

**NATIONAL PROJECT ON RINDERPEST ERADICATION (N.P.R.E)
IN PUNJAB- A BRIEF STUDY**

Rinderpest Control Programme was launched in India during the year 1952 with a view to combat this highly infectious viral disease of Cloven footed Animals (generally called cattle plague), which wipes out the whole cattle population in endemic areas causing heavy mortality of cattle viz. buffaloes and small animals. The present 100% centrally sponsored National Project for Rinderpest Eradication was launched w.e.f. May, 1992. The project was initially funded by European Economic Community (EEC). The contract of the scheme expired on 31.7.98 and after that scheme is being funded by domestic resources of the Govt. of India and the State Govt. concerned. The main objective of this project was total eradication of Rinderpest from the State and the country as a whole. Although India has been declared provisionally free from the disease with effect from First March, 1998, yet to maintain this status a continuous sero/monitoring and sero-surveillance (which is done on the basis of blood samples of animals collected from different areas of Punjab, from households selected by Govt. of India) is being carried out. At present activities like village search Programme, sero-surveillance, sero-monitoring, checking up of out-door registers, strengthening of diagnostic facilities and mass communication programme are required to be taken up as per guidelines of the National Project on Rinderpest Eradication.

Under this scheme during the five years 1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-2000, 2000-2001, 2001-2002 Govt. of India has provided funds to the tune of Rs. 33.85, 8.00 lakh, 15.33 lakh, 15.52 lakh and 14.00 lakh respectively. Expenditure incurred during 1997-98 was Rs. 33.85 lakh during 1999-2000 was Rs. 8.85 lakh and during 2001-2002 was Rs. 30.00 lakhs. No expenditure was incurred during the year 1998-99 & 2000-2001. The amount released by Govt. of India for these years was revalidated /adjusted which was spent in next financial year i.e. 1999-2000 and 2001-2002 Govt. of India did not allot any funds for the year 2002-03.

With a view to have an assessment about the necessity / usefulness of the scheme Planning Department, Punjab has desired that an Evaluation Study of the scheme be conducted by the Evaluation Wing of Economic and Statistical Organization, Punjab. As stated earlier that under this scheme at present only monitoring and surveillance activities are being carried out to check symptoms of any outbreak of the disease. Hence masses in general are not involved in the implementation of the scheme. Hence, in order to have an idea about the usefulness of the scheme as well as conducting full fledged evaluation study an observatory study has been conducted in two districts viz. Ropar and Hoshiarpur selected from the list provided by the department concerned. Out of 29 villages selected from all the districts of the state by Govt. Of India for collecting blood sample, 3 villages (10%) were selected for the study purpose. From Roper district village Sandhuan of block Chamkaur Sahib and in

district Hoshiarpur, village Dhakowal of block Hoshiarpur-II and village Jahanpur of block Mukerian were selected. The village Jahanpur which is 15 Km. from Mukerian and is about 3 km. from Himachal Pradesh border was selected to have observations from border village where check post have been established.

From the selected villages a total number of 13 listed households were contacted for study purpose, out of this 5 belonged to Sandhuan village, 3 to Dhakowal and 5 to Jahanpur. Three (3) knowledgeable persons i.e. Sarpanch/ Nambardar of village, one from each selected village, two doctors from the district concerned and non-listed persons present at the veterinary hospitals and at sites at the time of visit of evaluation team were contacted.

On the basis of Study the main observations have been clubbed as under:-

1. OPINION OF HOUSEHOLD OWNER

i) Diseases/Blood Sample

Opinion of all the 13 listed household owners contacted revealed that Rinderpest is a gone disease and it has not been seen amongst the animals from the last about 15 years or so. They further revealed that personnel of the Animal Husbandry Department visit their village once in a month and collect the blood sample of the animals for sero-monitoring and sero-surveillance. It was also pointed out by them that though they come to know from doctors on contact that the animals is free from infection, otherwise the department does not supply any report of tests taken from the sample collected. This was the general opinion of the households that they should also be supplied the reports of test conducted upon.

ii) Examination Fee of Animal

The households contacted also revealed that though the fee for checking of animal at night is fixed by the Govt. at Rs. 36/- , yet it is not displayed any where in the hospital/dispensary and sometimes doctors do charge exorbitant fee pay Rs. 1000-1500/- for their visit to beneficiary's house.

iii) Awareness Camps

All the 5 listed persons contacted from village Jahanpur and five from village Sandhuan revealed that they are not even aware of the symptoms of the disease. Awareness Camps are not organized regularly, which are necessary to educate public about the growth of this

highly contagious disease. At this doctors from veterinary institution told the villagers to demand for the organization of camps. It is a matter of great surprise that organizing camps is a part of the scheme but doctors ask the public to put a demand for this.

II VIEWS OF NON-LISTED PERSONS

At the time of visit to the Veterinary Institution the Evaluation Team has contacted 20 non-listed persons (Persons available at hospital) at Chamkaur Sahib and 15 non-listed at Hoshiarpur. Almost all of them reported that no sign of Rinderpest has been seen for the last so many years. But they feel scared of it and opined that Govt. should continue with the monitoring operations. As Dairy farming has been adopted on commercial lines and milk/meat products like proteins are finding more places in export market. If such a disease reappears, will spread like a fire and will affect the economy in no time. Evaluation Team also contacted non-listed families at the time of visiting the site, they also expressed the similar views.

