Raising Livestock in Resource-Poor Communities of the North-West Province of South Africa — A Participatory Rural Appraisal Study

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Introduction
Gastro-intestinal worm infections are one of the most important causes of mortality and poor production in ruminants, particularly in sheep and goats, in resource-poor production systems worldwide. In order to determine the prevalence and importance of these parasites, a survey of internal parasites of domestic ruminants is being conducted in the North-West of South Africa. A complementary survey on farming systems and on farmers' attitudes in resource-poor areas was undertaken to ensure that recommendations on parasite control could be implemented by the farmers.

Purpose of Paper
A participatory research model was used in six village communities in the Molopo and Ditsobotla Districts in the Central Region of the North-West Province in order to achieve the following broad objectives: to understand in basic terms the way of life of these communities, to obtain information on the challenges farmers face in raising livestock in these areas, and to evaluate the farmers' level of knowledge of internal parasites in their animals. The project ran from May to August 2000.

Major Points or Information to be Shared
Information obtained at participatory workshops clearly indicated a need for improvements in water supply, schools, job creation, and health services. Lack of pasture for grazing livestock was also cited as being important. Other most frequently mentioned livestock problems included “gall sickness” (a vaguely defined condition not necessarily referring to tick-borne gall sickness), parasites (both external and internal), chicken diseases, and ingestion of plastic bags which have been discarded. Informal farmer interviews showed that most farmers seem to know what signs of internal parasites they should look for in the live animal. It was found that most farmers use a combination of treatments — ranging from Coca-Cola™ for “gall sickness” to the plant sebetebete (Senna italica) as a treatment for liver problems — as well as commercial medicines. It appeared that many farmers who use commercial medicines administer improper dosages.

Conclusions
There were some difficulties in using the participatory methods since it was the first time that the facilitators and the communities had been exposed to them. After many years of receiving free services from the government, many communities had difficulty in dealing with the concept of finding solutions within the community, which is such an integral part of participatory methods. There was insufficient time to look at possible solutions to many of the problems.

Educational Importance
The study contributes to the base of knowledge required to develop appropriate extension materials for the livestock owner in this province.