

Positive aspects of the use of herbs in the diet of livestock – analysis of the phenomenon and current knowledge of the subject among breeders – part II

Summary

The aim of the study was a review of the literature on the beneficial effects of herbs as diet supplements for farm animals and to assess current knowledge of this topic among livestock farmers. An attempt was also made to assess the degree of popularity of herbal medicine and the use of herbs in breeding practice as a way to modulate production results. A survey was conducted in May 2022. The task of 100 respondents aged 18 to 55+ was to answer 10 questions. The first part of the questionnaire (4 questions) concerned socio-demographics and the type of animals kept. The second part of the questionnaire dealt with the subjects for analysis, which included knowledge of phytotherapeutic plant species; properties of herbs and medicinal plants; the scope and frequency of use of herbs for animals; observable effects of the use or lack of use of herbs; sources of knowledge of phytotherapy; and the respondent's personal opinion on the issue raised in the questionnaire. The survey results indicate an average level of knowledge of herbs among livestock farmers. The vast majority of respondents knew the species of herbs commonly found in Poland and were able to indicate at least one of their properties. The use of herbs and medicinal plants by the respondents in animal feeding in practice is negligible. Of the 60 species cultivated in Poland as herbal plants, the respondents indicated three: garlic, chamomile and nettle. This indicates low interest among breeders in natural methods of diet supplementation and treatment. The use of herbs in animal husbandry and nutrition is currently limited, as only one eighth of the respondents have observed its positive effects. Supplementation with herbs is regarded as less effective than drugs and synthetic preparations. Nevertheless, this is a topic with development potential, due to the universal properties of herbs and their usefulness in human and animal nutrition.

KEY WORDS: animals, herbs, nutrition, phytotherapy