

6. Working Animals

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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

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

Further Resources

🔗 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&topicitype=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