ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION
A tool for improving livestock quality

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Artificial insemination (AI) is the introduction of semen, collected separately from the male, into the reproductive tract of the female allowing pregnancy to occur without physical mating. It has been used extensively throughout the world on many species of animals, including cows, pigs, goats, sheep and dogs.

Some of the benefits of artificial insemination include decreased risk of introducing disease, use of genetically superior males, reduced cost and the introduction of new breeds or blood-lines.

For many years AI has been performed on cattle in Jamaica and within the past eight years has increased in popularity in pigs. This technique, performed by the farmers themselves, revolutionized the pig industry allowing better quality pigs to be produced locally. Data collected over the period since AI was introduced in pigs, reveals that the use of superior genetics has doubled the weight of pig carcasses and increased the yield by ten percent.

Recently, in a project funded by the European Union through the United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, AI in goats at various farm sites has been successfully carried out in Jamaica. Over 250 female goats were inseminated approximately half of which became pregnant, producing more than 150 offspring. The project also trained 15 AI Technicians who were certified as of November 30, 2011 to perform the procedure in goats.

It is hoped that this is the start of a process that will see continued improvement in the goat industry through the use of superior genetics to enable the Jamaican farmer to be more efficient and profitable.

It should be noted that although AI is an excellent tool to improve the performance of the animals on a farm, good husbandry, nutrition and management are essential to achieving the desired results.