



# Communication Source Utilization Pattern of Dairy Farmers' Pertaining to Foot and Mouth Disease in Kerala

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## ABSTRACT

A study has been conducted among the dairy farmers in Thrissur district to assess the communication source utilization regarding Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). The exposure of dairy farmers to different communication sources and their relative preference as a source of information of FMD was assessed using the ranking method. Interpersonal channels were the effective sources of obtaining information about FMD followed by mass media and trainings. Majority of the dairy farmers used still used newspaper as the source of information, television occupied only second position. Veterinary surgeon was the most important source of information among interpersonal channels followed by neighbours and friends. Only about forty percent of the dairy farmers prefer to attend lecture classes than seminars or group discussions. First-hand information about communication source utilization will be much helpful for the extension agents and policy makers to implement appropriate disease mitigation strategies in the affected area which can be imbibed easily by the farmers.

**Key Words:** Communication, Source Utilization, FMD, Dairy, Farmer, Kerala

## INTRODUCTION

Information gaps were one of the most important reasons for low levels of income among farmers. The opportunities to access to information were not fully realized by farmers due to lack of technical and extension expert support. Farmers need access to information on technological innovations and similar to make proper decisions about their crop and livestock and its marketing (Dharanipriya and Karthikeyan, 2019). Intensity of information needed in agriculture and allied sectors is at an increasing pace and access to information has become the fundamental issue to be addressed (Jonathan, 2016). Media plays a paramount role in imparting Animal Husbandry information thereby awareness among cattle owners. Newspaper, radio, and television are very much popular in the state of Kerala and the higher literacy of people has facilitated access to

them. Diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), a highly infectious and acute viral disease of cloven hooved animals can be controlled effectively if a strong awareness of it is created among dairy farmers, which can be achieved through print and electronic media besides interpersonal channels, even social media. First-hand information about the communication source utilization pattern about dairy farmers is of immense value to policy makers in planning appropriate extension education programmes. In the above circumstances, such a study pertaining to FMD was studied among the dairy farmers of Thrissur district, Kerala State.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in Thrissur district in Kerala where epidemics of FMD were reported. A total of 120 respondents were selected using

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stratified random sampling technique, which included both FMD experienced and inexperienced dairy farmers. The exposure of dairy farmers to different communication sources and their relative preference as a source of information of FMD was assessed using the methodology developed by Pradeep (2000) as shown below.

**Media exposure:** it denoted the degree of the respondents' exposure to print media such as newspaper, magazines, posters, leaflets and electronic media such as radio and television. Preference for media communication sources means the respondents' choice of communication media such as print and electronic media. Each respondent was asked to rank seven common communication sources by giving first rank to the most preferred and last rank to the least preferred. The rank obtained for each source from each respondent was converted into scores based on the following method.

Rank	Score
I	7
II	6
III	5
IV	4
V	3
VI	2
VII	1

A total score of each source, over all the respondents was worked out and depending on this source wise total score; the sources studied were ranked from one to seven. Further, since the total score of a source can range from 120 to 840, three class intervals were fixed as follows

Class Intervals	Preference
120-360	Low
361-600	Medium
601-840	High

**Interpersonal channels:** It denotes the tendency of the respondent to be in contact with localite channels like neighbours and friends for information

and cosmopolite channels viz., veterinary surgeons, traditional veterinary practitioners, livestock inspectors, inseminators, milk society employees and WSHG members. Preference for interpersonal communication sources means the respondents' choice of interpersonal communication sources such as neighbours, friends, veterinary surgeons, traditional veterinary practitioners, livestock inspectors, inseminators, milk society employees and WSHG members. Each respondent was asked to rank eight common interpersonal communication sources by giving first rank to the most preferred and last rank to the least preferred one. The rank obtained for each source from each respondent was converted into scores as mentioned above. A total score of each source, over all the respondents was worked out and depending on this source wise total score, the sources studied were ranked from one to eight. Further, since the total score of a source can range from 120 to 960, three class intervals were fixed as follows

