

Summary of Proceedings of the National Seminar on the Sustainable Use and Conservation of the Deccani Sheep (Meat and Wool)

Anthra¹, Jan Jagran² and Indian Society of Sheep and Goat Production and Utilisation³

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A three day National Seminar on the Sustainable use and Conservation of the Deccani Sheep breed held between February 20th and 22nd, concluded on Thursday at the NISIET campus in Hyderabad. The seminar jointly organized by ANTHRA, Jana Jagran and the Indian Society for Sheep and Goat Production and Utilization brought together scientists from key National Research Institutions, the Animal Husbandry departments from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka, veterinarians, academicians, people working with textiles, handicrafts and handloom products, community representatives and NGO's .

The significance of holding the meeting in Hyderabad was that today the state of Andhra Pradesh has the largest sheep population in the country (213 lakhs as of 2003), of which approximately 40% are of the Deccani breed. This implies that Andhra Pradesh has the largest population of Deccani sheep, followed by Karnataka (total sheep population 72 lakh) and Maharashtra (34 lakh).

The Deccani breed of sheep is widely distributed in the Deccan plateau across the three states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and is reared under migratory, semi migratory and sedentary systems by shepherding communities such as the Golla, Kuruma, Kuruba and Dhangar. Formerly used by these communities for meat, manure and wool, today this breed has been crossed with many other breeds, primarily as a result of inappropriate breeding policies as also a collapse in the traditional wool markets, triggered again by larger macro-policy reforms.

In his opening address Dr. L. Mohan, Director, Animal Husbandry Department, Andhra Pradesh, spoke about the efforts being made by the Department to take care of the health needs of sheep in the state as also their success in obtaining financial support from the Central Wool Development Board, which will be used for the development and sustainable use of the Deccani breed of sheep. The key note address was by Dr. VK Singh, who recently retired as Director of the Central Sheep and Wool Research Institute (CSWRI) located in Avikanagar, Rajasthan. Dr. V.K Singh gave an extensive overview of the breed, its characteristics and the challenges facing the sustainable utilization of its products.

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The first Technical sessions focused on establishing the status of the Deccani breed in the three states. Dr. Ulmek, Dean, College of Animal Sciences, Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, made the presentation for Maharashtra, Dr. Baig of Janajagran presented the picture for Karnataka and Dr. MA Rehman, Additional Director, SMILDA, presented the scenario in Andhra Pradesh.

The second Technical session, focused on Breeding Initiatives in the Deccani Breed, where Dr Pachegaonkar, Retd. Deputy Director, AHD, from Maharashtra , Dr. Chanda Nimbkar, Head, Animal Husbandry Division , NARI , Maharashtra, Dr. Ramesh, Coordinating Pastoral Livelihood Research Project Andhra Pradesh ,of ANTHRA , Dr. Sateesh Kumar, Principal Scientist, Center for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) and Dr. S.C. Gupta , from the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR), Karnal, made presentations on breeding and genetic studies on the Deccani breed.

The third Technical session concerned the Deccani breed and its relationship to resources and markets. Dr Seshagiri Rao and Ms Lalita Rao from the Chenna Keshava Trust, Karnataka presented, as also Ms. Switha, who presented the results of a study she did for Anthra, on the Deccani Wool Sector in Andhra Pradesh. The session concluded with a brief presentation by Dr. Basudev Sunani from Orissa, who spoke about the small ruminant production systems in Orissa .

The concluding session of the day saw ANTHRA and Jana Jagran presenting their work with the shepherding communities in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka who rear the Deccani sheep as also experiences with value-addition to the wool to enhance its marketability.

On the second day the groups left for field trips to see the Deccani breed . There were five different groups which went to the villages of Chennapur , Peda gottimukkala and Avancha in Medak district, one group which visited Narayankhed, Medak, and the fifth group which visited Kosigi Mandal , Mahbubnagar district. The participants also visited weaving cooperatives and individual weaving units. On their return each group made a presentation on what their observations in the field.

The third and final day began with the concluding Technical Session. Dr. Karim, Director, Central Sheep and Wool research Institute (CSWRI), presented an Overall Plan for Improvement in Sheep Production with reference to the Deccani breed. Dr A.L. Arora, Head of the Division of Animal Genetics and Breeding, CSWRI, and Coordinator of the Network Project on Sheep Improvement, spoke on the performance of the Deccani breed under field and organised farm conditions, as also touched upon a proposed breeding plan to produce an elite animals of the Deccani breed. Dr Pokharna, Retd. Principal Scientists, Division of Wool Technology , CSWRI, spoke about wool and the Textile Industry. Dr Ramesh, from Anthra presented a tool developed by Anthra to assist shepherds in keeping track of disease morbidity and mortality in their flocks, as also to record flock dynamics. Dr Seshagiri Rao spoke of the applications of sensors in the community based management of natural resources, and its applications in disease diagnosis in sheep flocks. The session concluded with an input on Pastoralism in the Deccan, by Shri Sharmaji from Adilabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Following this the participants worked in five thematic groups concerning Breeding, Feeding, Health, Markets and Institutions, to come up with recommendations for future strategies that

would ensure the conservation and sustainable use of the Deccani Breed. The recommendations were presented, discussed and finalized in the Plenary Session and are presented below.

