

JOURNAL OF CAMEL PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Editor
T.K. Gahlot

Department of Surgery and Radiology
College of Veterinary and Animal Science
Rajasthan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Bikaner-334001, INDIA
Email : tkedjcpr@datainfosys.net Website : www.camelsandcamelids.com
tkcamelvet@yahoo.com www.tkgahlotcamelvet.com

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CAMEL PUBLISHING HOUSE
Bikaner - 334001, INDIA

Manuscripts and other related correspondence may be made to :

Dr. T.K. Gahlot
Editor, Journal of Camel Practice and Research
67, Gandhi Nagar West
Near Lalgarh Palace
Bikaner-334001, INDIA

Phone : 0091-151-2527029 (R)

: 0091-151-2521282 (O)

Mobile : 9414137029

Email : tkedjcpr@datainfosys.net, tkcamelvet@yahoo.com

Website : www.camelsandcamelids.com, tkgahlotcamelvet.com

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Phone : 0091-151-2527029, email: tkedjcpr@datainfosys.net, tkcamelvet@yahoo.com

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Phone: 0091 - 151 - 2242023

Email: tkedjcpr@datainfosys.net
tkcamelvet@yahoo.com

CONCERN FOR DECLINE IN DROMEDARY AND BACTRIAN CAMELS

The current year has been a period of concern for camels in India, Iran and Saudi Arabia. Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan organised an international seminar on "The Camel in Rajasthan" from 7-8 April 2008 in Hotel Jai Mahal, Jaipur, India. This seminar was unique because it had participation of camel keepers, milk marketing people, camel vets and scientists. A useful interaction took place and final recommendations were conveyed to the government of Rajasthan regarding measures to increase the popularity of camel products and population of camels in India. The tirade of Dr. Ilse Kohler Rollefson to save the camel in India was well projected by media in India and abroad but to no avail. Albeit, government of Rajasthan has initiated a scheme for insurance of camels. Camel keepers are now developing a conviction that camel milk marketing is the only option to enhance the camel breeding which in turn may prove beneficial to the camel keepers. A simultaneous research on camel milk and its proven advantages to human health had led to growing awareness among the people regarding the use of camel milk.

The demand of camel milk has increased primarily in Rajasthan and other states but with a meagre proportion to cow milk. Camel dairying at National Research Centre on Camels and a private camel milk dairy have started functioning in Bikaner. Milk is being marketed through the network of Rajasthan Cooperative Dairy Federation which is selling cattle and buffalo milk primarily. Seminar at Jaipur on camels in Rajasthan was also attended by pioneers of camel milk marketing, i.e. Ms. Nancy Abeiderrahmane from Mauritania and Dr. U. Wernery from UAE. They gave lot of tips for camel milk marketing in India and envisaged a good market for this milk. These researchers presented good papers on camel milk marketing in the International Camel Conference whose proceedings were released on 17 February 2008 in a convocation of Rajasthan Agriculture University, Bikaner. The theme of this conference was also based on saving the camels in India.

Important event of hosting festival of bactrian camels took place at Parsabad city of Iran on 29 April. Iran government has shown serious concern about a decline in the population of bactrian camels. The first ever bactrian camel festival was largely attended by local people, cameleers, vets, officials and scientists. The festival was preceded by a scientific workshop on bactrian camels. Guest lectures were given on bactrian camel reproduction by Dr. Lulu Skidmore, Dr. Amir Niasari and others. Importance of camels in tourism in India was explained by Dr. T.K. Gahlot. Iran foresees a growing tourism scenario based on bactrian camels.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has shown concern over the recent mortality in camels and explored possibility of occurrence of neurological diseases. A workshop on Dubduba syndrome was therefore organised at Riyadh, on 10-11 May 2008. The guest lectures were given by Dr. R.K. Tanwar, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, College of Veterinary and Animal Science, Bikaner, India; Dr. U. Wernery, Scientific Director, Central Veterinary Research Laboratory, Dubai, UAE; Dr. Alan Seawright of University of Queensland, Australia and Dr. Mansour Faris Hussein, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. It was attended by a large number of veterinarians from Saudi Arabia. Brain storming sessions were conducted to discuss the possible cause of mortality in camels.

