



AGRI MAGAZINE

(International E-Magazine for Agricultural Articles)

Volume: 03, Issue: 10 (October, 2026)

Available online at <http://www.agrimagazine.in>

© Agri Magazine, ISSN: 3048-8656

Animal Rearing: A Pathway to Rural Prosperity and Sustainable Livelihoods in India

*Pranaw Kumar Tripathi and Satyam Kumar

M.V.Sc. Scholar, Livestock Production and Management, ICAR-Indian Veterinary Research Institute (IVRI), Izatnagar, Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh, India

*Corresponding Author's email: pranawtripathi.22698@gmail.com

Animal rearing has been part of rural India for generations. Cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep, pigs and poultry give us milk, meat, eggs, wool and manure, but they give millions of households something more valuable: security. For small and marginal farmers, a few animals can provide regular cash when crop income is seasonal or uncertain. With scientific management, good veterinary care and fair access to markets, animal husbandry can become a powerful driver of inclusive rural growth.

A Strong Pillar of the Rural Economy

Livestock spreads risk. Instead of depending on a single crop, a farm can earn from milk sold daily, eggs and poultry that bring frequent returns, and goats or sheep that can be sold when money is urgently needed. Dung becomes organic manure or, where facilities exist, biogas. These crop–livestock links help farmers make better use of local resources. The scale of the sector is clear from official data. According to the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying's *Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2025*, India produced an estimated 247.87 million tonnes of milk in 2024–25, a rise of 3.58 per cent over the previous year, and per-capita milk availability reached 485 grams per day. Egg production was estimated at 149.11 billion and meat production at 10.50 million tonnes. Together, these figures show how much livestock contributes to food supply, economic activity and rural employment.

Different Animals, Different Opportunities

Dairy farming is a major source of regular income, especially where farmers can reach collection centres, cooperatives, chilling facilities and reliable buyers. Balanced rations, clean housing, hygienic milking and timely treatment improve both yield and milk quality.

Poultry farming offers jobs and relatively quick returns, but it demands sound biosecurity, good-quality feed, proper ventilation and dependable markets.

Goats and sheep are especially valuable in dryland and rain-fed regions, where they thrive on locally available vegetation and suit smallholder systems.

Pigs, backyard poultry and other local enterprises can also support household incomes where there is demand and technical support.

Fisheries and aquaculture complement livestock-based livelihoods. Their success depends on responsible production, healthy stocks, access to inputs, cold-chain facilities and efficient marketing.

Nutrition, Women and Local Jobs

Milk, eggs and meat supply valuable nutrients and add variety to everyday diets. The livestock value chain also creates work well beyond the farm gate: feed supply, animal health services, breeding, milk collection, processing, transport, retail and marketing. In many rural households, women do a large share of the daily work of caring for animals. Training, credit, producer groups, ownership of productive assets and a place in local cooperatives can help

them receive a fairer share of both the income and the decision-making power that animal rearing creates.

What Holds Farmers Back

Despite its promise, animal rearing faces stubborn obstacles:

- Low productivity and limited access to quality breeding services
- Seasonal shortages of green fodder and quality feed, and rising input costs
- Animal diseases
- Lack of affordable credit, insurance, reliable veterinary services, transport and storage
- Weak bargaining power in the market

Poor housing, unhygienic milking, inappropriate drug use and weak biosecurity harm animal welfare, productivity and food safety. Climate variability adds pressure through heat stress, water scarcity and shifting fodder availability. Growth, therefore, must rest not only on producing more, but on animal health, welfare, environmental responsibility and resilience.

Four Steps to a More Profitable, Sustainable Sector

1. Put prevention first. Strengthen vaccination, disease surveillance, timely diagnosis, deworming where indicated and access to veterinary services. Give farmers practical guidance on balanced feeding, fodder cultivation and conservation, clean water, housing, breeding decisions and hygienic handling of animal products.

2. Add value locally. Milk chilling and processing, small-scale poultry and meat processing where legally permitted, wool and fibre handling, and organised marketing can reduce losses and create rural jobs. Producer organisations and cooperatives help small farmers buy inputs, access services and negotiate better prices.

3. Reach the smallholder. Financial and institutional support must reach small farmers, women and young entrepreneurs. Government initiatives such as the Rashtriya Gokul Mission, National Livestock Mission, Livestock Health and Disease Control Programme, National Programme for Dairy Development and Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund support breeding, health, dairy development and infrastructure, while the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana supports fisheries. Eligibility and application details change, so farmers should check current official guidelines with their state animal husbandry or fisheries department.

4. Make sustainability central. Better feed efficiency, manure management, water conservation, appropriate stocking density, heat-stress mitigation and responsible use of veterinary medicines raise productivity while lowering environmental and health risks. Training and extension should be delivered in local languages and tailored to each region.

Conclusion

Animal rearing is far more than a side occupation. It is a source of income, nutrition, employment and resilience for rural India. Its contribution can grow further when farmers are backed by sound veterinary services, better feeding and breeding, accessible finance, strong producer institutions and dependable markets. Moving from merely keeping animals to managing healthy, productive and economically viable livestock enterprises can turn animal husbandry into a secure and sustainable pathway to rural prosperity.

References

1. Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying. (2025). *Basic animal husbandry statistics 2025*. Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India. <https://www.dahd.gov.in/schemes/programmes/animal-husbandry-statistics>
2. Press Information Bureau. (2025, November 26). *Release of Basic Animal Husbandry Statistics 2025 on the occasion of National Milk Day 2025*. Government of India. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2195049>
3. Press Information Bureau. (2025, August 5). *Supporting schemes for livestock farmers, dairy producers and fishermen*. Government of India. <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=2152464>

4. Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying. (n.d.). *Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying*. Government of India. <https://dahd.gov.in/>
5. Indian Council of Agricultural Research. (n.d.). *Indian Council of Agricultural Research*. <https://icar.org.in/>