6. Working Animals

Introduction

The animal work force 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 (and has risen since). 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 animal: -

- Working animals in agriculture
- Transport animals
- Animal assisted therapy
- Animals in law enforcement
- Assistance/service animals
- Security animals
- Military and war animals
- Search and rescue animals
- Herding, guarding and hunting animals

There are an estimated 59 million donkeys and mules in the world today and the majority are to be found in developing countries. Incessant droughts resulting in increased cattle mortality have contributed to an increase in donkey usage as draught and pack animals in both rural and urban areas. Donkeys are used for work and in many circumstances are lifelines to families in their everyday tasks, such as water, and wood fuel collection, land cultivation and transportation of produce to market.

Welfare Problems

Welfare problems with working animals include: -

- Working long hours with little rest
- Being denied social and behavioural needs
- Being kept in poor conditions
- Being underfed
- Being badly shod and/or suffering lameness
- Having ill-fitting harnesses, saddles and yokes
- Being kept tethered and/or hobbled
- Pulling un-roadworthy and/or overloaded carts (or other loads)
- Cruel training methods
- Lack of shade
- Lack of water
- Inhumane handling
- Lack of health and veterinary care
Animal Welfare Issues

- Heat stress
- Inhumane disposal when old/worn out (e.g. donkeys thrown from cliff tops in Greece)

Further Resources

*B Web Sites*

Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad
http://www.spana.org/

The Brooke Hospital for Animals
http://www.brooke-hospital.org.uk/

National Search and Rescue Dog Association
http://www.nsarda.org.uk/

Animal Concerns: Working Animals
http://www.animalconcerns.org/topics.html?topicsku=2002130143200&topic=Working%20Animals&topictype=topic

International Donkey Protection Trust
http://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/site/

Carthorse Protection Association, South Africa
http://www.carthorse.org.za/

Books

*Horse Healthcare*
*(Funded by the Brooke Hospital for Animals)*
By: David Hadrill
Publisher: ITDG Publishing
ISBN: 1853394866

*The Behaviour of the Horse*
By: A. F. Fraser
Publisher: CAB International
ISBN: 0851987850

*Working Animals in Transport and Agriculture*
http://www.wageningenacademic.com/books/ts06.htm
Edited by: R.A. Pearson, P. Lhoste, M. Saastamoinen, W. Martin-Rosset
ISBN: 9076998256

*WSPA Brochure*

*Cuidados Básicos para Equinos*
WSPA – Available from WSPA’s Costa Rica office or headquarters