

“Our most important animal is the buffalo”

Lo Thi Hanh lives in the village of Coi, in the midst of the steep slopes of the humid, mountainous area of Northwest Viet Nam. Like the homes of other farmers, her house is built on stilts. Under and around her house, she keeps a variety of animals.

“The most important animals I have are my four buffaloes”, says Lo Thi Hanh. “because they help me with my work on the farm and provide transportation. They carry maize from the fields, water from the wells to the farms and wood to build houses.”

The buffalos, a local breed from Viet Nam, are also a direct source of food and income. “They are used for their meat and for selling”.

Lo Thi Hanh has many other farm animals, such as local Muscovy ducks, Ri chickens and Co goats. In addition, she keeps Ban and Mong Cai pig, the latter have been crossed with Yorkshire pigs.

All these animals provide a variety of services in daily life. “They provide draught force and manure that I used as fertilizer for my garden and upland field plots. They are also important at special occasions like weddings, Tet (new year) parties, funerals and offerings.”

Keeping all these animals is not an easy task. “There is always a risk of epidemic diseases, which is worsened by the lack of knowledge on animal production and animal health.” The dry season is particularly difficult: “There is a continuous shortage of grass for ruminants and water can only be found far away,” says Lo Thi Hanh.

In these circumstances, it seems to be ideal to have strong high-output animals. “I would like to try to raise modern pig breeds like Yorkshire pigs because they grow faster, have a higher lean meat rate and produce more in shorter time.” Yet, as keeping such high-output breeds requires a lot of input, Lo Thi Hanh realizes: “Feeding would be more expensive and raising them more difficult.”



Lo Thi Hanh with one of her buffaloes.
Below: three Co goats.
Photo credits: Luong Van Dung

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