Friends! JCPR has entered in 15th year with a glorious past which is basically because of your support and interest. JCPR has brought several special issues in recent past which were largely appreciated by the camel scientists and researchers. We wish to bring out one review article in every JCPR. Current issue contains 26 papers based on anatomy, immunology, diseases, parasitology, pastoralism, milk and reproduction. There had been a paucity of literature on bactrian camels. JCPR tries to enrich the literature on bactrian camels. Much emphasis has been given on papers related to bactrian camels. JCPR pledges to go beyond the journal as it has become a strong resourcehouse of camelid literature. A superior impact factor of the journal makes it a distinguished one for the camelids and its scientists. I am sure that JCPR will go a long way in serving the camelids, its scientists and researchers.



(Dr. T.K. Gahlot)

Editor

GLOBAL CAMEL COMMUNITY

Dear Colleagues,

Camel is a multipurpose animal which, unlike any other mammal, has been used by mankind for its milk, meat, hide, traction power, wool, fuel and as a riding animal. In times of global warming, desert expansion, scarcity of food and water, the camel can be part of a solution to these problems. Journal of Camel Practice and Research which has entered in its 15th year of publication, has provided a biggest platform of camelid literature being available to global camel community and its researchers. Through us, people are slowly realising that the camel is the only domesticated animal which can thrive in climatic extremes. Recently, even the FAO stepped in promoting camel milk. It is common knowledge, Professor Reuven Yagil from Israel mentioned it as much as 10 years ago, that virtually millions of litres of nutritious camel milk are wasted daily because in most camel rearing countries there are no markets. We all know that the camel is not suitable for projects with quick, high returns, but small scale enterprises are encouraging. The Mauritanian and Kenyan examples, and now also India, clearly demonstrate that living conditions for the nomadic herdsman and his family can be greatly improved by selling surplus camel milk without any negative effect on resources.

Please let us continue with these good examples to fight poverty and the decline of camel numbers.

I would like to take the liberty to address two important points which have been of great concern to me for a long time. I believe this is the right time and the right forum to highlight these two problems.

The global camel community is very small may be between 400 to 600 scientists. Many of these are working remarkably in the field of camel science. The International Camel Conference held at Bikaner in February 2007 honoured such 13 scientists with Distinguished Camel Scientist Award. Many kudos to Dr.T.K. Gahlot, Organising Secretary who took this initiative. I am deeply honoured to receive this award, and I thank everyone who has chosen me for this special recognition. This recognition for the camel work I have done over the last 20 years will encourage me to work even harder to find solutions concerning many open unsolved camel issues. I am very proud of what our team in Dubai has achieved over the last 2 decades and I would never have reached this achievement without them. I am proud too that through our work and, of course, your work, western societies and also scientists are slowly realising how important the camel family is for millions of people. Nevertheless, we suffer from serious shortcomings. One major problem, which I face daily, is lack of communication, and I am not talking about the technical part of it. Everybody has an internet connection. I am talking about the willingness to communicate, to exchange expertise and new scientific findings. Let me give you a simple example: when I wrote the second edition of my book, I put a special attention and emphasis into the literature part. I compiled around 1000 scientific papers on infectious diseases.

Many scientific papers are not available through the internet because they are written in lesser known journals and often in local languages. So I wrote hundreds of emails and letters to Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, India, Saudi Arabia asking for reprints. Today I would estimate that at least 50% were not replied to, even after several reminders. I changed tactics and offered fake jobs and often sent dollars, which helped. This should not really happen, and therefore I ask you: please communicate with each other.

The second point I would like to stress is even more serious. Many papers on camel issues have been published which contain false statements and wrong results. Most of the findings mentioned in these publications are delusions of the author or authors. These unserious results will not only damage the reputation of serious camel scientists, but, more seriously, will have an impact on our desire to sell camel products to the EU or USA. People from Brussels, for example, will read these articles and come to a false conclusion.

My proposals for the future are:

1. Communicate with each other in a collaborative, friendly and direct way
2. Write genuine articles with new findings, avoid repetitions and enumeration of boring figures
3. Establish a global camelid scientific committee for the different fields which would scrutinise scientific articles before publishing
4. Create a column in Journal of Camel Practice and Research in which people can express their opinion, highlight their concern about dubious research results and ask for addresses

Priv. Doz. Dr. Dr. habil. Ulrich Wernery