

Livestock Diseases in the Northern and Eastern Countryside of Hama

Livestock in the Countryside of Hama

Syria has a vast desert, the Syrian Desert, where large numbers of livestock are bred. It is well-known for a distinguished breed of sheep, Awassi sheep, which is esteemed throughout the world. Sheep from this breed were widely exported before the current crisis. The Syrian desert includes also many breeds of goats and dairy cattle. This livestock kept a sort of food balance as Syrians relied on red meat and white meat. However, there was a surge in the use of white meat and a decline in the use of red during the crisis due to the increase in the numbers of sheep and cattle which led to an increase in red meat prices. In addition, dairy products from this livestock contributed, in a different way, to the food balance.

With the onset of the Syrian crisis, smuggling to neighboring countries led to a decrease in the numbers of livestock. Vaccination of livestock stopped in NSAG held areas since vaccination was carried out by advisory units and livestock care centers in villages and towns. There was also a decrease in the number of veterinary pharmacies and vets, in addition to the scarcity of veterinary medications in NSAG held areas as checkpoints prevented transporting these materials outside the regime areas. Excessive slaughter of livestock also contributed to the decrease in livestock numbers.

In addition to the challenges to the breeding of livestock, a number of diseases emerged, the most important of which was scabies (a parasitic arachnid that attacks the skin of animals) which surfaced recently and inflicted large numbers of livestock in the countryside of Hama, particularly in the east. The lack of medications to treat scabies, coupled with malnutrition, led to the loss of large numbers of livestock. Insufficient numbers of vets in the countryside contributed to the spread of scabies and made it uncontrollable. Livestock owners were in dire need for direction to select the convenient medication, in proper doses, and timing.

238,062

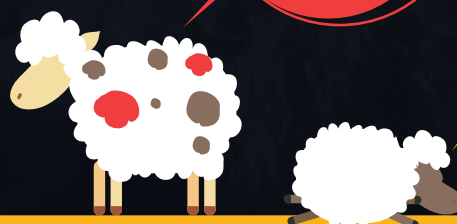
livestock (sheep and goats)
in the assessed area

74,008

inflicted
livestock

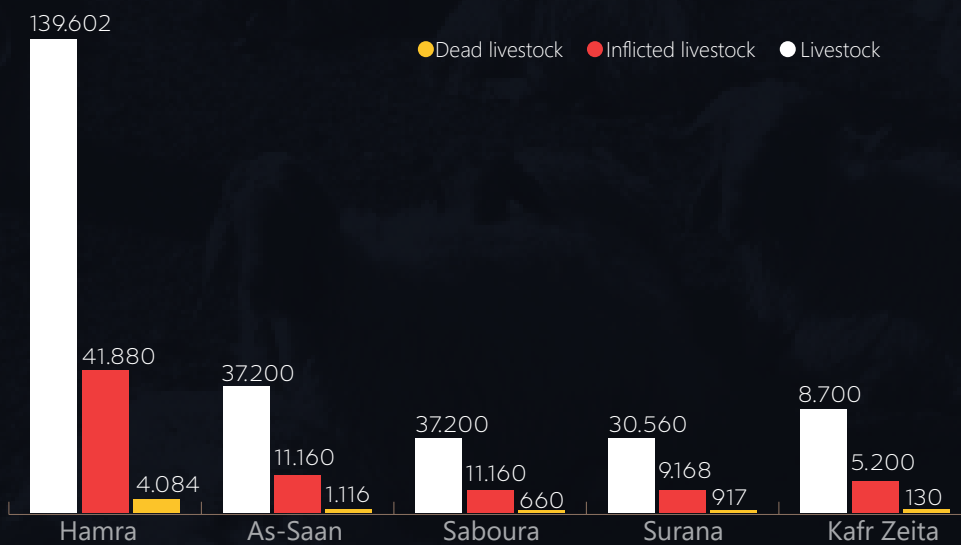
6,907

dead
livestock



The figure below includes the numbers of livestock (only sheep and goats). The number of livestock in the assessed area amounted to 238,062, 74,008 of which were inflicted with potentially mortal diseases, and 6,907 of which died last winter. The causes of death included starvation and diseases, the most prominent of which was scabies which spread normally in this time of the year due to humidity and poor ventilation. Malnutrition affected the health of livestock as breeders rely on fodder to feed their livestock in this time of the year. Insufficient amounts of fodder presented to animals severely weakened their immune systems and lack of sufficient vets and medication made the problem even worse.

