



ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD OF INDIA

Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Govt. of India
(Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying)
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No.3-8/2021-2022/PCA

Dated: 29.08.2022

To,

1. The Principal Secretary, Animal Husbandry of all States/UTs
2. State Animal Welfare Board of all States/Ut's.

Subject: Standard Operating Procedure for using equines as pack animals in hilly/mountainous terrain-regarding.

Sir/Madam,

The Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) is a Statutory Body established under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960 and is an apex body for protection and safeguard the rights of animals as well to ensure that the five freedoms of the animals are upheld and no animals are subject to any unnecessary pain or suffering.

2. In this regard the AWBI has received an alarming number of reports have come to the knowledge of the Board regarding mismanagement of working equines at high altitudes which could lead to calamities such as stampedes or outbreak of contagious diseases like Equine Influenza and Glanders. Unregulated use of animals in hilly terrains may be a cause of grave suffering to the animals and an inconvenience and danger to people.

3. It is stated that the use of animals for any purpose must be governed by the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 and Rules laid there under. For the use of draught and pack animals such as horses, donkeys, bulls etc the Central Government has promulgated the Draught and Pack Animals Rules 1965 and the Registration of Farriers Rules 1965.

4. That a large number of horses, donkeys, mules and ponies are being used as pack animals for carrying passengers and supplies in hilly/mountainous regions on specific tracks for tourism or pilgrimage. The conditions for work in such regions are vastly different from those in the plains and as such require additional safeguards to ensure that the animals do not undergo unnecessary pain and suffering and that their mismanagement does not contribute to endangerment of people or disease outbreak.

5. Accordingly, the AWBI has prepared a Standard Operating Procedure for using equines as pack animals in hilly/mountainous terrain to be implemented in specific areas where equines are being used for work in high altitudes and at steep gradients. This must be strictly implemented in addition to the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Act 1960 and Rules there under. It is also requested that an immediate compliance shall be ensured by the State Animal Welfare Boards and the District Societies for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, so that fatalities of humans and animals can be avoided.

6. Therefore, in view of the above, it is again requested to kindly issue necessary direction for the strict implementation of the following the Standard Operating Procedure for using equines as pack animals in hilly/mountainous terrain.
7. Your co-operation and co-ordination is highly solicited for the welfare of animals.

Yours sincerely,



(Dr. S. K Dutta)
Secretary

Copy to for necessary action.

1. The Chief Secretary of all States/UTs
2. The Director General of Police of all States/UTs
3. The District Magistrate of All States/ UTs.
4. The Director, Animal Husbandry Department.

STANDARD PROTOCOL FOR ADOPTION OF COMMUNITY ANIMALS

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the Use of Equines at High Altitudes

A large number of equines are used for the purpose of carrying people as well as supplies for tourism, pilgrimage, development purposes in hilly or mountainous areas. Such working animals require special conditions to ensure that unnecessary pain and suffering is not caused to them and violation of Section 3 and 11 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 is prevented while employing mules, horses, donkeys, ponies at high altitudes.

- 1. Registration of working equines** - Any District where equines are used for the purpose of carrying passengers or supplies or any other material on any hilly or mountainous region, must be duly registered with the District SPCA and identification tagging and health examination of the animal must be conducted by the Jurisdictional Veterinary Officer before granting such registration. The operator of the equine must bear all costs for the health examination and identification tagging. The total number of animals registered for any track must not be more than the carrying capacity of the track prescribed by the District SPCA. The proforma for registration form for working equines in hilly/mountainous regions is annexed as **Appendix-1**.
- 2. Veterinary Examination of Equines for the purpose of Registration** - Mandatory testing of equines for Glanders/Farcy must be ensured for each equine plying on the track. The Government of each State in question must ensure that no equines can enter any district of the State without a valid certificate from the National Research Centre on Equines - established under the aegis of Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) for conducting research on equine health. A stress test (endurance test) of each equine must be conducted to ensure its altitude fitness and to avoid any accidents at high-altitudes. The stress test must be repeated periodically, and the time gap between any two stress tests must not exceed one month. The registering authority shall maintain the data regarding the above two tests and the general health examination reports for each equine which is registered to ply on hilly/mountainous tracks. The proforma for health examination of equines is annexed as **Appendix-2**.
- 3. Acclimatisation of equines for High Altitudes** - The registration of the equine, must be allowed to get acclimatised for high altitude climatic adaptation for at least two weeks before being allowed to work. During this period of acclimatisation, the equine must be kept at the cost of the owner, either in the infirmary, maintained by the District SPCA, or at any other location specified by the District SPCA.
- 4. Evaluation of carrying capacity of each track:** On any track that has high footfall of tourists, to avoid overcrowding and collision with other pilgrims, manual cart movers, pedestrians, climbers, local vendors/shop keepers, local staff involved in

