

# CHAPTER 4

## WORKING ANIMALS

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# 1

## BACKGROUND

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The animal workforce is estimated at about 300 million animals and the numbers are rising: for example, the number of donkeys increased from 33.2 million to 42 million between 1961 and 1997. In the same period buffaloes increased from 87.5 million to 152.4 million. The majority of working animals are involved in transport and agriculture. Various species are involved: most commonly equines (horses, donkeys and mules), oxen and buffaloes, but also other animals such as cows, camels, llamas, yaks and elephants.

Most working animals live in developing countries.

The following are just some categories of working animals:

- Animals working in agriculture
- Transport animals
- Animals in animal assisted therapy
- Animals in law enforcement
- Assistance or service animals
- Security animals
- Military and war animals
- Search and rescue animals
- Herding, guarding and hunting animals

In many countries, despite their excellent service to the human population, working animals are overworked and under-valued. They are regarded more as commodities than as sentient beings. Throughout the world, working animals can be the sole provider of a family's income and in most cases their poor treatment is usually a combination of ignorance and lack of respect.

# 2

## WELFARE PROBLEMS

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Some of the welfare problems that may affect working animals include:

- Working long hours with little rest
- Poor husbandry
- Being denied social and behavioural needs
- Being kept in poor conditions
- Being underfed
- Being badly shod or suffering lameness
- Poorly designed or ill-fitting harnesses, saddles and yokes
- Being kept tethered or hobbled
- Pulling un-roadworthy or overloaded carts (or other loads)
- Cruel training methods
- Lack of shade
- Lack of water
- Inhumane handling
- Lack of health and veterinary care
- Heat stress
- Inhumane disposal when old or worn out

## RESEARCH

# 3

Before entering into a practical working animal programme/project, be sure to carry out as much research as possible. Carrying out a population survey of the area is crucial to programme success, as the resources must be able to cater for the number of working animals.

### Research Example Checklist:

- Decision makers: meet with government or municipality officials of the project area and get their support/blessing.
- Gain the support of local influential figures, for example: mayors, governors.
- Check the availability of veterinary medicines locally and their costs. Importation of certain drugs may need government approval.
- Check the availability of materials locally and their costs, for example: materials for harness, carts, horseshoes.
- Meet with local skilled craftspeople, harness makers, farriers etc. and look for potential candidates for training and development.
- Carry out welfare assessments on the animals you intend to help. This is particularly important for projects involving veterinary interventions. Thorough assessments on a given number of animals in the project area will identify priority issues. For example: if a high percentage of the animals have harness sores, then the design and materials of the harnesses would be an area to address and improve. If a high percentage were suffering from lameness, it may be that farriery training was necessary. The welfare assessments will also identify the areas for training and development. All projects should include an element of education as 'prevention is far more effective than cure.'
- Talk with the owners of the working animals. They will inform you of their main concerns and problems. This will also help in prioritising the needs and objectives of the project. They will also assist with the selection of local people, suitable to participate in the project. Community participation is a good motivator, giving the community a sense of ownership towards the project.
- Look for an effective method of evaluating the progress of the project, to ensure improvement is being made to both the animals and their owners.



## ANIMAL PROTECTION STRATEGIES

# 4

The animal protection movement has already used various strategies to improve the plight of working animals. The following are just some examples of what has been, and could be, done:

### a) Legislative Campaigns

- High profile campaigns, especially against appalling conditions and treatment, such as media events, demos, actions etc.
- Investigations and media exposés, such as working with television documentaries for maximum campaign impact
- Working with authorities for the introduction and enforcement of animal protection legislation and regulations to improve conditions. For more information, please see WSPA's 'Guidelines and Licensing Regulations for Riding Schools, Equine Tourist Establishments and Carriage Operators/Owners'
- Lobbying governmental authorities and politicians.

### b) Consumer Education

- Making tourists and travellers aware of working animal issues, for example, to avoid using pack animals and taking donkey or horse rides where burdens are heavy or conditions are poor



- Working with media, especially documentaries, to expose the issues and call for improvements
- Making information available in targeted publications, e.g. articles in travel and lifestyle magazines.

