

Standing Committee Report Summary

Lumpy Skin Disease in Cattle

- The Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing presented its report on ‘Spread of Lumpy Skin Disease in Cattle in the Country and Issues Related Therewith’ on December 19, 2023. Lumpy skin disease is an infectious viral disease that affects cattle. It is transmitted by mosquitoes, ticks, or through touch. It has a mortality rate of 1-5%, and animal recovery time is 2-3 weeks. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Control and containment:** In 2021-22, there was an outbreak of lumpy skin disease among cattle, which hurt milk production and farm income. The government took several steps such as vaccination, creating awareness, isolation, and treatment of infected animals to control and contain the spread of the disease. The Committee noted that the disease should have been prevented and contained at the initial stage, when it was first reported in September 2019. It recommended that disease surveillance, treatment, diagnostic infrastructure, and veterinary services should be ramped up.
 - **Vaccination:** Vaccinating cattle is important for tackling the spread of the disease. The Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying had issued vaccination guidelines, advisories, protocols for animal eligibility, and measures for safe vaccination. Currently, the Goat Pox vaccine, which does not have any adverse effects, is being used to vaccinate healthy cattle. Three manufacturers have received the vaccine technology from ICAR to manufacture an indigenous vaccine Lumpi-ProVac^{Ind}. The vaccine has been tested, and is awaiting final regulatory approvals. The Committee suggested that the Department should take steps to proactively get regulatory approvals for commercial production and vaccinate eligible cattle.
 - **Veterinary infrastructure and manpower:** Currently there are 33 labs to screen the presence of the disease. As per the Department, these are sufficient to cater to the diagnostic needs of states. The Committee observed that veterinary or para-veterinary staff was unavailable or absent in affected regions. This led to large-scale death of infected cattle. The Department noted that animal husbandry is a state subject, and that states did not report any shortage of trained staff. The Department also issued several advisories and guidelines to ensure that adequate staff is available. The Committee recommended that the Department ensure availability of
- trained staff, especially in remote and inaccessible areas. It also recommended that the Department upgrade infrastructure such as hospitals and labs.
- **Use of traditional medicine:** The Committee noted that traditional medicines were effective in treating cattle with the lumpy skin disease. The Department, however, noted that herbal solutions and homeopathy preparations only support affected animals in recovery and provide no guarantee of recovery. As a result, no definite treatment guidelines can be recommended. The Department has signed an MoU with the Ministry of AYUSH to introduce Ayurveda in veterinary science. The Committee suggested that the Department take steps to promote the use of traditional medicine and treatment.
- **Safe disposal of carcasses and infected material:** The Guidelines for Prevention of Lumpy Skin Disease specify that carcasses must be disposed of by burying it deep into the ground. The Department has circulated advisories to states to ensure proper disinfection and disposal of carcasses. However, the Committee observed several instances of carcasses being carelessly dumped. This poses serious health concerns to animals as well as humans. It recommended that the Department ensure adherence to bio-security measures and formulate a policy at the national level for disposing dead animals.
- **Compensation to livestock owners:** The Committee observed that several cattle owners lost their cattle to the disease and faced severe economic hardship. It noted that the Department does not have any scheme to compensate for cattle losses due to spread of disease. States such as Maharashtra and Karnataka are providing compensation. The Committee suggested that the Department coordinate with state governments to provide such compensation.
- **Accuracy of data:** The Department reported that of the 32.7 lakh infected cattle, 30.3 lakh had recovered, indicating a 93% recovery rate. The Committee expressed doubt on the data related to cattle death. It noted a mismatch in the reported data as compared to the ground reality. The Department noted that this data is provided by the states, and that it did not observe any mismatch during its visits to states. The Committee recommended that the Department ensure proper compilation of data to prevent underreporting.

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