

ANIMAL WELFARE BOARD OF INDIA

Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Govt. of India
(Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying)
NIAW Campus, 42 KM Mile Stone, Delhi Agra Highway
NH-2, Ballabhgarh, Haryana 121004
Email: animalwelfareboard@gmail.com : Website: www.awbi.in

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To

1. The Chief Secretary of all States/UTs
2. The Director, Department of Animal Husbandry of all States / UTs

Subject: Request to properly implement the Guidelines for Equines (Horses, Mules & Ponies) employed at Brick-kilns in India – regarding.

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. The Supreme Court has in the case of AWBI Vs. Nagaraja & Ors inter alia held that "We declare that the five freedoms [viz. (i) freedom from hunger, thirst, and malnutrition; ii) freedom from fear and distress iii) freedom from physical and thermal discomfort iv) freedom from pain, injury and disease; and v) freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour, referred to earlier be read into section 3 and 11 of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960, be protected and safeguarded by the State and Central Government, Union Territories (in short "Governments"), MoEF and AWBI."

3. Further, it has been brought to the notice of the Board that the brick kiln industry attracts manual labourers along with draught animals primarily equids (horses, donkeys and mules). There are 1.2 million working equids in India; majority of them are engaged in brick-kiln industry by poor and marginalized communities whose livelihood depends on these working equids.

4. Therefore, in view of the above, it is requested to kindly circulate and pass necessary directions to the concern authorities/departments and local bodies for the implementation of the "GUIDELINES FOR EQUINES (HORSES, MULES & PONIES) EMPLOYED AT BRICK-KILNS" in letter and spirit.

5. Your co-operation and co-ordination are highly solicited for the implementation of the Rules to ensure proper welfare of animals.

Yours sincerely,


(Dr. O.P. Chaudhary)
Chairman

1. Introduction

- 1.1 India is the second largest producer of bricks, second only to China, producing about 195 billion bricks annually. The process of brick production is largely manual; therefore, the brick kiln industry attracts manual labourers along with draught animals primarily equids (horses, donkeys and mules). There are 1.2 million working equids in India; majority of them are engaged in brick-kiln industry by poor and marginalized communities whose livelihood depends on these working equids. The states like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, J & K, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and West Bengal have large number of brick-kilns.
- 1.2 The role of equines at these brick-kilns is to transport raw bricks from nearby sites to brick-kiln furnace where raw brick is baked or fired at high temperature. Employment of equines for transport of raw brick is preferred over other modes of transport because of their manoeuvrability, low breakage of bricks, cheaper labour cost and their easy availability. This distance between site where raw bricks are made and the kiln furnace varies from brick-kiln to brick-kiln i.e. ranges from 500 meter to 2 km. Equines employed in these brick-kilns transport bricks either by cart or by pack. The number of equines working at each brick-kiln varies; the average number is 12.2.

2. Animal Welfare Issues

The brick kiln environment is very harsh and challenging for equines due to extreme dust and very high ambient temperature (over 50° Celsius) which leads to heat stress, exhaustion, dehydration, respiratory distress, eye problems, loss of body condition, colic and even death if untreated. The poor-quality harness and carts and uneven terrains to carry overloaded bricks for prolonged period leads to strain on ligaments and joints leading to lameness, harness injuries which further develops into life threatening disease like *Tetanus*. Exposure to stressful working environment lowers their immunity making them vulnerable to various diseases like *Trypanosomosis*, *Piroplasmosis*, etc. The equine suffers from fear and distress due to equine owners poor handling like twitching of ears, lips, beating, pulling and pushing. Also, equine owner does not have access to local veterinary service provision because of remote locations of brick-kilns. Their bad practices like use of chilly or tobacco as remedy for colic, use of blue dye or engine oils on wounds have detrimental effects on equine health. These brick-kilns are devoid of stabling facilities for equines or in some instances they provide temporary shed which are like pigeon holes. Such small, isolated, tin roofing and poorly ventilated sheds further add to the discomfort and make living condition miserable for equines. Inadequate water and feed facilities lead to hunger and thirst in working equines. Inaccessibility of basic services like farriery, saddlery, cart repairing and other ancillary services lead to prolonged pain and suffering in equines.

the Owner's Perspective

Due to migration of equines intra-state or inter-state or international (Nepal), there is always a risk of spread of infectious and contagious disease like Glanders, Strangles, and Equine Influenza from one place to other. The industry depends on thousands of manual labour including men, women, and children. These labourers are poor and socially deprived. They get a piece-rate with low wages. The industry operates on advance payment system which leads to debt traps as they fail to repay the advance payment to brick-kiln owner or contractor and thus they have lack of negotiating power for better wages and benefits and become bonded labour.

