

Participatory workshops to produce information materials on ethnoveterinary medicine¹

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Abstract

This paper describes a process to document, validate and publish ethnoveterinary medicine in the form of a manual that development workers can use. This process has been used to produce manuals on ethnoveterinary medicine in Asia and in Kenya, as well as information materials on other topics ranging from biodiversity to technologies for women. The process brings together indigenous livestock healers, scientists, NGO staff and extension staff to present, discuss and revise manuscripts on specific livestock diseases or problems. A team of editors, artists and computer personnel assist the workshop participants to revise, illustrate and desktop-publish the manuscripts.

This method provides an opportunity for scientists to validate ethnoveterinary practices, since they are able to discuss details of each practice with the indigenous specialists using it, compare it with standard veterinary methods, and judge its applicability and effectiveness. It is an excellent method of linking research, extension and field levels: scientists learn of indigenous techniques and can plan clinical trials or other forms of research on them; and scientific knowledge is translated into a form that extensionists and livestock holders can use. The method is also a very fast way of generating and publishing information: by the end of a two-week workshop, near-camera-ready material for a 200-page manual can be ready.

The method can also be adapted for use at the field level: in Kenya, a group of Luo practitioners are developing an ethnoveterinary manual for Luoland. A group of villagers in Negros, the Philippines, used a similar approach to produce a manual on forest conservation.

Similar manuals on topics such as sustainable agriculture and upland natural resource management have been adapted and translated in various languages in Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific.

Information scarcity

Livestock and agricultural technicians, extension personnel and NGO staff require large amounts of information about a wide range of topics. They are required to implement sometimes sophisticated farming, veterinary and other technologies. They use social methodologies such as training, community organising, facilitation and other skills. They are called on to provide information on everything from agroforestry to veterinary surgery.

This information can come from different sources: education and training, their own and others' experience, and books and other types of information materials. Each of these sources alone is inadequate. Field-level development workers typically have low levels of education and few training opportunities. Many are young and city-bred, so lack experience. They may learn from colleagues and pick up indigenous knowledge from local people, but the information they gain is sketchy and unsystematic.

A glance in development workers' homes or offices shows that they lack printed information materials, too. A few pamphlets, perhaps a newsletter from head office, and one or two textbooks from school or university—form the typical field extensionist's library.

Three problems underlie the scarcity of information materials:

- **Quantity**. Few information materials appropriate for development workers have been published and printed. Print runs are typically too small to serve needs. In Indonesia, provincial extension agencies typically print just 1500 copies of an extension pamphlet—enough for one copy for each field agent in the province, but far from enough to reach the tens of thousands of farmer groups there.

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- **Appropriateness.** Much of the information material that is available is too technical or otherwise unsuited for use by village-level workers. A research article on a drug's effectiveness is of little use to a paraveterinarian trying to identify and prevent a livestock disease. Also of little use are such staples as policy papers and news stories of field visits by government officials. Village-level workers are key intermediaries in the information web linking research, policy, markets and farmers, but sadly they receive scant attention when it comes to information provision.
- **Availability.** The little appropriate material that has been published is not widely available where it is needed—in the field. Distribution to district- and village-level workers is limited; many materials are distributed no further than the provincial capitals. Commercially published materials are too costly for low-paid staff with extremely limited funds. Useful information is often scattered in different documents, so is hard to find.

Of course, merely making information more available and more appropriate is no guarantee that development workers will use them. Admittedly, there are many good materials lying unused in cupboards and drawers throughout the world. But that is not an argument against making appropriate information materials available in the first place. Rather, we must find ways both to increase the availability of appropriate materials, and of encouraging and enabling development workers to use them.

Ethnoveterinary medicine is no exception to the general lack of information. With the exception of the two books described in this paper (IIRR 1994, ITDG and IIRR 1996), there are no generally available manuals of livestock diseases and how to prevent and treat them using remedies based on indigenous knowledge of local people. Development workers have thus had to rely either on conventional veterinary techniques (many of which require expensive drugs or unavailable supplies), or on indigenous techniques they have gleaned from local people but which have not been subjected to scientific scrutiny.

