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Title: Current status of cattle production system in Nyagatare District-Rwanda

Name: Dr. Eugene Mazimpaka
University of Rwanda School of Veterinary Medicine, Rwanda

Abstract (250-300 words)

A Study was conducted to characterize the cattle production systems in Nyagatare District, Eastern Province of Rwanda using pre-tested questionnaires, interviews with key informants as well as focus group discussions. The respondents were selected by multi-stage sampling at Sector and Cell1 levels. Based on the procedure of Morgan and Krejce (1970) to determine the overall sample size, the result indicated that the majority (98.3%) of farms were privately owned by large families of five to seven members, and most farmers (53.9%) had only primary education. Most respondents (52.6%) were in the age bracket of 41-50 years and were mainly (48.3%). The farm size averaged 6.5 ± 0.8 ha and most farms (64.7%) were fenced except in Rukomo Sector (50%) where zero grazing prevailed. A natural pasture, (savanna grass land) was the main feed resource, tethering (9%) and communal grazing had diminished. Napier grass was the main planted forage (93.2%), followed by *Chloris guyana* (3.1%) and *Brachiara* (1.2%). Leguminous forages were rarely (2.5%) reported. Vita-mineral and salt blocks supplements, hay and crop residues were the predominant supplementary feed stuffs used except in Karangazi and Rwemiyaga Sectors. However maize and rice brans were reported to be the main feed stuffs used for lactating cows. Indigenous cattle were predominant (67.03%), cross-breeds (28.37%) and exotics (4.6%) farmers also kept small ruminants, self treatment (78.4%). Natural breeding predominated (74.9%). The reported mean age at first calving (AFC) was highest (40.2 ±.33) for *Ankole* and the lowest (29.1 ±.50) months for exotic cattle. Calving interval were shorter in local breeds than 65.7 ±3.0 in exotic. The mean dairy milk yield was lowest for *Ankole* cattle 2.4± .08 as compared to the exotics (10.42±.36) and their crosses (7.2±.34). The main challenges were diseases, drug resistance, and shortage of water, feeds, and inadequate extension services.

Key words: *Cattle rearing, feeding, breeding, diseases, records, production, Rwanda.*

Biography(100-150 words)

Dr. Eugene Obtained his veterinary medicine degree from the University of Rwanda, his master's degree in Food Animal Health and Production from Makerere University School of Veterinary Medicine. My Masters dissertation was conducted in the field of production diseases research, where I investigated on milk and meat microbiology. The master's project, supported by Borlaug Higher Education for Agriculture Research and Development (BHEARD), focusing on brucellosis in milk from trade venders of Nyagatare District.

After completion of my Master's program in February 2017, I joined the Department of Veterinary Medicine, University of Rwanda as a Research Assistant and Lecturer. Currently, I am a Lecturer at the University of Rwanda and research coordinator for the SEAD/STIC Research & Innovation Fund Project, am interested in public health, community health, disease prevention. I enjoy walking, and focusing on the topics of zoonotic diseases and food poisoning. have a strong passion to conduct research.

Presenting author details
Full name: Eugene Mazimpaka
Session name/ number: Eugene
Category: Poster
Email id: emazimpaka1986@gmail.com
Contact number: +250-782114070