

Current Status of Animal Welfare Technologies in Bangladesh

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Abstract—The science of animal welfare means to interpret welfare issues on individuals and communities, identify possible solutions. Amongst all events in Bangladesh, the sacrifice of a four legged animal during Eid Ul Adha is the one that is studied in this paper in the context of animal welfare. The occasion originates from Prophet Abraham instructed by God to sacrifice his son and later on before the sacrifice took place, God replaced his son by a lamb. This teaches us that the sacrifice must of that particular animal which the consumers loves as much as their children. Thus the animals bought by the consumer – must be taken best of care for the animal even if it were raised and sacrificed in a farm and a slaughterhouse. However the farm to slaughter house procedure and processes of Eid ul Adha could be addressed and improved in case of animal ethics and technological advancements.

Keywords— Animal welfare, animal ethics, four legged animals.

I. INTRODUCTION

Muslims around the world celebrate Eid Ul Adha, which is in other words called the “Feast of the Sacrifice.” The tradition starts with the celebration of slaughtering any four- legged animal and usually the animals are: cattle, camels, goats, lambs, etc. Bangladesh, being an Islamic republic, slaughters around 1.8 million cattle for Eid alone (Ians, 2014). The purpose of the sacrifice is that the meat is to be divided into three parts: a third is kept by the cattle owner, a third is given to the friends and family, the last third is given to the poor and less fortunate. With an income level grouped as “ low” and with a poverty headcount ratio at national poverty lines reaching 30 % of the population by the World Bank statistics, such a religious festival aids the flow of food distribution amongst the poor.

However, the country being a developing one and governments having more greater concerns to deal with, like all other events, the event of Eid Ul Azha has some systematic flaws. The sacrificial procedure starts with bringing the cattle from the farmland or in many cases - are corruptly imported, from the neighbouring countries. Then they are transferred to the market place, a highly congested and unhealthy environment, where they are prepared for sale. Finally after meeting the right ‘buyer’ - they are slaughtered on Eid day - with poor animal welfare techniques. These problems must be considered as the slaughtering animals cannot raise their voices for themselves and actions need to be taken sooner or later.

II. TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

The demand for many food items is high, as the supply of food not being inadequately sufficient to feed a population so large. This makes livestock very expensive, particularly cattle. On the other hand, Bangladesh’s neighbouring country, India has a surplus of cattle population due to its ban on cow slaughter (J. Bhattacharjee, 2013). Whereas the demand for cows are low as it occupies a holy position in Hinduism. This imbalance in the two countries for a particular livestock

caused Bangladesh to ask for cattle imports from India. However, there also exists a ban on export of cattle which follows the Directive Principles of State Policy set down in Article- 48 of the Constitution “the state shall endeavour to organise agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines and shall, in particular, take steps for preserving and improving the breeds, and prohibiting the slaughter, of cows and calves and other milch and draught cattle” (J. Bhattacharjee, 2013). This ban invites the smuggling of cattle worth \$500 million annually, in the Indo- Bangla border, the rate reaches its peak during the Eid Ul Adha season (J. Bhattacharjee, 2013).

The law in India does not ban the movement of cattle from one state to another, so smuggling networks, transport cattle from distant states in trucks and by rail to West Bengal. Rules for transportation of cattle are violated often but rarely is action taken against offenders. According to Article 55 of the Transportation of Animal Rules (TAR), 1978: “an ordinary goods wagon shall carry not more than ten adult cattle or fifteen calves on broad gauge and not more than four adult cattle or six calves on narrow gauge” (J. Bhattacharjee, 2013). The real picture has many as 300 animals loaded in each wagon (J. Bhattacharjee, 2013). Studies showed the adverse effects of long distance transport on was associated with dehydration, lipolysis and muscle injury or activation leading to reduced animal welfare statuses (M.R Alam et al., 2010). The cows are unloaded far away across the borders and have to walk at least 15 km without rest. It is usually after reaching the border, they are allowed to be grazed on the Bangladeshi soil with the rest of the local cows. This is also part of the smuggling act as the smuggler needs to state that he found the cattle “roaming near the border” for the Bengali guards to let them enter the cow through the borders (J. Bhattacharjee, 2013).

