



International Journal of Veterinary Science & Technology

Research article

The Downtrodden Backers: The Prevalence and Determinants of Well-Being of the working animals; the Case of owners of Equines in Siraro woreda, west arsi zone -

Bewunetu Zewude Gebremeskel*

Department of Sociology, Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia

***Address for Correspondence:** Bewunetu Zewude Gebremeskel, Department of Sociology, Wolaita Sodo University, Ethiopia, Tel: +251-917-104-277; E-mail: bewunetuzewude@gmail.com

Submitted: 19 March 2019; Approved: 22 April 2019; Published: 25 April 2019

Cite this article: Gebremeskel BZ. The Downtrodden Backers: The Prevalence and Determinants of Well-Being of the working animals; the Case of owners of Equines in Siraro woreda, west arsi zone. Int J Vet Sci Technol. 2019;3(1): 006-012.

Copyright: © 2019 Gebremeskel BZ. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

ISSN: 2640-4397



Abstract

The prime objective of the research was to assess the overall patterns of use, treatment, and well-being issues of working animals in Siraro woreda, west Arsi zone, paying much attention to the behavioral aspects of the equine owners than the animals themselves. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using small-scale survey, in-depth interview, and observation methods from research participants systematically selected through judgmental/availability sampling technique. The collected quantitative data were analyzed using improved quantitative data analyzing instrument mainly SPSS version 20 where frequency tables, cross-tabs, and percentages were applied for data presentation. And qualitative data were transcribed, organized and analyzed according the themes identified and presented in a narrative manner. Major factors affecting working animals' welfare, such as inability to commonly use harnesses/yokes while loading the animals, absence of separate shelter built for the equines, failure of allocating sufficient resting time after loading, inadequacy of fodder, failure to take diseased/injured animals to the nearby veterinary clinic for treatment, have been found in the study area. The belief that equines such as donkeys never tire whatever amount of hours we let them work has also been found to be the widely held cultural value in the study area, potentially affecting the way people handle and care for their working animals. There is a need to develop a well-articulated national policy and legal frameworks that specifically deal with the protection and maintenance of equine welfare. In addition, the media should play awareness creation and mobilization role.

Keywords: Equine owners; Equine welfare; Working animals; Siraro woreda

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

The equines consists working animals we commonly use in daily routines: Horses, mules, and donkeys (1). They play paramount role in the day to day lives of people, especially in the developing countries such as Ethiopia. They are livelihood assets themselves and often help to generate other livelihoods assets (2). The equine industry is of course an essential contributor to economic activities and potential area of employment in many countries (3). Equines provide low-cost transport, agricultural power and, in many cases, the sole means of generating income for their owners, many of whom live in poverty. Their use in these contexts is expected to continue (4).

Worldwide, there are reportedly 122.4 million equines where the significant proportion is found in the developing parts of the world such as Asia and Africa (5). The number of equine population in the developing regions of the world is forecasted to be around 90 million, the highest proportion of which is found in Asia and central and North Africa (6). Ethiopia possesses the largest equid population in Africa, with an estimated 1.91 million horses, 6.75 million donkeys and 0.35 million mules (7). The report of reveals that there are about 2 million horses, 6.2 million donkeys, 0.38 million mules, and about 1.1 million camels in the sedentary areas of the country (8).

Equines serve various purposes for Ethiopian society, both in the rural and urban areas. Among the horses aged 3 years and older, about 1.2 million are used for transportation, 0.21 million are for draught and the remaining 0.21 million are used for other purposes. With regard to donkeys, about 3.8 million are used for transportation whereas about 0.83 million and 0.23 million are used for draught and other purposes, respectively (8).

In spite of the multi-dimensional benefits accrued from the equines, owners and beneficiaries of the equines are commonly observed while abusing them. Long working hours, difficult working conditions, lack of proper fodder after abusive work, poorly designed yokes or harnesses that inflict wounds and other body injuries, absence of shelter to protect them from sun, rain, and some insects are among problems encountered by Ethiopian equines(9).

It is important to undertake rigorous research in order to help the problem of working animal welfare become widely defined as a social issue and communicated among the owners and beneficiaries

(the whole society) of the equine. The present research is therefore, an attempt to assess the patterns of use, abuse, treatment and related issues of working animals in Siraro woreda of West Arsi zone, Oromiya regional state.