Alternative ways to produce information materials

One of the main reasons that there are so few information materials appropriate for development workers is that they are hard to prepare. The information typically comes from many different sources. The materials must be accurate and supported by scientific research or field experience, yet must be relevant to the needs of the audience. To be effective, the materials typically need to be written in non-technical language, well-illustrated, and clearly laid out.

However, many information materials, particularly those written by scientists, do not fulfil these criteria. They draw information from only a few sources—usually scientists rather than extensionists or farmers. They are scientifically accurate, but may not be relevant to the audience's needs. Many such materials contain large doses of jargon and few, if any, illustrations. Therefore, they are not effective.

Information materials are traditionally produced in various ways: written by a single author or a small team, written by multiple authors, compiled by an editor, or synthesised through a conference. Each of these approaches has distinct disadvantages:

- Single authors often lack the breadth of knowledge or direct experience to write about a broad topic, so must rely on information that is already written in the literature.
- Team and multi-author approaches require considerable co-ordination and the resulting manuscripts vary considerably in style, coverage and quality.
- Conferences can easily become unmanageable, and there is insufficient control over the manuscripts to make a uniform, easily used, whole.
- All these approaches take large amounts of time, both in writing and in editing the drafts.
- These approaches usually involve scientists rather than development workers or farmers. The manuscripts therefore often lack the richness of practical experience and indigenous knowledge that development workers and local people can provide.
- Development workers have no opportunity to comment on the relevance and usability of the manuscript. Information materials aimed at development workers and local people should be pre-tested and revised before they are published, but this vital step is often skipped to save time and money.

Intensive workshops

The workshop approach described in the remainder of this paper overcomes these disadvantages by compressing the preparation of the final manuscript into a short time, and by involving scientists, farmers and development workers in the writing process. A team of editors, artists and computer personnel assists the workshop participants to revise, illustrate and desktop publish the manuscripts. The aim is to develop the materials, revise and put them into final form as quickly as possible, taking full advantage of the expertise of the various workshop participants and staff.

This process has been used to produce manuals on ethnoveterinary medicine in Asia (in the Philippines in July 1994) and in Kenya (in July 1996). The Asia workshop involved 21 livestock specialists (veterinarians, an anthropologist, a pharmacologist, NGO staff and farmers) from nine countries, and resulted in four illustrated booklets (total 400 pages) on ruminants, swine, poultry and general topics. This workshop, an initiative of the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), was supported by Brot für die Welt, Heifer Project International, the World Bank's Small Grants Program, German Appropriate Technology Exchange, and IIRR.

The Kenya workshop was a joint initiative of IIRR and the Kenya office of the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG). This workshop involved some 40 participants from Kenya and Ethiopia, including veterinarians, veterinary researchers and educators, an ethnobotanist, development workers, field practitioners, and traditional animal healers. In all, 14 Kenyan ethnic groups were represented in the workshop. The resulting 226-page book covers diseases and problems of camels, cattle, chickens, dogs, goats and sheep. The workshop was supported by ITDG and IIRR, with grants from Balance, CTA, GTZ and ODA (now DfID).

The authors co-ordinated and managed both workshops and the

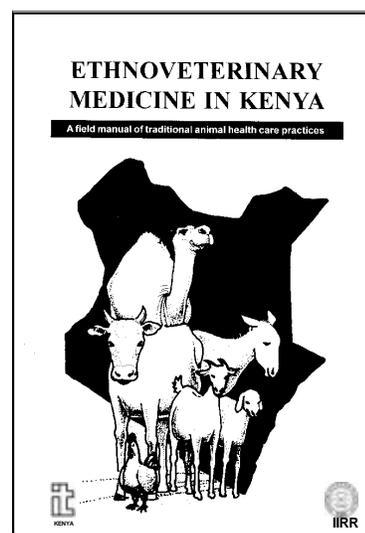
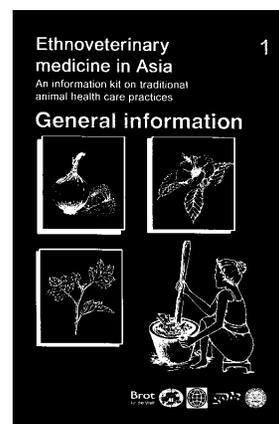


Table 1. Selected workshops to produce information materials.