1). Breeding

Issues

- ? To date the Deccani breed has been incompletely understood and described across the 3 states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka. The data available overwhelmingly represents description of very few limited strains of the Deccani found in Maharashtra, which are being used as the basis for evolving all breeding strategies and policies for the Deccani breed across the three states. Thus strategies and policies for its sustainable use, suggested thus far, are not based on ground-level data of the Deccani breed in the 3 states.
- ? The perceptions, needs and priorities of Shepherds who have historically reared the Deccani breed in the three states, have not been taken into account in the formulation of breeding programs, strategies and policies.

Recommendations

- ? There is urgent need to describe and profile the Deccani breed both in terms of its morphological characteristics, basic production and reproduction traits and molecular characteristics (including generating inbreeding coefficients and determining inbreeding levels in different populations), and create a database, from the 3 states of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Karnataka.
- ? Need to review the State breeding policies/strategies/ interventions for the Deccani breed thus far.
- ? Future Breeding strategy and policy for Deccani areas should be defined based on the baseline data generated as also take on board the needs and aspirations of the shepherding communities who have traditionally reared these breeds and depend on this breed for their livelihood.
- ? There should be a complete halt to introducing new strains or breeds from outside the region, till such time that the study is concluded /completed
- ? There should be minimum interference in the current breeding practices followed by the shepherds/ communities, till such time that the study generates the data, and establish the inbreeding levels.
- ? The Network Project on Sheep Improvement and Conservation for the Deccani Sheep should be expanded to include 2 additional centres for the project, one in Andhra

Pradesh and one in Karnataka which can be housed with Anthra in Andhra Pradesh and Jana Jagran, in Karnataka.

- ? The details (genotypic and phenotypic) of the breed need to be established before initiating any formation of Deccani Breed Associations.

2). Nutrition, Feeds and Fodder

Issues

1. Cultivable land has increased and grazing lands have decreased by assigning lands for housing, factories, agriculture etc.
2. Intensification and mechanization of agriculture with the use of chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, increased irrigation in dryland tracts, where the fallow periods have reduced, and the changes in cropping patterns from diverse food crops which yielded valuable crops residues standing in harvested fields, to non-food crops which are devoid of crop-residue, has resulted in a decline of natural available fodders as also crop-residues. With deep ploughing natural fodder seeds are destroyed. Lantana, parthenium and other non-edible species have colonized degraded soils. The overall impact has been a decline of fodders.
3. Decline in the quality of fodder has resulted in reduced milk yield, manure output, reduced body weight, increased susceptibility to disease, and therefore expenses on purchase of vitamins, tonics, etc. have increased.
4. The earlier tradition of penning animals on agricultural lands in the same village has reduced, as a result of which the duration of migration has increased.
5. Since the tradition of allocation of panchayat lands for grazing by the panchayat has all but disappeared, the rearers are forced to lease land for grazing.
6. The most recent threat is that the "sheeplands" (which are the grazing grounds for sheep, and are carelessly referred to as wastelands) are being targeted for setting up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and creating bio-diesel plantations.

Recommendations

1. Assigning/selling lands for housing, construction of factories, etc (non agriculture) need to be restricted. If lands need to be assigned, they need to be assigned to shepherd organizations, which they can use in ways that further their sheep rearing livelihood.
2. Re-allocation of land in villages for grazing through policy changes (where possible and feasible).
3. Analyse soils and investigate their status and any mineral deficiencies, and plan cropping and ecological agriculture interventions to correct these imbalances
4. Analysis of the water to determine its quality and plan interventions where need to restore watering sources and their quality.
5. Water troughs should be constructed en-route to the grazing lands, in ways that these can be used by small ruminants.
6. Strategic top feeding to pregnant ewes, and lambs when required.

