

Lecture 3

White Fulani (Bunaji) Cattle

This is the most widely distributed of all Nigerian cattle breed. It is found in Nigeria particularly Kano, Bauchi and Katsina province. It constitutes 50% of total cattle production. The coat colour is white with black points on the ears, muzzle and feet and tip of tail. It is used for milk production throughout the ecological zones in the country. The breed has been involved in crossbreeding programmes with imported cattle. The breed has given 1,000-3,600 kg milk per lactation. The udder is well developed with medium size teat. It is a triple purpose breed - milk, meat and work. About 26 coat colour combinations have been reported. Mature size for male is 530-600kg. Female is 340-360kg. Average age at first calving is 43 months. It has a breeding life of 9-10 years. The bulk of White Fulani are in the hands of the nomadic pastoralists. Under this condition, milk production is low ranging from 200-450kg/cow per annum. However, the milk production potential of the breed has been recognized as a result of the performance of cow's kept under improved conditions on government stations such as Shika, Vom, Agege and University of Ibadan. Birth weight is 21.6-25.1kg. Percent fat is 5.63-6.40%. It offers the best prospects for dairy production among indigenous breed. It is easily adapted to all ecological zones in the country and can be selected easily.



Plate 8: White Fulani Cattle

FEEDING AND MANAGEMENT

The major emphasis on the management of dairy cattle should be to treat each female so that it can produce calf each year. Fortunately, most breeds in Nigeria have genetic capability to calf annually if a well balanced dietary and management programme is developed to meet the nutritional need of the animal. This means providing good grazing pastures and minerals with calcium, phosphorus, salt lick and clean water during the wet and dry season. In the dry season, browsing plus additional dry grass, groundnut hay, cowpea hay, rice bran, guinea corn hay or stalks, various kinds of concentrates such as cottonseed, groundnut cake, guinea corn and millet should be provided.

Disease prevention and vaccination should be carried out. A herd of 5-30 cows will need one bull for servicing. The non-producing female and castrated male should be herded in a separate group and dispose of to save grass and feed for the producing animals. For feeding purposes, cattle should be divided into the following herds: 0-3months, 4-6 months, young heifers/breeders, pregnant and lactating herds.

0-3 Months Calves

After calving, the calves are left with their dam to receive colostrums. The colostrums contain antibodies which protect calf from disease. However, if calves are removed by birth, they are transferred to calves pen. It is essential to bucket feed the calves with 2-3 litres of milk/day at the temperature of 37.5-38°C. If the dam dies at calving or for other reasons fails to produce colostrums, then an effort should be made to obtain either surplus colostrums from another dam or feed colostrums substitute. A well known recipe is to whip up a fresh raw egg in 1 litre of milk and add half boiled water, 1 teaspoonful of castor oil. This will be sufficient for one feed and should be fed at body temperature 3 times a day for the first 3 days or *ad libitum*. Once the black jelly-like foetal dung passes along the feaces, the castor oil can be omitted. The milk should be supplemented with a mixture of soyabean cake and maize. They should be confined in another pen and allowed to graze during the wet season.

4-6 Months Calves

These are calves that have been weaned. In dry season, apart from grazing, they should be supplied with a mixture of cottonseed cake (75%) and guinea corn (25%). This should be reduced as from 15-24 months. By 24 months, the animals should be ready for slaughter, while the females are kept in the young heifers herd for breeding. Like the calf, the heifer can be reared indoors or out-doors but indoor rearing is very expensive. Shortly after weaning, calves are usually placed in a group of 8-10. They should be carefully watched to ensure that they do not suck each other. The quarters should be clean and a calf starter ration containing 16% or more crude protein should be fed up to 4 months. The amount of starter diet fed depends on the rate of weight gain and body condition desired of the calf. Quality hay should be fed and medium moisture silage and corn silage can also be used. Water should be available at all times. At 4 months of age, the calves should be introduced to concentrate feeds of the cows. When calves are 10 months old, grain can be discontinued if good quality roughage is fed. They should receive salt as well as Ca and P supplements. Rotational grazing should be adopted and heifers should not be grazed on any one paddock for more than 5 days at a stretch, to minimize disease infestation and destruction of vegetation.