Country	Year	Theme	Institution
Ghana	1993	Agroforestry in Ghana	IIRR and Ghana Rural Reconstruction Movement
India	1994	Biodiversity in the Western Ghats	IIRR and World-Wide Fund for Nature-India
India	1995	Technologies for farm women	IIRR and International Federation for Women in Agriculture
India	1997 (planned)	Management of camels	League for Pastoral Peoples
Indonesia	1996	Tidal swamp agriculture in Sumatra	Agency for Agricultural Research and Development
Kenya	1996	Ethnoveterinary medicine in Kenya	Intermediate Technology Development Group and IIRR
Kenya	1998 (planned)	Sustainable agriculture in E Africa	IIRR
Philippines	1994	Ethnoveterinary medicine in Asia	IIRR
Philippines	1994	Indigenous knowledge	IIRR
Philippines	1994	Resource management for upland areas in SE Asia	FAO and IIRR
Vietnam	1995-96	Upland agriculture and natural resources in N Vietnam	Ministry of Forestry and Orgut

production of the resulting manuals.

Both ethnoveterinary workshops followed a procedure pioneered at the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) in the Philippines (Gonsalves and Domingo 1989, Swan and Shakya 1992, IIRR 1995). This process has been used, in various forms, more than 20 times in different countries and languages to produce information materials on topics ranging from biodiversity to technologies for women (Table 1).

Workshop process

The procedure followed in the two ethnoveterinary workshops was slightly different. The description below is based on the Kenya workshop (ITDG and IIRR 1996: xiv–xv).

Preparation

The workshop required careful preparation over a long period (up to a year), to allow time to identify partner institutions, delineate the workshop themes, identify topics and participants, and to raise funds.

Several months before the workshop, a steering committee held a one-day planning meeting. The steering committee members included staff of NGOs, government departments, universities, research institutes and private individuals. They were selected for their knowledge and experience in veterinary science, traditional medicine, pharmacognosy, livestock production and animal health care and extension. This steering committee determined the scope of the manual (for example, what livestock species it should cover, whether conventional veterinary treatments should be included) and listed the major diseases and problems to cover. It also identified potential authors to write manuscripts on each disease (typically, each author was asked to cover 2–4 diseases). Wherever possible, overlap among manuscripts was avoided, as this would have caused confusion and a lot of extra editorial work during the workshop.

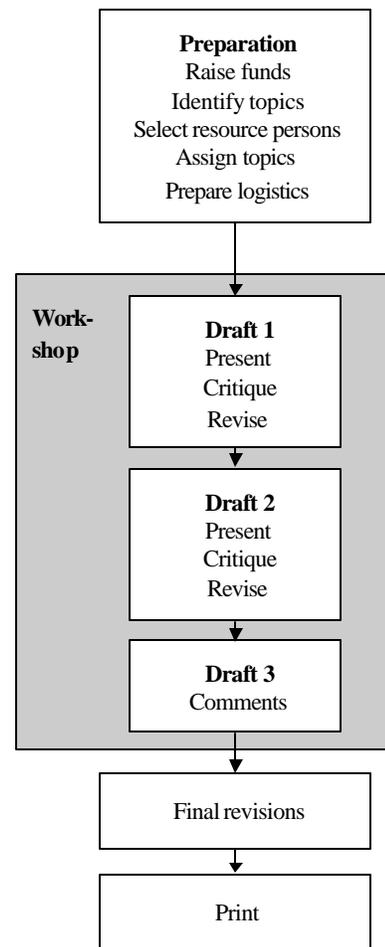
The steering committee and workshop managers developed detailed guidelines for structuring the manuscripts, and sent these and examples from previous manuscripts to the authors. The predetermined format greatly facilitated the review and editing of manuscripts during the workshop, and made the final book easier for the reader to use. Limiting the length to 4–6 pages forced authors to focus on key points and eliminate unnecessary background material. Authors were requested to submit all manuscripts as hard copy and on disk, and to bring the drafts and various reference materials with them to the workshop.

First-draft presentation and discussion

The workshop itself was held in Machakos, Kenya, in July 1996. The staff included a workshop co-ordinator (with the task of scheduling presentations), a team of three editors, four artists, three computer operators, and a photocopier operator. The workshop lasted two weeks.