7. Need to increase the biomass yield of the rangeland. Conservation of community rangelands with community participation.
8. Schemes like NREG need to consider the enhancement of fodder trees, grasses and plants.
9. Prevent cultivation of Pongamia and Jatropha on forest and common lands like tank bunds and instead replace these with silvipasture
10. Reformulate policy to ensure that bio-diesel plantations are not promoted all over the grazing spaces of sheep.
11. Breeding policies need to integrate issues related to feed, fodder and nutrition.
12. G.Os on maintenance and management of fodder trees need to be considered, eg. Cutting down acacia trees which are 10-15 years old for timber within panchayat jurisdiction is loss to fodder availability.
13. Integrated mixed farming: refining the systems and practices
 - ? Demonstration of these finer practices
 - ? Simple technologies to improve the utilization of crop-residues
14. Shepherds can be encouraged to grow fodder on their private land.
15. Shepherd's flocks are not assets but working capital and they need to be considered for access to welfare programmes such as BPL.
16. Mission as study on "Fodder Development and Management in Wastelands, Forestlands and community lands.

3) Health Care

Issues

- ? Absence of appropriate disease diagnosis, monitoring and surveillance, prevention and control strategies for sheep health
- ? Inadequate vaccines produced for basic diseases. Absence of consistent vaccination plans. (eg HS recommended in one state but not recommended in sheep for other state. Vaccines for sheep pox produced by VBRI in Andhra Pradesh is highly effective, but private sheep pox vaccines are ineffective)
- ? Absence of information to shepherds.

Recommendations

- ? Prioritise the major diseases which affect the Deccani sheep – area wise and season wise, age wise etc.
- ? The Morbidity and Mortality rates and associated economic losses need to be documented and recorded systematically from the flock level upwards. This information is required for formulating effective prevention and control programs and strategies.
- ? Regular system of disease monitoring and surveillance from the village to the District level has to be established. This information would feed into and get reflected at the district level data. From village to higher levels

- ? There is critical need to evolve a systematic preventive vaccination plan for major contagious diseases, which provides for quality (effective) and sufficient quantity of vaccinations.
- ? Forecasting models for parasite control, as developed by CSWRI need to be widely disseminated and used.
- ? Revitalize and re-integrate validated ethno-veterinary and homeopathic knowledge and practices into health-care management.
- ? Budget allocations to the Small Ruminant sector- is disproportionate to their contribution to the economy
- ? Needs of the shepherds need to be a vital component of health programs
- ? Research Institutions, NGOs and Animal Husbandry departments, should network and work towards making available critical information on flock health management to shepherds.
- ? Veterinary Act: Advocacy to change the act to facilitate training of shepherds to vaccinate their own flocks.
- ? Government veterinary health care delivery systems should not be disbanded, privatized and further crippled, but re-organised with appropriate human resources and budgetary resources, so that it is able to meet the needs of farmers. However it is not sufficient to have vets in the government. A separate cadre of veterinarians needs to be trained in disease investigation, and be assigned this job, at the field level.
- ? Creation of disease free zones

4) Marketing

- ✍ The main products marketed when we look at Deccani sheep include live animals, mutton, wool, manure, skin, hooves, other offal's etc
- ✍ In comparison to wool, the markets for live animals (mutton) and manure are less problematic than the wool markets.
- ✍ An emerging problem in the market for live animals is the growing distance between the end-user and the producer (e.g. MNCs entering the market of mutton a classic recent example of this being Metro Carry and Cash)

The challenge for the wool markets is to think new and think alternative.

- ? There is a need to straddle both local markets as also more distant markets.
- ? The strengths of black wool are that the black is a niche colour, coarse wool commands a niche market and we need to work on these strengths.
- ? From the Karnataka experience, Deccani wool comes in seven colours. There is a need to ensure that breeding programs/strategies sustain this diversity of wool.

- ? A range of products can be developed from wool, apart from the local Gongali. Some of these are:

felt based products

scrubbers / soap

by –products: protein nutrients

new wool products

waste wool- for mushroom cultivation

local markets for ropes

home furnishing

- ? Wool must be declared an agriculture produce and requires minimum support Price.

- ? A cess on wool imports should be brought in, and this can be used for implementing programs for local wool.

- ? Value addition for marketing of manure includes vermiculture

- ? Skin: Primary processing of the skin at the primary village level.

5) Institutions

- ? Sheep rearers organisations / cooperatives
- ? Wool Industrial Development Society
- ? Common Interest Groups
- ? SHG groups
- ? Research Institutions
- ? Insurance agencies
- ? Marketing agencies
- ? NGOs
- ? Banks
- ? Company for goat rearers
- ? Savings and Credit groups
- ? Research Stations for Deccani

Recommendations

- ? There is a need to prepare an inventory of Institutions dealing with rearers as also document as to the control and decision making processes within the group.
- ? There is a need to inventorise the training and capacity building needs of the rearers
- ? Study the existing wool industrial cooperatives – and identify specific points of intervention to strengthen cooperatives.
- ? Strengthening the existing sheep rearer societies
- ? Where shepherds are unorganized, there is a need to organise shepherds into primary level groups at village level
- ? Formation of Breed Associations – to represent the rearers of animals at state level / National level. (this to be done only once the breed has been satisfactorily described as listed in the section on Breeding).
- ? State level network of sheep rearers and they should access services from institutions, research institutions, universities, NGOs
- ? Coordinate and Facilitate interaction between different agencies working in the in the field.

