



Livestock: Assessing Health

Animal Health and Nutrition

Cattle, sheep and goats are important elements of farming systems in Afghanistan. Their growth and production can be adversely affected by health and nutrition problems. The following questions will help diagnose livestock problems.



Questions to ask

Observation	Comment
Feeding habits	
1. What are livestock feeding on?	
2. Has animal feed intake decreased?	A decrease in eating usually indicates an animal is diseased.
3. Are animals wanting to eat but can't?	Check their mouth for sores – often caused by foot & mouth disease or stickers/thorns from feed
Behavior or symptoms	
1. Are animals able to keep up with the herd? Are they “depressed” and isolating themselves from the herd?	When animals separate from the herd, they are often diseased.
2. Is animal breathing labored?	Normally a sign of respiratory disease or fever
3. Have any animals had unexplained abortions?	Abortion often occurs due to viral or bacterial infections (including: Bovine Virus Diarrhea (BVD), Brucellosis, Campylobacter (Vibrio) and Chlamydia)
4. Are the animal's eyes sensitive to light?	Sensitivity to light is commonly an indicator of pinkeye.
5. Are animals eating well, but manure is thin and runny	Johne's disease (especially in ruminants) or some internal parasites can cause diarrhea.
6. Have animals lost weight? If so, how rapidly have they lost the weight?	Slow weight loss suggests poor nutrition; slow weight loss but good nutrition suggests Johne's. Rapid weight loss suggests internal parasites
7. Are animals' noses clean or are they runny with a buildup of material?	Runny and nose discharges indicate poor health including respiratory and infection that is causing a fever
8. Are their eyes pale?	Sheep and goat anemia (lack iron in the diet)
9. Are the offspring (feeding on mother) dying or underweight	Check mother's milk production, or could be Bovine Virus Diarrhea

Note: sheep have a high tolerance for pain so diagnosis is hard and typically too late to prevent death.

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