

REPORT ON EQUINE HEALTH CAMPS AND THIRD WELFARE ASSESSMENT OF HORSES USED FOR RIDES IN KOLKATA

19 April–13 May 2022



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I. Executive Summary

Following the order of the Calcutta High Court dated 5 April 2022 stating that “petitioners will be free to provide the necessary facilities to the ailing horses through the agency of the State without interfering with any ownership right”, two health camps of three days each were organised by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India and the CAPE Foundation with the help of Animal Resource Development Department (ARDD) and Kolkata police. PETA India’s request to ARDD and the direction of ARDD to conduct the equine health camps are Annexures A and B, respectively.

The health camps were conducted from 19 to 21 April and from 10 to 12 May 2022. Even though the camp offered free veterinary treatment and care for horses, no animal owners brought animals to the camp site, claiming that all their animals were healthy.

Because the horse owners boycotted the health camps, PETA India’s veterinary team along with the government veterinarian assessed the horses at Maidan and at their tethering place near Hastings flyover and discovered that more than 100 horses needed to undergo a detailed clinical examination and receive emergency veterinary care and treatment. The assessment of the horses revealed that the owners deprive them of food, water, shelter, and much-needed veterinary treatment and that these animals continue to suffer from starvation, wounds, lameness, eye problems, and other untreated conditions, as highlighted in the first and second assessment reports submitted by PETA India and the CAPE Foundation.

On 22 January 2022, *The Telegraph* published an article titled “Ban on Horses on Digha Beach”. The article stated that the Digha Sankarpur Development Authority had banned the use of nearly 250 horses for tourist rides on all beaches in Digha because horse excreta was polluting the area and the tourists were in danger of being trampled while walking on the beach.

In order to stop cruelty to horses, it is important that the government of West Bengal appoint a law-enforcement committee to seize unfit and unlicensed horses and send them to an animal shelter or a sanctuary where they can receive veterinary treatment and care. Following the precedent set by the Digha Sankarpur Development Authority by banning horses on Digha Beach to protect the public and the animals, the state government of West Bengal must consider framing a similar policy to prohibit the use of horses for tourist and carriage rides in Kolkata, to rehabilitate the horses, and to provide the horse owners and carriage drivers with an alternative livelihood through the use of e-carriages or other means, such as taxis and commercial goods vehicles, as has already happened in Mumbai.

II. Equine Health Camps and Outcomes

Observations

1. On 12 April 2022, PETA India wrote to the Department of Animal Resources Development requesting that it direct its officials to constitute a veterinary team including the petitioners' representatives and organise a one-week treatment camp to conduct detailed clinical examinations and provide the horses with treatment (**Annexure A**). The letter referred to a 5 April 2022 order of the Hon'ble High Court of Calcutta which states that "petitioners will be free to provide the necessary facilities to the ailing horses through the agency of the State without interfering with any ownership right". PETA India also offered to contribute to the cost of the veterinary medicines, instruments, and equipment that would be required for the proposed camp. In order to limit the transportation of the sick and injured animals to the treatment camp site, PETA India suggested that the camp be organised at Maidan.
2. In response through an order dated 18 April 2022, the special secretary to the government of West Bengal directed the assistant director of the animal resource development department and the livestock development assistant of the Alipore Veterinary Sub-Centre to help with the two equine health camps to be organised from 19 to 21 April 2022 and 10 to 12 May 2022 (**Annexure B**).
3. During both the equine health camps, no horse owners turned up seeking clinical examination and treatment of horses.



Photo 1: Banner for the equine health camps conducted from 19 to 21 April and 10 to 12 May 2022



Photo 2: Equine health camp conducted on 19 April 2022



Photo 3: Equine health camp conducted on 20 April 2022



Photo 4: Equine health camp conducted on 21 April 2022



Photo 5: Equine health camp conducted on 10 May 2022



Photo 6: Equine health camp conducted on 11 May 2022



Photo 7: Equine health camp conducted on 12 May 2022

III. Assessment of Horses' Welfare

The assessment of horses revealed that the owners deprive them of food, water, shelter, and much-needed veterinary treatment and that these animals continue to suffer from starvation, wounds, lameness, eye problems, and other untreated conditions.