Each author in turn presented his or her first-draft manuscript, using overhead transparencies of each page. Copies of each draft were also given to all other participants, who critiqued the draft and suggested revisions. Modifications included the addition of large numbers of indigenous treatments, local names and disease signs, the deletion of inappropriate information, and the simplification of language and format. Some topics were deleted; others were merged or split.

Early in the workshop, the participants brainstormed a list of diseases and topics not yet included among the manuscripts. Individuals or small teams then volunteered (or were persuaded) to write manuscripts on these topics. In this way, several diseases that had escaped the steering committee's notice were added to the



manual. In total, 111 topics were presented and discussed during the workshop (some of these were later combined or discarded, so the final manual contains 96 topics).

The participants included both traditional healers and university-trained veterinarians. While most of the original manuscripts were written and presented by the veterinarians, the great majority of the indigenous disease-prevention and treatment methods were contributed by the traditional healers. Each treatment for each disease was discussed by specialists from both types of background. Any remedies that the group could not agree on were deleted. The remaining remedies were rated according to whether they were standard veterinary practice or close equivalents, could be supported by scientific knowledge, or were judged by traditional healers to be effective. These ratings are included in the manual as a guide for readers.

As much information as possible was collected on forms distributed to the participants. For example, a participant contributing an indigenous treatment was asked to write it on a form specially designed for this purpose. This ensured that the information was reasonably complete and in a standard format for easy editing.

The workshop was held in English, but many of the traditional healers present spoke only their own languages. Translators were responsible for translating between local languages and English. The translators themselves were experienced livestock holders, so were able to contribute much information to the manual in their own right.

First-draft revision

After each first-draft presentation, during the presentation by the next author, an editor helped the author revise and edit the first draft. This frequently involved complete rewriting and simplification of the text, revision to fit the required style and format, inclusion of the large amount of additional information collected during the workshop sessions, and rechecking of information with the author or information contributors. The editor and author also commissioned artwork from the team of artists, who drew illustrations to accompany the text. The Kenya manual contains nearly 350 line drawings, all drawn during the workshop itself.

The edited draft and artwork were then passed to a computer operator, who scanned the artwork onto disk and desktop-published the manuscript to produce a second draft.

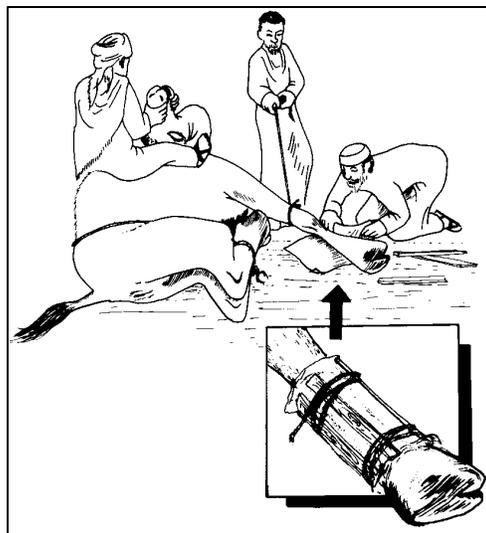
Meanwhile, other participants were also presenting papers they had prepared. Each, in turn, worked with the team of editors and artists to revise and illustrate the materials.

The local and scientific plant names were checked during the workshop by an ethnobotanist from the National Museums of Kenya. The traditional healers brought with them samples of medicinal plants they used; the ethnobotanist identified these; and the artists drew them.

Second draft

The first-draft presentations took the first five days of the workshop. During the weekend, the editors, artists and computer operators continued revising the manuscripts, and by the following Monday morning had prepared several second drafts. These were in desktop-published form (the participants had agreed on a format for the manual early in the workshop), and included illustrations.

During the next few days, the presentation and revision process was repeated, this time for second drafts. Each participant presented his or her revised draft to the group a second time, again using transparencies. Again, the audience critiqued it and suggests revisions. Much of this work was done in small groups; this enabled detailed review of each topic, and was necessary to enable the participants to review the large number of manuscripts that had been developed. The participants were asked in particular to check the illustrations for accuracy and ease of understanding.



This second review not only enabled information to be added or corrected. It also meant that representatives of the manual's readership—the development workers and traditional healers present—were able to comment on the format and presentation of the information. This acted as a detailed pre-test of the manual.

