

Animal Husbandary and its Importance

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Short Communication

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DESCRIPTION

Animal husbandry is the branch of agriculture concerned with animals that are raised for meat, fibre, milk, or other products. It includes day-to-day care, selective breeding, and the raising of livestock. Husbandry has a long history, starting with the Neolithic Revolution when animals were first domesticated, from around 13,000 BC onwards, predating farming of the first crops. By the time of early civilisations such as ancient Egypt, cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs were being raised on farms.

Major changes took place in the Columbian exchange, when Old World livestock were brought to the New World, and then in the British Agricultural Revolution of the 18th century, when livestock breeds like the Dishley Longhorn cattle and Lincoln Longwool sheep were rapidly improved by agriculturalists, such as Robert Bakewell, to yield more meat, milk, and wool. A wide range of other species, such as horse, water buffalo, llama, rabbit, and guinea pig, are used as livestock in some parts of the world. Insect farming, as well as aquaculture of fish, molluscs, and crustaceans, is widespread. Modern animal husbandry relies on production systems adapted to the type of land available. Subsistence farming is being superseded by intensive animal farming in the more developed parts of the world, where, for example, beef cattle are kept in high density feedlots, and thousands of chickens may be raised in broiler houses or batteries. On poorer soil, such as in uplands, animals are often kept more extensively and may be allowed to roam widely, foraging for themselves. [1].

Most livestock are herbivores, except for pigs and chickens which are omnivores. Ruminants like cattle and sheep are adapted to feed on grass; they can forage outdoors or may be fed entirely or in part on rations richer in energy and protein, such as pelleted cereals. Pigs and poultry cannot digest the cellulose in forage and require other high-protein foods. [2,3].

The domestication of livestock was driven by the need to have food on hand when hunting was unproductive. The desirable characteristics of a domestic animal are that it should be useful to the domesticator, should be able to thrive in his or her company, should breed freely, and be easy to tend. Domestication was not a single event, but a process repeated at various periods in different places. Sheep and goats were the animals that accompanied the nomads in the Middle East, while cattle and pigs were associated with more settled communities. The first wild animal to be domesticated was the dog. Half-wild dogs, perhaps starting with young individuals, may have been tolerated as scavengers and killers of vermin, and being naturally pack hunters, were predisposed to become part of the human pack and join in the hunt. Prey animals, sheep, goats, pigs and cattle, were progressively domesticated early in the history of agriculture. Pigs were domesticated in the Near East between 8,500 and 8000 BC, sheep and goats in or near the Fertile Crescent about 8,500 BC, and cattle from wild aurochs in the areas of modern Turkey and Pakistan around 8,500 BC. A cow was a great advantage to a villager as she produced more milk than her calf needed, and her strength could be put to use as a working animal, pulling a plough to increase production of crops, and drawing a sledge, and later a cart, to bring the produce home from the field. Draught animals were first used about 4,000 BC in the Middle East, increasing agricultural production immeasurably. [4-6].

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