After they reach Bangladeshi borders, the cattle are transported to markets all over the country by road transport. The journeys are usually lasting several days and the risk that transported animals will receive insufficient supply of drinking water and feed and inadequate rest, is always there

(M.R Alam et al., 2010). The road transport conditions involve high stocking densities, poor ventilation on the animals' under- side as high humidity and high temperatures are common in Bangladesh. To make matters worse, crude forms of animal restraint methods are used like the tying together of legs, and this may increase the risk of muscle injury, fatigue and stress (M.R Alam et al., 2010).

Solution to Problems in Transportation

Both India and Bangladesh have been working together in reducing the rate of cattle smuggling for some time. Two countries need to allow a proper and systematic transfer of the animals if there are any transfers being done. During transportation from other countries, it should be ensured that animals would not need to walk several distances. There would also be check points to ensure that the cattle is safe and healthy for export and import increasing the physical fitness of the animals as well. In Bangladesh, transportation of cattle on road transport facilities need to be improved. Cattle must not be transferred at long distances over a long time period. The highway patrol police must be in charge of monitoring the ratio of transport carrier size along with number of cattle transported. The cattle must be fed often and forms of restrain should be avoided. The trucks may be designed specifically for transport of animals, with proper ventilation and spacing. Training of personnel responsible for handling the transported cattle is needed. Expert handling of cattle may reduce injury rates amongst cows during transport.

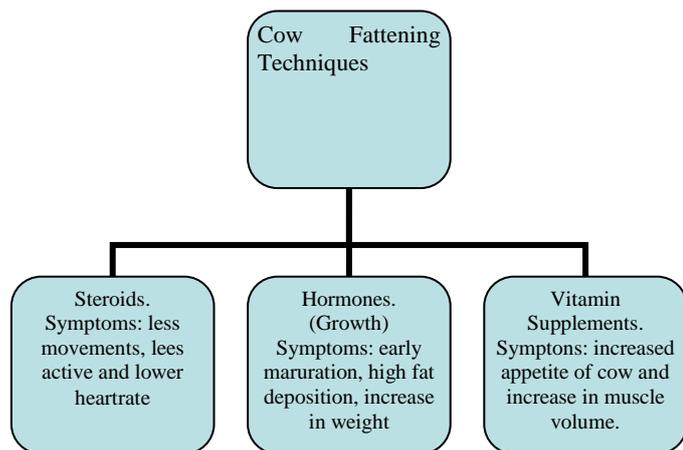


Fig. 1. Techniques used for cattle fattening.

III. CATTLE MARKET AND WAREHOUSE

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. The country has very less vacant spaces, for the market place of the cattle business which are available for only short period of time of the year. Stalls for cattle sale are available at every neighborhood. These stalls contain large numbers of cattle, goats, sheep and camel, altogether, in a very congested and unhygienic area. The spaces lack proper cleaning and with the large amount of buyers present, the place becomes noisy and suffocating. The cattle – especially the ones from farms become home sick - going through depression and frustration.

As Eid approaches, the amount of livestock increases in the country - the demand for feed increases, along with the price of feed increasing. This results in cattle to be fed less. Consumers on the other hand, will buy only healthy and large cows. The larger the cow – the higher its price is. Tired cattle, after long journeys from the border usually lose weight and look ill. So the method that hundreds of cattle sellers decide to make a bundle ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha, was to use harmful chemicals, fattening steroids, antibiotics and cattle growth hormones on cattle. It was reported that approximately 65 % of the sellers used fattening drugs on their cattle (P. Roy, 2014). Steroids of Dexamethasone group such as Decason, Dexamet, Paradexa, Oradexason and Predexanol; intravenous drugs of Butaphosphan group like Catophos and Catosol; digestion and appetite enhancers such as Digimax and Potash; and other vitamin additives are used on cattle(P. Roy, 2014). These drugs have severe side effects on the cattle such as aggression, dizziness, leg numbness leading to walking problems, swelling which may result in severe pain and loss of appetite. Massive side effects include eye problems causing the blurring of vision, heart problems, headaches, breathing problems which in many cases result in death. Figure 1 shows the impact of cruel consumerization on the cow.