After the presentation of each second-draft manuscript, the authors, editors, artists and computer operators again revised it and developed a third draft.

Third draft and final revisions

In the final days of the workshop, the workshop team had prepared third drafts of many of the manuscripts. These were distributed to participants for final comments and corrections. Participants were able to take away with them copies of the third-draft manuscripts, or (failing that) the second drafts.

After the workshop, there remained final editing and desktop publishing, the checking of scientific names, and the compilation of glossaries of plant and disease names in local languages. This work took the authors an additional four weeks before the manuscript was camera-ready and could be sent to the printers. The shortness of this editing period was because virtually all of the required information had been collected and checked during the workshop itself.

The publication

The publication resulting from the workshop can be loose-leaf, a set of pocket-sized booklets, or a bound book. The format and design can be set beforehand—or decided by the participants during the workshop itself. In the Asia workshop, participants decided on four separate, pocket-sized (13.5 x 20.3 cm) booklets (one each for ruminants, swine, poultry, and general information). In the Kenya workshop, they chose a single book in a slightly larger format (17.5 x 24.8 cm).

The broad theme of each book (ethnoveterinary medicine) is divided into smaller topics, each of which is based on a manuscript prepared by a workshop participant. Table 2 lists the contents of the Kenya ethnoveterinary manual; Table 3 lists the contents of the Asia booklets. Suitably adapted to local diseases and problems, these lists could be used as a basis for ethnoveterinary and paraveterinary manuals in other areas of the world.

Each disease or problem topic contains the following sections:

- **Name of the disease** in English (*Mastitis* in the example from the Kenya manual to the right).
- The **species** affected (the cow silhouette in the box at the top right of the example).
- The disease name in **local languages**.
- A one- or two-sentence **summary** of the disease and its importance in Kenya.
- Disease **signs**, stated as simply as possible as a bulleted list.
- Disease **causes**, also as a bulleted list.
- **Prevention** methods (not represented in the mastitis example, but structured in a similar way to

Ethnoveterinary Medicine in Kenya

Mastitis



Jete (Embu), *hiha goru* (Gahbra), *kuruara thukamo* (Gikuyu), *miatapkinai* (Kipsigis), *lifuuti* (Maragoli), *nohina* (Samburu), *caandhobarar* (Somali Ethiopia), *caandhobarar* (Somali Kenya), *loebeta* (Turkana)

Mastitis is a problem which affects the udder of milking animals. It is more important in imported breeds than in local ones.

Signs

- One or more quarters of the udder are swollen.
- Abscesses on the udder.
- Udder feels hard to touch.
- Udder is painful and hot to touch. The animal kicks when you touch its udder. It does not allow the newborn to suckle.
- Clotted milk.
- Blood or pus in the milk.
- No milk.



Causes

- Tick bites.
- Dirty *bowu*.
- Wounds on the teat or udder.
- Poor milk hygiene.

Treatment

- Mix a handful of *dikdik* faeces with a little water to make paste. Smear the mixture onto the udder and teats. Leave it overnight. Do not allow the calf to suckle. The swelling goes down by the following morning. (Turkana)
- Burn dry donkey faeces in a pot. Put the pot under the udder of the sick animal until it sweats. Repeat if the condition does not improve. (3)
- Crush a handful of *oyioko* (*Nezbania vesbati*) leaves. Mix with 125 g of cream or butter for 5 minutes. Rub the mixture into the affected area until the swelling disappears. (Lao, 3)
- Chew a handful of *chamogong* (*Ajuga remota*) leaves and stems. Spit 2 mouthfuls of the juice and saliva directly onto the swollen udder once a day for 7 days. (Kipsigis, 3)

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the treatment methods described below).

- **Treatment** methods. Each treatment gives the preparation method, the type of plant and plant part used, the amount used, the application method, the dosage, and the length of time the treatment should be applied. It also gives the name of the ethnic group or community using the treatment (*Turkana, Luo* and *Kipsigis* in the example), and the rating given to the treatment by the workshop participants (3 in this case means that the treatment was a common traditional practice that animal healers generally acknowledge and agree works).
- A **picture** of the disease signs, vector (eg, flies or ticks) or treatment method.

