

URGENT AND IMPORTANT

Shri Gopal Rai

Hon'ble Minister for Employment, Rural Development,
Labour, General Administration, Irrigation and Flood
Control
A-Wing, 7th Level
Delhi Secretariat
IP Estate
New Delhi 110 002

29 May 2019

Re: Outbreak of deadly zoonotic disease glanders in horses in Delhi – call for urgent action

Dear Shri Rai,

I'm writing from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India on behalf of our more than 1.2 million members and supporters to update you regarding the outbreak of the deadly zoonotic disease glanders in working equines in Delhi. We urge you to implement the 2010 ban on tongas and to prohibit the use of horses in weddings and other ceremonies in Delhi.

The 7 May 2019 report of the National Research Centre on Equines (NRCE) (**Annexure 1**), addressed to the Director of the Department of Animal Husbandry, states that eight horses in Mangolpuri and Neb Sarai tested positive for glanders. This being a notifiable disease, the provisions of The Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, should immediately be implemented. As you probably know, glanders is a contagious, fatal disease in horses, mules, and donkeys caused by *Burkholderia mallei* bacteria, characterised by the serial development of ulcerating nodules that are most commonly found in the upper respiratory tract, in the lungs, and on the 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 entire body, and in the absence of proper treatment, it can lead to a painful death.

As per the 17 January 2018 advisory issued by the government of Delhi, cases of glanders among the equine population have been reported in Delhi (**Annexure 2**). The advisory states that the office of the Director of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Delhi, claimed that samples from 40 equines were found to be positive for this disease. The advisory further called for stronger surveillance to detect any suspected cases of glanders among handlers and other humans who come into close contact with the equine population. However, the recent outbreak of glanders in Delhi indicates that the implementation of the aforementioned

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surveillance and restriction of equine movements has been ineffective so far and that the provisions of The Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, have been poorly implemented.

This non-implementation of surveillance and restriction of movement of equines is further significant in view of the fact that the Municipal Corporation of Delhi Resolution No 590 banning tongas in Delhi (**Annexure 3**), dated 4 January 2010, is yet to be implemented. This resolution gives a detailed account of the reasons for a ban on tongas, including that they have no place on Delhi's increasingly congested roads, that there is little demand for such slow-moving vehicles, and that they involve cruelty to equines. These animals are made to work in extreme heat and cold in a highly polluted environment. They're often overloaded, exceeding the legal limits on the quantity of goods and the number of passengers that they can bear, and forced to work for prolonged hours. Both equines and humans have been seriously injured in traffic accidents. The animals defecate on roads, causing a hazard to public health, as their faeces contain tetanus pathogens. They may also have deadly zoonotic diseases (which can spread to humans) such as glanders. The regular preventive vaccination of these animals is not being practised. In addition, owners are unable to provide their animals with healthy, wholesome, and balanced diets or proper shelter during non-working hours, and the carcasses of equines lie unattended on Delhi roads, since they have no commercial value. As the resolution states, "Therefore, it is clear that in this congested city environment of Delhi, horses, mule, pony, etc. are neither treated respectfully during their life times nor after their death."

As per the 2014 Policy for Licence to Horses/Mare and Horse Buggies (**Annexure 4**) issued by the South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC), routine surveillance of infectious diseases in horses used for weddings and other ceremonies in the jurisdictional areas of the SDMC is not mandatory, putting the health of horses and the general public at risk, as the recent outbreak shows.

The May 2016 Action Plan for Control and Containment of Glanders in Equines (**Annexure 5**) by the Ministry of Agriculture, Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries lists the measures to be taken by the state animal welfare department before, during, and after an outbreak.

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

1. Instruct the Director of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Delhi, to implement the provisions of The Prevention and Control of Infectious and Contagious Diseases in Animals Act, 2009, and the 2016 Action Plan for Control and Containment of Glanders urgently

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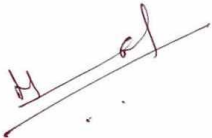
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and to ban all equine movement in the entire state of Delhi. This would mean a ban on using horses for work on roads and in marketplaces and on using them for weddings and other ceremonies. An urgent screening of all equines in Delhi for zoonotic diseases such as glanders must be done with the help of the NRCE.

2. Issue directions to the South, North, and East Delhi Municipal Corporations to implement the ban on tongas in their respective areas of jurisdiction, including stables, tonga stands, markets, and waiting areas for work, under the provisions of The Delhi Municipal Corporation Act, 1957.
3. Direct the management of the markets under the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee, such as Azadpur Sabzi Mandi and Okhla Sabzi Mandi, to comply with the law by not allowing tongas to use their premises for delivering goods or finding work.
4. Advise the Commissioner of Police to give directions to traffic police to stop the entry of tongas from Uttar Pradesh and Haryana at the border with Delhi.
5. Take a policy decision to ban the use of horses for weddings and other ceremonies in Delhi and to introduce an awareness programme encouraging couples planning a wedding to celebrate their nuptials without exploiting horses.

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: Secretary; Minister for Employment, Development, Labour,
General Administration and Irrigation and Flood Control

Director; Department of Animal Husbandry; NCT of Delhi

Animal Husbandry Commissioner; Department of Animal
Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries; Ministry of Agriculture and
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