Statement of the problem

A lot has been done by veterinary medicine practitioners as far as the welfare of working animals/equines is concerned in various parts of Ethiopia (5). For instance, studied health and welfare related assessments of working equine in and around batu town and found out lack of good management practices, harnessing problem, over loading, wound on different body parts, over working, disease, lack of veterinary service at the area, and lack of sufficient feed to be the major welfare problems of the equine in the area. Other researchers (e.g. 10; 6; 11; 12) have also undertaken research on the same topic, but in different areas of the country and came up with the same result outlined above to conclude that Ethiopian equines suffer from various welfare problems beside their significant contributions to the society.

Most of the researches conducted on the welfare situations of working animals in Ethiopia are mere descriptive ones trying just to find out the prevalence of equine welfare problems and the types of problems to which they are most exposed (for example, 13; 5). However, it is uneasy to find analytical studies that reveal the reasons owners are letting their assets to encounter all these welfare problems. Researches that explain the socio-demographic determinants of the use/abuse and treatments of the equine are hardly found in Ethiopia in general, and in West Arsi zone in particular.

In addition, almost all of the researches undertaken thus far on the issue of equine welfare in different parts of Ethiopia are done by individuals or groups of individuals with veterinary medicine background. Therefore, it is evident that these researchers give greater emphasis on medical/ and physical aspects of the studied animals (e.g. 7). Accordingly, little attention has been paid on the social, cultural, and behavioral dynamics of humans that crucially determine the state and extent of equine welfare. Furthermore, much of these researchers based their methods predominantly on observations of the body of the animals to illustrate the presence/absence of wounds and other injuries, instead of focusing on the behavioral aspects of owners of the animals. Given that the welfare of animals almost entirely relies on the widely held cultural values, beliefs, and behavioral aspects of the owners, it's crucial to pay attention to all these variables to get the flesh of the problem.



The presence of well-articulated policy and legal frameworks is important to maintain the welfare of working animals in all countries of the world, given humans' desire to maximize the profit obtained from the equines at the expense of providing the desirable level of care and treatment. Obviously, it is known that Ethiopia lacks the necessary legal and policy instruments to protect the welfare of the equine at national level. Locally accepted laws and some community based organizations such as NGOs, therefore, seem to play significant role in protecting and maintaining the welfare of working animals in Ethiopia. Consequently, the presence/ and absence of such locally established and long held norms as well as community based organizations and the roles they play in creating awareness and community mobilizations aimed at reducing the problem under consideration deserve intense study, which is lacking in the previously undertaken researches.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Research design

A cross-sectional survey research design was used in undertaking the study in which both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from owners of the equines at a point of time.

Sources of data

Both primary and secondary sources of data have been used in the research in order to achieve the specific research objectives. In case of the primary one, interviewer- administered questionnaire was designed as most of rural men are possibly less/uneducated and then translated in to the local languages-Amharic and afaan oromo- to serve as the major instrument of data collection. Data collectors having adequate level of literacy and those that are familiar with the local languages were hired and trained where the researcher serves as a supervisor. Furthermore, interview checklists were prepared to guide the process of collecting qualitative data. Above all, available literatures on the issue have been thoroughly reviewed to substantiate the primary data sources.

Methods of data collection

Survey: Survey of a small scale type has been used in the study to help the researcher obtain quantitative data pertaining to basic background information of the research participants, to identify determinants of "proper use"/abuse of the equines, and legal and organizational interventions in maintaining equine welfare in the area. Specifically for this purpose, questionnaire was designed and disseminated to a total of 50 scientifically drawn samples of equine owners.

Survey method is indeed not the major method of the research; instead it was used to complement the data collected through qualitative research tools specifically, in-depth interview and FGDs, which were the principal methods, used in the study. According to taking a minimum of 30 respondents is needed if the aim of incorporating statistical data is just to support the qualitative research (14).

The questionnaire has been interviewer-administered by its nature given the fact that majority of respondents were expected to be uneducated/ less educated. Maximum effort was made by the researcher in order to get 100% response rate.

