SLAUGHTER OF PREGNANT COWS AND FOETAL WASTAGES: A CASE STUDY A MODERN ABATTOIR IN DAMATURU, YOBE STATE

Kawu, Y. U., Ibrahim, A. and Nuhu, T.
Department of Animal Health & Production Technology, Federal Polytechnic, Damaturu, Yobe State, Nigeria
Corresponding author: kawuyahya@gmail.com. Phone no. 08065631979

ABSTRACT
There is paucity of information on the level at which pregnant cows are being slaughtered and foetuses being wasted at the Damaturu Modern Abattoir. Consequently, a study was designed to assess the level of this scenario. Using a structured questionnaire, a two-year (2021 – 2022) slaughter data was collected from the abattoir records and subjected to descriptive analysis (frequencies and percentages). Results showed that in 2021, a total of 2,589 heads of cattle were slaughtered out of which 1,438 were females with 112 (7.79%) at various stages of pregnancy. In the subsequent year, 2022, the total slaughter figure was 2,797 comprising of 1,693 females and 1,104 males among which are 148 (8.74%) pregnant cows. It was therefore concluded that the menace of slaughter of pregnant cows and foetal wastages also exists in Damaturu Modern Abattoir. Although the prevalence is low compared to that in other abattoirs and slaughter houses across the country, there is need for government to institute measures for mitigating the occurrence with a view to ensuring adequate animal welfare and improved cattle production in the study area.
Keywords: Pregnant cows, foetal wastages, abattoir.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is endowed with ruminant livestock resources, such as cattle, sheep and goats, estimated at a respective population of 19.2 million, 38.5 million, and 57.4 million (Adebowale, 2020). It has been well established that animal protein is superior to vegetable protein as dietary amino acids source for man (Devendra, 2001). According to Gefu *et al*. (2004), the primary objective of livestock production in Nigeria is the provision of meat. Livestock species are also reared for milk production, hair, hides, skin, and as source of income to the farmer. However, the productivity of any herd or flock may be affected by a wide range of disease problems and reproductive wastages (Baba *et al*., 2018) one of which is slaughter of pregnant animals.

The commonly slaughtered food animals in Nigeria are cattle, sheep, goats, camels, pigs and poultry. Others, on a lower scale, include donkeys, horses, rabbits and assorted game animals (Alabi, 2003). One outstanding challenge facing the use of these food animals, especially ruminant species, is that of slaughter of pregnant ones. Most livestock farmers sell off their animals without ascertaining their pregnancy status due to illiteracy, poverty or disease condition of the animals (Mutwedu *et al.,* 2019), Consequently, these animals end up being slaughtered for food. This scenario which is seldom aggravated by the neglect of ante-mortem inspection at the slaughter premises and weak implementation of government policies and laws concerning animal welfare and meat inspection, occurs on daily basis in nearly all slaughter houses across the country. This has been negatively affecting the livestock sub-sector.

Previous studies have shown that the prevalence of this practice varies from one slaughter house to another. According to Ardo *et al.* (2013) in a 12-month study, 14.4% foetal wastages was obtained at the Yola modern abattoir while Flora *et al.* (2018) and Kalu *et al.* (2019) 34.3 and 12.2% prevalence respectively. Most recently, a report by Jajere *et al.* (2023) revealed that 12% of cows slaughtered at Maiduguri abattoir were pregnant. However, limited data exists on the prevalence of this problem at the Modern Abattoir, Damaturu. Therefore, this study was designed to address this knowledge gap.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted at the Damaturu Modern Abattoir, Yobe State, Nigeria. Damaturu which has a total land area of 2,366 km^2, according to the 2006 census, is estimated to have a population of 88,014 inhabitants. Its location falls between latitude 11Â°44'40"N and longitude of 11Â°57'40"E with an average temperature 31.63^{o}C.

A two-year (2021 & 2022) data was collected from the abattoirs laughter records using a structured questionnaire. All data collected was thereafter analysed and presented as frequencies and percentages using descriptive analysis (SPSS v.25).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results for slaughter of pregnant cows/foetal wastages at the Modern Abattoir, Damaturu, during the years 2021 and 2022 are presented in Tables 1 and 2. In 2021, a total of 2,589 heads of cattle were slaughtered. Out of this number, 1,438 were females, with 112 (7.79%) at various stages of pregnancy. The month which had the highest percentage of pregnant cows was February (17.57%) followed by May (15.31%), January (11.81%) and October (10.24%). The higher rate of this problem in the first three months, which are months of feed scarcity, could be attributed to farmers' decision to prune down the size of their herds for effective and lower cost of maintenance. Consequently, many pregnant cows, whose demand for feeding and maintenance are higher, are taken to the market for sale. All other months had less than 10% prevalence with September being the lowest (2.88%). The mean percentage obtained in this study is lower than 14.4% (Ardo *et al.,* 2013) and 12.2% (Kalu *et al.,* 2019) but comparable to 7.5% reported by Ahmad *et al.* (2022).

