Developing Countries Farm Radio Network

Pack 10, Item 1

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**Keeping farm animals healthy and productive**

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Information on this topic was requested by DCFRN Participants in Bolivia, Cameroon, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Honduras, India, Kenya, Laos, Nigeria, Philippines and Uruguay.

Presenter: George Atkins

**Special note**

Before using the information in this item, please read the notes at the end concerning related DCFRN items.

**Suggested introduction**

We at this radio station are part of a world­wide information network that gathers farming information from developing countries all over the world. It's the Developing Countries Farm Radio Network, sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency, Massey Ferguson and the University of Guelph.

Through this Network, we bring you information on ways to increase food supplies for your family, or to sell—ways that other farmers have used successfully. Today we'll discuss some simple ways to keep your animals healthy and productive. Here's George Atkins.

**ATKINS:** If you have animals, of course you want them to be healthy and productive. If one of them gets sick, you try to help it get better. You certainly don't want it to die, or to make other animals sick too. Caring for a sick animal can take a lot of time and effort and it may even cost money, perhaps quite a lot of money.

It's much better to prevent your animals from getting sick in the first place, if you can. Here are some things you can do to help keep them as healthy and productive as possible. First, make sure they have enough to eat and drink all year round. Animals that are strong and well fed don't get sick as often as weak, poorly fed animals. And animals that are well fed are more productive, too.

Many people find their animals get thin and weak at certain times of year because there's not always enough fresh fodder (grass) for them to eat. To avoid this problem, preserve extra feed for them at the time of year when there is lots of fresh feed. Make silage or hay, for instance, and then feed it to them when they need it.

Take special care with young animals, to make sure they always have enough of the right kinds of feed—otherwise they won't grow well and may get sick. Some farmers take special care to breed their animals only at certain times of year, so that the young are born in a good season, when there's lots of feed. This way their mothers are able to produce plenty of milk for them to get a good start, and the young animals can start eating good fodder as well.

Make sure all your animals get enough water to drink—several times a day if possible. The water should be clean; animals can easily get sick from dirty water. It's especially important for young animals, and females that are giving milk, to be able to drink good clean water whenever they need it. Your animals should have some kind of shelter to protect them from too much sun, or heavy rains or strong winds. In places where there are no trees to shade animals from the sun during the day, there are farmers who provide them with a simple roof built on some posts in the ground.

Of course farm animals take up more space when they're lying down than when they're standing up so there is something you must do if you keep animals; you must have a place for them to sleep that's big enough for them to lie down comfortably. It must be a clean, dry place, because lying on wet, muddy ground can make your animals sick. Some farmers make a hard floor with large flat stones. Also it's good to spread dry bedding on the floor for them to lie on. Dry grass, chopped straw, dried leaves, or even dry soil are good for this purpose. Bedding like this will soak up urine and manure. Before it gets too wet and dirty, though, remove it and put down more clean dry bedding. The dirty bedding will make very good fertilizer for your crops.

Now let's think about the way you treat your animals. Always be calm and gentle with them. If you're rough and impatient with them, that'll make them nervous and they'll be less productive, and they may get sick more often.

Take extra care with very young animals, and with any new animal that's come from another place. It takes a while for a new animal to get used to its new home. During this time, it could get sick from germs that are around your place, germs that don't bother your other animals because they're used to them. Be sure to give the new animal good clean feed, clean water, and a clean dry place to sleep. And be extra kind and patient with it. It may be a little nervous at first.

Traditional home remedies are good for dealing with many animal health and disease problems; however, it's a good thing to try to have your animals vaccinated to protect them from certain very serious diseases such as anthrax. This can be done at an animal health clinic if there's one in your area, or by a veterinarian.

If one or more of your animals gets sick, or is injured, it's best to treat them right away. You should look at your animals often, at least once every day if possible. You should know what they look like and act like when they're healthy. Then if there's anything wrong with them—if one is injured or looks different than usual—you'll know right away, and can do something about it before it gets serious.

For instance, if an animal has an open wound, perhaps a bad cut, wash and disinfect the wound right away and keep it clean, or it may get infected and cause problems.

If an animal gets sick, help it get well as soon as possible. If necessary, get help from a veterinarian or animal health clinic. If it has a sickness that could spread to other animals, keep it alone, apart from the others, until it's well again.

Also, be careful when you buy an animal. Don't buy one that doesn't seem healthy. It's a good idea anyway to keep it apart from your other animals for the first three weeks or so, until you're sure it doesn't have any sickness that could spread to others.

If you keep your animals well fed and watered, with proper shelter and good treatment, they'll probably stay healthy. If they do ever get sick or injured, however, take care of them right away, so they get better quickly.

Serving Agriculture, the Basic Industry, this is George Atkins.

**Notes**

1. There are a number of other DCFRN items that contain information related to this item (Item 1). It may be helpful to the farmers you serve for you to use some or all of them in connection with this item. They are:

Caring for a Newborn Calf ­ DCFRN Package 10 (this package), Item 2.

Two Basic Needs of Cattle ­ DCFRN Package 8, Item 9C

Getting More Milk from Your Dairy Cow ­ DCFRN Package 2, Item

Milking Your Goat ­ DCFRN Package 8, Item 6

Udder Care for Goats ­ DCFRN Package 9, Item 9A

Protection and Support for your Goat's Udder ­ DCFRN Package 9, Item 9B

2. Information on preserving animal feed for the dry season can be found in:

Good Cow Feed at the End of the Dry Season ­ DCFRN Package 1, Item 3 (tells how to make silage)

Storing Grain ­ DCFRN Package 4, Item 2

Dried Coffee Pulp, Good Cattle Feed That Would Cost You Nothing ­ DCFRN Package 5, Item 9D

A Drying Structure for Groundnuts ­ DCFRN Package 8, Item 1A (Plants dried on this structure provide dried vines for animal feed, as well as dried groundnuts for people to use.)

Hay (Part 1 ­ Harvesting and Drying Hay) ­ DCFRN Package 9, Item 4, and

Hay (Part 2 ­ Making a Haystack) ­ DCFRN Package 9, Item 5

**Information sources for this item**

1. Better Farming Series, Unit 8, "Animal husbandry ­ Feeding and care of animals" (38 pages), and Unit 9, "Animal husbandry ­ Animal diseases; How animals reproduce" (33 pages), available from Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Rome, Italy. (Published by arrangement with the Institut africain pour le developpement economique et social (INADES) Available at <http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD_40/CD3WD/AGRIC/FB08AE/EN/B73.HTM> and <http://www.fastonline.org/CD3WD_40/CD3WD/VET/FB09AE/EN/B74.HTM>