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Unethical evidence against cattle dignity during loading, transportation and off-loading by livestock marketers in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria

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Abstract

Some activities that showed unethical practices against cattle during loading, transportation and off-loading were considered in this paper. Three major cattle market centres (Akinyele, Bodija and Oranyan) in Ibadan metropolis were used. Eighty (80) structured questionnaires were randomly administered to the cattle handlers to collect data on systems of loading, transportation and off-loading of the animals. Visual observations, head counting and image capturing of the animals on board were made. Cattle were transported by road (100%) using different kinds of vehicle including open roofed trailer, truck, saloon cars and buses with different capacities. Cattle were arranged to stand for days under sun and rain until the final destination. Over 94% of respondents transported their animals in 1-3 days. Also, 60% parked breeds, different sizes, horned and polled cattle together in the same truck during transportation. 3.75%, 5%, 7.5% and 83.75% of handlers respectively transported their cattle in the morning, afternoon evening and at any time of the day. Cattle were loaded and off-loaded by dragging, pulling and pushing. It is concluded that there were no standard systems of transportation, loading and off-loading of cattle as animals were exposed to inclement weather and hardship.

Keywords: Unethical evidence, cattle dignity, loading, transportation and off-loading.

Introduction

Specific studies on animal welfare and ethics in Nigeria, such as transportation is scanty. Good transportation is central to the calmness, control, admiration and the general welfare of livestock. In some countries of the world, there are laws guiding the very right of animals and standards in all activities relating to their production and managements. In Nigeria, there is no particular law relating to farm animal ethics and welfare but the right of animals under captivity or domestication has been defined by both criminal and penal codes that animals have right to be free from

hunger, discomfort, fear and distress and freedom to express normal behaviour. Babayemi and Bamikole (2010) observed that certain animals under confinement were deprived of essential necessities as comfortable space and quality diet and further expressed that in Nigeria, animal welfare and ethics were rarely enforced, not seen as quality control, thereby exposing the animals to all forms of treatment and consequently, not meeting the overall well-being of the society at large. This means that it is the prerogative of livestock producers and handlers to oppose callous treatment of farm animals at any stage of their life, especially during transportation. Ethical

verdicts regarding the handler's duties to animals are made at different levels within a community and society at large.

In the face of public concern about animal exploitation, animal scientists are increasingly questioning about the welfare of animals used in commercial production systems. The professional advice given by the animal scientists who have the expertise in animal welfare as regards animal production practices such as transportation, slaughtering and on-farm husbandry procedures are essential. Most animals often spend a fraction of their lifetime being transported from one place to another and therefore, constitute the most stressful experience they have. The novelty of being handled and transported can cause anxiety, fear and stress, making the animals more difficult to handle and thus tempting the handlers to become physically abusive. Often, in transportation, livestock handlers should handle the animals gently and have a proper attitude about their treatment.

The European Union Legislation established the rules on transporting livestock, which include requirements on vehicles, water, feed, rest, and transporter competence. In addition to these assertions, Defra (2006) report that animals on transportation should be unequivocally free from injury, unnecessary suffering and generally fit to travel.

In Nigeria, the trends for transportation activities, systems and standards on livestock movement from long and short distances are not known. The only animal right protection organization in Nigeria is the Nigeria Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NSPCA), but may be said to be moribund since its activities are unknown in the society. In advanced countries, where livestock production is well developed, there are clear and well defined specifications on the type of vehicle

to use, distances to cover and the general welfare of the animals during the process. The Welfare of Farmed Animals, England (Regulations 2007) details the minimum standards under which farm animals must be kept. The philosophical study of animal ethics and welfare seeks to give people the general guidance concerning what to do, what to seek and how to treat animals (Kai, 1962). Similarly, the Philippines Animal Welfare Act of 1998 provides some regulations of the treatment of sentient animal species (Favre and Hall, 2004) and is very operational till date. This legislation covers the rules on transporting livestock, including requirements on vehicles, water, feed, rest, transporter competence and documentation. The present study was designed to evaluate the loading, transportation and off-loading systems in Ibadan metropolis of Nigeria.

Materials and Methods

Three cattle markets in Ibadan metropolis were used in order to assess some unethical practices carried out by the cattle handlers in the areas. The cattle markets were Akinyele (Akinyele Local Government Area), Bodija (Ibadan North Local Government Area) and Oranyan (Ibadan North east Local Government Area). The markets were purposively chosen as they were central and the major cattle markets in Ibadan. Eighty (80) structured questionnaires were randomly administered to the cattle handlers to collect data on systems of loading, transportation and off-loading of the animals.

