The Effects of Antibiotics in Poultry in India

Today's quote

"You know you're in love when you can't fall asleep because reality is finally better than your dreams." — Dr. Seuss

Lessons from another jailbreak

The daring escape of six prisoners, including the self-styled commander of a Khalistan militant group from the Nabha Jail in Punjab is another wake-up call for the security establishment. This is the second major jailbreak in the country in the span of a week involving high-profile prisoners jailed on terrorism charges who had been well-planned and executed. While the jailbreak by members of the Students' Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) from the Bhopal Central Prison last month was planned inside and executed largely by the prisoners themselves, the incident in Nabha was aided by a group of armed men from outside wearing police uniforms. Shortly after the Bhopal jailbreak, all those who had escaped were gunned down in an alleged encounter. And a day after the Punjab incident, Khalistan Liberation Front chief Harmandir Mintoo was killed in Delhi, where the alleged mastermind, Parminder Singh, was arrested in Shamli district in western Uttar Pradesh. Apart from Mintoo, the five others who escaped are still at large. They are identified as Kashmira Singh, Naveen, Gokaran, Vicky Chandar, Amanpreet, Bhootan, Gurpreet Sekhon and Nita Deol, all described as Khalistan activists. The escape plan was to release the militants or the gangsters, or all of them. Whatever the aim, it is evident that the so-called high security prisons are hardly foolproof. Those incarcerated have enough scope to hatch a conspiracy, keep in touch with accomplices outside and finally escape plans in meticulous detail.

What is also troubling is that even before the jailbreak, there has been thoroughly investigated and as the hunt for the escaped men is still on, the incident has taken on political overtones. With Punjab due for an Assembly election early next year, the suspicion that these men were breaking out of jail to disturb the peace in the run-up to the polls will naturally arise. However, while voicing this suspicion, Punjab Deputy Chief Minister Sukhbir Singh Badal has alleged a Pakistanti hand. State Director-General of Police Suresh Arora has voiced suspicion of official connivance, noting that retaliatory firing by the police at the armed men was completely ineffective. Former Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal has called the incident a sign of breakdown of law and order and alleged official complicity at the highest level.

Drugs, mostly antibiotics, mixed with chicken feed, used to serve as growth promoters across poultry, were being passed on to humans through broiler meat and eggs. Residue of antibiotics in poultry meat and eggs increases resistant bacteria to antibiotics, including those used to treat human infectious diseases. However, reports various doctors across the country. Many doctors are forced to resort to a higher dosage to make their drugs effective.

In Northeastern states and Assam which produce 40% of India's broiler meat, the occurrence of which is consumed in states and UTs because of its spread causes infections. In these states poultry farms are fed on feed rich in antibiotics, which is not good for their daily diet. It would take them three for three days. But now the doctors are forced to use it for a maximum of six days. It means that they have to take chicken grows into an adult chicken in just five weeks.

Among the antibiotics which have turned less effective over the years are tetracyclins, oxytetracyclins, enrofloxacin, neomycin and trifloxacin, to name a few. Many were purchased from China, which is a major import destination for the food. Many are being used in the food industry, which is not good for the people. It is a matter of concern. DCDFI has issued circulars which are to be followed in order to reduce the use of antibiotics in poultry production and ensure that the products are properly labelled.

Preventive medicine specialists say that drugs are being misused in the field. Scores of drugs now have reduced efficacy when these are used to alter its own growth. Many doctors observe here. They point out that the use of drugs like azithromycin, norfloxacin and enrofloxacin is in the livestock. At the same time, there has been a widespread use of antibiotics in feed and milk.

Methods to tackle the misuse of antibiotics

Many researchers are of the opinion that there are alternative solutions. They suggest that antibiotics in poultry feed are not the only solution. Organic acidifiers and biotechnologically effective enzymes could be used to promote the growth of broilers. These enzymes are produced by bacteria and make the feed available to the animals without triggering resistance. Some herbal preparations for poultry, feed and water are also being studied by various organisations for that government should frame a policy to control the use of antibiotics in feed and milk.

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