traffic management on the pilgrim/tourist tracks, ideally there must not be more than 200 animals per kilometre. Each District Magistrate shall ensure that an empirical analysis of the carrying capacity of each predefined track is undertaken in terms of the number of equines that can be present on the track without compromising safety. The factors on which carrying capacity must depend are listed in **Appendix-3**.

- 5. The construction of infirmaries for injured sick, lame and disabled equines:** Each District Magistrate must allocate space and infrastructure for Equine Infirmaries which must be constructed and utilized to house and treat all injured, sick, lame and/or disabled, as well as abandoned equines. Such an infirmary may be located away from the track but within the district where animals are employed. In line with Sections 3, 11, 34 and 35 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, the expenses incurred on the transport, care and maintenance of equines on the tracks at high-altitudes must be borne by the owners of the equines. The amount to be borne by the owners for the maintenance and treatment of equines must be based on determinations made in accordance with Rule 4 of the Care and Maintenance of Case Property Animals Rules 2017. Alternatively, amounts prescribed under the respective State Panchayati Raj Acts, Municipal Acts, or by-laws of the Cantonment Board, as applicable, are to be deposited by the owners of the equines.
- 6. The construction of sheds for equines along each track:** Each District Magistrate must ensure that a sufficient amount of space commensurate with the number of registered equines is designated and sheds are constructed as night shelters for all equines registered to ply in a track. The sheds must be weather appropriate and must have fodder and water troughs and lighting facilities. The sheds must have segregation for aggressive animals, animals showing symptoms of disease or injured animals to be housed before they are taken to the infirmary. The sheds must have a suitable number of sanitation workers and must be kept clean at all times. Proper drainage facility availability of warm potable water must be available for all equines in the sheds.
- 7. The provision of warm, potable water:** Equines require warm, potable water to survive in high altitudes. The lack of this basic facility leads to colic, severe dehydration and consequently, painful deaths in large numbers. Therefore, District Magistrates shall ensure that there are provisions for warm, potable water for the equines plying on the tracks at high altitudes, in their jurisdictional areas. The provisions for watering of equines must be established and operated at every kilometre on the tracks. In the absence of provisions for watering of equines in sufficient quantities and at the right temperature, no equines shall be made to ply on tracks at high-altitudes.
- 8. Creation of check-posts for the veterinary examination of all equines:** Veterinary check posts must be created for examination of working equines on each predetermined track. The distance between two veterinary check posts must not be more than 4 kms. The veterinary check-posts must be manned by Veterinary and Para-veterinary staff employed and trained especially for the purpose. At each check post, the unsaddling of the equines shall be mandatory, alongside the examination of parameters including examination of gait and eyes. Life-saving medicines as well as equipment and medication for relieving common ailments in equines must be made available at these check-posts. It shall be mandatory for all

registered equine owners to pass by each check-post and not deviate from the predetermined route.

