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## Research Article

# Indigenous knowledge on camel milk and camel milk products hygienic handling, processing and utilization in Borana Area, Southern Ethiopia

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## Abstract

The study was conducted to assess traditional camel milk and camel milk products handling, preservation and processing, as well as utilization in Borana area. A total of 132 and 24 respondents were selected from milk producers and supplies, respectively through purposive sampling technique and interviewed on various aspects of camel milk and camel milk products using a single-visit multiple-subject diagnostic survey. Survey results revealed that the majority of camel dairying was done by women. Result showed hygienic handling of camel milk and milk products of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists was poor. Respondents reported that they preserved camel milk by washing and smoking milk vessels, keeping milk in a cold place and processing into other milk products. All most all respondents use camel milk mainly in its raw state for home consumption. Most of the respondents in the study area traditionally process camel milk into other camel milk products mainly during surplus milk production. The major product produced by respondents was fermented sour camel milk, locally named chuuchee. According to respondents lack of cooling facilities, improper collection center, lack of milk collection equipment, market milk selling shed, quick spoilage of milk due to the hot environment, seasonality of milk supply and marketing are the main constraints. Establishment of milk collection centers and introduction of small-scale milk processing plants with market linkage might help to solve camel milk hygienic handling and marketing problems in the study area.

## Introduction

One-humped camels (*Camelus dromedarius*) play an important role as a primary source of subsistence in the lowlands of Ethiopia [1]. Due to their characteristics, camels are often referred to as the 'White gold of the desert' as they can thrive in areas where crop production is limited and other animals cannot withstand the harsh climatic conditions [2,3]. The majority of these camels are found in the eastern and southern parts of Ethiopia. Because of their outstanding performance in the arid and semi-arid lowland areas of Ethiopia where forage and water are limited, pastoralists rely mainly on camels for their livelihood. In these areas, camel is generally kept for milk production and produce milk for a longer period of time even during the dry season when milk from cattle is scarce. The major ethnic groups owning camels in Ethiopia are the Beja,

Rashaida, Afar, Somali and Borana. Camel has a significant contribution to the livelihood of the pastoralist society who has few alternative modes of production system, particularly for milk production [4-6]. Currently, climate change is influencing traditional cattle productivity in arid and semi-arid areas and the camel is an exceptional animal capable of surviving in the hostile climatic conditions; as a result, camel is becoming the subject of increasing scientific and commercial interest [7].

Camel milk plays a vital role in household food security, prevention of malnutrition and acts as a source of cash to camel keepers and traders. It is an essential constituent of human diet in many parts of the world as well as in the pastoral and agro-pastoral areas of Borana [8]. It was observed that camel milk has essential nutrients found in bovine milk composition which has valuable nutritional properties; however, it contains



a higher amount of antibacterial substances, vitamin C, and nutrient than bovine milk [9–11].

Pastoralists commonly claimed that camel milk is difficult to process into products and is only suitable for drinking as fresh or sour milk [6]. However, currently, the possibility of producing various products from camel milk including soft cheese, yoghurt and butter has been reported [7]. Milk is an ideal medium for the growth of microbes and loses its quality within a short period of time if not preserved in some way. Poor handling and processing practices of milk usually result in undesirable products. The spontaneous nature of milk fermentation common in arid areas can result in undesirable products that are sometimes risky or dangerous for human health [12]. Traditional fermented camel milk has different names and processing methods in different countries. It is known as 'Dhanaan' in eastern Ethiopia [6]. 'Ititu' in Karayu area of Ethiopia [13], 'Suusac' in Kenya, 'garris' in Somalia [12]. And similarly it is known as 'Chal, and Shubat' in Turkey and Kazakhstan, respectively [14].

Camel milk is a recent newcomer to domestic markets including Borana area [8]. And especially to the international milk market [15]. However, camel milk production is facing high post-harvest quality deterioration and milk is wasted due to spoilage and quantity losses during the rainy seasons when production is high [16]. It is frequently reported that surplus of camel milk is produced in the Borana pastoral and agro-pastoral areas during the rainy season [8]. However, it was not studied in depth, particularly regarding camel milk handling, preservation and processing into different milk products, shelf-life of camel milk and camel milk products as compared to the milk of cows under pastoral conditions in the Borana area.

