High milk-yielding camels recovered from complex illness with a high-energy feeding regime

Description

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Practical experience with a big herd of dairy camels

Practically, I have been working with camels since 2004 ((almost 18 years). For the last 9 years, Iâ€™m working as a technical manager with an entity of camel milk production farm in the UAE. We have very high-yielding camels, and some of them are producing extraordinary quantities (>15kg/day).

Feeding regime for the lactating camels

In routine, we provide Alfalfa hay (adlib) plus TMR (total mix ratio with 15% CP and 75 %TDN) about 5-7 kg/lactating camel. The camels producing up to 10 kg of milk can fulfill their nutrient requirements (esp. CP and energy) from this feeding regime but the high yield (10 and above) canâ€™t fulfill their requirements, especially the energy and vitamins.

For a lactating camel who produces up to 10 kg of milk per day, the net energy (NE) and crude protein (CP) requirements are 95 MJ and 200 g respectively.

The high-yielding camels go to a negative nutrient balance (energy), usually, the camel gets sick, mostly because of ketosis (to fulfill the energy requirements from fats, ketone bodies are produced) which depress the immunity. Many blood tests become positive, enzymes are up and down, fever, off-feeding, etc. happen. Usually, the Vets misunderstand the situation and follow the results of the tests. They inject high doses of antibiotics, antiprotozoal, and others, resulting in the bodyâ€™s mechanism collapse.

Complex stress in dairy camels

Complex stress of high yielding and a lower energy intake almost kills the camels. The last straw is overdosing on medicine (chemicals and drugs) for the so-called treatment. In such conditions, additional energy allowance, feeding of herbs (native plants), and giving special care to the individual camels are really very practical and helpful. The camel is like birds (the birds and camels have the same Hemoglobin, oval shape), very sensitive to the fungus in feed, and highly reluctant to drugs (especially injections and infusions).

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Recovery after high-energy diets and feeding with native plants additionally

In some cases with high-yielding elite camels, I restricted the treatment with drugs but only systematic treatment (antipyretics and vitamins) was allowed. We put them separately and provided cornflakes or date syrup with salts and desert plants (Detrigium glaucum, Zygophyllum qatarenses, Calligonum comosum). Such a feeding cum boosting mechanism really helped and the camels started recovering in a week. Here is a video of a very high-yielding camel that recovered in a week, from zero milk to 20 kg/day again.

A bunch of native herb provides more nutrients and medicine than a cartoon of factory made drugs.

Dr. Raziq Kakar

Way forward

Keeping the animals (especially the camels) stress-free and happy is actually keeping the camels healthy. Better to void stressful treatment with antibiotics and shifting such high-yielding camels to energy-rich feeding mechanisms really helps. The local herbs (flora) really help and provide unknown health-promising nutrients.

Further reading

Here are some important links about camel dairying in the following lines.

- https://camel4all.info/
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/216145752_Camel_a_potential_dairy_animal_in_difficult_environm
- https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/science/how-to-milk-a-camel-it-s-not-as-straightforward-as-you-might-think-1.752779

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