
UNIT 14 WELFARE ISSUES IN WORKING ANIMALS

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14.1 LEARNING OUTCOMES

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| <p>a) Knowledge and Understanding: After studying this Unit, you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify specific welfare issues in working animals.• Explain the reasons for practicing painful management procedures in working animals. <p>b) Practical and Professional Skills: After studying this Unit, you will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discuss the specific animal welfare issues in working animals.• Demonstrate the welfare concern behind each practice and suggest alternatives to improve welfare of working animals. |
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14.2 INTRODUCTION

Dear Learner,

In the previous unit you were introduced to the concept of working animals, different working animals in India (equines, bullocks, camels and elephants), classification and husbandry systems of working animals (breeding, feeding, shelter/ housing and health) and physical, mental and naturalness aspects of welfare. In this unit, we will discuss some specific welfare issues pertaining to the following working animals:

- Bullocks

- Horses, Ponies and Donkeys
- Camels and Elephants

14.2.1 Type of Work vs. Welfare Issues of Working Animals

Commonly encountered welfare issues of working animals are due to the type of work they carry out (Box 14.1).

Box 14.1: Type of the Work vs. Welfare

- Donkeys or ponies fitted with pack saddle transporting the raw bricks in a brick-kiln usually develop wounds on their body parts where the saddle comes in contact with the body (Fig. 14.1).
- The wound under the base of the tail is caused by constant friction on the skin by the crupper .
- The wounds on wither and spine are caused due to the poorly maintained, dirty or ill-fitted pack saddle.
- The wounds on girth and belly are caused due to the girth band used to keep the pack saddle and the load intact.
- The animal also becomes lame due to overloading and overworking.

Similarly, bullocks used for hauling sugarcane from the field to sugar mills in carts often develop swelling/ abscess on the neck region due to the overloading and if the pair of bullocks hitched to the cart are of unequal size/ height.



Fig. 14.1. Wounds caused by saddle (Source: NRC on Equines)

14.3 WELFARE ISSUES OF BULLOCKS

The following welfare issues that we already discussed in Unit 2 are also applicable to most of the working bullocks:

- 1) Disbudding, dehorning and horn tipping
- 2) Tail docking
- 3) Animal identification methods
- 4) Lameness

(Please refer 'Unit 2 - Welfare Issues in Dairy Animals' for more details).

The majority of the welfare issues of the working bullocks are linked to the abuse / mistreatment / negligence by owners. They include the following:

- i) Long Working Hours:** Working long hours with little rest to the animals (e.g. Bullocks transporting sand from sand quarries (Fig. 14.2).



Fig. 14.2: Bullocks transporting sand (often for long hours)

ii) Denial of Social and Behavioral Needs:

- o The freedom to graze with other animals of the same species
- o Social grooming
- o Tied tightly with nose rope from both the sides during resting
- o Restricting them in such a way that they can't even move their head or tail to drive away the flies that irritate them.

iii) Unhygienic Housing: Housed in unhygienic, ill ventilated and inappropriate sheds.

iv) Under Feeding: Most of the working bullocks are not fed adequately even during the working season (e.g. season for sugar factories from November to June). The feed provided is often not balanced and sometimes insufficient, leading to malnourishment and debility in animals. During the off-season they are usually underfed, as the owner doesn't consider the animal to be a source of income and due to lack of resources to look after them well.

v) Bad Shoeing: Usually there is no need to shoe a bullock when it is working in the agricultural fields. But, when the bullocks are used in the sugar mills and market yards they are forced to walk on the metalroads and hence the need of shoeing has come up. You would have seen in any of your nearest market yard that the bullocks are shod by casting them down forcefully and tying all four legs for shoeing them, which takes almost 20 to 25 minutes for the farrier. While shoeing, the bullocks are usually casted down on the hard ground which causes injury to the animal's body and have the risk of even causing fracture on the leg bones. Moreover the bullock's hooves are not trimmed properly and also due to faulty shoeing (especially when the nail was driven into the soft tissue of the hoof), the animals become lame. It is a quite painful condition and often the bullocks are forced to work even when they are lame.

vi) Yoke Gall: Yoke gall or abscess is a very painful condition most commonly encountered in the working bullocks. You may imagine the quantum of pain you may feel when there is a small abscess on your hand or leg. The animals with abscess on neck are not even rested until they recover. Instead they are often hitched to the cart for work to earn the day's income. The pain can be relieved only through surgical intervention followed by resting of the animals until complete healing (Fig.14.3).