In-depth interview: The other method that has been used in the study as a tool to gather primary data is depth interview. This method

was intentionally chosen by the researcher because it helps one to obtain rich and depth data, as its name implies, about an issue at hand from the perspective of the research participants. Accordingly, the researcher has tried to approach participants, create and maintain a good rapport, and raised unstructured and semi-structured questions in which the interview was made to have a form of informal-normal conversation to make interviewees feel free and provide adequate data. Moreover, probing and follow-up questions has been raised where necessary in order to further clarify questions and create better mutual understanding. Interview guide containing unstructured and flexible questions relevant to the specific research objectives was prepared to smoothly guide the interview process.

Observation: It is certainly true that there are some aspects of social, cultural, and physical phenomena that are taken for granted during interview by research participants and sometimes beyond the expressing ability of interviewees in words. Such phenomena that may constitute an important share of the research findings often require the researcher to go to the field and make observations. Because animal welfare can be carried out both at home and outside of home and its dimension ranges from unobservable cultural beliefs to day to day practices, significant data can be obtained through the use of field observation method. Accordingly, the researcher has made a prior visit to the study area first to have some insight about the physical and social environment. Then, observation checklists were prepared and direct observation as well as observation along with interview was undertaken regarding the patterns of using, abusing, and treatments of the equines in the study area.

Sampling and Sample size

The survey populations of this research were owners of the equines in Siraro woreda of West Arsi zone. Although there are some statistical figures attempting to pin-point the frequency distributions of equine population in Ethiopia, these figures may not be reliable all the time and of course not beyond mere estimation in the sense that they will not be updated every year and every season following alteration in the seasonal size and distribution of the population. This fact brings us to the conclusion that one cannot obtain a dependable number of the equine population and hence sample frame from which a well representative sample size can be drawn.

Stratified multi-stage cluster sampling has been used by the researchers in order to determine the final size of the sample. Accordingly, Siraro woreda has been selected purposively given its geographical proximity to the researcher and on the basis of the fact that it is among the areas known for high concentration of the equine population. The woreda consists twenty eight (28) kebeles (local administrative units smaller than/and next to wereda or district). These kebeles have been already organized in to four manageable clusters by the woreda administration for ease of control; each consisted of seven kebeles and unknown size and distribution of households. One of the four clusters has been chosen purposively on the basis of its geographical proximity and to enhance the efficiency of data collection processes. Obviously, there are seven kebeles in the cluster from which two kebeles having the highest concentration of equine population were selected. Ultimately, fifty (50) households or owners of the equine were selected for the survey using judgmental/ availability sampling technique. Moreover, ten (10) owners of the equine were chosen for in-depth interview using the same technique applied for the survey. Consequently, a total of 60 samples of the study population have participated in the research.



Method of data analysis

Following the process of data collection, data cleaning was made in order to check out any incompleteness and inconsistency within the data. Then, data analysis has been made in accordance with the nature of the data collected. In this regard, qualitative data obtained through in-depth interview method were organized and analyzed using thematic analysis that was presented in the form of text. In addition, for quantitative data, the responses were converted into numbers for coding and entered into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 in order to look for the patterns and strength of association between and among variables. Frequencies, percentages, and cross tabulations were applied for descriptive analysis of the data. Moreover, bivariate and multi-variate analysis has been used to test the existence and strength of association between the dependent variable and the independent variables using 95% confidence interval.

Ethical Considerations

First, the researcher clarified what the research is all about and issues related to the purpose and objectives of the research. Moreover, research participants were informed about the possibility of being able to withdraw from the interview any time when the need arises. Above all, they were also promised and ensured that their personal identity will be kept anonymous, and pseudonyms will be used where necessary. Then, research participants were asked to provide their consent based on full willingness.

FINDINGS

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from June to the end of July, 2017 from owners of working animals currently living in Siraro woreda of west Arsi zone, Oromiya regional state. The quantitative data have been analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) in which different statistical tools, including percentages, frequency tables, cross-tabs, and t-tests were intensively utilized in presenting the findings. The qualitative data have been analyzed thematically and presented in a narrative way in the form of text. This chapter, therefore, deals with the analysis and presentation of data.

