



सत्यमेव जयते



ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD OF INDIA

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Govt. of India

भारतीय जीव जन्तु कल्याण बोर्ड

(पर्यावरण, वन और जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार)

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ANIMAL WELFARE GUIDELINES FOR EQUINES (HORSES, MULES, PONIES AND DONKEYS) EMPLOYED AT PILGRIM SITES

Introduction:-

1. There are number of Holy shrines in India located in hilly areas especially in the states of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. Lakhs of Pilgrims from within the country as well as from foreign countries visit these Shrines every year. Pilgrim tourism is an important source of revenue for these states.
2. Horses, Mules and Ponies significantly contribute in facilitating the transportation of pilgrims and goods to these shrines and therefore are an important resource for smooth functioning of pilgrimage. These Animals come to these places from long distances within & outside the states. The large congregation of Equines at these pilgrim sites makes them vulnerability to disease outbreaks. Employment of these Animals in high altitude at narrow and rocky tracks make them prone to accidental falls and sudden deaths due to cardiovascular failure. Health care and proper management of equines at pilgrim sites is therefore an important equine welfare issue.
3. Management of Equines at these pilgrim sites in terms of providing them shelter, proper disposal of dung, provision of feed & water arrangements and veterinary care are the major issues which need attention of local administrative authorities/ pilgrim management bodies.

Equine Management

4. **Sheltering of animals:** Suitable sheltering sites should be located 2 to 3 kms away from base camp where temporary sheds be made for equines and equine owners. Such sheltering places be provisioned with watering, electricity and dung disposal arrangements.
5. **Management of animals at tracks:** Arrangement for night halt be made after each 10-12 kms track distance. The working equines should not be allowed to be employed covering more than 20 kms (to and fro) stretch at a time. That means one set of animals be allowed to be employed from base camp to mid-way camp and the another set from mid-way camp to shrine. They need to have halting places on the track at distances of 3 kms with watering and temporary shelter arrangements (lay byes)
6. **Disposal of dung:** Its very important to organize proper dung disposal for hygiene and sanitation and also it could be used as manure by farmers or used for mushroom production. Arrangement for regular removal of dung from tracks is also desirable.
7. **Insurance of animals:** All animals employed for the pilgrimage be got insured under national insurance policy scheme by pilgrim management authorities under the aegis of State Animal Husbandry Department.

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8. **Farrriery:** The local farrriers need to be trained in quality shoeing of working equines to mitigate foot afflictions/lameness.

Veterinary Service Provision

9. **Health Check:** Horses, mules and ponies employed at pilgrim sites usually come from nearby districts and sometimes from neighbouring states as well. The pilgrim sites being mostly at high altitude areas there is need to carry out periodic health check of these animals to avoid deaths due to cardiac failure. Further the health check will ensure early detection of animals suffering from contagious diseases as well which will require quarantine arrangement to avoid spread of contagious diseases.
10. Horses, mules and ponies being employed at Pilgrim sites if found suffering from Glanders will be humanely Euthanized as per the AWBI guidelines on euthanasia and Glanders & Farcy Act 1899. Glanders is a Zoonotic disease which is also incurable.
11. **Endurance Test:** On arrival of new equines, they should be tested for endurance. The animals with load (mounted or rider on the top) be made to walk a distance of 2 km uphill. During this exercise the normal heart rate rises above 100 bpm which should be measured after 1 hour of rest if the Heart Rate comes down to 45 bpm the animal can be declared fit to work on high altitude area i.e. animal has healthy cardio- respiratory functions.
12. **Veterinary care center:** There is need to have a veterinary aid post at the base camp to be managed by State AH Department with basic medicines. However the owners be made to pay for prescribed medicines. Similarly there is need to have Veterinary First Aid posts at mid-way and at shrine to be managed by government paravets. Private qualified paravets be encouraged to established treatment centers at base camp to cater for additional veterinary support.
13. **Quarantine:** There is need to have quarantine arrangement (space / shelter) at least one km away from the main stables to keep / treat animals suffering from contagious diseases.
14. **Registration:** This should include photograph of owner and animal with details of the owner as well as animal. The use of Microchip, at the time of registration will help to identify the animal. Details of insurance, vaccinations, deworming and health check-up be recorded in the registration document of the animal.

Dated: 1st March, 2016


Chairman
Animal Welfare Board of India