- 9. Dissolution of schemes pertaining to insurance of equines plying on the tracks:** The insurance schemes pertaining to the use of equines made to play on tracks are structured such that the owners of the equines gain monetary benefit from their death, as well as the overwork of the equines plying on the tracks. This incentivises cruelty by intentionally overworking the animals in challenging conditions to secure insurance claims. Therefore, insurance of equine life must be allowed only and only on tracks where due precaution as per this SOP have been taken and the District SPCA can undertake the responsibility to ensure that no deaths of equines have been caused due to lack of welfare measures, infrastructure or due to negligence or cruelty caused by the animal owner/handler.
- 10. Convoy movement of equines:** On any track where more than 500 equines are used for carrying people or supplies it must be mandatory for such animals to move in a convoy system. The convoy size must range from 5-20 equines per convoy depending on the nature of the track and the total number of equines plying on the track. The time gap between the ascent of each convoy must be at least half an hour to allow for each convoy to stop at designated halts for veterinary examination, food and water. The convoy must move only on the predetermined track at a speed not more than 8 kms/hour and must make all the designated halts along the track.
- 11. Mechanisms to address calamity/disaster:** It is common for hilly/mountain regions to experience landslides, flash floods, cloud bursts, stampedes and other calamities. In certain places where footfall of people is high, there are greater chances of a calamity getting aggravated because of the presence of animals. The District SPCA must deploy first response teams at every kilometer of each track situated at high-altitudes. The first response teams must consist of Police officers, veterinarians as well as medical doctors present at checkposts located at intervals of every kilometer along the track. The District Magistrate, being the head of the District Disaster Management Authority must issue a clearly worded, detailed order in advance, with regard to treatment/evacuation and relief and rehabilitation of animals in case of any disaster on the tracks.
- 12. Compliance with the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960:** In accordance with the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and the Rules framed thereunder, each District Magistrate must ensure that no equine handler/owner violates the following conditions:
 - a. No equine is made to walk for more than 12 kms on any hilly/mountainous track in a day.
 - b. No equine is made to walk from sunset to sunrise.
 - c. No equine is made to work while it is injured, infirm or in any way distressed.
 - d. Immediate veterinary care must be made available to any sick/injured animal and treatment records must be preserved by the owner.
 - e. No animal shall be made to work for more than 2 hours at a stretch without giving adequate halts and rest.

- f. Harness of the animal must be removed when the animal is disengaged after work.
- g. No person shall use any spiked stick or bit, harness or yoke with spikes, knobs or projections or any other sharp tackle or equipment on any working equine.
- h. Heavy decoration and ornaments must be avoided for working equines as it causes stress and increases the load.
- i. No horse/mule must be made to carry more than a total of 100 kgs of weight including the weight of the passenger, supplies, and saddle. For donkeys the maximum weight carrying in hilly/mountainous regions shall be 25 kgs.
- j. No pregnant animal must be employed for work in any hilly/mountainous region.
- k. No animal must be made to work while it is raining, snowing or when there is hailstorm. No animal must be made to walk on slippery or muddy tracks or during floods.

Collation and monitoring of data: Each District Magistrate must ensure the District SPCA keeps record of the following:

1. The length and route map of each track where equines are allowed to be employed for work.
2. The number of equines plying on each track in the district.
3. The number of equines injured/maimed each day on every track in the district.
4. The number of equine deaths on each day for every track in the district.
5. The number of cases of animal cruelty registered each day with the district police under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960 and Rules made thereunder.

The data gathered by the District SPCA must be shared with both the District Magistrate and the State Animal Welfare Board at the end of each day.

14. **Monitoring of working animals:** The State Animal Welfare Boards must ensure that each equine working on any track in the State has only been registered by the District SPCA after undergoing thorough health examination, test for Glanders and Farcy and endurance test. The cumulative results must be maintained and updated on the website of the State Animal Welfare Boards on a weekly basis and steps must be taken to correct any lapses leading to cruelty to working animals. The State Animal Welfare Board must additionally ensure with the help of the Director, Animal Husbandry Department to deal with positive cases of glanders in accordance with law. The State Animal Welfare Board must also provide guidance and technical assistance to District SPCAs for the assessment of capacity, creation of sheds, infirmaries and check-posts as well as proactive steps which may be taken for prevention of cruelty.
15. **Notification of Rules:** The State Government must notify and enforce the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Licensing of Farriers) Rules, 1965 and ensure that only licensed farriers are available for tending to the hooves

of equines. Notification of the Prevention of Cruelty to Draught and Pack Animals Rules 1965 is also to be ensured for general use of bullocks, ponies, mules, camels, donkeys, horses

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Registration for the purpose of using equine on track from toin Districtfor the year..... by District SPCA

Information about the Owner of the Equine -

Name
Address as per Aadhar Card
Contact number
(Attach aadhar card)

Information about the Handler -

Name
Address as per Aadhar Card
Contact number
(Attach aadhar card)

Information about the Equine

Species - Horse Mule Donkey Pony
Tag Number of the Equine
Colour of the equine
Health Examination conducted by (name and designation of Veterinarian)..
Health examination conducted on (date)

Date of the Negative Report for Glanders (attach copy of report) -
Date of Endurance Test conducted (attach copy of report) -

Age of the equine -
Gender of the equine -

Amount of Fee deposited with the District SPCA.....

