

How owners' lack of awareness cause welfare issues to the working equines

Owner practices, harnessing and equine welfare

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Introduction

- Talianwala is a tented community that earns their living collecting and selling garbage from urban houses with the help of donkey carts.
- These donkeys work for hours and travel several miles to carry garbage loads.
- A veterinary team from The Brooke visiting the community found that many of the working donkeys had wounds and that this proportion did not decrease despite offering symptomatic treatment.

Aim:

To investigate the causes of commonly seen lesions.

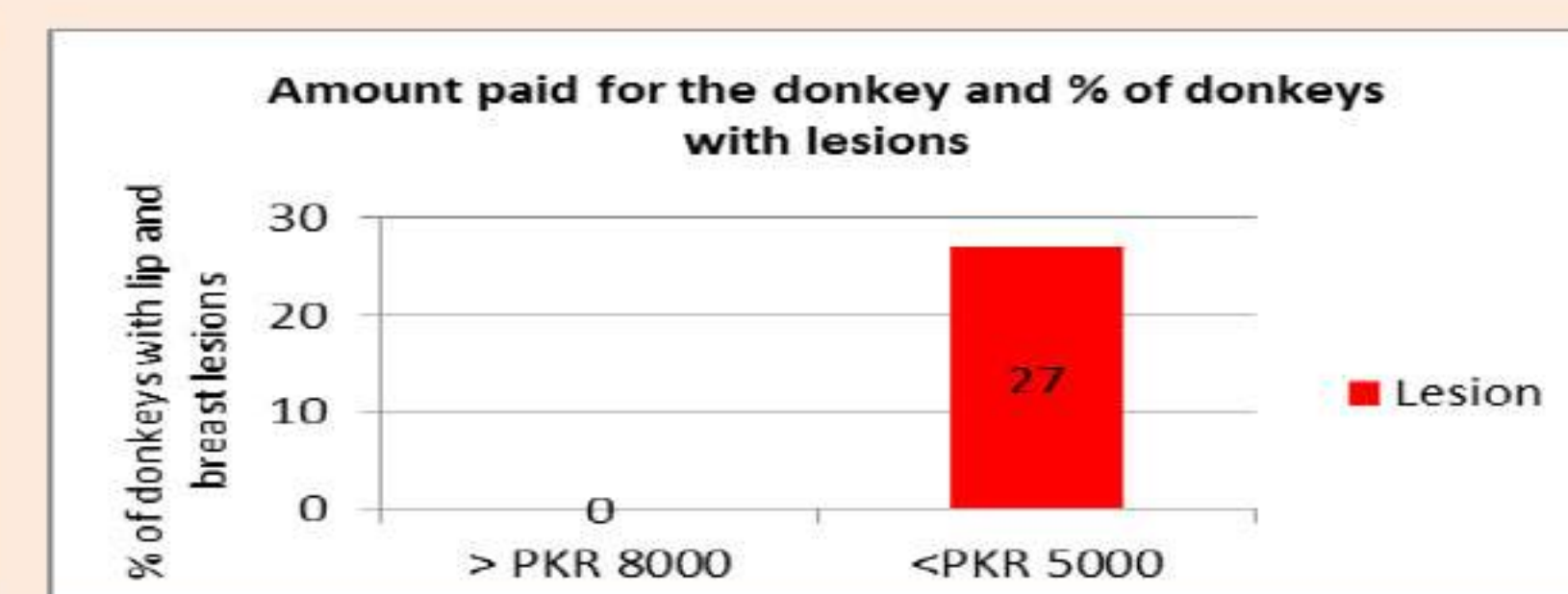