Photo 8: A horse with severe lameness due to chronic osteoarthritis of the left knee and a deformed leg



Photo 9: An emaciated horse with a fracture of the femur with inadequate immobilisation using a plaster cast (the joints on the top and bottom of the fracture are not included in the cast to immobilise the affected area)



Photo 10: Chronically emaciated horses used for tourist rides



Photo 11: A chronically emaciated horse used for tourist rides



Photo 12: A chronically emaciated horse used for tourist rides



Photo 13: A chronically emaciated horse used for tourist rides



Photo 14: Chronically emaciated horses used for tourist rides



Photo 15: An emaciated horse with wounds



Photo 16: A wound on a horse's withers caused by a faulty collar



Photo 17: A wound on the point of a horse's hock possibly caused by rubbing on the saddle or cart

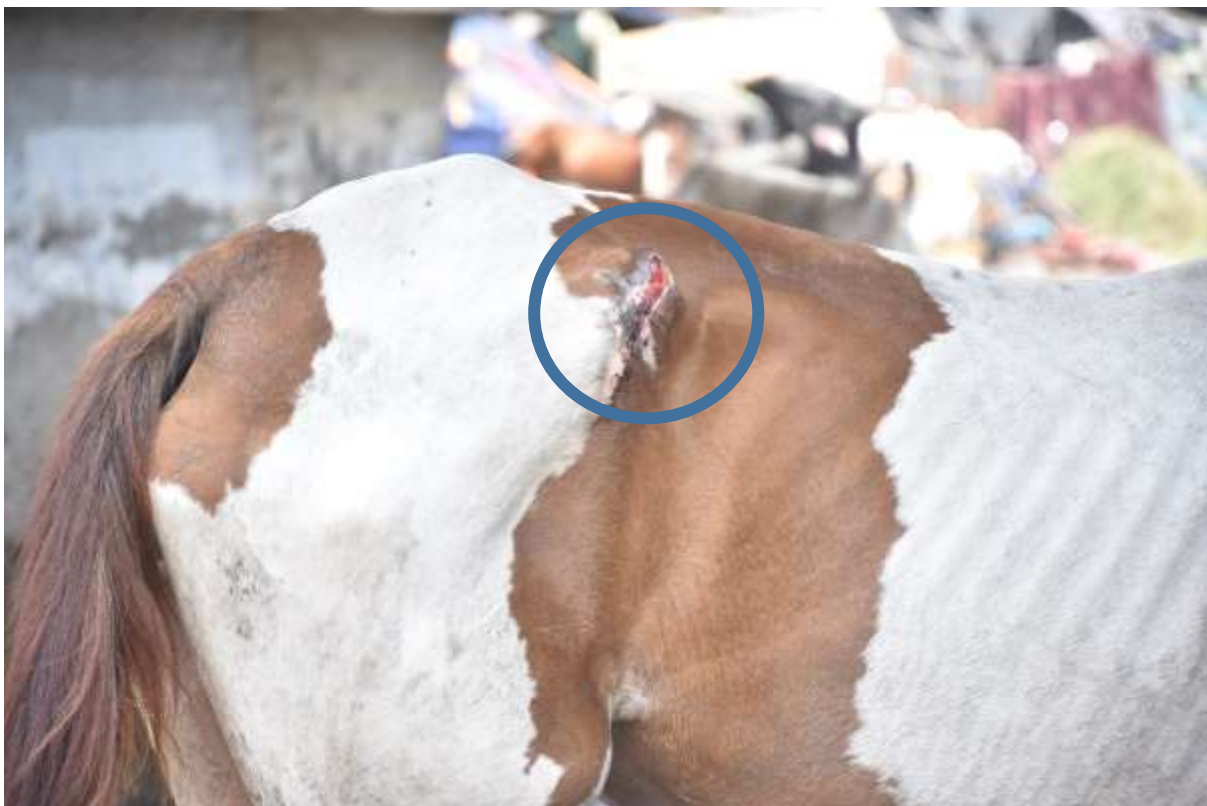


Photo 18: A wound on the point of a horse's hock possibly caused by rubbing on the saddle or cart



