

STATUS OF WORKING ANIMALS IN NEPAL POST EARTHQUAKE



1. SUMMARY:



Nepal has been seriously devastated by the great earthquake 2015. More than 8,000 people lost their lives and countless people are displaced and injured. Preliminary reports estimate the loss of agro products, livestock and birds due to earthquake at around Rs 10.5 billion. A total of 16,371 large animals (cows and water buffaloes), 36,710 small animals (goats, pigs and sheep etc) and 451,688 birds (chickens and ducks) were killed due to the earthquake, according to Ministry of



Agriculture Development. The ruins of our ancient monuments and buildings has now become a part of our country. This is the greatest loss for people of Nepal till date. And animals has suffered no less from the disaster.

As the lives of animals totally depended on their owners most of them are forced to get abandoned. And the working animals faces the worst of all. Equine has always been the main source of transportation and income in the mountain and mid hilly region of Nepal. And they are used for carrying bricks in the brick factories in Hilly and Terai region of Nepal.



Kathmandu alone counts some 125 brick factories. They employ an estimated 60,000 workers and 1500 donkeys and mules and all of them hugely affected by the earthquake.

Animal Nepal has always worked for the welfare of working equines by organising regular health clinics for working equines, regular education sessions for donkey owners, child handlers and factory owners, rescuing sick and injured equines, lobbying for passing of Animal Welfare Act and rules for working animals, campaigning against 'Blood Bricks' and promoting responsible brick industry and 'clean and green bricks'.

As a part of earthquake relief programme, with the help of 'The Donkey Sanctuary UK', Animal Nepal was able to provide relief

materials to over 50 families and 500 equines working in brick factories in Lalitpur district. Since most chimneys and shelters had collapsed immediate relief was needed to prevent disease and starvation. The relief goods included tarpaulins, donkey food, rice, lentils, salt, noodles, oil, rehydration salts and medicines like paracetamol, metronidazole, dettol hand wash etc. The team managed to provide food supplies and two tarpaulins per owner but the exact quantity varied according to their loss and size of their family.

As part of our relief project we conducted a research over status of working animals all over Nepal and how they were affected from the earthquake. With a survey done in 22 district of Nepal we didn't find much casualties in the working animals but around 300 equines death were recorded in Gorkha which was the epicenter of earthquake. Similarly 4 equines were dead in Kathmandu valley, 3 mules were found injured in Rasuwa. Couple of mules were injured in Dolakha district. We believe that the survey will be helpful for our future projects in welfare of working animals.

2. CONDITION OF WORKING EQUINE (REGION WISE)

Gorkha being the epicenter of the great earthquake has suffered most casualties and not much loss has been found in the lives of animals of other regions. The major effected areas are Gorkha, Dolakha Sindhupalchowk, Dhading, Kavre, Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Lamjung and Tanahun.

Nepal being one of the developing countries, it is estimated that over 25% people of Nepal still lives in poverty. And most of the country is dependent on

agriculture and farming. Around 100,000 working horses and donkeys are employed all over the country who play an important role in supporting the livelihoods of approximately one million people.

a. Mountain Region:

Mostly mules and horses are employed as a working animals in the mountain region of Nepal. The animals are used for the transportation of goods and construction materials. The mountain region being the hot spot for trekking and tourism, they are usually primary source of income for most of the people.



b. Hilly Region:



In the hilly region the equines are used for transportation of goods and the responsibility of equine care is on owners and/or handlers (a hired person by owners). Normally these equines are employed in the brick factories to carry the bricks. These equine hauling bricks in the brick factories work in a very pathetic situation. They are usually ill fed and less cared. Animal Nepal started working on equine outreach programme in Lalitpur district since 2008 after seeing the deteriorating condition of these animals.

c. Terai Region:



In the plains the equines are mainly used for transportation of people by cart, however since 2012 our work has extended intensively to focus on the horses, donkeys and mules used in the brick kilns of Kathmandu where they are required to carry heavy loads of bricks for long distances. Equines here are the primary source of income for the owners. Since the region has majority of lower class population, not all can afford a good health and proper care for their animals and there are also less or no equine health practitioners in the region.