Workshop advantages

Linking research and practice

The workshop is an excellent method of linking research, extension and field levels. The workshop brings together different groups—scientists, extension personnel, NGO staff, government personnel, teachers,

Table 2. Contents of *Ethnoveterinary medicine in Kenya: A field manual of traditional animal health care practices* (ITDG and IIRR 1996).

Introduction	4 Surgery and injuries	9 Lung diseases
Ethnic communities of Kenya	Surgical techniques	Coughs, colds and pneumonia
1 Preparing and using traditional medicines	Castration	Contagious pleuropneumonia
Preparing medicines	Fractures (broken bones)	Malignant catarrhal fever
Applying medicines	Wounds and burns	Newcastle disease
How much medicine to use	Abscesses	Pasteurellosis
Conserving medicinal plants	5 Skin and eye problems	Tuberculosis (TB)
Diseases that people can catch from animals	Contagious skin necrosis	10 Constipation and diarrhoea
Notifiable and immunisable diseases	Footrot	Bloat
2 Nutrition and management	Lumpy skin disease	Constipation
Pasture management	Orf	Diarrhoea
Feeding and nutrition	Pox	Coccidiosis
Feeding problems	Ringworm	Colibacillosis
Feeding young animals	Eye problems	Enterotoxaemia
Mineral deficiencies	6 External parasites	Johne's disease
Poisoning	Biting flies	Rinderpest
Snake bite	Fleas	Salmonellosis (fowl typhoid, paratyphoid, pullorum)
Housing	Leeches	11 Other infectious diseases
Predators and wild animals	Lice	Anthrax
3 Breeding and reproduction	Mange (mites, scabies)	Blackquarter (blackleg)
Breeding	Mosquitoes	Brucellosis (contagious abortion)
Abortion	Nasal bots (fly larvae)	Ephemeral fever (three day sickness)
Difficult birth	Ticks	Foot-and-mouth disease
Poor mothering	Tsetse flies	Glanders (farcy)
Navel ill (musky chick disease)	7 Internal parasites	Haemorrhagic septicaemia
Retained afterbirth	Bottle jaw	Leptospirosis
Uterine prolapse	Coenurosis (gid)	Rabies
Mastitis	Cysticercosis (meat measles)	Tetanus (lockjaw)
Milk fever	Hydatid disease	Wooden tongue (actinobacillosis)
Veneral diseases	Liverflukes	12 Appendices
Sheath rot	Lungworms	Animal names in local languages
	Stomach and intestinal worms	Animal weights
	8 Diseases carried by ticks	Disease names in local languages
	Anaplasmosis	Plant names in local languages
	Babesiosis (redwater)	Weights and measures
	East coast fever	Participant profiles
	Heartwater	List of papers presented
	Trypanosomosis (nagana, surra)	References

Table 3. Contents of *Ethnoveterinary medicine in Asia: An information kit on traditional animal health care practices* (IIRR 1994).

1 General information	2 Ruminants	3 Swine	4 Poultry
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
How to use these manuals	Lack of appetite	Lack of appetite	Reduced appetite
Identification, collection and preparation of medicinal plants	Fever	Fever	Coughs and colds
Application of herbal medicine	Coughs and colds	Coughs and colds	Diarrhea
Common units of measurement	Diarrhea	Diarrhea and dehydration	Intestinal worms
Estimating live weight	Dehydration	Constipation	Ticks, lice and mites
Simple surgical techniques	Bloat	Poisoning	Fungal diseases
Treating castration wounds	Constipation	Internal parasites	Infectious diseases
Glossary of English and botanical names	Poisoning	Pork tapeworm	Wounds
Glossary of medicinal plants	Internal parasites: Stomach and gut worms	Scabies or mite infestation	Housing
Ethnoveterinary question list	Liverflukes	Lice	Heat stress
Glossary of technical terms	Tick infestation	Infectious diseases	Feeding
	Scabies (mange)	Problems of the eye	Calcium deficiency
	Lice	Wounds	
	Fungus infections of the skin	Sprains	
	Infectious diseases	Housing	
	Foot rot	Feeding	
	Eye diseases	Breeding	
	Wounds	Care of newborn	
	Bleeding	Udder infection	
	Snake bite	Anemia in piglets	
	Sprains		
	Difficulty in urinating		
	Housing		
	Feeding		
	Mineral deficiency		
	Breeding		
	Pregnancy and birthing		
	Care of mother animals after birthing		
	Care of newborn		
	Udder infection		
	Decreased milk flow		

indigenous experts, farmers and other local people—to develop and produce a common set of materials. Scientists learn of indigenous techniques and can plan clinical trials or other forms of research on them; and scientific knowledge is translated into a form that extensionists and livestock holders can use.

