

URGENT AND IMPORTANT

Shri Ravindra Choubey
Agriculture Minister
Room No. M-3-1, Capital Complex, Mantralaya
Mahanadi Bhawan
Naya Raipur 492 002
Chhattisgarh

2 August 2019

Re Potential Outbreak of Deadly Zoonotic Disease Glanders in the Horses of Chhattisgarh – Call for Urgent Action

Dear Minister,

I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India on behalf of our more than 1.5 million members and supporters to update you regarding a recent incident reported in Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh regarding a mare infected with the deadly zoonotic disease **glanders**. (A newspaper report about it is attached as **Annexure A**.)

Since glanders is notifiable under The Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animal Act, 2009, and the state government is required to take control measures, as per the provisions of this act, we urge you to issue an order prohibiting the use of horses during weddings and other ceremonies in Chhattisgarh.

As you probably know, glanders is a contagious, fatal disease of horses, mules, and donkeys caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia mallei*, characterised by serial development of ulcerating nodules that are most commonly found in the upper respiratory tract, lungs, and skin. **Glanders can spread from horses to humans and prove fatal**. Humans may become infected with the disease through contact with infected animals or inhalation. In humans, the disease can affect the skin, the lungs, and the rest of the body, and in the absence of proper treatment, it can lead to a painful death.

The June 2019 National Action Plan for Control and Eradication of Glanders in India (**Annexure B**) issued by the union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying replaces the May 2016 Action Plan for Control and Containment of Glanders in Equines. It states, "Equine fairs, congregation, shows, or any equestrian events [including weddings] in which equids from unorganized sector take part shall not be permitted to be held in 25 Km of radius of the notified area/focus of infection." The 2019 guideline further states that it shall be the responsibility of the state veterinary authority to conduct a glanders surveillance programme, including clinical, physical, pathological, and serological surveillance.

The 26 May 2017 letter issued by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and the Ministry of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries (**Annexure C**) to all principal secretaries of state governments clearly stated that there's a need to control the spread of

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zoonotic diseases and listed several measures to be taken to combat zoonotic diseases in order to safeguard human and animal health in the state.

However, the recent outbreak of glanders in Chhattisgarh indicates poor implementation of the 2016 action plan, the measures listed in the 2017 letter, and the provisions of The Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009. This case also establishes that routine surveillance of infectious diseases in horses used for weddings and other ceremonies is essential. Otherwise, there's a serious danger of putting the health of horses and the public at risk.

Under these circumstances, may I request that you take the following necessary actions to ensure the protection of horses and the public in Chhattisgarh?

1. Issue an immediate order prohibiting the use of horses during weddings and other ceremonies in Chhattisgarh.
2. Ban the use of horses for weddings and ceremonies throughout Chhattisgarh and encourage couples planning a wedding there to celebrate without exploiting horses through an awareness programme.
3. Have the director of Department of Veterinary Services immediately implement the provisions of The Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, and ban all equine movements in Chhattisgarh. This would mean bans on working animals on roads and marketplaces and on the use of horses for weddings and other ceremonies. An urgent screening of all equines in Chhattisgarh must be done with the help of the National Research Centre on Equines for zoonotic diseases such as glanders.
4. Issue directions to all municipal corporations to ban equines- horses, donkeys and mules- in their respective areas of jurisdiction.
5. Advise the director general of police in Chhattisgarh to give directions to traffic police to stop the entry of horse-drawn carts from other states at the borders of Chhattisgarh.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We are ready to meet with you at your earliest convenience. May we please hear from you soon? I can be reached on +91 9910817382 or at ManilalV@petaindia.org.

Sincerely,



Dr Manilal Valliyate, CEO
PETA India

cc: Shri K.D.P. Rao, Additional Chief Secretary and Commissioner of Agriculture
Production

Shri Hemant Pahare, Secretary (Livestock Development Department)

Shri C.R. Prasanna, Director, Directorate of Veterinary Services