Husbandry and Management Practices in Domestic horses in Northern Nigeria and their Clinical Implications

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This study was conducted to identify common husbandry and management practices associated with domestic horses in Northern Nigeria. Fifty (50) of the horse was purposely selected as units of analysis. Primary data was generated by means of a pre-tested, semi-structured questionnaire administered to the sampled respondents. A simple inductive statistics was applied to the primary data. The study revealed that the whole facilities studied 50(100%) had a prior experience with horses. A large number of horses, mostly West African Dongola and West African Barb are kept solely for pleasure or ceremonial purposes (60%). While the other breeds of horses like Argentine (6%) and South Africa polo ponies (2%) are kept for polo. Recently, the Sudan country-bred (4%) and Western Sudan pony (6%) have found a place in West African polo. Other breeds found within the facilities studied are Argentine criollo; Nigerian ponies and various crosses. Only 10% of the facilities had breeding stocks with only 2% carrying out artificial insemination while 8% do natural mating. The housing management system includes stables (40%) and open fields (60%) where horses are tethered. Bedding materials includes straws (50%); sand (20%) and wood shavings (30%). Feed grade provided include a combination of rations-bran; cracked grain and hay (40%), Bran; cracked grain and legumes (48%) and Bran and hay (12%), all feed combination administered along with fresh grass. Watering and feeding practices involves provision of feed and water twice daily (50%) and while others provide it adlib (25%). Feeding horses with various additives accounted for 19% of the studied facilities. The health status as shown by the body condition score ranges from II-IV/V (88%) of the population studied. Routine dental care is regular (30%) with all the facilities while others (70%) are not irregular. Grooming is common in all the facilities especially within the performance horse circle. Routine hoof care including trimming and shoeing is common in 26% of the facilities while hoof trimming without shoeing is a common practice in 74% of the facilities. Orthodox medicine practiced in 80% of the studied area. While ethnoveterinary consist of 10%, while a combination of orthodox and ethnoveterinary medicine was common in 10% of the study area. Vaccination against African horse sickness equine influenza and tetanus is common in the various equine communities.Though 16% of the population do not vaccinate against any known disease. Parasite control program include pasture hygiene (4%); interval dosing (10%); continuous in-feed (4%); selective dosing (40%) and strategic dosing constitute 42%. Exercise is a common practice but intensity and duration is not strictly adhered to especially during tendon injuries. Manure management differs from facility to facility-some dispose manure within the facilities (40%) while others dispose it outside the facilities (60%). A number of clinical signs like limping, coughing, ocular and nasal discharge, swellings on the body, abnormal mucous membrane, fever, ventral oedema and reluctance to move, foul respiratory odour was observed. Clinical cases like laminitis; pigeon fever; bran disease; colic; African horse sickness; exertional rhabdomyolysis; sinusitis; piroplasmosis; dermatomycosis and tumours was observed.

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