Camel milk handling practices at production and collection points, preservation, processing, immediate acceptor, poor infrastructure and unreliable transportation are the major constraints. In Ethiopia, including Borana area, not only at different dairy cooperatives but also in research, camel milk post-harvest handling and processing have not been given much attention. Camel milk is one of the economically important livestock products to improve the socio-economic status of camel owners, traders and dairy processing cooperatives. Although, despite the important contribution of camel milk to pastoralists living in the lowlands of the Borana area, little is known about the properties, preservation, processing, shelf-life and keeping quality of camel milk at the high ambient temperatures prevailing at the production area. In addition, identifying traditional methods and types of camel milk fermentation is a paramount for camel milk quality improvement and products development.

Currently, climate change is a worldwide phenomenon throughout the world as well as in Borana agro ecological areas. Consequently, this climate change is causing livestock death specially cattle following recurrent drought. Because of this, Borana communities are diversifying their livelihood towards camel dairy production and the demand of camel milk and milk product is also increasing. However, camel dairy production

only is not enough to improve the livelihood of the community unless they convert camel milk into diversified milk products to minimize spoilage and postharvest losses, especially during surplus milk production. Therefore, this study was designed to address the information gap on handling, preservation, processing and utilization of camel milk and camel milk products.

## Materials and methods

### Description of the study area

The study was conducted in Yabello, Gomole and Moyale districts of Borana zone, southern Oromia, Ethiopia. These districts are located on Addis-Moyale road. The Borana plateau is the portion of the Southern Ethiopia rangelands, in which the climate is generally semi-arid, with annual rainfall range of 500 mm in the South and 700 mm in the North. The altitude ranges from 1000m in the South to 1500m in the Northwest, the rainfall is bimodal but erratic in distribution. Fifty –nine percent (59%) of annual precipitation occurs from March to May and 27% from September to November, annual mean daily temperature varies from 19 to 24°C. There are four major seasons identified in the Borana plateau. These include: (1) – Ganna (March–May), the long rainy season; (2) Adoolessa (June–August), the cool dry season; (3)–Hagayya (September–November), the short rainy season; and (4) Bona (December–February), the warm dry season [17].

### Methods of survey data collection

A survey was conducted to assess traditional camel milk and camel milk products handling, preservation and processing under pastoralists and along milk supply in the Borana area. Three well known districts in camel production potential from pastoral area were purposively selected. From each district, milk-supplies at each town in the district and two Pastoral Associations (PAs) were selected. The selection of PAs from each district of Yabello, Gomole and Moyale that had good camel production potential were selected again using purposive sampling technique. Households and milk-supplies at each district were selected based on accessibility of the village and willingness of the camel owners and milk-suppliers to take part in the interviews. Information about consumption pattern, preference and importance of camel milk, traditional processing and preservation methods, types of fermented camel milk, types of plant used for processing, types of spoilage and shelf life of camel milk and milk products were collected from respondents by means of semi-structured questionnaires.

In order to develop effective interventions, it is necessary to understand what and how pastoralists and milk-supply cooperatives carry out the kind of camel milk and milk products in a given or particular way. Thus, to make use of existing sources of information, both secondary and primary information were used in the study. To collect required information for this study, a combination of different techniques were applied. Secondary information was collected from zone and district offices of pastoral and agro-pastoral. Moreover, relevant literatures and



documents were consulted to provide technical background and to develop a basic understanding of how camel milk and milk products handling and processing operated in the study areas.

Handling, preservation, processing and utilization of camel milk and camel milk products under pastoral and along milk-supplies in Borana zone were assessed by using a single-visit multiple-subject diagnostic survey [18]. A total of 132 respondents at production level and 24 respondents at milk-supply level were selected for interview using purposive sampling technique.