Fig. 14.3: Relieving yoke gall pain surgically (before and after)

(Source: Animal Rahat May 17.2016)

- vii) Overloaded Carts:** Bullocks pulling overloaded carts are a common sight in many states. During sugarcane crushing season, one can easily sport a pair of bullocks or buffaloes hauling an overloaded cart carrying the sugarcane from fields to sugar mills. The maximum capacity a pair of bullocks weighing around 450 kg can carry is up to 1.8 to 2 tons of sugarcane with pneumatic tyres and good road conditions. But these bullock carts are sometimes loaded up to 3 to 3.5 tons. This overloading results in lameness, accidental falling due to slipping while going down or climbing up the terrain and also yoke galls (Box 14.2).

Box 14.2: Overloaded Bullock Carts (Source: PETA- India)

Bullock-cart owners in several parts of the country are reportedly encouraged to overload bullocks through incentives offered by sugar factories. The animals are often forced to pull loads twice the load of what a normal, healthy bullock could pull. The additional weight causes bullocks to suffer from swollen knees, necks and shoulders, and the strain impairs their immune systems and shortens their lives. This is a clear violation of Prevention of Cruelty to Draught and Pack Animals Rules, 1965, by exceeding the allowable weight of 2.8 tons per bullock cart (Fig. 14.4).



Fig.14.4: Overloaded bullock carts (Photo:The Hindu (21st October 2019)

- viii) Inhumane Handling and Restraining:** In Maharashtra ‘Khillar’ breed of cattle are used for draught purposes. These bullocks naturally have long sharp horns, and the owners or drivers often carry a whip on their shoulders stating that it is to prevent the bullock from butting them. There is always a

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Write two examples for work related welfare issues in working animals.

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2) What is meant by yoke gall?

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3) Write the welfare consequences in bullocks with overloaded carts.

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14.4 WELFARE ISSUES OF HORSES, PONIES AND DONKEYS

14.4.1 Welfare Issues of Horses/Ponies

The welfare issues of horses/ponies vary as per their work type and most of the above mentioned welfare issues are common for horses too. The welfare issues include:

- Long working hours with little rest
- Being denied social and behavioral needs
- Being kept in poor unhygienic stable conditions
- Underfed/malnourished
- Faulty shoeing causing lameness
- Ill-fitted harness and saddles

- Being kept tethered and/or hobbled most of the time
- Pulling non-roadworthy and/or overloaded carts (or other loads on pack saddle)
- Cruel training methods
- Lack of shade and water
- Inhumane handling and restraining methods
- Lack of veterinary care
- Poor management practices etc.

When the animals are subjected to some of the above unethical practices, the animals may suffer with one or the other health issues. Some of the specific and most commonly encountered welfare issues in the working horses/ponies are:

- 1) Lesions/wounds caused on various body parts coming in contact with the harness. e.g. lesions on corner of lips caused due to spiked bits, lesions on chest, back, girth, ribs/flank, fore and hind legs, point of knee, under the tail base.
- 2) Lesions caused due to constant tethering/hobbling during resting or grazing.
- 3) Ectoparasites (ticks, lice, bot fly eggs).
- 4) Lesions caused due to firing with hot iron as part of traditional healing (branding to treat jaundice in horses).
- 5) Mutilations of various body parts such as ears and nostrils due to myths.
- 6) Discharge from eyes causing fly nuisance and sometimes leading to corneal opacity (white discoloration of cornea), blindness etc.
- 7) Foot related welfare issues such as abnormal hoof shape, hoof horn quality, thrush, absence of frog etc. are also commonly noticed in horses. Most of these foot related welfare issues are due to unhygienic stable conditions, faulty foot trimming etc which ultimately result in lameness in these animals. Lameness, a painful condition can also be caused due to arthritis, swelling of the flexor tendons and joints in the working animals.

14.4.2 Welfare Issues of Donkeys

The welfare issues of working donkeys are also similar to those of horses/ponies. They also vary as per the work type i.e. the donkey being hitched to carts as in some parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat or being fitted with pack saddle for carrying the bricks in the brick-kilns of northern and central India. The donkeys are also used for carrying the construction materials for buildings in the city areas and for carrying the agricultural produce in the rural parts of India on the packsaddle. Majority of the donkeys are used by fitting the packsaddle.

The most commonly encountered welfare issues in donkeys being used for carrying the raw bricks in the brick-kilns are (Box 14.3):

- 1) The lesions/wounds on the body parts caused due to the ill-fitting harness coming in contact with the body. e.g. lesions on chest, girth, back/spine, under the tail base, thigh region, hindquarters etc.
- 2) Lesions caused due to hobbling/tethering constantly when the donkeys are either resting or grazing after the completion of work.