The Solution to Cattle Marketplace Problems

The government must step forward in providing an hygienic and healthy environment to the animals in the market place. Methods include building better spaced stalls and larger animal to space ratio, so that cattle is free to stretch out a bit.

A survey (O.F. Sujana, 2011) suggested that the farmers and the sellers of cattle were 30% illiterate and 70% had passed elementary school only. These people had no idea about the adverse effects of the drugs that they were using on cattle and most of them were using it as others were using it. Raising awareness of these people on the effects of using these drugs, to both the animal and the consumer later on consuming the cow, must be done effectively. Educating the farmers and the sellers on using natural methods such as : mixture of straw, molasses, urea fertiliser and lentils as a safe fattening diet for cattle. “The Animal Feed Act 2010 which prohibits the use of antibiotics, growth hormones, steroids or other harmful chemicals in animal feed and the offender may end up in one year's imprisonment or up to \$ 1000 in fine or both” but the law must be monitored more strictly. Drugs or steroids sold for fattening of cattle must be banned.

IV. PRE SLAUGHTER AND SLAUGHTER HOUSES

Once bought, the consumer has to meet all the animals' adequate requirements of food and shelter according to the religious procedure of the sacrifice. However, on the Eid day, the animal when brought to the slaughter site, perceives signals of odours, danger, sights and sounds. Animals risk of fear increases stress levels and this is an indicator of animal welfare status (I. J. H. Duncan, 2005). The pre-slaughter methods of restraints are very poor in terms of animal welfare – including the tying of legs, beating of the incorporate cow causing injury, causing agony in the poor animal.

During the slaughter, the cow is aware of facing death and it was found that, even upto 2 minutes after death, their brain was still able to feel pain signals. The pain of the cow relies very much on the technique of the slaughter men. With over 1 million cows to be slaughtered, it is difficult to find skilled slaughter men who is a master of his craft, and with unskilled labor - the pain of the cattle rises.

The Solution to the Slaughtering Problems

The usage of restraint devices on animals must be used in order to avoid cruel methods such as tying leading to injuries. This will keep the animal in place and avoids movements which are helpful during slaughter as well. The best way for the animal to feel less pain is when it is not conscious. There are several halal stunning methods to stun adult cattle such as penetrating captive bolt stunning, non-penetrating captive bolt stunning and electrical stunning (Nakyinsige et al., 2013). This method is also Islamic as it considers the welfare of the animal as well. Slaughter must always be done by a skillful licensed slaughter man in order to avoid increased pain for the animal. These skilled men must be trained and have a experience to slaughter a huge number of cattle together tactfully.

V. CONCLUSION

The sacrifice originates from Prophet Abraham instructed by God to sacrifice his son and later on before the sacrifice took place; God replaced his son by a lamb. This teaches us that the sacrifice must of that particular animal which the consumer loves as much as his children. Thus after the cattle is bought by the consumer - the consumer takes almost the best care of the animal could ever be taken care of , if it were raised and sacrificed in a farm and a slaughterhouse. The consumer fulfills its proper diet, shelter and medical expenditure. The emotional attachment between the consumer and the cow causes the consumer to feel adverse pain of the animal, on the day of slaughter. This increases the respect for the animal and the food it provides us. Although many argue about this festival as being one of the most blood shed festivals – it does offer the less fortunate some fair share of meat. Without this festival, animals will be still slaughtered in slaughter houses but then, as the buyer of the meat never

witnesses the pain of the animal – he will never learn to respect the animal. However there is still need for improvising of the systems through which the festival takes place. With a bit of change in the whole event as whole - the religious celebration of Eid ul Adha can be very holly and welfare one for the animal and the society.

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