III VIEWS OF KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSON

Knowledgeable person contacted also expressed the similar facts as reported by the listed households. They confirmed the non-existence of disease in the area and monthly visit of the doctors to their villages. In case of emergency arising out of general illness of animals, the doctor has to be called upon to check the affected cattle at their place. Though on request visit of the doctor is a paid visit and as there is no conveyance at Veterinary Hospitals or dispensaries the doctor visits either by his own conveyance or hired vehicle, the charges for which has to be borne by the beneficiary.

It was further revealed that in general medicines are not available in the hospitals, doctors only prescribe the medicine which has to be arranged by the beneficiary at his own expense.

IV OPINION OF HEAD OF VETERINARY INSTITUTION

The Evaluation Team visited the Veterinary Institution and had discussion with Dy. Director of Animal Husbandry Department at Hoshiarpur and Veterinary Officer at Chamkaur Sahib. The team observed that Veterinary hospitals/dispensaries are popular amongst the public. Doctors explained that villagers do often come to get the prescription for the general illness of animals and a record in this regard is maintained at both dispensaries and hospitals. Views of the Veterinary Officers are listed below:-

i) **Collection of Blood Sample**

The doctor revealed that as per norm fixed by Govt. of India under the scheme, they visit the selected village and collect blood sample for sero-monitoring and sero-surveillance purpose. These blood samples are sent for testing labs of RDDDL Jullunder for their onward submission to Bangalore. Doctors also reported that only surveillance and monitoring programme is being carried out under this scheme and record is this contact is maintained at district headquarter. They pointed out that they face the difficulty in the collection of blood samples, as the farmers do not co-operate for providing blood sample of their animals under the impression that animals may become weak on doing so. Even then blood samples are collected by the persuasion and using influence of the veterinary institutions. Moreover farmers are not given any financial help or compensation for the blood losses of their animals. It results into their disinterest in the programme.

ii) **Checking of disease**

In case, if a doubtful case showing the symptoms resembling with Rinderpest is traced then the doctor concerned immediately report it to the district Headquarter. From headquarter a team of doctors comprising of Deputy Director, Incharge of Hospital, District Pathologist and doctor concerned in whose jurisdiction the village falls, visit the affected village and the area surrounding that village and collect blood sample and send it to RDDDL Jullundur for test. Only after the receipt of test report from Jullundur, conformation of disease is made.

iii) **Status of funds**

As regards funds, the doctor reported that no direct funds are provided to them under the scheme for meeting out the eventuality. They only get syringes and medicines from the purchase made under this scheme by Joint Director posted at RDDDL (Regional Disease Diagnostic Laboratory) Jullundur working under the control of Director Animal Husbandry, Chandigarh.

iv) **Non-Availability of Medicines**

In context of non-availability of medicines, as reported by the villagers, the doctors explained that there is a fixed annual allocation of medicines to various level of Veterinary Institution. A dispensary gets medicines for Rs. 5,000/- per annual and a hospital gets of amount of Rs. 10,000/- per annum, which is inadequate. Moreover proper storage facility is

not available at veterinary institutions. Specific medicines are to be kept under cold chain system and for this purpose refrigerator is required, which is not provided to veterinary institution.

v) **Awareness Camps**

Veterinary Officers reported that awareness camps in respect of disease are organized only at the willingness of villagers. It is not a proper justification as the awareness camps should be organized regularly in a systematic way.

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SURVEY

From the discussion/views collected by the Evaluation team from different sections related with the scheme, the main findings emerged as:-

- i) Rinderpest disease is a foregone disease amongst animals of Punjab.
- ii) The views of all the listed and non-listed households, knowledgeable persons, Veterinary Officers of the district concerned confirmed the 100% 'Eradication of Rinderpest' disease from State of Punjab.
- iii) Rinderpest disease being a fatal one and if it breaks out, it spreads like the wild fire and live stock wealth of the state (about 1 crore livestock population) could be finished in no time and will be difficult to control it in a short span of time causing a great loss to the state, specially to the farming community. Hence required equipment be supplied to veterinary institutions for maintaining the medicines for controlling of such a disease.
- iv) Medicines be provided at veterinary institutions as per their actual requirement instead of fixed quota allocation.
- v) The funds under the scheme need to be provided regularly not only for the purpose of monitoring and surveillance.
- vi) A Committee comprising of Director Animal Husbandry, Joint Director RDDEL, one Joint Director from other discipline and a suitable number of representatives of selected districts under the scheme to constitute for making purchases and deciding other issues under the scheme.
- vii) Department should organize awareness camps at regular intervals systematically. Certain incentives are provided to villagers to induce/ allure them to attend the camps. Literature concerning the disease be distributed at camps.

- viii) The reports of blood samples collected be also intimated to concerned households.

The State of Punjab being an agriculturally predominant state and the contribution of livestock sector (an allied activity of agriculture sector) in its development is directly and indirectly very valuable. Contribution from this sector in State Domestic Product is about 17%. Moreover the declaration made by Govt. of India/OIE (Office International Epizooties), Paris regarding Punjab being Rindespest free, State is enable to compete under World Trade Organization (W.T.O). To maintain this status of the state, activity of the sero-monitoring, sero-surveillance and awareness programme etc. under this scheme needs to be continued.