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Foetal Wastage in Camel (*Camelus dromedarius*) Slaughtered at Katsina Central Abattoir, Katsina State Nigeria

Bello Sabo
Department of Animal Health and Production Technology, Hassan Usman Katsina Polytechnic, Katsina Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Foetal wastage through slaughter of pregnant camels was evaluated for a period of six months (from July–December, 2017) at Katsina abattoir. A total of 738 camels were slaughtered within the study period out of which 456 (62%) were females. 64 (14%) of the number were pregnant. It was observed that, of the 64 Foetuses, 15 (23%) were in the first trimester, 30(47%) were in second trimester and 19 (30%) were in third trimester. Estimated financial losses annually through slaughter of pregnant camels at Katsina central abattoir was ₦16,640,000. It was concluded that relevant government agencies should ensure enforcement of policies relating sales of pregnant camels for slaughter. Adequate ante-mortem inspection be carried out, enlightment campaigns on farmers and butchers on the financial implication of slaughtering pregnant camels.

Keywords : Foetal Wastage, Camel, Abattoir.

I. INTRODUCTION

A camel is an even-toed ungulate in the genus camelus, bearing distinctive fatty deposit known as "hump" on its back. There are three species of camel which include the dromedary also known as the Arabian Camel or one-humped camel (*Camelus dromedarius*), which inhabits the middle east and Africa, the Bactrian or two humped camel (*Camelus bactrianus*), which inhabits central Asia and the critically endangered wild bactrian camel (*Camelus ferus*) (Plasil *et al.*, 2016). Camel is important livestock specie that adapt hot and arid environment (Elzubeir et al., 2006). They are traditionally used for transport and supplementing animal protein for human in terms of its milk and meat (Abubakar *et al.,* 2008). A gestation period of 350 to 395 days was recorded by many researchers. Camels breed during certain times of the year (harmattan) and therefore are seasonally polyestrous animals (Arthur 1992). Foetal wastage through the slaughter of pregnant camel is probably one of the most destructive practices man has ever used against his own production endeavors (Abassa, 1995). Though slaughter of pregnant animals is forbidden by law in almost all countries of the world (ECA, 1988) the practice is still continued. A huge financial loss is incurred annually as a result of destruction of thousand of foetuses at the abattoirs. Ribadu (1988) estimated a financial loss of six million seventy five thousand naira over a ten year period from destruction of 4500 camel foetuses annually at Kano abattoir. Though much has been written on foetal wastage, the practice is still ongoing. Therefore this work was carried out to quantify the magnitude of wastages of camel fetuses at Katsina central abattoir.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data was collected through a daily visit to the abattoir between 6:00am-8:00am for a period of six months (4th July – 28th December, 2017). The

reproductive tracts of the slaughtered female camels were examined for evidence of pregnancy. The uterine horns and bodies were inspected for changes suggestive of pregnancy. Incision was made along the axis of the uterine body through the right and left uterine horns. The uterus was then opened up and checked for the presence of foetuses. Where foetuses were found, they were properly indentified as male/female by physical examination of their genitalia. Data was compiled and analyzed using percentage.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 738 camels were slaughtered between July 2017 and December, 2017 at the Katsina abattoir out of which 456 (62%) were females and 282 (38%) were males(Table 1).

Table 1: Number of camels slaughtered at Katsina abattoir between July 2017 and December 2017.

Month	Male	Female	Total
July	53	70	123
August	37	82	119
September	47	68	115
October	50	79	129
November	52	73	125
December	43	84	127
Total	282 (38%)	456 (62%)	738 (100%)

Number of pregnant camels

Out of the 456 female camel examined, 64 (14%) were pregnant when slaughtered (Table 2).

Table 2: Total number of pregnant camels slaughtered at Katsina abattoir between July, 2017 and December, 2017.

Month	Number of Camels	Percentage (%)
Pregnant	64	14
Non pregnant	392	86
Total	456	100

Foetuses recovered and their sexes

From the 64 foetuses recovered, 37 (58%) were males 24 (38%) were females while 3 (4%) their sexes were not recognized (Table 3).

Table 3: Total number of foetuses recovered from pregnant camels slaughtered at Katsina abattoir between July, 2017 and December, 2017.

Month	Male	female	Sex not determined
July	5	3	1
August	7	5	0
September	4	2	0
October	8	3	0
November	7	6	1
December	6	5	1
Total	37 (58%)	24(38%)	3(4%)

Stages of pregnancy

Out of the 64 foetuses recovered, 15 (23%) were in the first trimester, 30 (47%) were in second trimester and 19 (30%) were in third trimester.

Table 4: Stages of foetuses recovered from female camels slaughtered at Katsina abattoir between july, 2017 and December, 2017

Trimester	Number of foetuses Recovered	Percentage (%)
First	15	23
Second	30	47
Third	19	30
Total	64	100

The level of the problem of foetal wastage in camel at Katsina central abattoir can be extrapolated from this study. The total number of camels slaughtered within the study period was 738 out of which 456 were females and 14% of this number was pregnant. This number may seem small but it impact negatively economic wise. The number of the foetal wastage in this study was low compared to the findings of (Ribadu, 1988) , (Bello et al., 2008) and (Abubakar *et al.*, 2010) who found 49%, 23% and 34% in Kano, Sokoto and Maiduguri abattoirs respectively. Camel foetal wastages in this study were low compared to previous reports in other animal species. 50,9% of catttle in Zaria (Ojo et al., 1978) but higher than reported for cattle 5.55% (Ogundipe and Olaifa, 2000), 3.9% (Abdulkadir et al., 2008). The likely reason for lower number of wastages in the present study compared to some previous findings may not be unconnected to the increased awareness by veterinary service to the farmers. Lower number of wastage compared to this study may be due to the fact that

little or no camels were considered for meat in the past. But with current increase in the contribution of camel meat to the daily animal protein requirements (Agaie et al., 1997) which could be responsible for slaughter of more camels, this figure has an increase tendency. This study is similar to the findings of Bello et al., (2008) in Sokoto in which more females were slaughtered than males. This may be due to higher demand of males for use in traction which makes the male more expensive that butchers settle for cheaper females for slaughter so as to maximize profit. The study also found variation in sex of the recovered foetuses in which male foetuses were found to be higher than the female ones. The sex ratio (male: female) of recovered foetuses in this study was 58% to 38%. This differs from the findings of shalash (1965), and Bello et al., (2008) who obtained 47.48% to 52.52% and 46.46% to 53.24% respectively. It was observed also in this study that from the 64 foetuses recovered, 23% were in first trimester 47% in the seconds trimester and 30% in the third trimester. This invariably implies that most of the farmers know about the pregnancy before selling the camels as 77% of the animals were in advanced stages (second and third trimester) of pregnancy which could easily be diagnosed. From the study, an estimated financial loss of over 16,640000 would be incurred annually. This is lower than that reported by Bello et al., (2008) which was 24,960,000, but higher than what Umaru (1997) reported which was N828, 000 all in Sokoto abattoir.

IV. CONCLUSION

The financial loss as a result of slaughter of pregnant camels nationwide is counterproductive. The practice of slaughtering pregnant camels in Katsina central abattoir resulted in the loss of 64 pregnancies which will translate to economic loss.

There is need for relevant government agencies to ensure enforcement of policies regarding sales of pregnant camel for slaughter. Adequate ante mortem be carried out. Butchers and farmers be enlightened on the negative implication of slaughtering pregnant animals.

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