SOCIO – ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES OF TRADERS INVOLVED IN PRE – HANDLING TECHNIQUES AND WELFARE PRACTICES OF CATTLE FOR TRANSPORTATION IN ZANGO MARKET, BUKURU, JOS PLATEAU STATE

[1]Nyam, P.P., [2]Pewan, S.B., [1]Samchi, E.D.P and [1]Goshit, D.T

[1]College of Education, Department of Agricultural Education, Animal Science Division, P.M.B. 01000, Gindiri, Plateau State.

[2]Veterinary Extension and Liaison Services Division, National Veterinary Research Institute, Vom, Plateau State.

***Corresponding Author**: e-mail: philipnyam@yahoo.com*

***Phone Numbers**: 08036199654; 07058697174*

Abstract.

A diagnostic survey was designed to examine the Socio-economic characteristics and challenges involved in pre-handling techniques and welfare practices of cattle for transportation in Zango market. A total of 80 questionnaires were administered to stakeholders involved. Data collected were analysed using simple descriptive statistics which include frequencies, percentages and ranking. The result of the showed that majority of the males (86.25%) and females (13.75%) had tertiary education. The result also revealed that challenges faced in marketing and transporting cattle were inadequate market information (18.75%), absence of permanent structures (16.25%) and inadequate grazing area decreasing order of importance of the constraints. Therefore, it is that more youths should be encouraged to participate in cattle marketing through load facilities and information on market situations be made available ahead time.

Key word: *Socio-economic, CharacteristicsPre-handling, Technique, Welfare, Practices.*

Introduction

Livestock marketing in Nigeria according to Adamu (1992) is a complex activity involving several categories of people such as sellers, buyers, transporters and commission agents among others. Animal transport which involves among other things collecting from various farms, transport, queuing and loading, would be efficient when integrated with dynamic planning process that takes into account road conditions, climate, traffic conditions transport, time and distance since they are major threats to the welfare of animals during handling. The intensity and specialization of livestock production and the demand for livestock to be marketed and slaughtered outside places where they are being produced have necessitated transportation of different domestic animals species all over the world (Ayo and Oladele 1996; Minka and Ayo, 2007a) thereby making transport exceptionally stressful in the life of the animals as it compromises their welfare. In addition, herdsmen occasionally hit the cattle and cause great pain and injury mostly because they consider the animals as mere commodities not as sentient being that feel pain and stress, or because of lack of knowledge about animals and their welfare.

Improper handling, inappropriate uses of sticks by handlers, violent impact of the animals against the facilities or impact or collision with other animals are potential bruising events (Warris, 1990). Handling the cattle without the practice of using sticks results in better welfare and less risk of poor carcass quality (Malena *et al.*, 2006). Grandin (1997) reported that animals can be stressed by either psychological stress such as hunger, thirst, fatique, injury and thermal extremes.

In the animal flow to livestock market or abattoirs, poor handling and long process of transportation impose stress on animals. In developed countries, animals are transported more or less by using standardized transport vehicles. However, in developing countries, animals transport is mostly by walking on hoof from farm to marketing or by ordinary trucks not designed for animal transport. Animal handlers in transport chain and marketing are not trained and do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding about welfare of animals during pre- transport, transport and post-transport. In general, poor animal handling results in weight loss, physical injuries, sickness and even death of animals, leading to the poor welfare conditions and economic loss. This article aligns with emerging issues offering several conceptual and empirical contributions. Despite research progress, there is still dearth of empirical evidence relating to the benefits associated with friendly environment for sufficient and efficient pre-handling and welfare practices for cattle. Therefore, the overall objective of the current study was to investigate the socio- economic characteristics and challenges of traders involved in pre-handling and welfare issues during

transportation with special focus on cattle flow to and fro Zango market in Bukuru.

Materials and methods

The study was carried out at the Bukuru Control Out-Post. Bukuru livestock market.The location, climate and soils have been described (Musa and Jiya, 2011)

Data Collection and Analysis

Data and information were collected through interviews and questionnaires. Information was gathered from key informants such as cattle rearers, buyers, sellers, Meyyati Allah (Kungiyan Fulani) and veterinary handlers. A total of 80 informants were used to collect the data. More detailed information was gathered from traders, who purchased animals from the feeder markets and transported them to Zango market. In addition to conducting interviews, using well structured questionnaires, physical observations were made on animal conditions and handling of animals as well as loading activities was recorded. The data collected were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussions

The results presented in table 1 show that more males were involved (86.25%) in pre-handling techniques and welfare of cattle for transportation than females (13.75%). The involvement of females were in the areas of buying, selling and negotiating the transportation of their cattle to the southern part of the country, while the higher number of males was not unrelated to the fact that the activities were muscle bound and also implies that most of the heads of the households were males; from the data collected majority of the respondents were married (88.75%). This could not be unconnected to the fact that they were struggling to meet family financial obligation and were socially responsible. The table also shows the distribution of respondents by their religious affiliation, age attained and level of education. The majority of the respondent were Muslim (85%) and (15%) were Christians. Respondents were within the range of 31-40 years constituting the majority (47.50%). This implies that most of the respondents were young, who were in their active stage in life and struggling to fend for their families.A substantial segment (87.50%) of the population possessed tertiary education (OND/NCE) and others had one form of educational qualifications or the other. this implies high level of literacy among the respondents and also high reasonable decision making in the business. The higher proportion of the respondents with higher educational attainment found themselves in the business of handling and transporting due to necessity being initiated by lack of commensurate job to their higher qualification. However, the implication would be the exhibition of high level of unethical practices.

The study shows that a significant proportion of the respondents were cattle traders (61.25%). The result also shows that 45% of the respondents had 6-10 years experiences being the highest while 5% of the population had 20-30 years. This shrinkage in the years of experience might be attributed to the stressful nature of the work and had to seek for an alternative source of livelihood particularly those with academic qualifications. Table 2 shows the challenges at the control post. Inadequate market information (18.75 %), absence of permanent structures (16.25%) and inadequate grazing area were the challenges in decreasing order of importance. This reflects the general situation of poverty of the people who cannot afford to access information. Farmers/traders get market information mainly from earlier market and they usually go to the market without information before hand about the timely price of cattle. They sometimes take back their animals if the price offered is below their expectation. This means wastage of time and exposing the animals to more stress and disease conditions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, more males, married and youth between 31-40 years were involved in the pre-handling and welfare practices of cattle meant for transportation and individual that has attained fair academic status. The major constraints and challenges abound in the study area, were inadequate market information and absence of permanent structures. Therefore, it is recommended that more youths should be encouraged to participate in the cattle trading to provide source of employment in order to raised standards of living and information on market situation or conditions be made available ahead of time.

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