Background of the study area

Siraro is one of the woredas/districts in West Arsi zone, Oromiya regional state. The district has been administered jointly with Shalla woreda up until 1990 and it is since then that it has been an independent (autonomous) woreda. Loke, the town of the woreda, is about 317 kilometers away from the capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa. The nearest known town to the woreda is Shashemene which is located 64 kilometers away from it. Demographically, the woreda reportedly has a total of 208,337 populations out of which 102,085 are males and 106,252 females. The Oromos constitute the largest ethnic group in the area and Oromiffa being the most widely spoken (85%) language in the area, followed by the Hadiyas and the Kembatas. Geographically, the woreda is adjacent to Shala wereda in East, Badawacho wereda, Hadiya zone SPNNR in West direction, Wolayita zone Duguna Fango wereda and Sidama zone Boricha wereda, SNNPs in South direction, and in north direction Kembata zone Halaba special wereda SPNNR.

The woreda has 28 kebeles, divided into eight clusters (maaybaasii), 80 zone structures, 1357 participatory working groups (Garee misomaa). It is known for a wheat highland agro-ecological nature where 97% of the populations make their livelihoods from

agriculture. There are a total of 40,854 equine populations in which 36,723 are donkeys, 4,026 horses, and 105 mules.

The Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

Age wise, the very significant majority (44%, 42%) of survey respondents are in the older adulthood age group. Moreover, 82% of the respondents are male equine owners and female owners have been found to be just 12%. Most of the respondents (88%) are Muslim in terms of religious orientation, followed by Protestants (10%) and orthodox Christians (2%). As far as the marital status of survey participants is concerned, majority of them (80%) are married, 14%, 6% of them are widowed and divorced, respectively. Most of the respondents (44%) haven't attended school (are uneducated), while 42% have attended only elementary level education. The data also showed that only few (6% & 6%) have either begun or completed a high school education and college. Furthermore, the average family size of the respondents has been found to be 6.54 in the study area. 90% of the respondents are full time farmers, 4%, 6% of them are employees in the formal sector and own business runners respectively. 1-500 Ethiopian birr has been found to be the average monthly earning for the significant majority of research respondents and just 2% reported to earn a monthly income which is more than or equal to 3000 birr. Finally, the average number of working animals currently possessed has been reported to be 3.1, where 1 & 5 have been found to be the minimum and maximum number of equines that the owners possess in the study area, respectively.

The Manner of use and treatment of the equines by the owners

Day today's living experience can tell us a lot about the manner in which owners and riders of the working animals use and treat their equines. Both quantitative and qualitative data from the present study also revealed interesting findings about the issue under consideration. Field observation of the equines witnesses that most of these animals are wounded and some others are observed experiencing other physical injuries one way or another. One common reason for this is failure to use yokes or harnesses while loading the animals. As shown in table 1 below, among the equine owners who reported that they have yokes, only half of them confirmed that they do commonly use harnesses while loading their working animals. The worst of this is that 42% of survey respondents reported that they don't take their working animals to the nearby clinic whenever they get diseased/infected or physically injured. Alternative medical practices such as treatment of the animals at home (32%), and taking ill or injured equines to the traditional healers (30%) have been found to be commonly used along with the modern medical practice. Given the problem of unknown dose and lack of safety, such practices may not be as such effective in terms of treating the animals.

Both grass and purchased fodder have been found to be the types of foods that owners commonly feed their working animals (58%). It is good that majority (56%) of the respondents spend part of the income obtained from working by the equines to buy them fodder. However, 86% of the respondents reported that they don't have separate shelter built for the equines. Data from in-depth interview also confirmed this. For instance, a respondent said:

"I haven't built a separate shelter for my working animals. They either spend nights with my other tame animals or I just keep them just near around my backyard, safeguarding them from dangerous animals such as hyenas."



Table 1: Findings about the manner of use and treatment of the working animals, source: own survey-2017.