Numbers of Livestock in the Northern and Eastern Countryside of Hama



Fodder

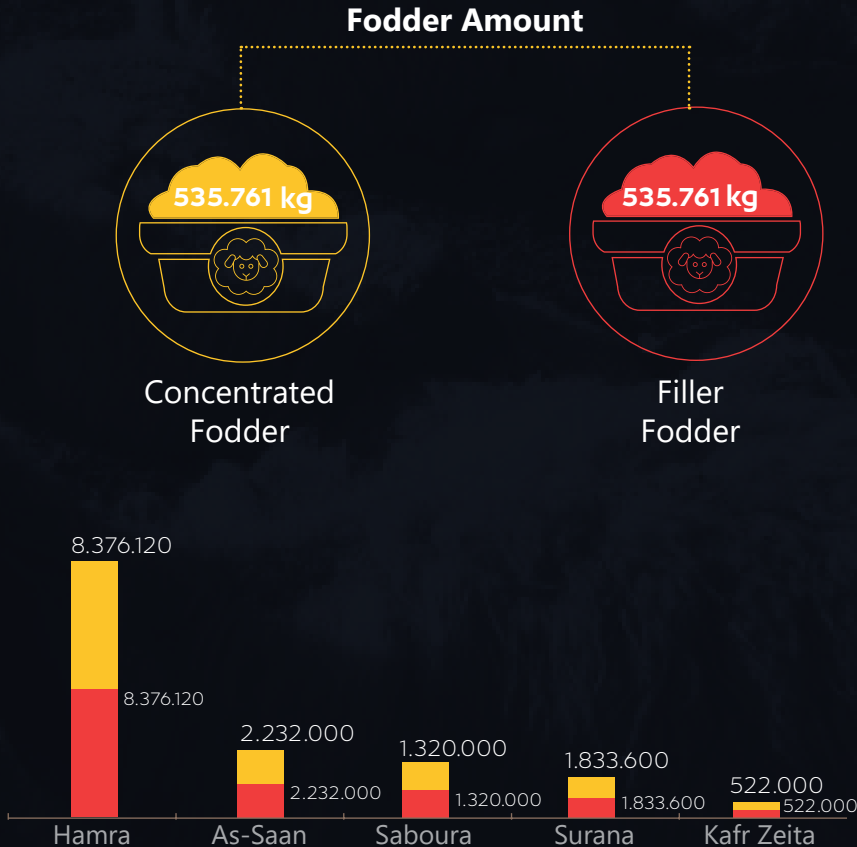
Livestock breeders rely on fodder to feed their animals for a few months per year. The use of fodder increases in Winter and Summer due to the scarcity of pastures. Before the current crisis, advisory units used to distribute subsidized fodder to encourage livestock breeding as this profession is a source of livelihood for a large number of families and it contributes to the food balance in Syria.

Livestock breeders use concentrated feed and fillers (hay and straw) to feed their herds. Red hay (from beans and grass pea) is preferred for sheep while white hay (from wheat and barley) is preferred for cattle.

Breeders of livestock (sheep and goats) try to achieve nutritional balance for their animals by providing two types of fodder, concentrated feed as well as fillers. Concentrated feed is expensive and a single animal needs a daily portion of 1 kg of this type of feed. Fillers are less expensive and are presented to satisfy the hunger of livestock. A sheep needs 1 kg of this type of feed per day.

The required amount of fodder was calculated for two months per sub-district. Breeders are waiting for Spring so that pastures may be available for their livestock. Until then, subsidization needs to be provided to avoid livestock starvation.

