

B.3 Livestock Sheltering in Humanitarian Situations

Background

Livestock have been sheltered within household infrastructure for hundreds of years. Vernacular buildings in many less developed countries still contain provision for livestock. Fences and bushes within a household plot of land are also traditionally used to shelter livestock. For example in Gujarat, India, thorny fences of *Acacia Arabica* are used to protect the buffaloes. In Sri Lanka, fences of wood and wire are used alongside sheds made of wood or bamboo, roofed with grass or leaves.

In less developed countries, livestock are often people's largest capital asset and keeping them within the household plot is the most obvious way of protecting that asset. Wherever people find shelter, they attempt to make provision for their animals to live close to their dwelling, especially if their livelihoods depend upon them.

Why consider livestock in a shelter response?

Livestock are important to people for a broad range of reasons. They are a key wealth asset acting as a bank account in areas where people have no other means of storing financial capital. Livestock are also important for livelihoods dependent on animal produce and labour, transporting goods and people, providing milk and meat, cultural activities and personal security.

In less developed countries where humanitarian assistance is required post disaster, up to 70 per cent of resource-poor people rely on livestock for their livelihoods. This dependence, coupled with the potential advantages of linking emergency responses with recovery and development programmes, gives a window of opportunity for emergency shelter actors to incorporate a sustainable livelihoods approach at the emergency phase. Assessments of livestock shelter needs could be carried out as part of broader shelter needs assessments.

Designing livestock shelters is one of the simpler parts of an overall shelter response. Support for the construction of sheds, covered areas or secured external spaces can be provided or enough space can be left in settlement planning for people to build these themselves. Livestock sheltering should include consideration of access to grazing, fodder production, environmental impact, vaccines and quarantine. Failure to do so can lead to weak shelter that can be damaging to animal and human health, and is not locally sustainable.

Livestock in shelter responses

Shelter solutions for livestock are seldom seen as a priority by responding organisations during the first stages of an emergency. This is often due to the assumptions that livestock sheltering is a cost at the

expense of human needs or a lack of consideration of livestock shelter needs at all. Planning for livestock shelter need may not incur an additional cost, and will help mitigate issues arising from livestock and people living in close proximity.

A few examples do exist, such as the response to the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, where shelter for livestock has been built by external organisations. More common are accounts of how disaster-affected people make provisions for their livestock themselves, often using the materials that organisations have intended them to use for sheltering their family.

In cold climates, such as northern Pakistan, there is greater consideration of livestock shelter needs as part of a sustainable livelihood solution. In warm climates,



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Top to bottom: European farmhouse with space for cattle underneath. Goat shed attached to main house in Sri Lanka. House in Vietnam with pigs sheltered under the raised floor.

Photos: Top Julia Macro, Below Tim Leyland



such as in Haiti post-earthquake 2010, the need to shelter livestock from the elements was reduced. In very hot climates, however, there may be a need for shade which people often take their own steps to find or create.

The argument for sheltering livestock can also be made when there are potential security threats from livestock thieves. If the livestock asset is safely secured and/or out of sight, this can reduce opportunistic livestock raids and reduce the vulnerability of the livestock owner.

Sheltering issues relating to livestock

For displaced and non-displaced disaster-affected people who are keeping livestock, or where people have migrated with their livestock, there are several shelter and settlement issues related to livestock:

Spread of trans-boundary disease: As people migrate with their livestock due to conflict, drought or other natural disasters there is an increased risk of spreading infections. This risk can be mitigated through working with national and regional disease surveillance projects (where available) and planning a locally appropriate response with regional veterinary and public health organisations.

Access to grazing / fodder: There may be reduced grazing land or fodder available or access may be constrained due to insecurity, difficult terrain or host community relations. Competition between host and displaced communities over grazing land and watering points can often cause conflict and is therefore a key consideration in settlement planning.

Location of livestock: When displaced people in a camp or temporary settlement have their livestock with them, space for livestock should be included in site planning. Considerations include living space for the animals, access to grazing, exit routes and a secure



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Above: A child's coat is given to a calf after the Pakistan earthquake, and a shelter is built for the livestock whilst the family are living in a similarly makeshift shelter.
Photos: Joseph Ashmore



and protected location. Cultural norms may prevent communal grouping of livestock as people may prefer to keep their livestock separate for fear of identification problems or sharing disease. For non-displaced people community livestock sheltering may be possible, if identification and disease control are considered. In the majority of cases, people prefer to keep their livestock assets within their own household plot, and consideration of this should be made when planning.

Environmental impact: Livestock can over-graze, pollute water sources and cause local erosion.

Water availability: Households with livestock require extra water for the animals. Household water shortages are sometimes due to a failure to include animals' drinking needs. Separate water points for livestock and people should be planned where possible to reduce contamination of human water sources.

Faeces disposal: The collection and disposal of livestock faeces should be included in a shelter response to prevent health and hygiene problems. Dried dung can be an important, cheap source of fuel.

Host community / Government: Along with firewood and water collection, livestock grazing can place extra demands on fragile natural resources. Arrangements for livestock should be discussed with local communities and government.

As international organisations seldom incorporate livestock considerations into their emergency shelter programmes, problems arise that, with greater awareness and integrated planning, could be mitigated against or eliminated completely.

The Livestock Emergency Guidelines and Standards (LEGS) can be used to support decision making and planning for livestock shelter and settlement interventions. (For further information see www.livestock-emergency.net)



"Dried dung can be used for fuel".
Dung drying in a camp near Kandahar, Afghanistan, 2003.
Photo: Joseph Ashmore



After Cyclone Aila in Bangladesh, with limited space available on road sides or embankments, many families prioritised secure shelter for their livestock.
Photo: Joseph Ashmore



In Dadaab, Kenya, there are restrictions on livestock, but they remain an important livelihoods asset.
Photo: Joseph Ashmore

Conclusion

The need to consider livestock-based livelihoods during the emergency stage of shelter responses is beginning to be identified by some agencies. Simple actions, such as assessing livestock-based livelihoods in a disaster affected community, can enable responding shelter agencies to decide whether there is a need to factor in livestock considerations.

In the majority of cases, conflict and disaster affected people make provisions for their livestock shelter without support or resource allocation from external organisations. Greater awareness of livestock issues by responding organisations could enhance the value of livestock to displaced people by reducing levels of animal ill-health caused by inappropriate sheltering.

Seeing the sheltering of livestock as part of a livelihoods solution may provide organisations with better opportunities for integrating livestock-based interventions. Increasingly organisations want to provide people with the tools they need for self-recovery, where affected people choose how and where they will rebuild, which may involve livestock as a necessity. Improved support for livestock-based livelihoods may be part of an umbrella of interventions to improve resilience.

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