

Knowledge on Foot and Mouth Disease among cattle and goat farmers in Nuwara Eliya district of Sri Lanka

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Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) is a one of the earliest reported highly contagious viral diseases affecting cloven hoofed livestock and wild mammals in Sri Lanka. The economic impact of the disease is huge due to direct production losses and indirect costs associated with control measures. Extensive public education and awareness programs with appropriate knowledge translation tools are essential to minimize the economic impact of such a devastating disease. In the face of a FMD outbreak, cattle and goat farmers in the Nuwara Eliya district of Sri Lanka are at the highest risk of production losses, as the district is known to have the lowest FMD incidence and highest milk production in the country.

In the present study, we investigated the basic knowledge on FMD among 118 cattle and goat farmers in four veterinary service ranges of the Nuwara Eliya district. The study was conducted from August to November 2015 using a pretested structured questionnaire. Our results indicated that 61% of the farmers had heard about the disease and the occurrence of FMD outbreaks in Nuwara Eliya. Their knowledge about; causative agent (3%), transmission (7%), susceptible animals (15%), symptoms (9%), consequences (10%), morbidity rate (1%), mortality rate (3%), prevention and control (3%) and spreading rate of the disease (5%), were not at an acceptable level (<15%) even though 23% of the farmers had direct contact with the area veterinary surgeon. The study also revealed the daily presence of potential wild hosts/ reservoirs such as wild boar (89%), wild buffalo (16%), sambar (39%), deer (16%) in the vicinity of cattle and goats. The presence of potential wild hosts/ reservoirs poses a serious threat for controlling and eradicating FMD especially for the farmers who manage their cattle and goats semi-intensively. We envisioned our results would facilitate the selection of appropriate knowledge translation interventions and thereby close the knowledge-to-practice gaps in FMD control and eradication programs in Sri Lanka.

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