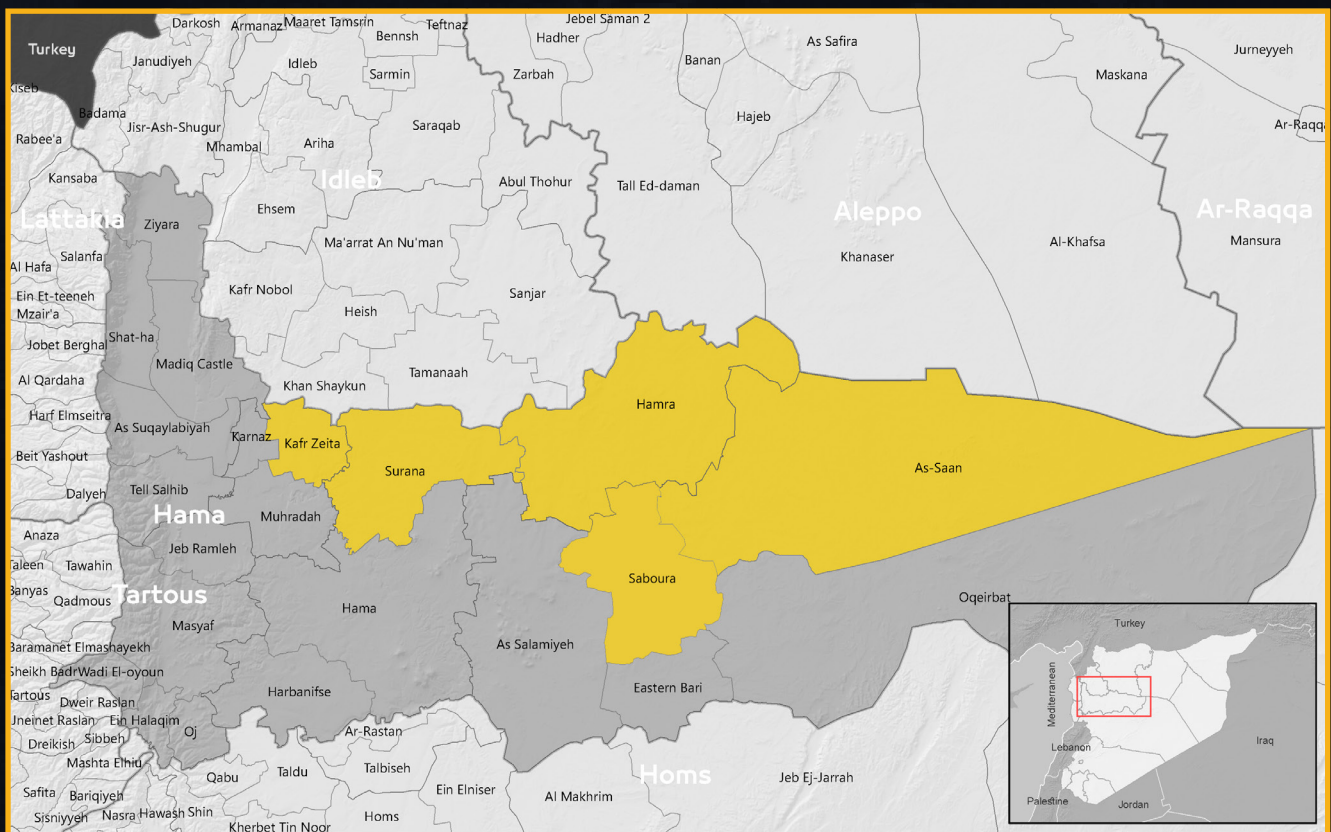
The required amount of fodder in KG for March and April 2017



Recommendations

- To provide all types of fodder and establish a plan for providing them regularly to livestock breeders at subsidized prices in seasons where pastures are not available.
- To subsidize wheat and barley production to make them available in the market at convenient prices and amounts, to satisfy the growing needs.
- To provide veterinary care centers and support their staff to provide veterinary guidance and vaccinations to serve livestock breeders and decrease the burden of animal diseases.
- To provide different medications in accordance with the diseases that inflict animals in Syria.
- To provide vaccinations for sheep to avoid the decrease in their numbers.

Map: Sub-Districts with infected livestock



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