

# HIV/AIDS AND THE LIVESTOCK SECTOR



Animals play a vital role in the livelihoods of many rural communities, providing food, income and security. Draught animals also provide power for preparing land, and transporting goods and services. This leaflet provides information on how the livestock sector is affected by the impact of AIDS and identifies ways in which livestock can assist in improving the livelihoods of poor vulnerable households.



## IMPACT OF HIV/AIDS ON LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION SYSTEMS:

- animals are sold to raise cash to buy medicines and food
- livestock are slaughtered during funerals
- due to labour shortages from sickness and death, households may lack sufficient time to care for animals and market their products
- due to gender differences in the ownership and care of animals, widows and orphans may not have the knowledge and skills to care for specific animals
- the inheritance system can result in widows and children losing remaining animals
- the loss of draught animals reduces the area cultivated
- veterinary and extension services are reduced as a result of AIDS
- the loss of animals may reduce bio-diversity

## SUPPORTING SMALL LIVESTOCK IS A PRACTICAL, ACHIEVABLE AND COST EFFECTIVE WAY OF REDUCING VULNERABILITY TO, AND IMPACTS OF HIV/AIDS.

This can be achieved by:

- improving household nutrition: meat is rich in proteins and minerals (eg guinea-pigs) or vitamins (e.g. rabbits); eggs and milk
- providing additional income: in addition to selling eggs, milk and meat, animal products can be processed to make products for sale (e.g. milk into cheese; rabbit and goat skins into bags, shoes, clothes and furnishings; pig skin into bottles and food containers)
- producing manure: for use in home gardens, as compost and as fuel
- rebuilding renewable assets: store of wealth and insurance
- empowering gender: in particular, giving women control over new income sources
- comforting orphans: vulnerable children may benefit psychologically from caring for small animals
- being close to the home: this enables a carer to look after the sick and tend to the animals

## **S** SMALL ANIMAL BREEDING GIVES A REGULAR SUPPLY OF ANIMALS DUE TO THEIR RAPID REPRODUCTION:



- one hen produces 14 chickens per year, and they also start to reproduce
- one rabbit can produce 30 rabbits per year
- one male rabbit can cover six females
- one guinea-pig can produce 20 offspring per year
- one male guinea-pig can cover 12 females
- guinea-pigs grow rapidly in size

## **K** KEY ELEMENTS OF RAISING SMALL LIVESTOCK

### **Animal health**

- find information at veterinary centres about diseases that may affect animals
- vaccinate animals (e.g. protect chicken from Newcastle disease)
- select animals which are more resistant to diseases (ducks and guinea fowl are resistant to the Newcastle disease)
- avoid keeping animals in a noisy environment
- handle them with care as some (e.g. rabbits) are prone to stress
- pay special attention to caring for newborn animals: young chickens need to be well protected in their first few weeks

### **Animal feed**

- correct feeding is crucial for animal health
- animals should be fed regularly especially the young ones
- clean water and food should always be available
- certain animals are easy to feed: grains and household waste (e.g. hens, guinea-pigs)
- fruits and herbs (e.g. rabbits and ducks)
- forage (e.g. guinea-pigs)

### **Shelter**

A shelter or a hen house for small animals is important to:

- prevent or reduce animal losses
- protect them from predators which could attack them
- increase household meat production
- give small animals shelter to rest in shade, eat and refresh themselves
- protect crops

### **For construction of a shelter:**

- use inexpensive locally available material such as the bamboo, waste products of wood, etc
- make sure there is space (for a perch, a water tank and feeding trough), light and air
- raise cages off the ground to protect the animals from transmissions of diseases, floods, predators

### **Hygiene**

- keep the animal environment clean
- prepare litter with straw, stems of corn, and change it once a week
- feeding troughs must be cleaned everyday
- disinfect regularly utensils that are in contact with animals (especially rabbits), and the cage and feeding trough.

**INFORM HOUSEHOLDS WHERE THEY CAN  
ACQUIRE MORE INFORMATION ON SMALL  
ANIMAL BREEDING AND ON HIV/AIDS.**

This could include:

- local institutions, NGOs and other qualified technical organizations of small animal breeding
- associations for people living with the AIDS and their service



**SEE OTHER LEAFLETS IN THIS SERIES:**

- HIV/AIDS in daily life
- Give support to AIDS-affected families: the role of field workers