## Statistical Analyses

The collected survey data through key informants' interview were analyzed using descriptive statistics by using SPSS version 20 software.

## Result and discussion

### General information of respondents and camel handling

General information on respondents is shown in Table 1. Most of the respondents in the study areas were females (67%) and the remaining (33%) were males. The age distribution of respondents were as follows: 18–30 (37%), 31–45 (40%), 46–65 (36%) and >65 (19%) years old. The majority of respondents were illiterate 116 (88%); whereas 10.5% and 1.5% were in grade 1–8 and 9–12, respectively (Table 1).

The survey result revealed that the majority of camel dairying gender division of labor was done by women (Table 2). It was indicated that women are generally responsible for milking (61.5%), processing (81.1%), cleaning milk vessels (85%) and marketing of camel milk (80%) where accomplished by women. On the other hand, herding (77%) and barn clearing (51%) were performed by adult men and men (husband), respectively.

According to respondents, almost all 132 (100%) barns used to house camels were fenced. Pastoralists use bush fences that do not have rooves by separating camels by age category. They made separate fences for calves. The purpose of separating calves from young breeding male calves is to get morning milk and to control mating for young breeding males. The results of the survey showed that 70 (53.03%) respondents cleared their camel barn once a month while 40 (30.30%) of them cleared once a week and 22 (16.67%) do not clean other than changing fences (Table 3).

### Camel production

Scholars stated, originally that, Borana communities are known for their indigenous cattle production due to extensive experience and a very strong attachment to cattle rearing. Camel production becomes the most common livestock species where most of the Borana pastoralists were commonly need to have. On the other hand, earlier camel production was, in some case like traditional taboo, exclusive to the Borana except Gabbra people. However, recently the proportion of

**Table 1:** General information of respondents.

	Sex		Age			Educational level		
	N	%		N	%		N	%
Male	43	33	18-30	37	28	Literate	0	0
Female	89	67	31-45	40	30	Illiterate	116	88
			46-65	36	27	1-8 grade	14	10.5
			>65	19	15	9-12 grade	2	1.5
Total	132	100		132	100		132	100

**Table 2:** Gender division in camel dairying responsibility.

Household members	Milking	Processing	Cleaning	Selling	Herding	Barn clearing
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)
Adult men	2 (1.5)	0	0	0	102 (77)	60(45.45)
Adult female	34 (26)	25 (18.9)	20 (15)	26 (20)	16 (12)	5 (3.79)
Men	15 (11)	0	0	0	14 (11)	67 (50.76)
Women	81(61.5)	107 (81.1)	112 (85)	106 (80)	0	0
Total	132 (100)	132 (100)	132 (100)	132 (100)	132 (100)	132 (100)

**Table 3:** Barn facility and cleaning variables.

Variables	Districts			
	Yabello N (%)	Gomole N (%)	Moyale N (%)	Overall N (%)
<b>Types of barn</b>				
Housed	0	0	0	0
Fenced	45 (34.1)	40 (30.3)	47 (35.6)	132 (100)
No barn	0	0	0	0
<b>Frequency of barn clearing</b>				
Once a week	13 (9.85)	15 (11.36)	12 (9.10)	40 (30.30)
Once a month	27 (20.45)	20 (15.15)	23 (17.42)	70 (53.03)
Do not clean	5 (2.27)	5 (2.27)	12 (4.01)	22 (16.67)

Borana people keeping camels is increasing, even if it is not in accordance with their indigenous knowledge and habits. As a result, camel populations increased in the Borana area over the same time [19].

Recently, different factors had suppressive impacts on the livestock production systems of Borana pastoralists. However, cattle have a priority demand in pastoral areas, currently the preferences of pastoralists have changed, especially due to drought. Respondents reported that camel and goat become the most important livestock types, more important than cattle only due to climate change. The main reason behind this priority and purpose of choice to produce camel is for milk production (85%) during dry season, drought resistance (64%), good price (59%), meat production (58%) and wealth status (49%) indicated as in Tables 4,5.

