

INTRODUCTION

In the Five Year Development Plan issued by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the period 1964 - 68 the following comments were made.

'.....there is considerable room for an increase in local livestock production, especially if the policy aim of attaining a greater degree of self-sufficiency in food production is to be realised over the plan period.'

'One very important factor in livestock development is the cost of animal feeds. High costs, have tended to inhibit development in this country.....'

This illustrates the increasing awareness of the potential of the livestock industry in Trinidad and Tobago, which, until recent times, has been seriously neglected. Examples of the progress that is being made are very evident:-

The setting up of a condensary and the importation of high grade Holstein stock in the dairy industry,

Grading up of local beef stock to imported Jamaica Red and Charollais cattle,

The extremely rapid expansion of the poultry industry.

However, when one looks at the sheep of Trinidad and Tobago, it is apparent that very little attention has been paid to them, either by means of improving breeding performance or bettering management technique. Although there are very few sheep on the two islands, there is a considerable demand for mutton and lamb as shown by the high import figures for these commodities.

Can this be replaced by home production?

Indeed, this would be a means of saving foreign exchange, which is so essential to a developing country such as Trinidad. Sheep have an added advantage over other forms of livestock in that they can be fed

quite adequately on locally produced feedstuffs such as citrus pulp and coconut meal, where necessary in addition to grass, without requiring imports of expensive concentrates that have to be paid for out of foreign exchange funds.

Information on the present structure of the sheep population and of its performance, is almost non-existent and few people in Trinidad and Tobago, claim possession of extensive knowledge on sheep husbandry methods.

This study has been carried out in an attempt to collect some information on the structure and performance of the sheep population in Trinidad and Tobago.

The report is split into five sections which presents information on the sheep population both at the national level and farm level, analyses of some data on sheep weights and on carcass composition and finally discusses the implications of these results.