On arrival of vehicles conveying the animals from their destinations, type and nature of vehicle were noted and visual observation of the off-loading system was made. In off-loading, the breeds, sizes, sex and type (horned and polled) were closely observed. Loading methods from the three

centres to other places within and outside Ibadan metropolis were further noted. Also, a structured oral interview was used to elicit more information on the off-loading and loading systems of cattle. A reconnaissance of loading and off-loading facilities at the centres was carried out. Data generated from the respondents were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussion

Presented in Table below are the means of transportation and composition of cattle transported. The result showed that all the cattle handlers transported their animals by road. This was expected as it might be more difficult to transport cattle on hoof from such long places, spanning hundred of

kilometers. The visual appraisal of the vehicle for road transportation indicated majority to be long trailers travelling long distance on bad roads. Grandin (2000) reported that vehicles should be driven smoothly without jerks or sudden stops, corners be negotiated slowly and gently as poor driving coupled with bad roads can cause animals to lose their balance and fall. The use of vehicles with open roofs expose the cattle to rain, sun intensity and cold conditions. On the composition of cattle at transportation (Table 1), the respondent indicated that 75%, 8.8% and 13.8% were transported as all kinds together, different sizes and similar breeds respectively. This composition of cattle in the trucks showed that all kinds were arranged and packed

Table 1: Means of transportation and composition of cattle transported

| Parameter | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--|-----------|----------------|
| Means of transportation | | |
| Road | 80 | 100 |
| Rail | None | None |
| Air | None | None |
| Composition of cattle transported | | |
| Different sizes, horned and polled | 60 | 75 |
| Similar sizes | 7 | 8.75 |
| Different species | 11 | 13.75 |



Figure 1. Showing cattle abuse during transportation out of Ibadan metropolis

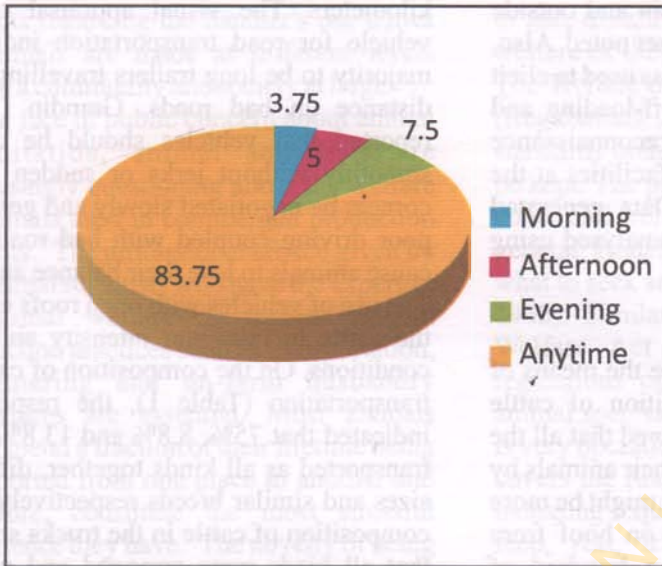


Figure 2. Period for the transportation of cattle to Ibadan

together including breeds, cows, bulls, small, big, horned and polled. This arrangement was opposed to the welfare of the animals as there were competition for space, supremacy and fighting and trampling sometimes supervened. ARMCANZ (1999) established that one should not mix horned and polled animals together in the vehicle because it causes bruising and injury. The vehicles were not lined with bedding materials such as wood shavings, therefore, cattle rested and slept directly on their faeces and urine. Some inhumane treatment of cattle during transportation were noticed as shown in Figure 1. Apart from the fact that cattle were bound and crowded, people intentionally sat on the animals. The use of rail would have been preferred, being fast, cheap, accommodating and animals are less prone to inclement weather, but it is non functional at present in Nigeria.