The diversity of skills, organisations and backgrounds of participants is key to ensuring that numerous ideas are represented in the materials produced. Several authors can contribute to each section of the materials. This method provides an opportunity for scientists to validate ethnoveterinary practices, since they are able to discuss details of each practice with the indigenous specialists using it, compare it with standard veterinary methods, and judge its applicability and effectiveness. The process of comments and revisions from other participants is like the peer review in journal publishing, but is more intensive and involves more reviewers. The workshop also allows members of the intended audience (farmers, extensionists...) to contribute to the preparation of the materials and pre-test the text and illustrations.

The detailed discussions during the workshop enable participants to learn a great deal from each other. This sharing of experiences allows the development of networks that continue to be fruitful long after the end of the workshop itself, and can have an impact on research agendas and project implementation. Scientists at the Kenya workshop were surprised at the depth and accuracy of the traditional healers' knowledge. Partly as a result, the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute is planning a joint project with ITDG on ethnoveterinary medicine. A group of Luo traditional healers and NGO staff are developing an ethnoveterinary manual for western Kenya. And after a workshop on upland resource management in the

Philippines, participants have held further workshops to translate and adapt the English-language manual for Thailand, Indonesia and the South Pacific (FAO and IIRR 1995).

Speed

The method is a very fast way of generating and publishing information. The concentration of resource persons, editors, artists and desktop-publishing resources at one time and place makes this possible. In conventional methods, the editor is given a completed manuscript, and then must repeatedly contact the authors to check information. Artwork must also be commissioned separately. This takes time and delays publication. Involving the editors and artists in developing the manuscript means that this checking can take place during the workshop itself—considerably speeding and easing the editorial task. With suitable preparation, it is possible to produce material ready for the printer within a few days or weeks after the end of the workshop itself.



Flexibility

The workshop process is extremely flexible. The repeated presentations, critiquing and revision of drafts allow for papers to be reviewed and revised substantially, new topics to be developed during the workshop and topics to be combined, dropped or split into parts.

The process can be modified and adapted to suit individual situations. Workshops have ranged from 1½ days to two weeks in length, covering from four to more than 100 manuscripts, and with between 15 and 150 participants. These workshops have covered a wide range of topics, including agroforestry, indigenous knowledge, family planning, occupational health and biodiversity (some of these are listed in Table 1). Workshops have been conducted in several non-English languages, including Amharic, Chinese, Indonesian, Spanish and Vietnamese.

While the approach described here relies heavily on computers (and thus skilled operators and a reliable electricity supply), the method can also be adapted for use at the field level where these are lacking. A group of villagers in the uplands of Negros, the Philippines, used a similar approach in a one-day workshop to produce a manual on indigenous tree species; all manuscripts and illustrations were prepared by hand, and the final publication is hand-written (Willard 1995).

When is a workshop appropriate?

Workshops are suitable for preparing illustrated materials—such as extension booklets and field manuals—that present relevant, practical information in simple language. They are best used where a large number of people know a little, but no one knows a lot about the subject. The subject area must be divided into topics and assigned to individual participants. A workshop approach would therefore not be appropriate for narrow subjects or if one person or a small group has all the information needed to write a book, or for lengthy literature reviews or the presentation of detailed information. In such cases, more conventional methods of writing are more appropriate.

The workshop approach is very different from the scientific conferences familiar to many participants. It is a very intensive process, making considerable demands on participants and (especially) the workshop staff. Manuscripts undergo major revisions: a few participants may complain that their work has been changed too much. Workshops are also relatively expensive, since the host must cover food and board, airfares, staffing and possibly per diems. When considering whether to plan a workshop or use conventional methods, the benefits of the workshop approach must be weighed against these limitations.

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