### c) Education

- Providing training and education to owners about animal welfare aspects of working animals
- Covering working animal issues in school educational materials and programmes
- Covering working animal welfare issues in Veterinary and Agricultural University curricula, and providing resources like WSPA's 'Concepts in Animal Welfare'
- Including animal welfare education in all vocational programmes covering areas where working animals are used.

### d) Practical Assistance

- Providing veterinary care for working animals
- Providing farriery training and development
- Assisting in the introduction of improved carts, tethers, harnesses, saddles etc.
- Establishing community participated projects
- Providing or installing water facilities and rest areas in relevant locations, e.g. along trade routes.

## 5

### CASE STUDY

The **Lampang Pony Welfare Organisation (LPWO)** managed to increase animal welfare and improve the health of the pony population in Lampang Town, in Northern Thailand, on very limited funding.

Many of the 350 ponies, used to transport tourists in carriages, were suffering from malnutrition and secondary nutritional hyperparathyroidism (HPT). This was found to be caused by unbalanced levels of calcium and phosphorus in their diet.

The main symptoms of HPT or 'big head' include: increased size of the nose and lower jaw (due to minerals in the bones being replaced by fibrous tissue), respiratory noise, lameness, bone and joint tenderness, loose teeth and emaciation.



Two ponies suffering from HPT.

LPWO initiated a project to treat and monitor the health of the ponies and to increase the understanding of nutrition and health care among their owners. It was expected that a daily supplement of cheap limestone would prevent HPT and in existing cases reduce the severity of the symptoms.

Approximately 250 ponies participated in the general health care programme, of which 149 ponies were included in the survey and monitored. A nutritional and health programme was started, and several workshops were organised that highlighted the importance of calcium and consequences of malnutrition. The horse owners were also offered limestone at a reduced price. Subsequently, the ponies were checked every three months and their intake of calcium and clinical signs of HPT were registered.

The use of calcium depended on the owners' cooperation. In the period from August 2003 until November 2004, the owners recognised improved health status and better performance among their ponies. Better performance results in higher earnings, which encouraged more and more owners to use calcium.

This project shows that it is possible to improve the health among ponies in southeast Asia even with very limited funding. Cheap limestone can balance traditional feeding with rice bran and cut grass to prevent, as well as cure, symptoms of HPT. Education can encourage horse owners to change their old habits and positive results can encourage others to follow suit.

## 6

### FURTHER RESOURCES

#### Web Sites

##### Animal Concerns: Working Animals

[www.animalconcerns.org/topics.html?topicsku=2002130143200&topic=Working%20Animals&topic type=topic](http://www.animalconcerns.org/topics.html?topicsku=2002130143200&topic=Working%20Animals&topic type=topic)

##### Carthorse Protection Association, South Africa

[www.wag.co.za/WAGintro%20pages/Cart%20Horse%20Protection/cart\\_horse\\_protection\\_associatio.htm](http://www.wag.co.za/WAGintro%20pages/Cart%20Horse%20Protection/cart_horse_protection_associatio.htm)

##### International Donkey Protection Trust

[www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/site/1/home.html](http://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/site/1/home.html)

##### Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad

[www.spana.org/](http://www.spana.org/)

##### The Brooke Hospital for Animals

[www.brooke-hospital.org.uk/](http://www.brooke-hospital.org.uk/)

#### Books

##### The Behaviour of the Horse

A. F. Fraser

Publisher: CAB International

ISBN: 0851987850



**Horse Healthcare**

(Funded by the Brooke Hospital for Animals)

David Hadrill

Publisher: ITDG Publishing

ISBN: 1853394866

**Working Animals in Agriculture and Transport**

[www.wageningenacademic.com/books/ts06.htm](http://www.wageningenacademic.com/books/ts06.htm)

R.A. Pearson, P. Lhoste, M. Saastamoinen, W. Martin-Rosset (editors)

ISBN: 9076998256

**WSPA Resources****Guidelines and licensing regulations for riding schools, equine tourist establishments and carriage operators/owners**

Alistair Findlay (2004)

Available from WSPA's London headquarters

**Cuidados Básicos para Equinos**

Available from WSPA's Costa Rica office or London headquarters (2003)