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Questionnaire survey of knowledge of farmers in Lankapura, Polonnaruwa district about foot and mouth disease (FMD), 2019

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Dairy farming is an important source of subsidiary income of farmers in Lankapura, Polonnaruwa. Milk and meat are important sources of nutrition. Although measures have been taken to increase the dairy sector in Lankapura, Foot and mouth disease is endemic to this area and highly contagious viral disease of cattle. Food (meat and milk) safety is badly affected by FMD. To establish a strategy to control FMD in Lankapura, it is essential to clarify the knowledge level of farmers. The objective of this study was to evaluate the knowledge of farmers about FMD and to improve their knowledge level. A semi-structural questionnaire was used to collect data through a single visit survey between 01st of May to 14th of July, 2019. One hundred and fifty farmers were selected randomly with a sample size of 15 farmers from ten Gramaniladhari divisions in Lankapura. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 22. The results showed that out of 150 farmers, 63% reported at least one outbreak in the previous three years period and 40% reported about outbreaks of FMD in the year 2018. Cattle of thirty farmers were free from FMD in last three years. Two farmers were unable to provide data about the history of outbreaks. Farmers stated that during the FMD outbreak, the infected cattle had recovered within six weeks or less and median was 4 weeks. Estimated mortality rate in 2018 was 0.49% and morbidity rate was 90%. Some farmers (36%) were reluctant to vaccinate their cattle. They suspected that milk production is decreased by vaccination. Some farmers didn't mention whether they vaccinated or not. Only 33.3% farmers had vaccinated their cattle. When considering the source of transmission, only 26% had a proper knowledge about all possible sources of FMD transmission. Only 30% farmers mentioned more than four clinical signs of FMD infected cattle. Only 0.03% of farmers mentioned the correct immunity period (6 months) of FMD vaccination. In conclusion, a high proportion of farmers (74%) had very poor knowledge of disease transmission sources and 70% of farmers didn't know more than four clinical signs of FMD. As the farmers in Lankapura are not adequately aware of FMD, awareness programmes were conducted in Lankapura not only in FMD introduction and transmission but also its negative impacts on food safety.

Keywords: Foot and mouth disease, Survey, Lankapura

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