Declaration by the owner -

I hereby declare that:

1. I shall be solely responsible for the periodical vaccination and deworming of the equine which will be used for work and has been presented for Registration today.
2. I shall be held responsible and liable for prosecution in case the animal registered for work is treated cruelly.
3. I shall be responsible for ensuring that wholesome and timely fodder is given to the animal.
4. I will abide by all orders/SOP/instructions provided by the Central and State Government agencies as well as the District SPCA for the welfare and maintenance of the equine.
5. I will get the daily physical inspection of the animal conducted by the veterinarian authorised by the District SPCA, before employing the animal for work.

6. I will get monthly health examination of the animal conducted by the Jurisdictional Veterinary Officer.
7. The Registration of my animal may be cancelled/suspended, if the above conditions are not met.

Signature of the applicant

Name of the applicant

Date

Place

Appendix 2

Equine Health Examination Proforma

Name of the veterinarian: _____

Date of health examination: _____

Place of health examination: _____

Name of the owner: _____

Number of the owner: _____

Address of the owner: _____

Tag Number: _____

Name of the handler: _____

1. Horse
2. Mule
3. Donkey
4. Pony

Age: _____ Gender: _____ Color: _____

Reproductive Status: Pregnant / Open / Fresh / Bred / Immature

Any medical history: _____

Prior vaccination records available? Yes / No

Vaccines administered for Equine Herpes Virus, Equine Influenza, Tetanus, Rabies.

Next dose due on: _____

General attitude and demeanour:

- 1 Bright, alert, responsive
- 2 Quiet, alert, responsive
- 3 Lethargic
- 4 Mildly depressed
- 5 Depressed
- 6 Comments _____
- 7 Appetite:
- 8 Normal
- 9 More than normal
- 10 Less than normal
- 11 Not eating

Comments _____

Limbs look and feel: Normal Abnormal

LF _____ RF _____ LH _____ RH _____

Gait: (Normal, lame, wobbly, weak) LF _____ RF _____ LH
_____ RH _____

Comments: _____

Head, face, throat looks and feels: From front Normal Abnormal

From sides: Normal Abnormal

Left eye: Normal Red Cloudy Watering Squinting Growth

Right eye: Normal Red Cloudy Watering Squinting Growth

Comments: _____

Temperature _____ Pulse _____ Respiration _____ Capillary refill time _____

Mucous membranes Pink Pale pink Red Dark Toxic line

Pulse feels: Normal Weak Irregular

Heart sounds: Normal Weak Irregular

Respiratory sounds: Normal Abnormal

Comments _____

Gut Sounds: 0 absent, 1 fewer than normal, 2 normal, 3 more than normal

Upper left side _____ Lower left side _____

Upper right side _____ Lower right side _____

Body, neck, and back look and feel: Normal Abnormal

Under belly looks and feels: Normal Abnormal

Tail and under tail look and feel: Normal Abnormal

Sheath or udder looks and feels: Normal Abnormal

Other notes:

Any specimen collected for diagnostic purpose:

Name of Veterinarian Signature and Seal of Veterinarian

Date: _____

Appendix 3

The number of equines that can ply on any hilly/mountainous track must be determined in a scientific manner to avoid accidents due to overcrowding, poor management, disease outbreak, stampede and other mishaps. In the absence of any of the facilities listed in the SOP, the animals may suffer unnecessary pain and movement of people will also be impeded. Hence the following must be the basis of calculating how many equines can be allowed to work in hilly/mountainous regions.

- A. Night shelters must be available for all animals
- B. Warm drinking water must be available for all animals
- C. At least one veterinarian must be available for every 500 animals, on the track. Working hours and working days of the veterinarians so deployed must be taken into account so that the minimum number of vets prescribed is always available for treatment and screening of the animals on the track.
- D. Sanitation facilities for removal of the tonnage of dung generated by the equines must be in place.
- E. Screening facility for Glanders and Equine Influenza must be available for each equine.
- F. Testing facility for conducting a stress test for each equine must be available before each animal is allowed to be employed for work.
- G. There must be an in-patient veterinary facility available for housing at least 10% of the total equines employed at any track, in an infirmary - if such animals are injured, disabled and abandoned.
- H. Acclimatisation sheds must be available for the equines newly registered.
- I. Fodder facility must be available on the track.
- J. The District Police must be well aware of legal provisions to prosecute any violation of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960.