Figure 2 indicates are the periods for the transportation of cattle from their source of purchase to various centres in Ibadan

metropolis. Of the respondents, 3.75, 5, 7.5 and 83.75% transported their cattle in the morning, afternoon, evening and any time of the day respectively. The study showed that there were no specific periods for transporting cattle. A larger percentage of the handlers indicated transportation at any time, which was anchored on when purchasing was completed and again on the availability of vehicle to convey the animals. These reasons for transporting cattle at any time of the day were not the best for the welfare of the animals. Animals that are transported during the hot weather of the day or under heavy down pour of rain may be stressed and weakened. High environmental temperature may increase the risk of heat stress and mortality. This agrees with the report of ARMCANZ (1999) that the stress of transport will be greatly increased by extremes of weather and that severe stress or deaths can also be caused by very cold weather because the body temperature would be considerably reduced (Tarrant and Grandin, 2000). It is

very important to transport animals in vehicles during the cooler mornings and evenings or even at night. A combination of high humidity and high environmental temperatures may be deadly to animals. Knowles and Warriss (2000) reported that death losses increase as a result of stress created by increased temperature indicating that transportation is better at the cool hour of the day.

The number of days that it took to transport cattle from the source is in Figure 3. Majority of the handlers (96.4%) claimed with impunity that they transported their cattle between one and three days i.e. 24-72 hours. This is rather too high for an animal to be healthy and to maintain its body weight. The implication of this long hour of transportation by road is that cattle would stand, confine, remain without food, water

and exercise. Where possible, journeys are expected to be short and direct without any stoppages. As a rule, cattle, sheep and goats should not travel for more than 36 hours and should be offloaded after 24 hours for feed and water if the journey is to take longer than that. Marahrens *et al.* (2003) studied long distance road transport of cattle and reported that all categories of cattle lost weight and showed catabolic energy metabolism during transport. Similarly, Nanni (2003) transported steers for 16 hours and reported that the longer journey was associated with a significantly larger live weight loss. Regulations governing the transport of livestock differ among countries. Blackwood and Hurst (2004) reported that in Australia, the code of practice for Land Transport states that sheep, for example, must be rested after a



Figure 3. Number of days for transportation of livestock to Ibadan



Figure 4. Off-loading of cattle at destination

journey of 36 hours. There are recent moves in developed regions, seeking to limit the duration of livestock transport to 8 hours or less. In the European Union, journey time does not exceed 8 hours (Tarrant and Grandin, 2000).

Shown in Figure 4 are cattle in the truck ready to be off-loaded. During off-loading, it was observed that cattle were directly pushed down from the truck of about 2 m high from the ground. There was no good ramp facility for easy off-loading in the three locations. The process adopted for off-loading was by drawing the animal from inside of the truck to the door through holding of the horn or pulling the tail. The off-loaded cattle were always observed to be weak and wounded with bruised skin. Due to the stress of the long journey without food, water, rest and coupled with forceful off-loading, some cattle became recumbent and at times dead. Smith *et al.* (1995) reported that bruises can be greatly reduced if the producers/truckers/packers will take care of off-loading facility. Therefore, in order to minimize stress and avoid injury, ramps are necessary for off-loading livestock out of the vehicle. Excessive steep ramps should be avoided or designed so that the slope is not greater than 20 degrees and should fit closely and be at the same level

with the truck gate (Grandin, 1987 and Lapworth, 2004).

Presented in Figure 5a is a common loading system of animals in Ibadan cattle centres. Cattle were bound with ropes on legs and head together. This was effected by twisting and bending the head in order to align with the hind and fore legs. The choice of this method was probably necessitated by the type of vehicle for conveyance (Figure 5b). The method undoubtedly might inflict injury and pains on the animal. This is indeed an animal abuse. Animals that have been abused can be dangerous. Abuse of animals is unethical which may be detrimental to animal welfare and human being consuming it. It is reported that, cattle and sheep have excellent memories and are able to remember painful experiences and will be more reluctant to re-enter a facility where a stressful event has previously occurred (Grandin *et al.*, 1986; Hutson, 1985 and Rushen, 1986).

Conclusion

The current study indicated that there were cattle abuse and unethical evidences in major cattle centres in Ibadan metropolis. Cattle were transported on bad roads with low speed and roofless trucks, and the



Figure 5a. Restrained cattle to be transported to the desired destination



Figure 5b. Loaded cattle to be transported to the desired destination

animals arrived their destination late, stressed and weak. Animals were transported at any time of the day thereby exposing them to inclement weather and suffering. Ramp was not used for off-loading from high built trucks but were thrown down, suggesting that the animals could be battered, wounded and weakened. Animals to be loaded were folded, tied and rolled into the boots of car, which were generally unsuitable for such. It is concluded that the market cattle handlers were probably ignorant of the standards in the transportation, loading and off-loading of livestock, the paper therefore recommends training for the stakeholders.

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