In Borana area, southern Ethiopia, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists keep mixed livestock species (livestock diversification) each for a particular purposes. The domestic livestock species kept by them for milk production in the study areas include camels, cows, goats and sheep. Among these, cows and camels are the major milk producing animals in the area. Cow milk followed by camel milk was highly preferred by the pastoralists in the study sites. With regard to preference,



cow, camel, goat and sheep milk ranked first, second, third and fourth, respectively (Table 6).

According to the respondents view, milk type from each species has its own unique characteristics and properties. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists gave many reasons for preference of milk types of their domestic animals. They stated that cow milk can be processed into other milk products easily whereas processing of camel milk into other dairy products is difficult. Cows' milk tend to make people fat, that causes obesity but camel milk gives strength, endurance and stamina. Unlike cows' milk, camel milk has medicinal values and can be used to treat a number of ailments in human beings. The informants also indicated that cows' and sheep milk have high fat content than camel milk and thus suitable for butter-making.

In the study area, camel milk is largely consumed in its raw state, without being subjected to any sort of processing treatment. All the households interviewed reported that they use camel milk when it is fresh (Table 6). This observation is in agreement with that reported in earlier studies [6,20], which indicated that camel milk is consumed fresh in most camel rearing societies. On the other hand, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists exercised making of fermented camel milk (*chuuchee*) and butter from camel milk alone or by mixing it with cow or goat milk (Table 6).

### Camel milk hygienic handling and processing

**Camel milk handling and preservation:** The survey result revealed that, from the total of 132 respondents, 96.97% of them did not take training on camel milk hygienic handling and utilization. The study showed that 68.18% of respondents practiced washing hand before milking (Table 7). In the study area, the majority of respondents (72.73%) use pond water while, 12.88% and 14.39% used bore holes and tap water, respectively for camel dairying activities. The study results

**Table 4:** Ranked purposes for keeping camel.

Variables	N	Valid Percent	Rank
Milk production	112	85	1
Drought resistance	85	64	3
Good price	78	59	2
Meat production	76	58c	4
Wealth status	65	49	5

**Table 5:** Frequency of milking and production potential of camel.

Variables	Season				Overall mean
	LDS	LRS	CDS	SRS	
Frequency of milking	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	-
One times	0	0	0	0	-
Two times	132 (100)	51 (38.64)	132 (100)	63 (47.73)	-
Three times	0	81 (61.36)	0	69 (52.27)	-
Milk yield L/day (Mean ± SD)	3.79±0.76	6.39±1.39	4.04±0.73	6.30±1.47	5.13±1.10
Lactation length (months)					12.01±3.00

LDS = Long dry season, LRS = Long rainy season, CDS = Cool dry season, SRS = short rainy season and SD = standard deviation

**Table 6:** Preference of milk type, consumption and marketing of camel milk.

Preference of milk type	Valid percent	Rank
Cow	46.21	1 <sup>st</sup>
Camel	39.39	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Goat	12.12	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Sheep	2.27	4 <sup>th</sup>
<b>Consumption of camel milk</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Proportion (%)</b>
Fresh raw milk	132	100
<i>Chuuchee</i> (sour milk)	62	49.97
Butter	9	6.87
Blended with other milk type	32	23.48

**Table 7:** Camel milk handling variables.

Variables	Districts			
	Yabello N (%)	Gomole N (%)	Moyale N (%)	Overall N (%)
<b>Previous training on camel milk</b>				
Yes	1 (0.75)	2 (1.52)	1 (0.75)	4 (3.03)
No	44 (33.33)	38 (28.78)	46 (34.85)	128 (96.97)
<b>Washing of hand before milking</b>				
Yes	30 (22.73)	28 (21.21)	32 (24.24)	90 (68.18)
No	15 (11.36)	12 (9.09)	15 (11.36)	42 (31.82)
<b>Source of water for milking activity</b>				
Pond	35 (26.51)	34 (25.76)	27 (20.45)	96 (72.73)
Bore holes	2 (1.52)	6 (4.54)	9 (6.82)	17 (12.88)
Tap water	8 (6.06)	0	11 (8.33)	19 (14.39)
<b>Heat water before milking</b>				
Yes	45 (34.09)	29 (21.97)	46 (34.86)	132
<b>Cleaning and smoking milk containers regularly</b>				
Yes	45 (34.09)	40 (30.30)	47 (35.61)	132
<b>Purpose of milk vessels smoking</b>				
Give flavor and increase shelf life	45 (34.09)	35 (26.52)	47 (35.61)	132

