

Tamil Nadu's sex-sorted artificial insemination project records 95.7 per cent success

CHENNAI: The State government scheme, which uses sex-sorted semen during artificial insemination of cows to ensure breeding of female calves, has recorded a whopping 95.7 per cent success rate as against the global standard of 90 per cent.

The scheme was implemented in November last year to increase milk production and thereby enhance revenue for dairy farmers. A few other States had introduced the scheme a few years ago. As many as 247 female calves and 11 male calves were born during first phase.

A total of 2,000 sex-sorted semen straws were distributed to Krishnagiri, Erode, Madurai and Theni districts, for selective reproduction of cows. All semen doses belonged to Red Sindhi breed bulls, offsprings of which are capable of yielding 2,800 to 3,500 litres of milk a year.

Until February this year, 745 such insemination procedures were conducted at veterinary dispensaries, through which 258 calves have been born. "The sexed semen doses are given only to cows of Jersey crossbreed as per the State's breeding policy. So far, the calving rate stands at 33 per cent. We expect more deliveries of female calves by the end of November, after which we will know the exact success rate. The semen doses are fully subsidised and the farmers have to bear no costs," Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Service director A Gnanasekaran said.

Officials said that unlike regular artificial insemination, well fed cows which have calved at least once are chosen for providing sexed semen. Also due to the high costs involved in procuring semen straw, animals with robust endocrine system and with no reproductive disorders were selected.

Last year, the government allocated Rs 47.5 crore for setting up a laboratory at Udthagamandalam for producing sexed semen. At present, the government procures sexed semen straws from Genus Breeding India Private Limited (ABS India) in Pune.

For the second phase of the scheme, the Animal Husbandry department plans to procure over 3,500 sexed semen straws. The second phase will begin by January, but this time the farmers may be charged 25 per cent of the semen cost, officials said.

More number of female calves ensures more revenue for farmers, and also the financial burden rearing male cattle is lifted. According to official data, a total of 48.88 lakh artificial insemination procedures were performed during 2019-20 in Tamil Nadu.

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