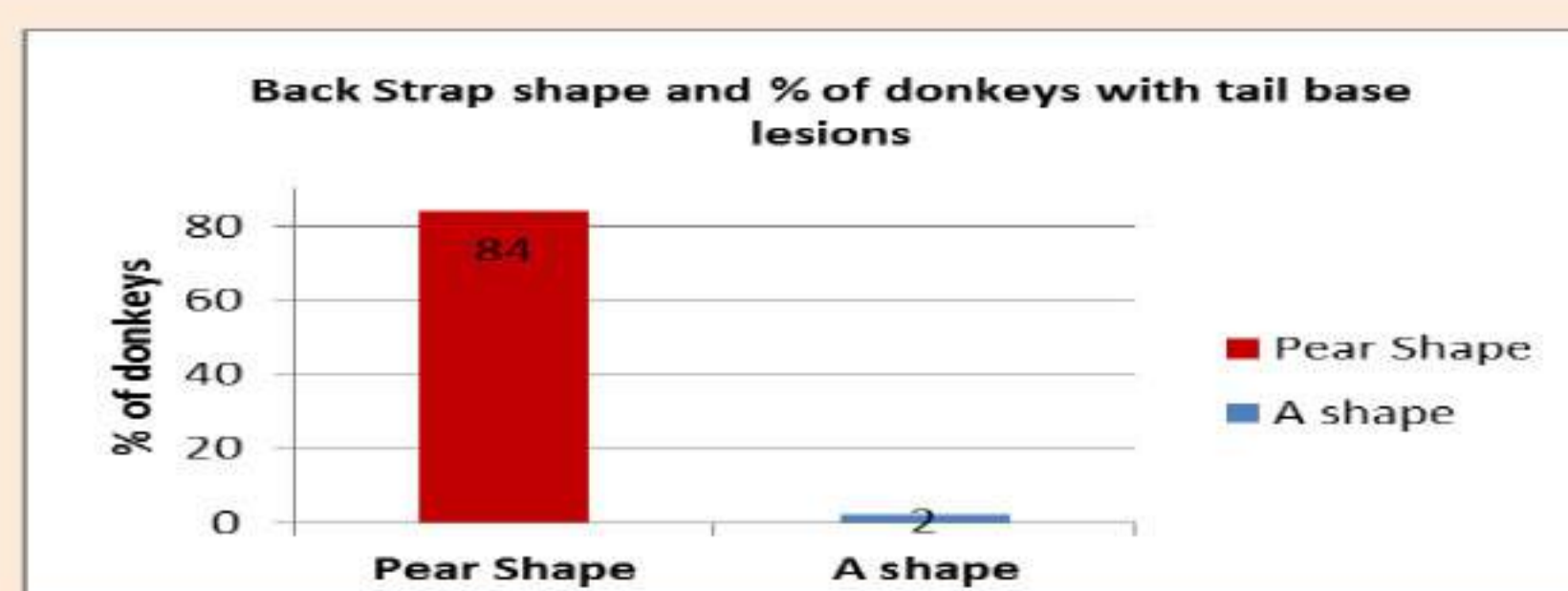
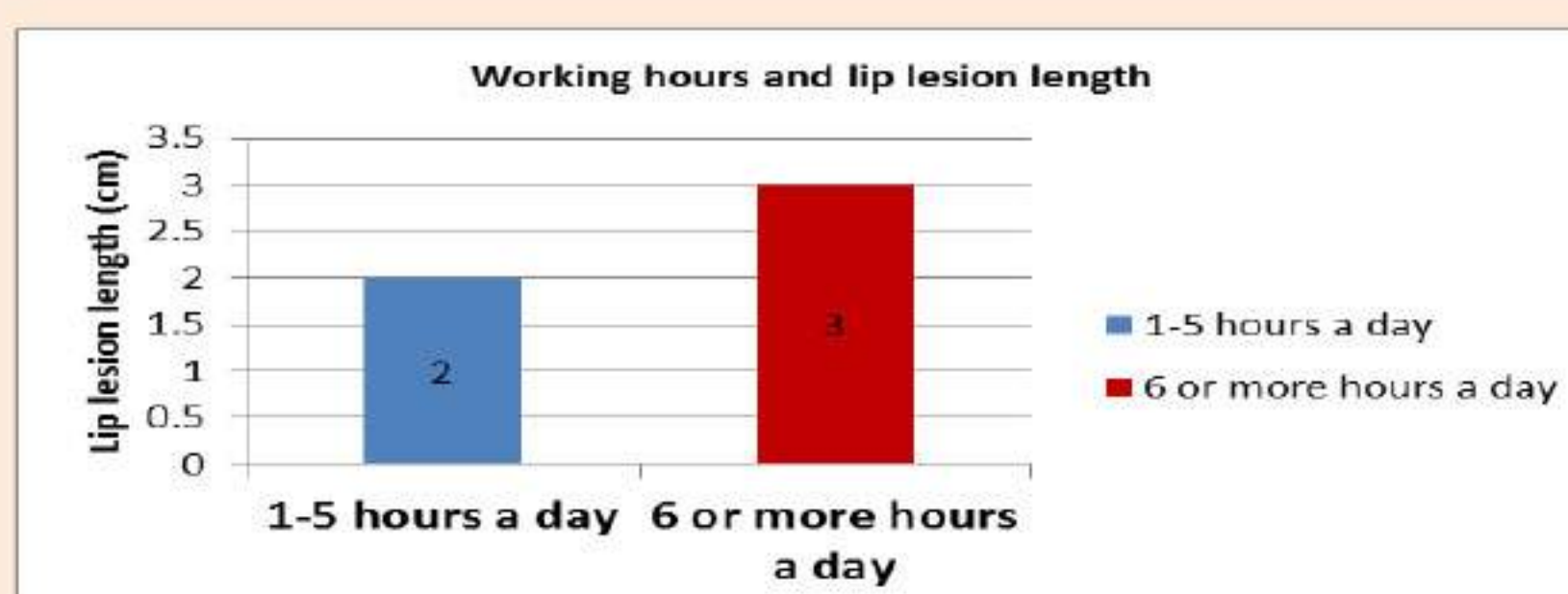
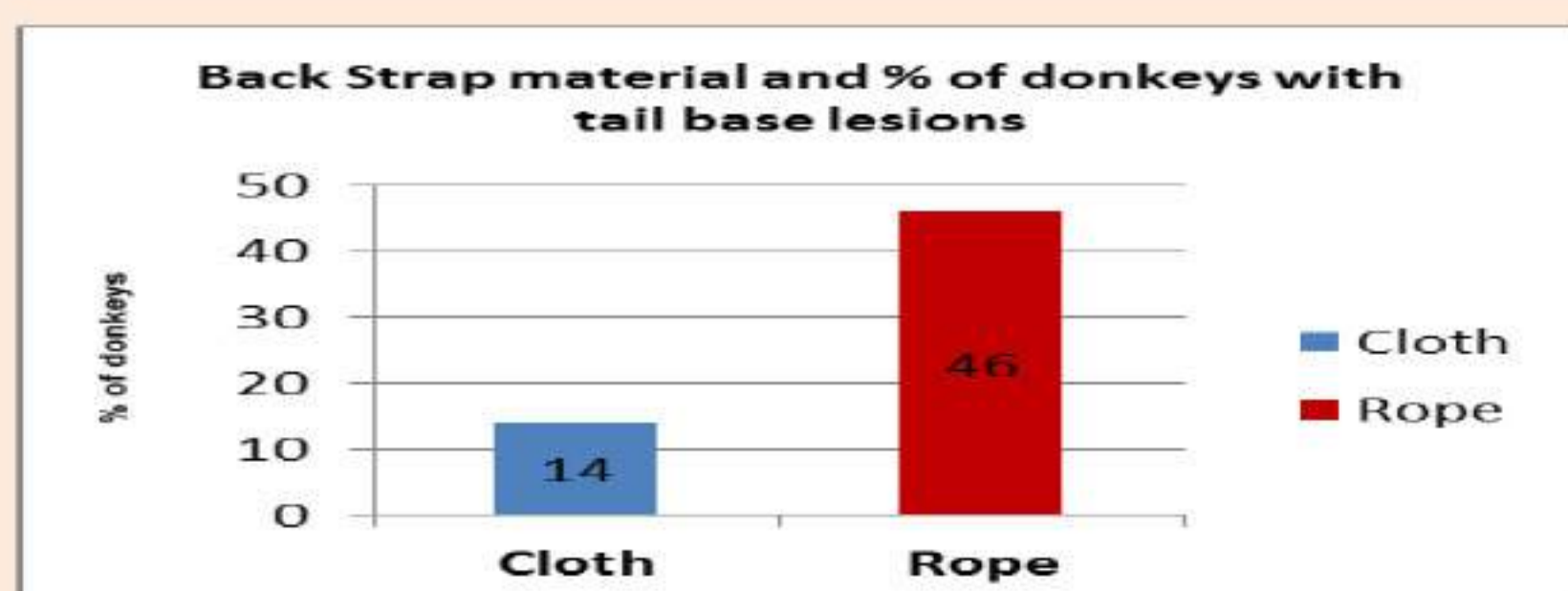


Working donkeys with their owners in Talianwala community

Methods

- Data were collected by convenience sampling from 113 animals and their owners through interviews focus group discussions and transect walks.
- Data were analysed by the Statistical Services Unit at Sheffield University, UK.

Results



Lesions caused by harness and bit wounds

Back straps made of rope were associated with tail-base lesions
 Pear shape back- straps were associated with tail-base lesions

More working hours were associated with lip lesions.
 Amount paid for the donkey was associated with lesions.

Discussion of findings and how they were used

The findings suggest that the animals of poor owners who are unable to afford appropriate harnessing, pay less for their animals and work longer hours may be at risk of developing lesions.

These findings were used to develop an action plan, prepared and led by the donkey owners of Talianwala community. The saddlers were trained and worn out harnesses were replaced. The community decided not to use rope in harness and decrease working hours per day. As a result lesions were significantly healed after 4 months of the intervention.

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