Photo 19: A horse with an untreated penile injury



Photo 20: A horse with a cataract and blindness in the left eye



Photo 21: A horse with purulent discharge from an eye indicating systemic infection



Photo 22: A PETA India veterinarian assesses the emaciated horse with purulent eye discharge at Maidan



Photo 23: A PETA India veterinarian assesses an emaciated horse at the Victoria Memorial



Photo 24: A PETA India veterinarian assesses an emaciated horse at the Victoria Memorial



Photo 25: A pregnant mare (as confirmed by the caretaker) used for tourist rides



Photo 26: A PETA India veterinarian assesses an emaciated horse at the Victoria Memorial



Photo 27: A pony with an untreated hernia on the left side of the abdomen



Photo 28: A pony with an untreated hernia on the left side of the abdomen (close-up)



Photo 29: Horses are forced to eat from the road – the grass could be contaminated with faeces, and the bits haven't been removed from the animals' mouths

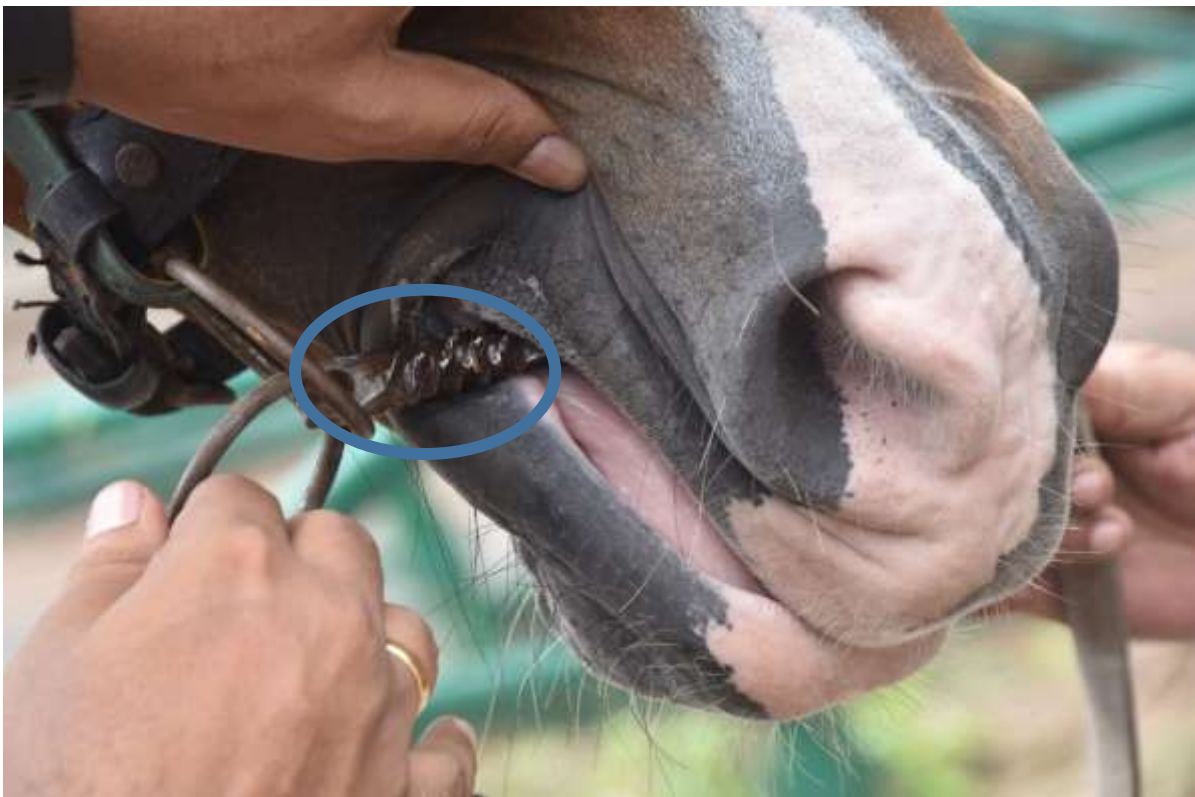


Photo 30: A spiked bit – prohibited under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Draught and Pack Animal) Rules, 1965 – used to control a horse



Photo 31: A spiked bit – prohibited under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Draught and Pack Animal) Rules, 1965 – used to control a horse



Photo 32: Horse faeces polluting public spaces near the Victoria Memorial

IV. Assessment of Housing Conditions



Photo 33: A horse is tied by the neck, with no free access to food or water



Photo 34: A horse is tied by the neck, with no free access to food or water



Photo 35: A horse is tied by the neck, with no free access to food or water



Photo 36: A horse is forced to stand in filth and his own faeces on an uneven surface under the flyover



Photo 37: Horses are forced to stand in their own faeces and near a pile undisposed excreta under the flyover



Photo 38: Horses are forced to stand in their own faeces under the flyover



Photo 39: A horse is forced to stand in faeces and near a pile undisposed excreta



Photo 40: A horse is forced to stand in his own faeces and near a pile undisposed excreta

V. Case Study on Digha Beach Horse-Ride Ban

Friday, 13 May 2022

The Telegraph *online*

[Home](#) / [West-bengal](#) / Ban on horses on Digha beach

Ban on horses on Digha beach

It affects roughly 250 horses already stationed on the beach and owned by families who have been in the trade for the last few decades