Program Schedule

Timings	Day 1	Presenter	Chair persons
9-10 AM	Registration		
10- 10: 30 AM	Welcome and introductions Background to Workshop	Dr Sagari R Ramdas Dr.Kamal Kishore	
10:30- 10:45 AM	Inaugural Address	Dr L Mohan , Director AHD, AP	
10:45 – 11:15	Key Note Address Sustainable use of Deccani sheep for livelihood security	Dr.V.K.Singh Former Director CSWRI	
	Vote of thanks	Dr. Nitya S Ghotge	
11:20-11:30	Tea Break		
11: 30- 12: 15	Technical Session - I Establishing the Status of the Deccani – a view from the academic institutions and Government Departments Andhra Pradesh Initiatives taken up by AHD for the development of Deccani breed Karnataka An Overview of Deccani Sheep in Karnataka – Issues and Challenges Maharashtra Overview of the Deccani sheep breed in Maharashtra Discussion	Dr. M.A.Rehman ,Addl Director,AP Dr Baig, Jan Jagran, Karnataka Dr Ulmek , Dean, MPKV, Maharashtra	Dr.V.K.Singh
12.15 -1.00PM	Technical Session - II Breeding Deccani Breed in Maharastra Improved sheep brighter prospects Indigenous Knowledge on Deccani Sheep breed <i>Discussion</i>	Dr.Pachegaonkar, Rtd. Deputy Director AHD,Maharashtra Dr.Chanda Nimbkar ,Director,NARI Dr.Ramesh, Anthra	Dr.Kamal Kishore
1.00 - 2.00 PM	Lunch		

2:00-2.40	Technical Session – II (contd.)		
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	Breeding Application of Molecular Markers for improvement in Performance of Deccani sheep Discussion	Dr.Sateesh. CCMB Dr.S.C.Gupta, Principal Scientist and Head NBAGR	
2.40 – 4.00	Technical Session III Deccani Wool Sector study in AP Coping Strategies of Golla Communities Sheep and Gollas at cross Roads <i>Discussion</i>	Ms Switha ,CHITRIKA Ms.Lalitha Rao Chennakeshava trust Dr.PR Sheshagiri Rao, Chennakeshava Trust,	Dr.Sagari Ramdas
4:00-4:15	Tea		
4.15 – 5:30	View from the experiences from different states Orissa Sheep development in Orissa Karnataka Marketing of Coarse wool AP and Maharashtra Supporting Pastoral Livelihoods <i>Discussion</i>	Dr.Basudev Sunani Mr Gopi, Shramik - Jan Jagran Dr Nitya S Ghotge, Anthra Dr Sagari R Ramdas, Anthra	Dr.Seshagiri Rao
5:30 – 6.00	Discussion on field visits		
6.30	Team for Narayankhed depart for field trip		

Timings	Day 2	Presenter	
5.30am -3pm	Field Trip and return to NISIET (Lunch on the way back from the field)	Field Trip to Medak (Narsapur and Narayankhed area) and Mahabubnagar	
5-7.30	Feedback of groups – Flag issues for group work for future strategies		
8:30 pm	Dinner		
	Day 3		
9.00- 11.00	Technical session – IV Work plan for overall improvement in sheep production Performance of Deccani sheep in organized farm and field conditions	Dr.S.A.Karim Director ,CSWRI Dr.A.L.Arora Head , Division of Animal Genetics and breeding	Dr. V.K Singh

	Community Based Disease Monitoring System Deccani wool – Its utilization strategy Community based management of natural resources through sensor network	Dr.Ramesh, Anthra Dr.Pokarna Retd Principal Scientist ,CSWRI Dr.Sheshagiri Rao Chennakesava trust	
11:15-11:30	Tea break		
11:30-1:30	Group work on Breeding Markets /Wool development Health Nutrition – Grazing Institutional Building		
1:30-2:30	Lunch		
2:30-4:30	Group presentations		
	Recommendations and conclusion		

National Seminar on “Sustainable Use and Conservation of the Deccani Sheep (Meat and Wool)”
20th -22nd FEB’07 NISIET, Hyderabad

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