Availability of a separate shelter for the equines	Frequency	Percent
Yes	7	14.0
No	43	86.0
The type of food equine owners feed		
letting equines to graze grass	6	12.0
collecting grass & feeding at home	15	30.0
both grass & fodder	29	58.0
Frequency of feeding equines per day		
once	21	42.0
twice	29	58.0
Habit of taking equines to veterinary clinic when diseased		
Yes	20	40.0
No	21	42.0
System	9	18.0
Way of dealing with equines when diseases/injured		
self-treatment	16	32.0
taking it to the vet clinic	19	38.0
taking it to traditional healers	15	30.0
Having ones' own yoke		
Yes	45	90.0
No	5	10.0
Habit of commonly using yoke while loading		
Yes	25	50.0
No	20	40.0
Total	45	90.0
System	5	10.0
The number of hours equines spend at work		
4	2	4.0
5	6	12.0
> = 6	12	24.0
depends on availability of work	30	60.0
Total	50	100.0

As shown in table 1 below, the number of hours that these working animals spend at work is high. According to the present survey, 60% of respondents revealed that the number of hours their animals spend at work depends on the availability of work. This implies that the animals could work 12 hours per day so far as the work is available and hence, the time they are given to rest is the time when there is no work. Moreover, 24% of the respondents reported that they let their equines to work for more than six hours. All these indicate that the manner of use of the working animals is at its worst state in the study area.

The findings of the present study are parallel to findings of researches undertaken before by various scholars. For instance, Salim et al (2015) in their researches conducted on "Health and Welfare Related Assessment of Working Equine in and Around Batu Town, East Shoa, Central.

Ethiopia", concluded that the major factors and indicators of

poor welfare were lack of good management practices, harnessing problem, over loading, wound on different body parts, over working, disease, lack of veterinary service at the area, and lack of sufficient feed.

Socio-demographic determinants of the manner of use and treatment of the equines

Table 2 above displays the belief and perception of working animal owners about the need to maintain equine welfare. Accordingly, it can be generalized that most owners believe and perceive that equines deserve to be provided with some care and treatment, except very few cases. For instance, 96% of the studied equine owners believe that working animals such as donkeys and mules have feelings of pain when severely bitten. This statistics has no easy implication; belief and perception usually go with practice. Majority of the respondents also believe that equines deserve equal/same care and treatment as cows and oxen. The same finding holds true for the belief in the fact that equines need additional fodder, other than grass they graze from the field.

One exception is about the need to build a separate shelter for the equines. As shown in the table, majority (82%) of the research participants believe that there is no need to build a separate shelter for the working animals. In addition, in table 4 above, it has been found that 86% of the studied population reported that they don't have a separate shelter readily built for their equines and here it has been shown that almost nearly the same percentage of the owners believe it is not important to do so. Therefore, the assertion that belief and perception go hand in hand with practice seems to apply.

Moreover, figures in the table 2 tell us that significant majority of the owners believe in the idea that equines do not tire for whatever amount of hours they spend at work. As shown, 52% of the owners have been found to hold such belief. Obviously, deep-rooted and commonly held cultural beliefs and attitudes play paramount role in terms of determining the way people handle and care for their equines. Hence, owners' perception that working animals such as donkeys and horses do not feel tiresome even if they work for a very extended hours largely determines the amount of load they decide to pack on their animals and the amount of rest they provide to them.

The welfare of the working animals can be compromised by the age of the person responsible to regularly work on them. In table 3 below, it has been observed that the majority (74%) of the studied owners confiscated that it is their son that is in charge of riding (working on) the equines. Given that these children may not be as such matured enough to discharge the responsibilities of safely riding the animals along with taking all the necessary care for them, leaving such tasks to young children may compromise the welfare of the equines. Field observations of the situations of the persons commonly riding the working animals reveal that these guys are children, usually below the legal age of work that cannot be trusted to be issued with such great responsibilities. Frequent incidents of car accidents associated to crash of vehicles colliding with carts on the road are consequences of such irresponsibility. As can be seen in the table 5 below, 64% of persons in charge of commonly working on the animals are within the age range of 16-20.

In an attempt to find what exactly determines the level of care and treatment that equine owners are about to provide to their working animals, a cross-tabulation of some dependent variables against independent variables was made as shown below in the table



4. Accordingly, it is only educational status of research participants that shown association with the belief and perception that the equine owners hold about equine welfare. Other independent variable such as family size, religion, average monthly income, have been found to have no association with the perception of owners about the need to maintain equine welfare.

Cultural values and beliefs related to the equines, use, and their treatment

As pointed above, deep-rooted and widely held cultural values and beliefs determine the kind of practice associated to animal use and treatment. As in the case in most other parts of Ethiopia, the belief that “working animals do not tire” has been found to be the widely held societal value in the study area. This cultural value is usually associated to donkey. People commonly believe that donkeys do not tire whatever amount of hours they may spend on work.