In 2022, the number of slaughtered heads of cattle was 2,797 comprising of 1.693 females and 1,104 males. This is at variance with Flora *et al*. (2018) who reported higher number of males than females, but agrees with Swai *et al.* (2015). Among the females, 148 (8.74%) were pregnant. This is comparable with 9.87% reported by Oyekunle *et al.* (1992) but lower than 12% (Jajere *et al.,* 2023). Detailed analysis of monthly occurrence, showed that the month of September had the highest occurrence (16.26%), closely followed by May (14.17%), then December (13.97%), November (12.40%) and March (12.04%). The month of October had the lowest (3.45%) percentage of slaughter of pregnant cows.

Table 1: Statistics of Cattle Slaughtered at Damaturu Modern Abattoir, 2021

Month	No. of Cattle Slaughtered	No. of Cows Slaughtered	No. of Pregnant Cows (frequency)	Percentage of pregnant Cows
January	210	127	15	11.81
February	243	148	26	17.57
March	237	116	9	7.76
April	189	101	2	1.98
May	175	98	15	15.31
June	265	153	10	6.54
July	170	86	3	3.49
August	164	95	3	3.16
September	178	104	3	2.88
October	225	127	13	10.24
November	247	119	8	6.72
December	286	164	5	3.05
Total	**2589**	**1438**	**112**	**7.79**

Table 2: Statistics of Cattle Slaughtered at Damaturu Modern Abattoir, 2022

Month	No. of Cattle Slaughtered	No. of Cows Slaughtered	No. of Pregnant Cows	Percentage of pregnant Cows
January	274	162	10	6.17
February	258	137	6	4.38
March	218	108	13	12.04
April	189	146	8	5.48
May	205	127	18	14.17
June	272	178	20	11.24
July	197	125	5	4.00
August	201	107	8	7.48
September	235	123	20	16.26
October	262	145	5	3.45
November	237	129	16	12.40
December	249	136	19	13.97
Total	**2797**	**1693**	**148**	**8.74**

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this research, it was concluded that the slaughter of pregnant cows and foetal wastages do exist at Damaturu Modern Abattoir. However, the extent is low when compared to that reported in other abattoirs in different parts of the country. Accordingly, the study recommends that Yobe State government should enforce strictly the laws governing animal welfare and slaughter of food animals in the abattoir.

REFERENCES

Adebowale, O. O., Ekundayo, O. and Awoseyi, A. A. (2020). Female cattle slaughter and foetal wastage: A case study of Lafenwa abattoir, Ogun state, Nigeria. *Cogent Food and Agriculture,* 6 (1): 1-12.

Ahmad, M. Y., Hanga, H. R. and Abdulwahab, K. S. (2022). Foetal wastages in Kano central abattoir and its impact on the Nigerian Economy. *FUDMA Journal of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology*, 8(2): 175 – 179.

Alabi, S. A. (2003). Ante-mortem and post-mortem inspection of food animals. A paper presented at a workshop on meat inspection held at the College of Agriculture and Animal Science, Mando Road, Kaduna 25th April pp 5 - 10.

Ardo, M. B., Lawal, H. and Aliyara, Y. H. (2013). Economic implication of bovine foetal wastage in Yola modern abattoir, Adamawa State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Agro Veterinary and Medical sciences,* 7(2): 57 – 64.

Baba, B. O. C. and Abdu, T. (2018). Economics in ewe gestation termination in Maiduguri abattoir, Borno State, Nigeria. *International Journal of innovative Research and Studies,* 5(5): 45 – 48.

Flora, H. N. B., Nsadzetsen, G. Mbiba, H. F., Wirndzerem, F. T., Isabelle, L. W., Munji, V. N. and Bayemi, P. H. D. (2018). Incidence of foetal wastages in cattle slaughtered and its economic implications at the Bamenda city slaughter house, Cameroon. *International Journal of Veterinary Sciences and Animal Husbandry,* 3(6): 14 -18.

Gefu, G. O., Aju, I. F.Alawa, C. B. I. and Magaji, S. O. (2004). Characteristics of small holder sheep and goat management practices in South East, Nigeria.

Jajere, S. M., Mohammed, S. Jidda, D. and Emmanuel, E. T. (2023). Fetal wastages among food producing animals slaughtered at Maiduguri abattoir: Prevalence, causes and economic implications. *Sahel Journal of Veterinary sciences.*20(3)*:*46-52

Kalu, E., Zephaniah, N. C., Uchechukwu, N. V., Odirichukwu, E. O. and Ukweni, P. C. (2019). Bovine fetal wastage in Ubakala Abattoir: public health and economic implications. *American Eurasian Journal of Scientific research,* 14 (30): 47 – 52.

Mutwedu, U. B., Buuma, B. K., Mushagalusa, A. C., Bisimwa, N. P., Cirezi, N. C., Mugumaarhahama, Y. and Ayagirwe, R. B. (2019). Prevalence and economic losses of calf fetal wastage in Elakat public slaughter house of Bukaru, Democratic republic of Congo. *Veterinary World,* 12(10): 1644 – 1649.

Swai, E. S., Hayghaimo, A. A., Hassan, A. A. and Mhina, B. S. (2015). The slaughter of increased numbers of pregnant cows in tanga abattoir, Tanzania: A cause for concern? *Onderstepoort Journal of Veterinary Research,* 82(1): 947.