

Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of Animal Husbandry in Qinghai Province

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Abstract: This article discusses the relationship between environmental protection and the sustainable development of animal husbandry in Qinghai Province. As an important region for the development of animal husbandry, Qinghai Province faces the dual challenges of environmental protection and economic development. Firstly, the emissions and waste disposal from livestock and poultry farming have caused pollution and pressure on the environment, posing a threat to the stability of ecosystems and the sustainable utilization of water resources. Secondly, the vulnerability of the ecological environment and the increased risk of natural disasters have added uncertainty and vulnerability to animal husbandry. Finally, in order to achieve sustainable development of animal husbandry, Qinghai Province needs to formulate and implement environmental policies and regulations promote ecological environment protection and restoration.

Keywords: Qinghai Province; Environmental protection; Sustainable development; Policy recommendations.

1. The Importance and Current Status of Livestock Industry in Qinghai Province

Qinghai Province, located in the northwest region of China, is an area with a well-developed livestock industry. The livestock industry plays a significant role in the economic and social development of Qinghai Province, providing employment opportunities and income sources for farmers and herders. However, with rapid economic growth and the expansion of the livestock industry, environmental issues have gradually emerged.

1.1 Importance of Animal Husbandry in Qinghai Province

Economic Pillar: The animal husbandry industry in Qinghai Province serves as a significant pillar of the local rural economy. It provides employment opportunities and income sources, particularly for farmers and herders, for whom livestock farming is a primary economic activity.

Food Supply and Security: The animal husbandry products in Qinghai Province provide essential support for local and neighboring regions' food supply and security. Beef, mutton, dairy products, and other livestock products are integral parts of people's daily diet. The development of animal husbandry can meet the demand for meat and dairy products, providing residents with nutritious, safe, and reliable food options.^[1]

Ecological Balance and Grassland Management: Animal husbandry has a significant impact on the grassland ecosystems in Qinghai Province. Proper livestock farming practices can promote the restoration and growth of grassland vegetation, maintaining ecological balance. Through traditional grazing methods, farmers and herders contribute to the renewal and conservation of grasslands, ensuring the stability of the grassland ecosystem.

1.2 Current Status of Animal Husbandry Development in Qinghai Province

Expansion of Farming Scale: The livestock farming scale in Qinghai Province has been continuously expanding. The main livestock species include cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry, with a focus on cattle and sheep.

Integration of Crop and Livestock Farming: Qinghai Province has promoted the development model of integrating crop and livestock farming, achieving a beneficial interaction between animal husbandry and agriculture. The manure and by-products from livestock farming can be utilized as organic fertilizers for crop cultivation. Conversely, crop residues such as straw can be used as feed resources, promoting the coordinated development of animal husbandry and agriculture.^[2]

Technological Improvement and Innovation: The animal husbandry sector in Qinghai Province has emphasized technological innovation and improvement by promoting the adoption of new farming techniques and management methods. For instance, advanced feeding technologies, disease prevention and control measures.

2. The Impact of Livestock Industry on the Environment in Qinghai Province

2.1 Land Resource Utilization and Grassland Ecosystem

Pressure on land resource utilization: Livestock farming in Qinghai Province occupies a significant amount of land resources. The construction of farms and pastures requires vast areas of land for grazing and fodder cultivation, leading to land occupation and degradation.

Disruption of ecological balance: Qinghai Province's grassland ecosystem is fragile, and livestock farming disrupts its balance. Overgrazing results in vegetation destruction and reduced biodiversity, affecting the ecological functions of grasslands. This can lead to habitat loss for wildlife, species extinction, and ecosystem instability.

2.2 Water Resource Management and Pollution Control

Water resource utilization and consumption: Livestock farming has a significant impact on water resource utilization and consumption. A large amount of water is needed for drinking, fodder cultivation, and livestock cleaning during the livestock production process. The presence of large-scale farms and pastures further increases the demand for water resources, putting pressure on local water supplies.

Water pollution issues: Livestock farming generates pollutants such as feces, urine, and wastewater, which contain a high concentration of organic matter and nutrients. If not properly treated and managed, these pollutants can enter water bodies through runoff, leaching, and erosion, causing eutrophication and water quality degradation. This can harm aquatic organisms and ecosystems.

