peculiar sound while grazing. They easily traced out the absence of single animal from the herd, as they were able to describe distinguishing characters of each and every animal in the herd.

Breeding practice:

Kathewaries were found to be using only natural service to breed their cows. They did not use artificial insemination due to lack of faith and knowledge. The Kathewaries were found to be very careful in the selection of breeding bull. They invariably changed the bull after few years. Dave (1958) and Gaur *et.al.* (2005) recorded similar observations.

Majority of owners (37.84 per cent) had the breeding bulls of 4-5 yers (Table 4). Most of the herd owners maintained at least one breeding bull in the herd. The observations have close resemblance to those reported by Dave (1958), Lal (1994) and Gaur *et al.* (2005)

Breedable age (year)	No. of observations	Percentage
Upto 3	02	5.40
4 to 5	17	45.95
6 to 7	14	37.84
Above 7	04	10.81

Involvement of family members:

Kathewari families were found fully engaged in dairy enterprise. Gavala or herdman handled the job of grazing of animals, other family member looked after the management, watering and feeding of young sucking calves, milking cows and bullocks kept at residence. The major portion of the herd management, household management and requirements looked after by female members. The milking of the animal was assisted by their housewives. Ladies prepared milk products such as Dahi, Ghee from milk and sold it in nearby areas of their stay. Male members looked after marketing of milk. Children assisted in grazing and milking of animals. Dave (1958) and Lal (1994) reported similar observations.

Family status of Kathewaries:

Kathewaries were mostly uneducated, some of them were educated upto primary level, none of them was educated upto Higher Secondary level or above. Migratory living habit was the main reason for low level of education. Ramachand and Sohal (1983) and Sinha *et.al.* (1979) reported similar observations.

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