indicated that almost all pastoralists and agro-pastoralists heat or warm water before milking to wash milking vessels and clean and smoke milk containers regularly before milking. Respondents explained that the purpose of smoking milk vessels is to give flavor and increase shelf life (Table 7). The major traditional methods of Borana pastoralists and agro-pastoralists used to preserve camel milk in the study area include washing and smoking milk vessels (57.5%), keeping milk in a cold place (18.94%) and processing (23.48%) into other products particularly *chuuchee* (Table 8).

As indicated in Figure 1, based on households interviewed, the four most frequently used plants for smoking milk vessels in the study area were *Premnaschimper* (*Xaaxessaa*), *Olea Africana* (*Ejersa*), *Acacia brevispica* (*Hammaressaa*) and *Faurea speciosa* (*Danse*). Smoking milk containers has been reported to exert anti-microbial properties and prolong the shelf life of cow milk [21]. It was reported that plants exert pure and semi-purified used as anti-microbial which some of anti-microbial compounds contain tannins, phenolic and flavonoids



and alkaloids that possess not only antimicrobial properties but also consumed by man as antibiotics and flavors analgesics and food additives [22]. Anti-microbial compounds released from these tree species during smoking of the milk containers may in part be responsible for the longer shelf life of camel milk observed in the present study. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the study area used different milking vessels. Accordingly, 79%, 29%, 21% and 3% of respondents used wood, gorfa, plastic, and okole, respectively for milk vessels (Figure 2). In addition, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists also used garican (89.4%) and sororo (10.6%) vessels for shipping milk to market (Figure 3).

**Traditional camel milk processing and utilization:** The survey result shows that almost all respondent use raw milk for home consumption in the study area. The majority (80.30%) of respondents did not boil milk before consumption. Most of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists (77.27%) in the study area traditionally process camel milk into other camel milk products mainly during periods of surplus milk production (Table 9). Camel milk products that are traditionally made by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists in the study area are indicated in Table 9. Pastoralists and agropastoralists in the study area produce naturally fermented sour camel milk called *chuuchee*. *Chuuchee* is made by placing fresh camel milk in a clean/smoked container and keeping it warm (ambient temperature) to allow spontaneous fermentation. *Chuuchee* is said to have a shelf life of about 3 months. Similar products like *dhanaan*, *shubat* and *gariss* traditionally made from camel milk were reported from Ethiopia Somali [6], Kenya [23] and Sudan [19], respectively.

*Chuuchee* is made by spontaneous fermentation without using a starter culture. Some respondents stated that they mix camel milk with goat milk to make viscous *chuuchee* rather than from camel milk alone. The report showed that the quality

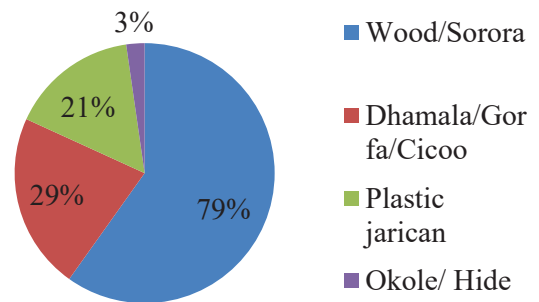


Figure 2: Types of milking vessels.