- 3) Lesions caused due to firing (applying red hot iron to burn a part of body i.e. either the joints, flank region, both sides of the neck, back and spine till tail base, over the nasal bridge etc.) which are not only painful but also gets infected later, causing lifelong fear, pain and distress to the donkeys.
- 4) Mutilations which include nostril slitting and cutting of ear tips are also a common welfare issue in working donkeys. These practices are based on myths and are rooted from non-availability and non-accessibility of quality veterinary services for donkeys.
 - The custodians slit the nostrils of the donkeys believing that it will help in inhaling and exhaling more air during work and thereby increase the work efficiency. Often, it is also done as a treatment for tetanus in donkeys.
 - 1/3rd of the ear from tips cut to drain out the bad blood if the donkey is suspected to be suffering from any blood protozoan disease such as babesiosis and trypanosomiasis. These procedures are usually performed by quacks without using any anaesthetic or analgesic forcing the animals to suffer very badly. Many times due to the use of non-sterile equipment to cut the ears may cause tetanus in these animals.
- 5) Lameness is also a common welfare issue in the working donkeys. It is mainly due to lodging of thorns, nails and stones inside the sole of the hoof etc. when the donkeys are made to walk on poor roads and the hooves are not being cleaned by the owner regularly. It may also lead to infection of the sole and may result in painful complications such as hoof abscess. Lameness is also caused by inflammation of tendons, ligaments, muscles and joints and is often caused by overloading and overworking without giving enough rest.

Box 14.3: Donkeys in Industries and their Welfare – Case Study

(Source: The Donkey Sanctuary)

Donkeys work hard and for long periods in brick kilns, mines, quarries and building sites, which can mean suffering and deprivation for donkeys and people alike. In rural areas, they are often used in farming and for transporting goods to market.

Donkeys work in the brick kilns that fuel the country's building boom, which has seen thousands of high-rise blocks shooting up around Delhi and Mumbai. Most of the bricks involved in their construction has been transported by donkeys or mules. Workforce of donkeys and their owners take the raw, unfired bricks to the kiln. They work together to build a quadrant of bricks around the central chimney of the kiln, stacking around a hundred thousand bricks in a precise pattern.

Once the bricks have cooled, donkeys take them to another area where they are stacked in huge walls ready for buyers.

Besides bricks, they also carry sand and crushed stone for mortar, walking up the stairs. They carry 25 bricks at a time, each weighing 2.5kg. Unlike the cranes (machines), donkeys are able to deliver bricks and mortar more directly to the bricklayers.

The workers and their donkeys live on the building site and move on to another building site when the work is over. Tracking and maintaining ties with itinerant donkey owners is one of the major challenges for their welfare.

Welfare is Key: The donkeys have hard lives and their conditions need to be improved by training local service providers such as farriers and harness makers, providing veterinary health care for the animals and educating brick kiln owners and workers. The productivity and efficiency of working animals is dependent on their welfare: where animals are poorly fed, overworked or suffer from illness and disease, they cannot achieve their productive potential. Simple interventions can empower owners to keep their working animals healthy and ensure their continued productive benefit. Attention to donkeys welfare in development policy, improved education in animal care and handling, access to basic veterinary care and sufficient feed and nutrition can significantly increase their productivity and longevity (Fig. 14.6).



*Fig. 14.6: Donkeys in industry and welfare extension by The Donkey Sanctuary
(<https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/what-we-do/issues>)*

14.5 WELFARE ISSUES OF CAMELS AND ELEPHANTS

14.5.1 Welfare Issues of Camels

- 1) Most commonly encountered welfare issues in working camels are harness/saddle wounds. As the hump of camel is not well supplied with blood healing takes a long time, therefore padding of the harness is important.
- 2) The camel's nose may be torn and may be infected because of the method of using the nose peg (Fig. 14.7). Usually the camel owners use long wooden nose pegs with which the ropes/ reins are attached for leading the camels. These wooden pegs due to constant friction sometimes tear the nasal septum, which may get infected and may also get infested with maggots causing further tissue damage (Box 14.4).
- 3) Mange, a parasitic skin infestation is another common issue in camels for which preventive management practices and timely treatment are necessary.



