

Safeguarding Sheep



Background and Objectives

Ecto-parasite infestation is a serious problem amongst the sheep and goat flocks of Himachal Pradesh. This is due to non availability of water bodies where these flocks can be dipped in order to get rid of various parasites like ticks, lice and mites on regular intervals. It is highly recommended that the sheep and goat must be dipped at least thrice a year to keep the animals free from infestations. However, due to lack of awareness coupled with non availability of dipping infrastructure in Himanchal Pradesh there are huge losses both in terms of wool and meat amongst the sheep flocks of the state.

Presently only constructed fixed dips are available on the migratory routes in the districts of Chamba, Kangra, Kullu, Mandi, Shimla and Kinnaur. A few fixed sheep dips are also available in districts Solan, Sirmour, Bilaspur and Una.

The problems being faced in the fixed constructed dips are their high cost of maintenance, non availability of land at suitable places, abundant and varied migratory routes, lack of security at sheep dips, and the non availability of free flowing water. All these problems are compounded by the fact that regular maintenance and cleanliness are not possible.

The answer to the above problems lies in introduction of mobile dip tanks on migratory routes. Mobile sheep dips are constructed of light weight, high grade steel and designed for sheep and goats. The system is designed for a convenient self contained towing configuration which can be towed easily behind a jeep. The unit can also be manoeuvred by hand to be set up at difficult locations. It can be set up by a single person at a convenient location by detaching it from the trailer. The location is selected after considering ease of sheep flow, land and access to water etc.

Intervention

The chief objectives behind introducing mobile sheep dips are to improve the health of sheeps, reduce mortality rate, enhance meat production and for setting better returns to breeders. To achieve these objectives and to cover approximately 1,50,000 sheep in the Districts of Hamirpur, Bilaspur, Kullu, Mandi, Solan, Sirmour, Una and Lahaul & Spiti the state has approved purchase of three mobile sheep dip tanks through RKVY funds at a cost of Rs. 142.00 lakhs. These mobile dip tanks are arranged on the migratory routes of sheeps and goats and the flocks are dipped/drenched in ecto-parasiticide for cleaning.

Earlier the sheep were being dipped in fixed sheep dips/tanks which have been constructed long time ago on the migratory routes of sheep. The Department was facing difficulty in construction of new fixed dip tanks due to problems in land transfer as most of the land on migratory routes is forest land. Therefore, the benefit of dipping was not being extended to cover more sheep population. After purchase of mobile sheep dip tanks, this problem has been solved to a great extent.

The place of installing mobile dip tanks is identified on the migratory routes through which maximum number of sheep flocks passes during migration on locations where adequate water supply and disposal is available. The Sheep Dip Tank is carried to this place during the migration period for mass dipping and drenching of the sheep flocks.



Outcome

The benefits of the above efforts are manifold. Large numbers of migratory flocks are being covered by this process. Total swim length of mobile sheep dip is 8.5 meters which is more than the length in conventional sheep dips and this results in better contact with deworming medicine. Fixed sheep dip tanks were catering to needs of only those flocks that were passing through that particular migratory route. Now with introduction of mobile sheep dip tanks, different migratory routes can be accessed leading to more coverage of flocks. So far 1.25 lakh numbers of sheep and goat have taken dips in these tanks. This has resulted in improved health of sheep and lower mortality. The production of meat and wool has also increased from 1427 tonnes to 1441 tons (estimated) and 1114 tons to 1137 tonnes (estimated) respectively during the period 2009-10 to 2011-12. As a result, the income of sheep owners has also increased.