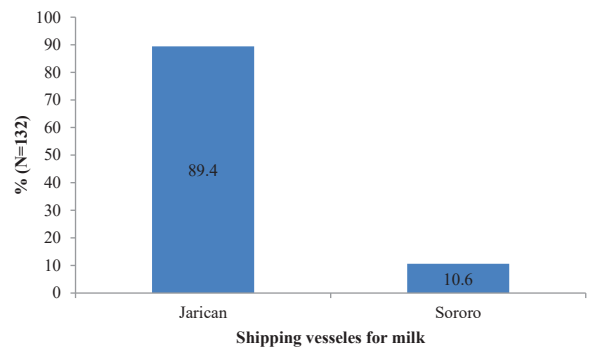


Figure 3: Types of vessels for shipping milk to market.

Table 9: Camel milk processing variables.

Variables	Districts			
	Yabello N (%)	Gomole N (%)	Moyale N (%)	Overall N (%)
<b>Use raw milk for home consumption</b>				
Yes	45 (34.09)	40 (30.30)	47 (35.61)	132 (100%)
<b>Boil milk before consumption</b>				
Yes	3 (2.27)	11(8.33)	12 (9.09)	26 (19.70)
No	42 (31.82)	29 (21.97)	35 (26.52)	106 (80.30)
<b>Camel milk processing</b>				
Yes	29 (21.97)	32 (24.24)	41(31.06)	102 (77.27)
No	16 (12.12)	8 (6.06)	6 (4.55)	30 (22.73)
<b>Type of camel milk products processed</b>				
Chuuchee	10 (7.58)	13 (9.85)	39 (29.55)	62 (46.97)
Butter	2 (1.52)	4 (3.03)	3 (2.27)	9 (6.82)
Blending	15 (11.36)	14 (10.61)	2 (1.52)	31(23.48)

Table 8: Traditional preservation methods.

Traditional preservation methods	Number and proportion (%) of responses
Washing and smoking milk vessels	76 (57.58)
Keeping milk in a cold place	25 (18.94)
Processing ( <i>Chuuchee</i> )	31(23.48)

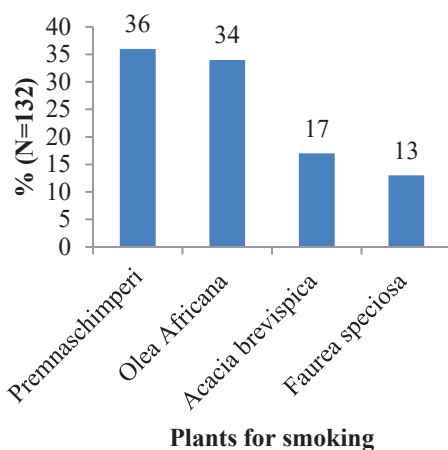


Figure 1: Mostly used plants for smoking.

of *susac*, fermented camel milk, improved using selected mesophilic lactic starter cultures, rather than spontaneous fermentation; the resulting fermented milk had a uniform taste and a longer shelf life [24]. Isolation and identification of microorganisms that are responsible for the fermentation and production of the indigenous fermented camel milk product, *chuuchee*, would help to develop a commercial starter culture and to standardize the manufacturing method for this product in the future.

The majority of the respondents reported that it is difficult to make butter from camel milk. However, small proportion of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists reported that they mix camel milk with cows and goats milk when intending to make butter (Table 9). Some respondents revealed that butter can be



made from camel milk when fermentation is undergone for 7 days. Production of butter from camel milk cannot be achieved easily because camel milk shows little tendency to cream up and also because the fat in camel milk is firmly bound to the protein [25]. Factors that affect manufacture of butter and optimization of churning and cream separation processes from camel milk may help alleviate the difficulty of butter-making from camel milk.

### Camel milk marketing

Apart from its food value, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists generate income from sale of camel milk. Almost all respondents 132 (100%) reported that they sell camel milk to generate income. There are no cooling facilities on the market of study area. The survey result indicated that 75 (56.82%) and 73 (55.30%) of respondents reported there were spoilage of raw milk due to market problem and problem of marketing fresh milk, respectively (Table 10). Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists sell their camel milk to individuals (44 (33.33%)), retailers (72 (54.55%)) and hotel/cafeteria (16 (12.12%)). The study results revealed that 120 (90.91%) of respondents buyers did not consider milk quality criteria; whereas 12 (9.09%) gave attention to milk quality when purchasing (Table 10). All the households interviewed in the present study reported that they sell camel milk implying that camel milk has high demand in the market. Even though camel milk has high demand in the area, camel milk marketing is constrained by price fluctuation, cooling facilities and well-organized transportation and marketing systems.