Effects on soil moisture and water cycle: Overgrazing and improper grassland management can lead to soil moisture loss and disruption of the water cycle.

2.3 Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change

Methane emissions: Livestock farming is a significant source of methane emissions. Methane gas produced during the digestive process of ruminant animals such as cows and sheep is a major source of emissions. In the vast pastoral areas of Qinghai Province, where livestock farming is prevalent, the methane emissions are substantial.

Contribution to greenhouse gases: Methane is a potent greenhouse gas that plays a significant role in climate change. Its greenhouse effect is much greater than that of carbon dioxide. The methane emissions from livestock farming have a significant impact on the total greenhouse gas emissions and greenhouse effect, both in Qinghai Province and globally, exacerbating the issue of climate change.

Impact of climate change: Climate change has various impacts on livestock farming in Qinghai Province. Increasing temperatures and the rise in extreme weather events may lead to unstable water supply in grasslands, affecting livestock's access to water and fodder.^[3]

3. Importance of Environmental Conservation in the Sustainable Development of Livestock Farming in Qinghai Province

3.1 Ecosystem Protection and Biodiversity Conservation

Ecosystem Protection: Qinghai Province is home to diverse ecosystems, including grasslands, lakes, wetlands, etc., which are crucial for the development of livestock farming. These ecosystems provide pasture for grass growth and fodder resources, maintaining the ecological balance and sustainable development of livestock farming.

Biodiversity Conservation: Qinghai Province is one of the important biodiversity conservation areas in China, housing numerous rare and endangered wildlife and plant species. Livestock farming has some impact on the habitats and environments of these species.

3.2 Pollution Control and Sustainable Water Resource Utilization

Environmental Pollution Control: The development of livestock farming entails environmental pollution issues such as waste discharge, livestock wastewater, and animal manure. These pollutants can have impacts on soil, water bodies, and the atmosphere, posing threats to the stability and health of the ecosystem.

Sustainable Water Resource Utilization: Livestock farming requires a significant amount of water for drinking, cleaning, and cooling purposes. However, in the development of livestock farming, effective measures must be taken to protect water resources and prevent excessive exploitation and contamination.

4. Challenges of Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development in Qinghai Province's Livestock Farming

4.1 Fragility of Ecological Environment and Risks of Natural Disasters

Ecological Environment Fragility: The ecological environment in Qinghai Province is relatively fragile, including vulnerable grassland ecosystems, soil susceptible to drought and grassland degradation, and fragile water resources. The development of livestock farming puts pressure on these fragile ecological environments, such as issues of overgrazing, grassland degradation, and excessive water resource utilization. Protecting and improving the ecological environment is a prerequisite for the sustainable development of livestock farming.

4.2 Livestock Farming Emissions and Environmental Pollution

Livestock Waste Emissions: Livestock farming generates a large amount of waste, including feces, urine, and feed residues. These waste materials contain significant amounts of pollutants such as nitrogen, phosphorus, and organic matter. If not properly managed, these waste emissions can lead to soil and water pollution. Livestock waste emissions are a significant source of environmental pollution.^[4]

Water Pollution: Nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus from livestock waste can easily dissolve into water bodies, leading to eutrophication. This can trigger excessive algal growth, resulting in harmful algal blooms and deteriorating water quality. Air Pollution: The emission of gases such as ammonia and methane during livestock farming can have negative impacts on the atmosphere. These gases not only affect air quality but also contribute to global climate change issues.

5. Strategies and Measures to Promote Sustainable Development of Livestock Industry in Qinghai Province

5.1 Policy support: Develop policies that support sustainable development in the livestock industry, including financial support, tax incentives, and loan policies. The government can provide funding and technical support to encourage farmers and herders to adopt sustainable farming practices and management measures.

5.2 Promote technological innovation: Strengthen technological innovation to drive progress and innovation in the livestock industry. By researching and promoting advanced farming techniques and management methods, we can reduce resource consumption, environmental pollution, and emissions while improving production efficiency and sustainability in the livestock industry.^[5]

5.3 Promote sustainable agriculture and animal husbandry: Foster the coordinated development of agriculture and animal husbandry, encourage the synergy between the livestock industry and other agricultural sectors and value chains, and achieve optimized and circular utilization of resources.^[6] Promote organic livestock products and grass-fed farming models to meet the market demand for green, healthy, and sustainable products.

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