

Review

## Management and welfare needs of donkeys in the rural areas of Noushahro Feroze, Pakistan

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**In this study a concise review was provided, discussing the management of donkeys in the rural area of Naushahro Feroze Sindh Pakistan. In this area donkeys are commonly used for the transport ion of clay bricks, mud, and grain for grinding, manure from pens to field, crop harvests from fields to stores and market places, crop residues from fields to homesteads for storage, plowing and weeding, and it also as a means of transportation for people. Thus, the donkey is used more as a carting animal (transport) than for cultivation tasks (plowing and weeding). Need exists that, institutions should provide awareness for donkey care and health. There is also need to provide trainings to farmers on such subjects such as management, welfare, and healthcare etc.**

**Key words:** Management, welfare, donkey, Naushahro Feroze, Pakistan.

### INTRODUCTION

The domestication of plants and animals started about 11,000 years ago (Peter, 2005). The donkey or ass, *Equus africanus asinus* (Don and Reeder, 2005) was a domesticated member of the *Equidae* or horse family. Asses were first domesticated around 3000 BC or 4000 BC probably in Egypt or Mesopotamia (Nowak, 1999) and have spread around the world. They continue to fill important roles in many places today. Domestication of the donkey from the African wild ass transformed ancient transport systems in Africa and Asia and the organization of early cities and pastoral societies (Stine et al., 2008).

Agriculture, in Pakistan, registered the growth of 3.13% against 2.38% last year and livestock witnessed a marginally higher growth of 4.04% against the growth of 3.9% last year. (Anonymous 2010 to 2011). About 41 million donkeys were reported worldwide in 2006 (Waltraud et al., 2008) China has the highest with 11 million, followed by Pakistan, Ethiopia, and Mexico (Starkey and Starkey, 1997), Pakistan has around 4.7 million of donkeys (Anonymous, 2010 to 2011), where they were used principally as draught or pack animals. Grey, brown, and white were the common coat colors of

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**Figure 1.** Donkeys eating home wastes in Naushahro Feroze District.

local donkeys (Singh et al., 2005). The domestic donkeys of Pakistan like the donkeys in Africa traces its heritage to the wild asses found in Egypt, the Sudan, Somalia, and Ethiopia, namely *Equus asinus africanus* and *Equus asinus somaliensis* (Feseha et al., 1991). Sindh is the most populated province of Pakistan after Punjab, where people are mostly dependant on livestock and agriculture and use animals for their food and transportation. In villages of Sindh specially, in district Naushahro Feroze, donkeys are commonly used for the transport of bricks, mud and fire wood, grain for grinding, manure from pens to field, crop harvests from fields to storage and market places, crop residue from fields to homesteads for storage, plowing and weeding and also serve as transportation of peoples. In the outside edge of Naushahro Feroze, in the villages of Kandiaro, Hallani, Kotri Kabir, Bhirya city, Pacca Chang and periphery, donkeys are present in abundant number and involved in farming directly and indirectly.

## DISCUSSION

### Nutrition

In Sindh, villages are not developed as in Punjab province and other countries of Asia and of the world. There are no feeding values required for donkey in all over Sindh. Donkeys obtain most of their energy from structural carbohydrates. Some owners suggest that, a donkey needs to be fed only with straw, supplemented

with controlled grazing in the summer or hay in the winter. The variation may be acknowledged to management observations, and the sources of animals examined (Mirani et al., 2012).

A local owner does not care about the feeding of donkey. They are commonly vaulted in dirty areas of city where they fed on home food waste and drink stagnant water (Figure 1).

### Donkey work load

Traditionally, animals like donkey and camels have been classified according to their function, for example, riding animals or pack type's animals (Shah et al., 2012). The donkeys are working almost many days in a year and about an average of 8 to 10 h a day. In donkey cart, they work near to 11 to 12 h. The distance covered by the donkeys varied from 10 to 40 km at 2 to 5 km/h as a pack and 8 to 16 km/h as cart. They play a major role in the economy of villagers, mostly in transportation from one village to another village.

Donkeys are usually reared by poor people and work in harsh environments for the fulfillment of their basic needs through transportation of goods and peoples, in some places of Naushahro Feroze, the average price of this kind of work is of 100 PKR for 2 km for loading on donkey cart and this money also depend upon load, making their welfare cause for concern due to economic pressures. Donkeys carried 60 to 100 kg weight as a pack and 100 to 500 kg in cart (Singh et al., 2005), as depicted in



**Figure 2.** Typical loading on donkey in Kandiaro.

Figure 2.

## **HOUSING AND MANAGEMENT OF DONKEYS IN VILLAGES**

### ***Housing and stabling***

There was a poor housing system for donkey. Owners have small stables for their animals, as seen in Kotri Kabir, Bahlani, Halani, Kandiaro, Machur, Bhirya city and their vicinity. Proper cleaned mangers are usually lacking and, if present, are usually made up of clay. Small buckets are used for their drinking water. Stables were not seen clean and ventilated, and were mostly too wet due to manure and urine (Khan et al., 2013). Stables were usually open in all seasons even in winter freezing nights and hot summer days.

### ***Cruelty on donkeys***

Donkeys are more likely than mules or horses to demonstrate avoidance or aggressive behavior towards an observer, while horses were most likely to make a friendly approach (Pritchard et al., 2005). Owners apply harsh punishments to their donkeys, extra loading, improper uses of old saddle, which are barely supportable. They usually punish cruelly with sticks.

Lameness is commonly seen accompanied with rough skin coat and different types of wounds. Most of the donkey's owners do not care for the donkey's body coat or tropical and saddle wounds (Khan et al., 2013).

### ***Needs of animal welfare***

Unfortunately there are not any animal welfare organizations and Non Governmental Organizations (NGO's) in the District population of donkeys and there is no special animal welfare teams working to treat infected or injured donkeys. Owners leave their donkeys when they are highly injured or suffering from lameness and those donkeys freely walks in over populated district areas and cities. The threat of zoonotic diseases remains a problem all year over. Due to unawareness and lack of knowledge about animal welfare, people use highly injured and diseased animals in load and traction. It is also seen that, young donkeys are prematurely used, in support of adult animal in donkey carts, when they bear extra load.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

Donkeys are the mainly ignored and disregarded animals in Pakistan. (Khan et al., 2013) Donkeys are less ignored animal in Sindh province due to unawareness. Owners

ignore the importance of welfare and management of donkeys.

A protocol should be developed to assess the welfare of working equines specially, donkeys, in urban and rural areas, using express observation of physical condition and welfare parameters. There is an urgent need to activate NGOs and animal welfare organizations in the remote districts of Pakistan, to design special small mobile equines hospital units which can provide both treatment and also collect data for injured, lame and retired equines. These units also can provide training for donkey owners and young veterinary professionals on such subjects as welfare and management.

### Conflict of Interests

The author(s) have not declared any conflict of interests.

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