
Buffalo recording in Iraq

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Recording at this stage is carried out on State farms only. There is only one buffalo farm of this sort. Private farms keep no records. A way must be master-minded to enter this closed circle. Standardised eartags must be provided when recording is commenced.

Recording

This is possible on State farms only, since expertise is available on these farms.

Follow-up of calf birth

On State farms, staff with expertise is available. Perhaps a further improvement will be necessary.

On private farms the problem exists. A special body must be designated and trained to carry out these tasks. Of course this creates a financial burden and a party is required to provide staff and funds?

At present no data bank or data processing centres exist in Iraq. However, data may be processed at any of the Iraqi universities or at the National Computer Research Centre for a nominal fee. If such a centre is established, under whose jurisdiction would it function? Would it be one of the universities or the Ministry of Agriculture?

Establishing a data processing centre

The importance of recording is still not realised by many and to organize field teams, the following must be considered:

- team members must be oriented with the importance of recording. They must also be trained for the systems of data collection;
- under which central administrative body should such teams operate?

Field teams

Approaching private farmers

Approaching private farmers is not an easy task. Most, if not all buffalo owners are uncooperative, reserved, traditionalist, superstitious, suspicious and not anxious to provide accurate information regarding the number of animals owned and their performances.

Warranting farmers' cooperation

To warrant private farmers' cooperation it is necessary to create incentives. Funds for such incentives must be provided. The question is what could such incentives be? From my experience, in 1968 I had provided a buffalo owner, free of charge, with concentrates in return for allowing me, personally, to supervise the milking of his buffaloes and take from each lactating buffalo a.m. and p.m. milk samples over a period of one year. That trial eventually provided the first information on yield and composition of Iraqi buffalo milk (see Trop. Agriculture 1970, 47: 171-174 and 175-179).

At the Agricultural Engineers' Union Conference in 1994, I submitted a paper on the importance of buffaloes in Iraq, its various performances, problems and shortcomings and reasons justifying its conservation and improvement as an animal genetic resource. The establishment of a buffalo research centre was also recommended. The recommendations were unanimously approved but unfortunately nothing has yet been done.