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Ethnoveterinary medicine

a practical approach to the treatment of cattle diseases in sub-Saharan Africa

Ngeh J. Toyang
Jacob Wanyama
Mopoi Nuwanyakpa
Sali Django
Foreword

Ethnoveterinary medicine is the name given to the way in which most livestock keepers in Cameroon and other countries treat animal health problems. Ethnovet practices are important because they are easily available, inexpensive and effective, especially in rural areas where veterinary services are absent or irregular and expensive. At this level, indigenous animal health systems are used for emergency purposes.

Until 1989, ethnovet practices were mostly carried out at individual level, with little coordination. In 1989 the Cameroon Ethnovet Council was founded. This council has about 300 members, all practising ethnovets. Bringing ethnovets together allows members to share ideas and work together, for example creating ethnovet gardens, doing research and gathering knowledge.

This manual has been compiled from information contributed by members of the ethnovet council in Cameroon and pastoralists in Kenya. It describes ethnovet practices in Cameroon and Kenya, but these practices are valid for other East and West African countries as well.

You will find examples of plants and materials used in ethnovet practices, formulations, as well as the dosages and treatments for a selected number of cattle diseases. The examples illustrate how African healers have used locally-available substances to combat animal diseases and other adverse conditions for centuries.

By recording ethnovet knowledge in a book, the knowledge can be shared for posterity. We recommend this book to Africans who do not have access to outside sources of animal healthcare, schools, researchers and research institutes and to information lovers in general.

The Cameroon Ethnovet Council
Alhaji Eggi Sule
Alhaji Eggi Sule is President of the Cameroon Ethnoveterinary Council. Born into a Fulani family in 1942, Alhaji Eggi followed in his father's footsteps, observing and assisting him in the collection, processing, storage and use of medicinal plants for treating animal diseases. Until his death at over 100 years of age, Alhaji Modibo Sheifu was an adviser to the Cameroon Ethnovet Council and principal mentor to his son.

Alhaji Eggi's dynamism as a leader is well known amongst his fellow Ethnovets and the Fulani community at large. He was one of the first Ethnovets to set up a medicinal plant garden in the early 1990s in an attempt to improve access to medicinal plants and to conserve rare species. His knowledge of medicinal plants reaches beyond the borders of Cameroon as some of his plants come from other countries, particularly Nigeria. It is not uncommon to see Alhaji Eggi on horseback going to assist other herders with animal health problems using ethnovet or basic conventional techniques acquired through paraveterinary training.

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The idea for this publication was presented to Agromisa in 2002 by the director of Heifer, The Netherlands, Joep van Mierlo. Since that date many activities have been undertaken and different people and organizations have been involved in the creation of this booklet. First we would like to thank all the active EthnoVet member practitioners
of the Cameroon EthnoVet Council who were involved in this publication. It is their knowledge and experience that we now share with all readers and users of this booklet.

The four co-authors work at different levels and in different parts of Africa, but they proved they were able to share their insights and together they found a way to develop and check the contents of this publication.

We would also like to thank the editor, Hanneke Mertens of DIO, the Dutch branch of Vets without Borders, who kept this long process going.

Last but not least we would like to thank Macmillan Education and IIRR from Kenya for their permission to use several illustrations from their publications.

In response to a preliminary restricted edition of 2005 of this book, we received useful comments from many peer readers on the text, tables, illustrations and layout. These comments have been incorporated into this second and improved edition, which will also be translated into at least three languages like all other Agrodok publications. We invite all readers to send their comments on the content and the way they use this book so we can continue to learn from each other.

Wageningen, May 2007
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1 Introduction

Ethnoveterinary medicine deals with people’s knowledge, skills, methods, practices and beliefs about the care of their animals (McCorkle 1986). Ethnoveterinary knowledge is acquired through practical experience and has traditionally been passed down orally from generation to generation. Widespread interest in documenting and validating ethnoveterinary practices arose in the early 1980s. Since then, several studies have been carried out, many reports written and numerous conferences and workshops held. These activities have saved ethnoveterinary knowledge from extinction: most knowledge resided with elderly community members and disappeared as they died. The introduction of modern practices also made it difficult for the younger generations to appreciate and use the beliefs and practices of their forefathers. Despite recent efforts to promote the use of ethnoveterinary knowledge worldwide, much information is only documented in field reports and scientific publications. Few practical manuals have been written to help animal healthcare workers, farmer leaders and farmers to actively train others in the use of effective and validated ethnoveterinary practices. This manual is intended to fill that void.

The aim of this booklet is to help livestock agents and farmers’ leaders integrate and promote the use of ethnoveterinary medicine practices in animal healthcare, focusing on cattle diseases. According to the World Health Organization, at least 80% of people in developing countries depend largely on indigenous practices for the control and treatment of various diseases affecting both human beings and their animals. Ethnoveterinary remedies are accessible, easy to prepare and administer, at little or no cost at all to the farmer. These age-old practices cover every area of veterinary specialization and all livestock species. The ethnoveterinary techniques include treatment and prevention of disease, extensive materia-medica preparation, ecto- and endo-parasite control, fertility enhancement, bone setting and poor mothering management. The materia-medica consists mainly of plants in addition to
other components such as earth and minerals, and animal parts. The potential contributions of a well-developed ethnoveterinary scheme as illustrated by the practices above cannot be overemphasized. Suggestions are provided on how to document, assess and promote effective ethnoveterinary practices. The appendix contains information on further reading, a list of useful contacts and websites, and lists of medical plants and diseases.
Part I: Ethnoveterinary medicine

Millions of people around the world have an intimate relationship with their livestock. Many people depend on their livestock: animals provide them with food, clothing, labour, fertilizers and cash, and act as a store of wealth and a medium of exchange. Animals are a vital part of culture and in many societies are regarded as equal to humans.

To keep animals healthy, traditional healing practices have been applied for centuries and have been passed down orally from generation to generation. Before the introduction of western medicine, all livestock keepers relied on these traditional practices. According to the World Health Organization, at the moment, at least 80% of people in developing countries depend largely on these practices for the control and treatment of various diseases that affect both animals and humans.

These traditional healing practices are called ‘ethnoveterinary medicine’. In this booklet we often use the abbreviation ‘ethnovet’. Ethnovet medicine is:

- Accessible
- Easy to prepare and administer
- Inexpensive: low cost or even free
- Part of one’s own traditional culture

Worldwide interest in documenting and validating ethnovet practices arose in the early 1980s, as people started to realize that ethnovet knowledge was disappearing. Elderly community members with this knowledge were dying and the introduction of modern practices made it difficult for the younger generations to appreciate and use the beliefs and practices of their ancestors.

Interest in ethnovet practices has grown recently because these practices are much less prone to drug resistance and have fewer damaging side-effects on the environment than conventional medicine.