



Story of the Month: March 2010

A New Breed of Entrepreneur!

Jeevan Raikwal, a well-dressed, small built young man with a funky hair-do could be easily mistaken for someone attending college in a city. When he starts talking however, he has an intensity that belies his age of twenty-two. Jeevan has established himself as a community based paravet in the Reetha area for the past 3 years and takes his responsibility of vaccinating, treating and improving the quality of livestock in his community very seriously.

Ever since he was a child, he has had a fascination for animals. He finished 12th grade and was considering his options, when – through Chirag – he got the opportunity to attend a 4-month training program on artificial insemination organised by the Uttarakhand Livestock Development Board at Rishikesh. Subsequently, he was placed with the government livestock center in Haldwani and after completing his tenure returned to his village.



Although the course was specifically related to conducting artificial inseminations, he was interested in primary health care of livestock as well and learnt as much as he could by watching and learning from experience. Prakash, an experienced member of Chirag's animal husbandry team is his mentor and he spent several months apprenticing with him after returning to his village of Simayal. When asked about his veterinary training, he replies "You could say that my time with Prakash, was my training. Everything that I know is thanks to working with him in the field."

Being a paravet in the hills is not easy. For one – the day starts early, sometimes at the crack of dawn and with villages scattered across the hillsides, walking between homes could take long. When Jeevan returned from his training and decided to establish himself as a paravet, it took some time and effort to let people know of his services. He printed posters and put them up, distributed visiting cards, and let people know through word of mouth. However in a short span of time he has established himself and has a busy practice and knows almost every household in the area. "In the beginning it was tough, and I needed to be very systematic about getting clients" he says, "but I knew that this is what I wanted to do and I would do all I could to make it work". Although his specialty is artificial insemination in which he has conducted close to a 1000 procedures in three years, he is also called on for administering primary health treatment and vaccinating animals in the community. "They (the community) do not have an option, as it is hard to get access to veterinarians in this area and so I do what I can" he says. Very often, he also liaises with the government livestock department to hold animal husbandry health camps in the village.



Through his work, he earns a decent livelihood and has recently bought a motorbike to commute between areas, where possible. He currently earns on average nearly 4,000Rs each month. He says that things have become easier in the last 3 years with cell phones. Earlier when there were no mobile phones, he would be out for the day, return and then be told to go back to the village for another emergency. In the hills, the distance between villages can be far and with cell phones, it is easier to coordinate visits and respond to emergencies.

Apart from treating livestock, he is also working to improve yields of cattle through better breeds, fodder and management and communicating with farmers on the ways to improve health and yield of cattle. He works with two farmer federations, one makes nutritious cattle feed using local cereals and the other produces traditional home based remedies for livestock – both initiated by Chirag. He feels that his relationships with farmers over the years has built trust and so he can make a difference to their lives.

When asked about what does he like best about being a paravet – he responds that he finds it both challenging as well as fun – and at the same time he is able to earn a living in his own village while serving his community. I ask him if he has other plans at the moment. He replies “why would I want to switch to something else now? I am still learning something new everyday and would like to continue my work here”

In conversation with Puja Jawahar