### Camel milk and camel milk products along supply

This particular assessment of camel milk and camel milk products hygienic handling and processing along milk supply covers Yabello, Gomole and Moyale districts of Borana zone, with the specific dairy marketing sites of Yabello, Surupa and Moyale towns. The major sources of raw camel milk supply

to traders in Gomole district at Surupa are producers and collectors around Surupa. Traders and collectors check quality of milk by using organoleptic test (watching cleanliness and tasting by tongue). It was stated that milk that is below the acceptable limit was rejected. There was no quality-based standard payment for milk; however, payment was made as market price for acceptable milk by sensory evaluation. As reported by the traders and other key informants in the area; milk quality problems were uncommon, except for some poor milk handling at production and collection as well as camel milk price fluctuation. Collectors and traders clean and fumigate their milk Jericans using water and locally available wood chips to reduce deterioration of milk. There were no transportation access and cooling facilities for raw camel milk. Traders supply collected camel milk from Surupa to Moyale in large volumes and also to Bule Hora in smaller quantities depending on seasonal camel milk production. The main agents of raw camel milk supply to Yabello town were producers, collectors that encampment around Yabello and some traders from Gomole district. Milk supplied to Yabello is consumed and used in the town without shipping to other area since Yabello is capital city of Borana and has a higher population than other towns in the study areas.

The terminal milk supply for camel milk and milk products in the study area was Moyale. The main suppliers of milk to Moyale are producers in the nearby Moyale town, traders from different parts of Borana and brokers at Moyale. The problem associated with camel milk production is variation of milk price, which experiences significant seasonal fluctuation. During surplus production in the wet season, milk excluded from sale was processed into *chuuchee* and sold as sour camel milk. As to traders and broker's perception, supply of raw camel milk is inadequate during the dry season and the problem of supply shortage is severe during and after incidence of drought. Quality problems are also more common during dry season. However, modes of transportation used are the basic causes of quality deteriorations the opinion of traders and brokers. Prior to milk storage, traders and brokers clean their milk Jeri cans with boiled water and then fumigate with locally available wood chips.

According to camel milk collectors, traders and key informants, adulteration and lack of cooling facilities are the major problems of milk quality at milk supply of the study area. Milk and milk products are very susceptible to adulteration with water. In the study area, respondents revealed that camel milk adulteration increases as the product is moved to market from areas which are closer to pre-urban and urban centers. It may be that less adulteration occurs at production level. In addition, within the study area, the main constraints are a lack of milk collection equipment market milk selling shed, quick spoilage of milk due to the hot environment and seasonality of the milk supply, in which there is excess supply in wet season and extremely low supply in the dry season.

### Shelf life and spoilage of camel milk and milk products

The majority of the respondents reported that fresh camel milk can be kept unspoiled for about 2 days (Table

**Table 10:** Camel milk marketing variables.

Variable	Districts			Overall N (%)
	Yabello N (%)	Gomole N (%)	Moyale N (%)	
<b>Sell fresh whole milk</b>				
Yes	45 (34.09)	40 (30.30)	47 (35.61)	132
<b>Cooling at market</b>				
No	45 (34.09)	40 (30.30)	47 (35.61)	132
<b>Problem of marketing fresh milk</b>				
Yes	24 (18.18)	20 (15.15)	31 (23.48)	75 (56.82)
No	21 (15.91)	20 (15.15)	16 (12.12)	57 (43.18)
<b>Spoilage of raw milk due to market problem</b>				
Yes	21 (15.91)	22 (16.67)	30 (22.73)	73 (55.30)
No	44 (33.33)	18 (13.64)	17 (12.88)	79 (59.85)
<b>To whom fresh milk is sold</b>				
Individuals	12	15 (11.36)	17 (12.88)	44 (33.33)
Retailers	33 (25)	19 (14.39)	20 (15.15)	72 (54.55)
Hotel/Cafeteria	0	6 (4.55)	10 (7.58)	16 (12.12)
<b>Buyers put quality criteria</b>				
Yes	5 (3.79)	3 (2.27)	4 (3.03)	12 (9.09)
No	40 (30.30)	37 (28.03)	43 (32.57)	120 (90.91)



