

Indigenous yak-cow cross breeding in Baltistan

Abbas, Muhammad, 2003

Abstract

The Yak (*Poephagus grunniens*) is one of the world's most remarkable animal. It is a herbivore and found in wild in China and Nepal at high altitudes ranging from 4000 to 6000 m above sea level. Recent studies show that their number in wild is decreasing drastically. In the Himalaya region, the domestication of yak dates back to 3000 years. After domestication it spread to lower elevation (3000 m) but with limitation because of its anatomical and physiological characteristics. In Pakistan yak and its hybrids are located mainly in the areas that border with China and Ladakh at elevation above 3000 m above the sea level. These large bovines provide traction, milk, meat, hides, hair, wool and manure. In Baltistan, the male is popularly known as yak and the female is called yakmo where as its F1 male and female cross breeds' offspring are called zo and zomo respectively.



Yak

Picture: Veronika Seim

This study is aimed to explore the yak cow cross breeding and its indigenous management practices. The study was carried out in Thalley valley in Baltistan region, Northern Areas of Pakistan. Thalley valley was selected because the people of Thalley are famous for their indigenous knowledge about preparing yak for cross breeding. Data about indigenous practices of yak cow cross breeding from ten villages of Thalley watershed was collected during three-month fieldwork. In yak cow cross breeding the challenge is to harmonize the mating behaviour of breeding yak and cow so that they could copulate successfully. The study explores indigenous breeding practices; comparative advantages of yak and yak cow cross breeds, the role of cross breed animals in the livelihoods of the local populations. The current management constraints and future possible improvements are also discussed in this study. The study reveals that the F1 (zo and zomo) are more productive than pure cow and yakmo. The farmers get about 15 kg of butter from one zomo compared to 5 kg from cow during one lactation period. Pure cow can be kept for 12 years as milk producing animal while zomo can be kept for 18 years. Zomo is also regarded hardier for long and cold winters compared to cow and can graze on shrubs and bushes during the winter when cow needs stall-feeding.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the award of Master of Science in Management of Natural Resources and Sustainable Agriculture (MNRSA)

Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric), Norwegian University of Life Sciences