

Veterinary Services suitable for Privatization in Sheep and Goat Farming

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Abstract

Privatization of veterinary services is considered as one of the strategies to improve the quality of the services and decrease the burden on scarce public resources. This paper attempts to identify the veterinary services suitable for privatization, in the areas of sheep and goat farming in Andhra Pradesh. The study concludes that veterinary services, which have economic importance need to be identified and methodologies evolved for their adoption by the farmers.

In India, the veterinary services have been funded, managed and delivered by the public sector. But in the recent past the government's financial resources for the provision of veterinary services have not kept pace with the increased livestock population (Carney, 1998) and production resulting in deterioration of quality services by the public sector agencies (Anteneh, 1984; De Haan and Nissen, 1980). Hence privatization of veterinary services is considered as one of the strategies that could be implemented to improve the quality of the services and to decrease the financial and administrative burden on scarce public resources. Therefore, the time has come to make a transitional shift to the private sector for support, though not for total substitution. Intermediate steps do exist between a solely public veterinary service system along with private partnership.

Keeping the above facts in view, the objective of the present study was to identify the veterinary services suitable for privatization in the areas of sheep and goat farming in Andhra Pradesh.

Methodology

An ex-post facto research design was used to conduct the present study in 6 mandals comprising 12 villages of Chittoor and Mahaboobnagar districts of Andhra Pradesh. A total of 180 farmers were selected based on stratified random sampling method. Twenty five Veterinary Assistant Surgeons (VASs) from each district

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comprising 50 from the State Department of Animal Husbandry and 30 scientists from Sri Venkateswara Veterinary University, Tirupathi were selected for the study. Twenty four services from sheep and goat farming were selected in accordance with available literature. An interview schedule was used to collect data on the quality of service provided. Ten indicators namely complexity, profitability, tangibility, perishability, reliability, accessibility, security, responsiveness, competency and specificity were selected for assessing the quality of service based on available literature and consultations with the experts.

For each indicator the response categories were agree and disagree with the weights of 1 and 0. The score ranges from 10 to 0 were obtained for each veterinary service. The mean scores were obtained for each veterinary service through judgment of the scientists, VASs and farmers working in respective areas through the judgment sheet. Thus the veterinary services with a mean score above 5 were identified and considered as amicable for privatization.

Results and Discussion

The veterinary services suitable for privatization in sheep and goat farming as identified by the three different groups of respondents i.e. scientists, VASs and farmers are presented in table 1.

From the table, it can be inferred that 16 veterinary services were found suitable for privatization as perceived by the scientists, 12 by Veterinary Assistant Surgeons and 11 from the farmers' point of view.

Eight veterinary services like vaccination, control of ticks, major surgical treatment, on farm consultancy services, round the clock services, issue of health certificate, issue of post mortem certificate, door delivery of services and insurance were found to have a common perception among all the three groups and also were above the mean score of 5. Farmers are ready to pay for those veterinary services either on contract basis or individual consultancy basis provided they prove their worth in the field situation.

The results obtained clearly indicate that the three categories of respondents perceived those veterinary services for privatization in sheep and goat sector which required skills, were service oriented (during odd hours) and helped in effective decision making in farm activities. Further, the routine services that are provided by government were not preferred for privatization. Surprisingly the diagnostic

Table 1: Comparative Mean scores of the Veterinary Services suitable for Privatization in Sheep and Goat farming