In table 1 above, it has been discussed that 60% of respondents reported that the number of hours their equines are allowed to rest depends largely on the presence or absence of work to be done. The implication of this finding is that these working animals will be forced to serve as long as there is work and allowed to rest in so far as there is no load to be packed. In table 2 moreover, it has been outlined that 52% of the equine owners believe working animals do not tire. All these facts, added to data from in-depth interview, tell us that equines are equated to machines that do not feel tiresome except in the presence of some technical problems in it.

Working animals are created to carry goods and serve humans. God created them so strong that they do not tire, unlike human beings. Therefore, we have to make use of them so long as they are alive.

Table 2: Showing commonly held beliefs and perceptions towards equine welfare, source: own survey.

Thinking that equines have feelings of pain if severely bitten	Frequency	Percent
Yes	48	96.0
No	2	4.0
Belief in the necessity of separate shelter for the equines		
Yes	9	18.0
No	41	82.0
Belief in the necessity of additional fodder for the equines		
Yes	27	54.0
No	23	46.0
Believing that equines deserve equal care as cows/oxen		
Yes	28	56.0
No	22	44.0
Believing that equines need rest		
Yes	29	58.0
No	21	42.0
Thinking that equines do not tire		
Yes	26	52.0
No	24	48.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 3: The person in charge of riding the animals and its age (source: own survey, 2017).

The person in charge of riding the working animal	Frequency	Percent
father	10	20.0
son	37	74.0
wife	3	6.0
Age of the person in charge of riding the working animal		
1-15	5	10.0
16-20	32	64.0
Total	37	74.0
System	13	26.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 4: Cross-tab showing the links among some dependent and independent variables, source: own survey 2017

		Thinking that equines have feelings of pain if severely bitten		Total
		Yes	No	
Average monthly income of the equine owner	1-500	44	2	46
	501-1000	1	0	1
	1001-1500	2	0	2
	> = 3000	1	0	1
		Thinking that equines have feelings of pain if severely bitten		Total
		Yes	No	
Family size of the equine owner	4	3	0	3
	5	7	0	7
	6	13	1	14
	7	12	0	12
	> = 8	13	1	14
		Belief in the necessity of separate shelter for the equines		Total
		Yes	No	
Educational status of the equine owner	Never attended school	1	21	22
	1-8	4	17	21
	9-10	2	1	3
	11-12	0	1	1
	College diploma	2	1	3
Total		9	41	50

Legal and organizational interventions in maintaining equine welfare in the area

As shown in table 5, 92% of the survey respondents reported that there exist organizational interventions in the study area pertaining to the protection and maintenance of working animals’ welfare. Both field observations and data from in-depth interviews also reveal that there is such intervention geared towards mobilizing the local people to be aware and stand for the protection of equine welfare. The Brooke Ethiopia has been frequently reported to be a non-governmental organization currently operating and still active in the area in terms of cascading tasks under consideration.

Despite the roles being played by NGOs in the area, it has been found that there are no interventions from governmental organizations in the area as to mobilizing the local communities to maintain equine welfare. Furthermore, the lack of legal and policy frameworks would aggravate the situation, both at local and national level.



Table 5: Showing the presence/absence of organizations working on equine welfare in the area.

Availability of Gov'tal/NGOs working on equine welfare				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	46	92.0	92.0	92.0
No	4	8.0	8.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

CONCLUSION

Major factors affecting working animals' welfare, such as in ability to commonly use harnesses/yokes while loading the animals, absence of separate shelter built for the equines, failure of allocating sufficient resting time after loading, inadequacy of fodder, failure to take diseased/injured animals to the nearby veterinary clinic for treatment, have been found in the study area. The belief that equines such as donkeys never tire whatever amount of hours we let them work has also been found to be the widely held cultural value in the study area, potentially affecting the way people handle and care for their working animals. The fact young children are usually in charge of commonly riding the working animals whose age is mostly below the legal age of work, has been found to affect the state of equine care and treatment.