4. Provision of basic facilities Shelter / Stabling

Well ventilated shelters with adequate space for equines to lie down, get up and turn around easily should be provided for working equines to protect them from adverse weather conditions. Preferably semi-open shelter (paddock) system should be established at each brick-kiln. Plantation of shady trees around paddocks should be encouraged.

4.2 Watering facilities

Working equines need regular and adequate access to safe and clean water that meets their physiological and work requirements. Animals should be allowed to drink / offered drinking water every two hours during work. There should be provision of adequate number of water points.

Nutritional aspects

Equines are natural grazers i.e. eat small amounts often and their natural diet is mainly grasses, which have high roughage content. Therefore, equines should be fed frequently with a predominantly fibre-based diet either grass or hay. Working equids should be provided with access to an appropriate quantity and quality of balanced feed. Their feed should also include high energy diet. Owners should offer forage whenever possible and allow for an adequate number of working breaks to allow the animals to eat. Cut green forage should be provided when grazing is not possible. The brick kiln owner should provide space for cultivation of green fodder like Berseem, Lucerne. In case of lack of space brick kiln owner should provide facilities to grow grasses or plants through hydroponics.

Rolling pits

Equines roll just after being untacked to ease the irritation of drying sweat, to relieve pain or discomfort or for rest and pleasure. Rolling plays a very important role in maintaining body's flexibility and health of equines. Therefore, each brick-kiln should have sand rolling pits.

Road maintenance

Forced traction is required for equines to carry brick load because of poor and uneven road conditions which not only impacts the equine health (saddle wounds, strain on ligaments and tendons leading to lameness) but also imbalances the cart and may cause breakage of harness due to

continuous jerking, stretching, regular repair and maintenance essential.

5. Handling & Management practices

Appropriate workload

Equine should be used for work purpose when they attain at least three years of age. Equines should work a maximum of six hours per day and should be given at least one full day rest in a week. The permissible weight in cart and pack should be according to The Prevention of Cruelty to Draught and Pack Animals Rules, 1965 under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960. During rest day equine should be fed with bran and fodder to avoid incidences of *Azoturia*. Also, injured or sick equines should not be put to work until they recover completely. Work should be reduced in very hot weather or work timings should be changed accordingly. Mares should not be worked three months before and after foaling.

Discourage harmful practices

There is a need to sensitize animal owners to avoid bad or harmful traditional practices like using whips and harmful goads such as sticks, continuous tethering or hobbling. Material and equipment used to hobble should be designed for that purpose to minimize chances of injuries/ hobble wounds. Equine owners should be encouraged to use equine friendly harness material and to clean and dry the harnesses after each work session. Overloading and overworking the equines should not be allowed. Adequate tyre pressure and regular maintenance of cart is required to avoid pain, discomfort and injuries to equines. Educate equine owners about prevention of cruelty to animals like use spiked bits, blistering, hot firing to treat lameness, chilly or tobacco as remedy for colic, etc. which are punishable offences under Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960.

Knowledge of equine behaviour & common health ailments

Presence or absence of certain equine behaviours could indicate animal welfare problems including fear, depression or pain. Therefore animal owners should be familiarized with normal and abnormal behaviour in order to interpret the welfare implications of what is being observed. In view of this, Brick-kiln owner should display normal and abnormal behaviour signs of equids to educate equine owners. The Brick kiln owners should also display signs and symptoms of common equine diseases to educate the owners about them. The following equine diseases should be enlisted with symptoms at each brick kiln; dehydration, heat stress, Anhidrosis, colic, Surra, Glanders, Piroplasmosis, equine influenza and Strangles.

6. Veterinary service provision

Each brick-kiln should have facility of first aid for equines and brick kiln owner should display contact number of nearby Veterinary Doctor / Assistant in order to access veterinary services in emergency. Also, brick kiln owners should have linkages with Government Veterinary doctor / local health service providers for provision of timely health services like regular health checks, vaccination, deworming, etc.

Farriery & other allied services

Availability of adequate number of trained Farriers which are licensed by State Animal Husbandry Department as per the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Licensing of Farriers) Rules, 1965. All equine owners should have access to feed seller, saddler and cart repairers. Also, the regular cart repairing and maintenance is required to facilitate smooth traction of cart and minimize stress on equines. The working conditions, hot and humid environment in brick-kiln leads to heat stress and heat stroke in equine. Therefore, to facilitate normal thermoregulation in equines, regular hair clipping is of utmost importance. Also, BK owners should have linkages with local farriers, hair clipper and cart repairers so that equine owners can avail these services on time.