Fig.14.7: Different types of nose pegs

(Source: camelconnection.com/camel-nose-pegs-to-use-or-not-to-use)

Box 14.4: Camel Nose Pegs-Potential Health Risks and Safer Alternatives

The traditional wooden nose pegs can splinter and even break. This can lead to the camel's nose becoming infected which, if left untreated, can dangerously lead to septicaemia which may be fatal in some cases. Even if the nose peg is not splintered or broken, bacteria can continuously reproduce (multiply) in the pores of the wood / bone of the traditional style nose pegs, which, can continue to infect the camel even if the camel is undergoing a course of effective antibiotics. Only if the infection is fully removed from the pores of the wooden / bone nose peg or, the nose peg is totally removed and a new sterile nose peg is inserted in conjunction with a course of effective and specific antibiotic.

Safer Alternatives for Camel Nose Pegs: Modern materials such as polycarbonate can be used to make excellent nose pegs which are unbreakable and do not allow the bacteria to grow on the surface or inside (Fig. 14.8). These removable tipped nose pegs are also easier to insert into the nose hole than the traditional solid ended nose pegs as there is no stretching of the flesh when being inserted into the nose.



Fig. 14.8: Modern and removable camel nose peg made from polycarbonate

(Source: www.camelconnection.com)

14.5.2 Welfare Issues of Elephants

- 1) Chaining or keeping an elephant tethered upon unreasonably short or unreasonably heavy chain or cord is one of the most common welfare issues in captive elephants (Box 14.5).

- 2) Due to constant chaining and lack of enrichment, the elephants develop 'stereotypic behavior' i.e. constant head swaying and bobbing while kept chained at one place for long durations.
- 3) Cutting the tusks of a bull elephant and exposing horn cord/pulp is also quite common practice.
- 4) Forcibly weaning away an elephant calf (below 2 years of age) from mother.
- 5) Using heavy chains and hobbles with spikes or sharp edges or barbed wires for tethering elephants. The constant chaining causes deep wounds on the hind legs of the bulls during the 'musth' period (is a periodic condition in male elephants, characterized by highly aggressive behavior and accompanied by a large rise in reproductive hormone). These wounds are quite painful and take months to heal. Often the chains are found embedded inside the skin and muscle tissues resulting in chain sores.
- 6) Parading an elephant over tarred roads or otherwise, during hot period of the day and for a long duration at a stretch without rest for religious or any other purpose.
- 7) Transporting elephants on trucks of inadequate size or trucks with uneven floor, or tying them in an improper manner-subjecting them to severe jerks during journey by truck.
- 8) Transporting elephants in trucks for over 12 hours at a stretch without any break.
- 9) Foot ailments, nail cracks, splitting, thinning of the foot pad due to chaining on the hard concrete floor.
- 10) Abscess on the shoulder, hind quarters due to constantly lying down and getting up on the concrete floor and such abscess takes years to heal or sometimes never heals at all.
- 11) Use of banned 'bull hooks' (ankus) by the mahouts to restrain is also one of the common cruelties to elephants. Due to poking with bull hooks the elephants get injured and start bleeding.
- 12) Working for long hours for carrying the wooden logs without rest and food.

Box 14.5: Gods in Chains

(Source: Gods in Chains by Rhea Ghosh)

Different situations in which elephants are chained and held captive in India includes (Fig. 14.9):

- Begging elephants
- Temple elephants
- Circus elephants
- Zoo elephants

The complex social groups of elephants and their matriarchal societies are disrupted due to the unnatural settings under which they are imprisoned. They are incredibly of good judgment animals with physical and mental



Fig. 14.9: Constant chaining

characteristics unique to other land animals. The healthy male elephants that are in the state of ‘musth’ being treated like rogue elephants due to their high levels of aggression. Their aggression reduces when they are able to mate, but instead of this, the elephants are subjected to extreme cruelty by their owners and mahouts.

Before we proceed, complete the activity 2

Activity 2: Read the case study presented in Box 14.3 and enlist the welfare issues of donkeys working in brick kilns and construction sites. Write what would be the most appropriate way to improve their welfare?

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Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the spaces given below for your answers.

b) Check your answer with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Write any five welfare issues of Horses/Ponies.

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2) What are the welfare related mutilations in donkeys?

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3) What is meant by nose peg in a camel?

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4) What is Musth period in elephants?

