



Awareness Day on the Welfare of Working Equids for West Eurasia countries

Tashkent, Uzbekistan • 27 September 2017

Executive Summary



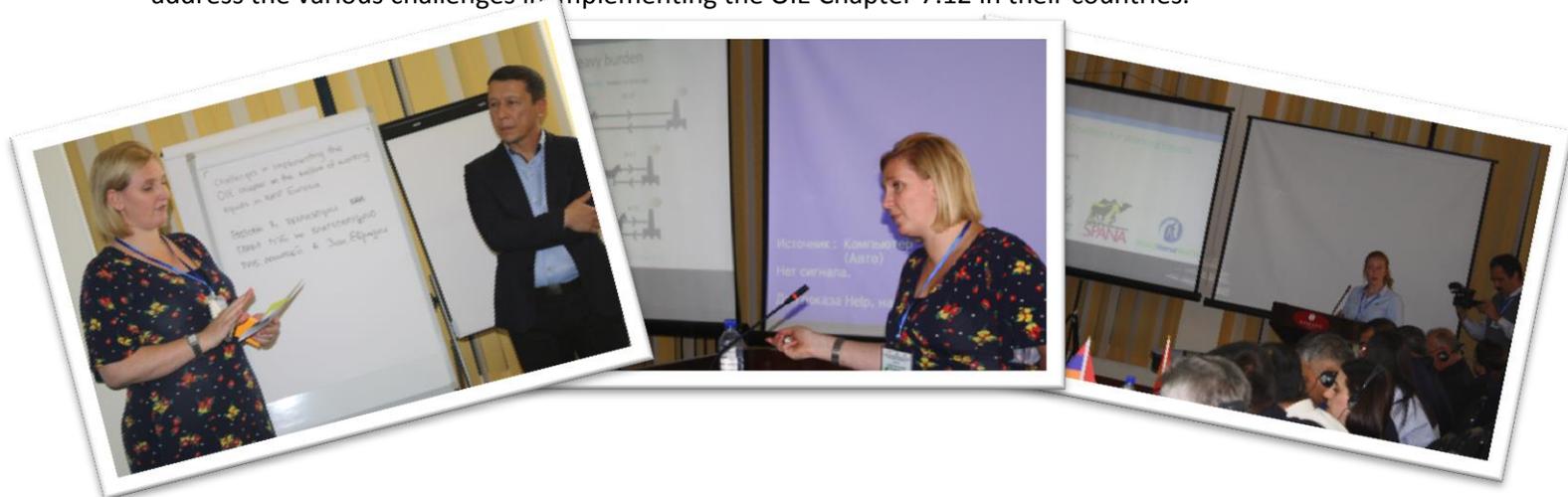
OIE Member Countries in Europe agreed to include the **welfare of working equids** as one of the five priority topics of the second Action Plan (2017-2019) of the OIE Platform on animal welfare for Europe, given (i) that equids are still widely used for field agricultural work and transportation in the region and (ii) the newly adopted [Chapter 7.12 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code](#) on the welfare of working equids. The Platform Secretariat is therefore tasked to identify some key activities to assist countries with the implementation of the OIE Chapter, with a view to improving the welfare of working equids in the region, which too often remain 'invisible' to the eyes of the various stakeholders, including the Competent Authorities despite their many valuable roles.

OIE and the **International Coalition for the Welfare of Working Equids** (ICWE) jointly organised an Awareness day as a side-event of the second OIE Workshop on stray dog population

control for West Eurasia countries¹, to raise awareness amongst member countries on the welfare of working equids in this region, as well as to gain an insight into the potential welfare challenges that are present in those countries and explore how they could jointly develop some capacity building activities adapted to the identified needs and gaps.

The day opened with a general introduction on the welfare of working equids, reviewing in details the various welfare aspects linked to the **5 Freedoms** and to the **equid-human partnership**, including the end of (working) life of working equids. **Outcome-based measurements** relating to six essential criteria (body condition; lameness; wounds; nutrition and access to water; illness and injuries; and handling practices) – that all together measure what is really important for the working equids - were also well described. Finally **Chapter 7.12** was presented in depth, as well as the under development **ICWE Toolbox** to facilitate its implementation.

Participants were requested to share their country situation, needs and gaps by answering a QUIZZ and discussing in a working group session the best ways to (i) raise awareness on working equids, and (ii) address the various challenges in implementing the OIE Chapter 7.12 in their countries.



The awareness day was an overall success. Generally, the countries present felt that their working equids had acceptable standards of welfare, but this may actually highlight a lack of awareness in this area and a common tendency to accept the situation for what it is because it is seen as normal.

The main findings on the sub-regional situation are presented below:

- 1.** Working Equids are present in all countries in West Eurasia
- 2.** They are used for multiple tasks, most importantly for agricultural field work and the transport of goods/material
- 3.** The Veterinary Services are involved in the implementation of animal health and welfare legislations, policies and programmes on working equids in only half the countries; in the other countries, other agencies such as environmental agencies and municipalities be involved as well
- 4.** Veterinarians receive equine-specific trainings in West Eurasian countries, as part of the normal curriculum (only 20% of countries declared those trainings as optional)
- 5.** The health and welfare of working equids are part of the routine work of the Veterinary Services in 75% of the West Eurasian countries
- 6.** Working Equids are regarded as very important for the family / households economies and important for the national economies of West Eurasian countries
- 7.** In most West Eurasian countries, the health and welfare status of the working equid population is regarded as very good to adequate
- 8.** Veterinary Services currently have the knowledge and resources to make an accurate assessment of the welfare of equids – however, several countries recognized the lack of sufficient financial resources to do the work appropriately

¹ Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia ; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

9. A majority of West Eurasian countries indicated that working equids have insufficient access to high quality and affordable farriery services, as the farriery standards are not high and the farmers lack resources to afford to use them
10. In terms of tack/harness/cart-making services, the equipment is made and fitted by the owners themselves using local materials in the majority of West Eurasian countries
11. Working equids are sold in most cases at the end of their working life – while some of them are euthanized. Slaughter is the most common end of life option for working equids
12. Lack of owners' resources (financial, access, time, etc) represents the biggest welfare challenge for most working equids, followed by the lack of equine expertise in the country
13. Charities/NGOs that have specific programmes focused on protecting and improving equid welfare are present in half of West Eurasian countries

Proposed next steps:

- Participants were requested to:
 - **Report back** to their Delegate/CVO and relevant experts/OIE Focal Points
 - Explore ways to **better assess the current situation** of Working Equids in their country, notably using outcome-based measurements
 - From there, **decide on appropriate actions** to include the welfare of working equids in the Veterinary Services agenda
- OIE and ICWE will collectively explore possible future actions in light of the above findings. There is an interest and justification to run a **sub-regional Campaign** aimed at enhancing awareness of the public at large and in particular of the horse owners and children at schools (a similar campaign has recently been run in the Balkans for stray dog populations). It would be expected that the OIE and ICWE would work together to prepare materials and resources as well as providing training and workshops so that the countries themselves will have all the tools needed to implement the campaign. It was proposed that the campaign would be led by the OIE but the countries themselves would ultimately be responsible for the delivery of the campaign - working to address their country's working equids' specific needs. This would definitely pave the way to ensure that the OIE Chapter on Working Equids is successfully upheld in the near future.