S.No	Veterinary services	Mean score of the quality of service			
		Scientists N = 30	VASs N = 50	Farmers N = 180	Total
1	Laboratory diagnosis	5.1	3.7	3.6	4.13
2	Radiography	3.3	3.9	3.5	3.57
3	Vaccination	7.1	8.8	6.7	7.53
4	Deworming	6.0	5.0	4.8	5.27
5	Control of ticks	6.3	7.6	5.9	6.6
6	Medical treatment	5.5	4.7	5.4	5.21
7	Major surgical treatment	7.6	9.0	5.7	7.43
8	Minor surgical treatment	4.6	1.9	3.0	3.17
9	Gynaecological & obstetrical treatment	5.9	4.9	5.0	5.27
10	Livestock advisory services	6.0	4.4	2.2	4.2
11	Distribution of fodder seedlings/ slips	3.9	4.6	2.2	3.57
12	On farm consultancy services	7.2	5.3	5.3	5.93
13	Supply of publications	4.1	2.5	3.1	3.23
14	Round the clock services	6.2	8.2	6.8	7.07
15	Issue of health certificate	6.3	7.8	6.4	6.83
16	Issue of Post mortem certificate	7.0	7.2	5.3	6.5
17	Meat inspection	3.1	2.1	2.9	2.7
18	Drug distribution	5.6	5.1	3.9	4.87
19	Continuing education and training	3.6	3.5	3.3	3.47
20	Door delivery of services	7.4	7.8	6.4	7.2
21	Preparation of project reports	4.6	4.0	3.8	4.13
22	Information on government schemes	2.6	2.2	1.9	2.23
23	Supply of feed	6.2	5.6	4.3	5.37
24	Insurance	6.7	7.4	5.5	6.53

services (laboratory tests, radiography) were not considered for privatization, which revealed that the importance of these diagnostic services was possibly not appreciated by the farmers, as they feel the task of diagnosis is for skilled practitioners only. Hence from the scientist's point of view these technological services are to be included in extension and can be charged from the farmers.

The veterinary services suitable for privatization as expressed by scientists, veterinarians and farmers varied considerably. The scientists considered services viz. laboratory diagnosis, vaccination, deworming, control of ticks, medical treatment, major surgical treatment, gynaecological and obstetrical treatment, livestock advisory services, on farm consultancy services, round the clock services, issue of health certificate, issue of post mortem certificate, drug distribution, door delivery of services, supply of feed and insurance as suitable for privatization. The perception on the quality of services by the Veterinary Assistant Surgeons was more or less similar to those of Scientists except in case of laboratory diagnosis, medical treatment, gynaecological and obstetrical treatment and livestock advisory services and the remaining 12 veterinary services were perceived suitable for privatization. The Veterinary Assistant Surgeons are ready to provide the services except the above said veterinary services on payment basis, as they have identified these services as not chargeable.

The farmers strongly felt that the veterinary services like vaccination, control of ticks, medical treatment, major surgical treatment, gynaecological & obstetrical treatment, on farm consultancy services, round the clock services, issue of health certificate, issue of post mortem certificate, door delivery of services and insurance were suitable for privatization and the rest should not be privatized. It may be due to the fact that these services involved the overall health care of animals which is a primary concern and mandatory for any welfare state hence such services should not be privatized. Farmers are ready to pay for the above noted few services.

It could be concluded that veterinary services like vaccination, control of ticks, major surgical treatment, on farm consultancy services, round the clock services, issue of health certificate, issue of post mortem certificate, door delivery of services and insurance are suitable for privatization as expressed by scientists, veterinary assistant surgeons and farmers and can be charged. The perceived economic gains like getting high yielding progeny, increased production and productivity etc. made them consider the above services for privatization. However, for the other veterinary services, thorough discussions with the scientists, farmers and Veterinary Assistant Surgeons are required to foresee the consequences and to tailor these veterinary services suitable for privatization.

All the three groups are of the opinion that the services like radiography, minor surgical treatment, distribution of fodder seedlings/ slips, supply of publications, meat inspection, continuing education and training, preparation of project reports and information on government schemes are not suitable for

privatization. The reason is that, a majority of them are not individual focused issues and the role of the public is much more important.

Conclusion

Complete privatization of veterinary services, which have economic importance are to be identified by the scientists and methodologies are to be evolved for their adoption by the farmers through VASs. Farmers who are ready to pay can be identified and charged for services. Service charges can be collected for vaccination, control of ticks, major surgical treatment, on farm consultancy services, round the clock services, issue of health certificate, issue of post mortem certificate, door delivery of services and insurance as these are agreed by all the three groups. Services like radiography, minor surgical treatment, distribution of fodder seedlings/ slips, supply of publications, meat inspection, continuing education and training, preparation of project reports and information on government schemes cannot be charged at present.

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