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14.6 LET US SUM UP

- In this unit we examined the welfare issues in working animals with specific emphasis on bullocks, horses, donkeys, camels and elephants.
- Commonly encountered welfare issues of working animals are due to the type of work they carry-out.
- Welfare issues in dairy animals *viz.*, disbudding, dehorning and horn tipping, tail docking, animal identification methods and lameness are also applicable to most of the working bullocks.
- The majority of the welfare issues in the working bullocks are linked to the abuse / mistreatment / negligence by owners.
- The welfare issues of horses/ponies vary as per their work type. General welfare issues of bullocks are common for horses/ponies too.
- The welfare issues of working donkeys are also similar to the horses/ponies and also vary as per the work type i.e. the donkey being hitched to carts or being fitted with pack saddle for carrying the bricks in the brick-kilns.
- Mutilations are also a common welfare issue in working donkeys and it include nostril slitting and cutting of ear tips. These practices are based on myths and are rooted from non-availability and non-accessibility of quality veterinary care for donkeys.
- Most commonly encountered welfare issues in working camels are harness/saddle wounds and nose peg infections.
- Chaining or keeping an elephant tethered upon unreasonably short or unreasonably heavy chain or cord is the most common welfare issues in captive elephants among others.
- Attention to working animal’s welfare in development policy, improved education in animal care and handling, access to basic veterinary care and sufficient feed and nutrition can significantly increase their productivity and longevity.

14.7 KEYWORDS

Brick-Kiln: It is a brick manufacturing factory i.e. a place where the earth/mud is mixed with sand and shaped in to a brick and once these bricks get dried in the sun then the raw bricks are transported on the back of donkeys, ponies or by mini-tractors to the furnace where these raw bricks are baked to get the final brick.

Ectoparasite: A parasite that lives on the exterior of its host (e.g. ticks, lice, flea etc).

Harness: A set of straps and fittings by which a horse or other draught animal is fastened to a cart, plough, etc. and is used by its driver to control the animal.

Hobbling: To put a device (usually nylon rope) around the legs of a horse, pony or donkey so as to hamper but not prevent movement. It also means to restrict the free movement or activity.

Lameness: Limping by any animal due to some injury on any of the four limbs or the hooves.

Musth: It is a periodic mating condition in male elephants, characterized by highly aggressive behavior and accompanied by a large rise in reproductive hormone.

Mutilation: Damaging a part (s) of the body of an animal e.g. mutilation of ear, nose and tails in working animals).

Nose Peg: It is a long wooden peg used to restrain the camel with which the ropes/ reins are attached for leading the camels.

Working Animal: Domesticated animal that is held and trained to perform specific tasks.

Yoke Gall: A yoke gall is a localized acute inflammation (swelling) of the skin on the neck of the bullock due to constant friction caused by the yoke.

14.8 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND FURTHER READING

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Web Resources:

<https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/what-we-do/issues>

<https://camelconnection.com/camel-nose-pegs-to-use-or-not-to-use/>

14.9 SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISES

- 1) The majority of the welfare issues in the working bullocks are linked to the abuse / mistreatment / negligence by owners. Illustrate with suitable examples.
- 2) Discuss the general and specific welfare issues in the working horses/ponies with examples.
- 3) Write short notes on the following
 - a) Common welfare issues in donkeys
 - b) Common welfare issues in camels
 - c) Common welfare issues in elephants
- 4) Discuss the potential health risks and safer alternatives to nose pegs in camels.

14.10 ANSWERS / HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Donkeys or ponies fitted with pack saddle transporting the raw bricks in a brick-kiln usually develop wounds on their body parts where the saddle come in contact with the body. The wound under the base of the tail is caused by constant friction on the skin by the crupper. The wounds on wither and spine are caused due to the poorly maintained, dirty or ill-fitted pack saddle.
- 2) Yoke gall is a swelling/ abscess on the neck region developed due to the overloading of the cart or due to unequal size / height of the bullocks hitched to the cart used for transportation of heavy loads.
- 3) The additional weight causes bullocks to suffer from swollen knees, necks and shoulders, and the strain impairs their immune systems and shortens their lives.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The welfare issues of horses/ponies include: long working hours with little rest, being denied social and behavioral needs, being kept in poor unhygienic stable conditions, faulty shoeing causing lameness, and ill-fitted harness and saddles.
- 2) Mutilations are also a common welfare issue in working donkeys and it include nostril slitting and cutting of ear tips. These practices are based on myths and are rooted from non-availability and non-accessibility of quality veterinary care for donkeys.
- 3) Nose peg is a long wooden peg used to restrain the camel with which the ropes/ reins are attached for leading the camels.
- 4) Musth is a periodic mating condition in male elephants, characterized by highly aggressive behavior and accompanied by a large rise in reproductive hormone.