11). This is much shorter than the shelf life of camel milk reported previously [6,26]. That took 7 days for to sour. When compared to cow milk, camel milk has longer shelf life. The better keeping quality of camel milk suggests that it probably contains compounds or substances with strong anti-microbial properties. The majority of respondents stated that *chuuchee* can be kept for a week whereas some of them revealed that *chuuchee* can be kept for up to 3 months. According to respondents, the shelf life of butter was 1 day. However it can be kept for 7 days if stored correctly. The most common types of spoilage that occur in camel milk include souring, ropiness and whey separation (syneresis), (Table 11). These defects are similar to the types of spoilage that occur in cow milk.

### Therapeutic properties of camel milk

The other reported benefit of camel milk is its curative value against a number of human diseases. Pastoralists and agro-pastoralists stated that camel milk is used to treat a number of sicknesses in human beings (Table 12). The respondents reported that camel milk is used to treat backbone pain, diarrhoea, malaria disease, heart disease, respiratory diseases, and uteral contraction post-delivery. According to the pastoralists and agro-pastoralists surveyed, the revealed beneficial property of camel milk is attributed to the fact that camels browse on various plant species and active agents with therapeutic properties from these plant species are secreted into the milk. The medicinal value of camel milk has also been reported by other authors [6,27]. The recent report of [15]. Revealed that significant development has been observed for the past two or three decades, including internationally, enhanced by camel milk status regarding its health effects for regular consumers.

**Table 11:** Reported shelf life and spoilage of camel milk and milk products.

Product type	Shelf life (%)				
Raw milk	1 day (5.30)	2 days (78.79)	3 days (15.91)	-	-
<i>Chuuchee</i>	1 week (50.76)	2 weeks (17.42)	1 month (3.79)	2 months (3.03)	3 months (2.3)
Butter	1 day (4.58)	1 week (2.27)		-	-
Spoilage types		N (%)			
Whey separation		20 (15.15)			
Ropiness		30 (22.73)			
Souring		82 (62.12)			

**Table 12:** Therapeutic use of camel milk.

Type of disease	N	Proportion (%)
Backbone pain	13	8.33
Diarrhoea	11	6.82
Malaria disease	18	12.12
Heart disease	8	4.55
Respiratory diseases	22	15.15
Women uterus contracts and shrinks ( <i>abdominal pain</i> )	24	16.67
Missed (had no knowledge)	48	36.36

## Conclusion and recommendation

The hygienic practice during camel milk production and along supply in the study area was poor. Moreover, camel milk hygienic handling practices were also susceptible for contamination. Yet, in the study area most of the respondents did not implement proper hygienic practices except hand washing before milking. Smoking and washing milking and storage vessels as well as traditional milk processing were practiced to preserve camel milk. Raw camel milk was used for home consumption without boiling in the study area. *Chuuchee* is the most traditional fermented camel milk processed in the area. Adulteration of milk, lack of appropriate dairy equipments, inconsistent seasonal milk supply, poor milk market outlets and hot environment are the major constraints for quick spoilage of camel milk. In addition to the importance of camel milk for food security and medicinal values, pastoralists and agropastoralists sale camel milk to generate income for their livelihood improvement.

Although camel milk has high demand in the area, camel milk marketing is constrained by price fluctuation, shortage of cooling facilities and unorganized transportation and marketing systems. Awareness creation for camel dairy value chain actors on camel dairy production, handling, processing, establishment of milk collection centers as well as introduction of small-scale milk processing plants might help to solve camel milk quality problems and generate better income from camel dairy sector.

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