Class Intervals	Preference
120-400	Low
401-680	Medium
681-960	High

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Media exposure

Data (Table 1) show that majority of the dairy farmers used newspaper as the information source (75%). The other media from which dairy farmers got information in the descending order were television (67.5%), radio (44.16%), poster (30.83%), monthly (12.5%), weekly (11.66 %) and newsletter (8.33%). Among the media sources, newspaper and television had medium preference whereas weekly, monthly; newsletter, poster and radio had low preference. No media source had high preference. It was found that majority of the respondents got information on FMD from print media as newspaper and electronic mass media as radio and television as well as that, a large majority

## Communication Source Utilization Pattern of Dairy Farmers

**Table 1. Distribution of farmers based on media exposure**

Sr. No	Media	f (%) (n=120)
1	News Paper	90 (75.00)
2	Weekly	14 (11.66)
3	Monthly	15 (12.50)
4	New letter	10 (8.33)
5	Poster	37 (30.88)
6	Radio	53 (44.16)
7	Television	81 (67.50)

was interested in getting further information from print and electronic media viz. newspaper, radio and television, change agents should see to present information on FMD in the appropriate mode in these media items. Extension agents shall consider the findings of the study that literature items such as magazines, weeklies, posters and newsletters were preferred only next to newspaper, radio and television. Media policies may be formulated accordingly.

### B. Interpersonal channels

Data (Table 3) exhibit that majority of the respondents (83.33%) indicated that veterinary surgeon was the source of information about FMD, followed by neighbours (70.83%), friends (63.33%), milk society workers (50.83%), livestock inspector (49.16%), traditional veterinary practitioners (21.66%), WSHG (women self help group) members (5.83%) and inseminators (2.5%). Data in table 4 shows that veterinary surgeon was the highly preferred source of

**Table 2. Distribution of media based on dairy farmers preference n=120**

Sr. No.	Preference	Media source
1	Low (120-360)	Weekly, Monthly, Newsletter, Poster, and Radio
2	Medium (361-600)	Newspaper and Television
3	High (601-840)	Nil

information among interpersonal channels. Medium preference was for friends and neighbours and the lowly preferred sources were traditional veterinary practitioners, livestock inspectors, inseminators, milk society workers and WSHG members. The observation that many dairy farmers were interested in getting information about FMD through interpersonal channels like veterinary surgeons followed by neighbours and friends, milk society workers, livestock inspectors, traditional veterinary practitioners, WSHG members and inseminators in that order, has considerable importance in communication source planning.

### C. Trainings attended

It was found that 39.17 percent of the dairy farmers attended lecture classes on FMD. Seminars were attended by 24.17 per cent and group discussions by 8.33 per cent. Majority of the respondents showed reluctance to attend trainings should be taken seriously by the extension agencies. The reason for such behaviour needs to be ascertained. Need based modifications of the training curriculum and training methodologies could be a possible solution. Even strategies like door step training programmes as well as more importance to skill

**Table 3: Distribution of dairy farmers based on interpersonal channels as the source about FMD**

Sr. No.	Interpersonal channel	f (%) (n=120)
1	Friends	76 (63.33)
2	Neighbours	85 (70.83)
3	Traditional veterinary practitioners	26 (21.67)
4	Veterinary surgeon	100 (83.33)
5	Livestock inspector	59 (49.16)
6	Inseminators	3 (2.50)
7	Milk society workers	61 (50.83)
8	WSHG members	7 (5.83)

**Table 4. Distribution of interpersonal channels based on dairy farmer’s preference n=120**

Sr. No.	Preference	Interpersonal channel source
1	Low (120-400)	Traditional veterinary practitioners, Livestock Inspector, Inseminators, Milk society workers, WSHG members
2	Medium ( 401- 680)	Friends and neighbours
3	High (681- 960)	Veterinary surgeon

**Table 5. Distribution of dairy farmers based on the trainings attended.**

Sr. No.	Category	f(%) (n=120)
1	Seminar	29 (24.17)
2	Group discussion	10 (8.33)
3	Lecture class	47 (39.17)

based training programmes could be thought of.

### CONCLUSION

Interpersonal channels were the effective sources of obtaining information about FMD followed by mass media and trainings. Veterinary surgeon was the most important source of information among interpersonal channels. Majority of the dairy farmers used newspaper as the source of information and were reluctant to attend trainings and the reason has to be sought out. Appropriate extension strategies

should be adopted and implemented in the area of information dissemination keeping in view the research highlights.

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