A boy mounted on a caparisoned pony in Digha.
Subhas Mishra

[Anshuman Phadikar](#) | Digha | Published 22.01.22, 02:21 AM

The Digha and Sankarpur Development Authority on Friday banned the operation of tourist horses on all beaches in Old and New Digha, putting an end to a long-standing tradition in the East Midnapore tourist town.

The ban affects roughly 250 horses already stationed on the beach and owned by families who have been in the trade for the last few decades. “The amount of waste generated by horses is causing a problem in the maintenance of beaches,” said a DSDA official, explaining that horse excreta is routinely found washed up in the shallow seas or in mounds on the sea side, where tourists would otherwise roam.

The new legislation will even ban the harbouring of horses in the nearby forest. “The government should give us alternative employment if they are going to take such a step. I am a third-generation operator, and should have some recourse,” said Sheikh Aidul. “The lockdown has made things bad to worse for us over the last two years. This would be a nail in the coffin,” he added.

Uttara Chaudhuri, Jalpaiguri resident, said the horse ride in Digha was an indelible part for children. Manas Mondal, the DSDA executive officer, defended the ban. “Horses on occasions have trampled down tourists. Above all, the waste is the main problem, which has to be solved if Digha is to prosper.”

VI. Conclusion and Recommendation

The horses used for tourist rides near the Victoria Memorial are denied even basic nutrition and veterinary care. In order to stop cruelty to horses, it is important that the government of West Bengal appoint a law-enforcement committee to seize unfit and unlicensed horses and send them to an animal shelter or a sanctuary where they can receive much-needed veterinary services.

Following the precedent set by the Digha Sankarpur Development Authority by banning horses on Digha Beach to protect the public and the animals, the state government of West Bengal must consider framing a similar policy to prohibit the use of horses for tourist and carriage rides in Kolkata, to rehabilitate the horses, and to provide the horse owners and carriage drivers with an alternative livelihood through the use of e-carriages or other means, such as taxis and commercial goods vehicles, as has already happened in Mumbai.