RECOMMENDATION

First, there is a need to develop a well-articulated national policy and legal frameworks that specifically deal with the protection and maintenance of equine welfare. Though it is substantive, the roles now being played by the non-governmental organizations alone cannot bring the required level of change as far as improving the welfare of working animals is concerned. Moreover, the media should not wait until the concerned state authorities design policies and legal instruments. Instead, it should play awareness creation and mobilization roles. Finally, abuse and maltreatment of working animals is an objective phenomenon that we always experience and observe in our day to day endeavors. It is not something that abusers secretly undertake. Therefore, everyone has the moral responsibility of protecting equines from exploitation and stop when the action is publicly undertaken.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance was obtained from Wolaita Sodo University ethical approval committee. In addition, an informed consent was also gained from research participants. First, the researcher clarified what the research is all about and issues related to the purpose and objectives of the research. Moreover, research participants were informed about the possibility of being able to withdraw from the interview any time when the need arises. Above all, they were also promised and ensured that their personal identity will be kept anonymous, and pseudonyms will be used where necessary. Then,

research participants were asked to provide their consent based on full willingness and data collection was undertaken on the basis of the verbal consent obtained.

REFERENCES

1. Mearg Fitsum & Kirmani Monzur Ahmed. Population dynamic production statistics of horse and ass in Ethiopia: A Review. *Journal of Biology, Agriculture and Healthcare*. 2015; 5: 1. <https://bit.ly/2GthfoQ>
2. World Horse Welfare. How do we demonstrate the importance of working equid welfare to human livelihoods? The proceedings of the 7th international colloquium on working equids, Royal Holloway, University of London. 2014.
3. Farm Animal Welfare Advisor Council. Animal welfare guideline for horses, donkeys, and ponies. The secretary farm animal advisory council, animal health and welfare division, Agriculture house Kildare street: Dublin. 2015. <https://bit.ly/2Xv2hWa>
4. Biffa DVM, Woldemeskel M. Causes and factors associated with occurrence of external injuries in working equines in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Applied Research in Veterinary Medicine*. 2006; 4: 1-7. <https://bit.ly/2XAVfz8>
5. Salim Usman, Haimanot Disassa, Tadele Kabeta, Tilahun Zenebe, Girma Kebede. Health and welfare related assessment of working equine in and around batu town, east shoa, central Ethiopia. *Nature and Science*. 2015; 13. <https://bit.ly/2Zr7wYy>
6. Morka Amante, Adisalem Hunde, Bojia Endebu, Eyob Hirpa, Bedasso Mamo. Health and welfare assessment of working equine in and around nekemte town, east wollega zone, Ethiopia. *American-Eurasian Journal of Scientific Research*. 2014; 9: 163-174.
7. Abreha Tesfaye, Yohannes Tekle, Habtamu Taddele, KalabGezahagn, Hagos Yihdego. Survey of common skin problem of working equines in and around mekelle, nort Ethiopia. *Academic Journal of Animal Diseases*. 2015; 4: 30-38. <https://bit.ly/2USD8I0>
8. CSA. Report on livestock and livestock characteristics (private peasant holdings), Statistical Bulletin, Volume II, Addis Ababa: Ethiopia. (2010/11).
9. Solomon Mekuria, Rahmeto Abebe. Observation on major welfare problems of equine in Meskan district, Southern Ethiopia. *Livestock research for rural development*. 2010; 22. <https://bit.ly/2lyD9dP>
10. Niraj Kumar KK. Fisseha N. Shishay, Hagos Y. Welfare assessment of working donkeys in mekelle city, Ethiopia. *Global Veterinaria*. 2014; 12: 314-319. <https://bit.ly/2GtPoVk>
11. Solomon Tiruneh, Musie H/Meleket, Fanaye Shiferaw. Assessment of carting equine welfare and management practice in Bahir dar town. *Int. J. Adv. Res. Biol.* 2016; 3: 100-112
12. Julia B. Assessment of donkeys' welfare in addis ababa and ambo, Ethiopia. A Thesis report submitted to Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Animal Environment and Health. 2016. <https://bit.ly/2UOiskT>
13. Getahun Asebe, Bizelew Gelayenewand Ashwani Kumar. The general status of animal welfare in developing countries: the case of Ethiopia. *J Veterinar-Sci Techno*. 2016; 7: 1000332. <https://bit.ly/2Dv0c4O>
14. Tesfa Teferi G. The effect of development induced displacement on relocated household: The Case of Addis Ababa. The Hague, Netherlands. 2014.