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It is estimated that only 3–5 per cent of the country's vet services reach animal owners because there is limited technical expertise and it is generally only available in cities or major districts. The main welfare problems seen include a lack of appropriate feed, water, shelter, vaccination programmes and poor understanding of animal welfare: preventable wounds, lameness, colic, injuries and diseases are routine issues.

Most of the working animals in the hilly region has been replaced by motorcycle or jeeps. After the road way reached to districts like Solukhumbu, Mustang etc. there has been major decrease in the number of mules. But in some places the mule and pony culture in transportation is considered quite unique and hence tourists prefers to pay a handsome amount for the ride even if there are vehicles available.

BRICK FACTORIES OPERATING IN NEPAL



List of Brick Factories Operating in Nepal

SN	Name of District	Total Brick Factories	Registered Brick Factories	Unregistered Brick Factories	Numbers of Factories that use Animals	Remarks
1	Kailali	39	35	4	Not used	Not used animals since 2 years
2	Sarlahi	40	30	10	8	Mostly carts are used
3	Rupandehi	50	50	-	24	Among 50 registered, 46 are only running

4	Nawalparasi	35	35	-	Not used	When equines got sick they decided to use vehicle
5	Morang	18	18	-	Not used	Mostly tractors
6	Sunsari	28	28	-	Not used	Mostly tractors
7	Rautahat	53	51	2	5	16 factories shut down due to earthquake
8	Bardiya	50	9	41	9	
9	Siraha	40	35	5	1	
10	Saptari	46	5	-	2	Chimneys of 40 brick factories came down
11	Jhapa	22	22	-	Not used	People are used as labor
12	Mahakali Kanchanpur	30	30	-	10	
13	Bara Parsa					
14	Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, Lalitpur	150	150	-	30	Many brick kilns prefer to have equines.
15	Dhading	9	4	5	2	They have recently started using equines.
16	Nuwakot	1		-	-	
	Total	611	502	57	86	

Among the destroyed property from the disaster brick factories tops the list, especially the chimneys and people and equine shelters are hugely affected. Lalitpur district, which is the working area of Animal Nepal, among the brick factories owner, one owner and his family died. Altogether four equines lost their lives and 25 animals got injured in Kathmandu and Lalitpur.

Majority of the brick kiln are based in Terai so they remain safe during the quake.

A total of 585 equines were brought this season to work in 15 brick factories of Lalitpur. Altogether there are 46 equine owners, with each a number of relatives and handlers. A total of 500 people were identified as beneficiaries in the relief program. With the kind assistance of The Donkey Sanctuary UK, Animal Nepal team and St Xaviers' School student volunteers distributed relief goods in brick factories, including feed for equines.

Animal Nepal also helped equine owners to obtain health certificates which allowed

them to travel back to Nepalgunj. Due to the ongoing aftershocks the equine owners and handlers did not feel safe and wanted to go back to their homes as soon as possible. Equine owners from 6 brick factories left within 10-15 days after the earthquake, while the others stayed behind and build a temporary home inside or outside the brick factory. Animal Nepal continues to check on the conditions of the equines that stayed behind.

Many brick factories have halted their production for a while due to the collapse of the chimneys. Among the brick factories that were operating this season around 90% have suffered a major damage. But various consequences follow besides just the property damage as many lives are directly depended upon the production.

The working equines have been either sent back to Nepalgunj or sold to owners operating in the hilly region. More than 30 mules and horses were sent to Hill and mountain region of Nepal for transportation purpose while all remaining equines were sent back to Nepalgunj.

As the production stopped the equine owners and the handlers faced immediate unemployment. Since most of them come from marginalized communities they have little to fall back on. Some had taken loans before the brick production season which they are unable to pay back.

Consequences of the disaster:

- Loss of lives of animals
- Major decrease in the brick production at Kathmandu valley ultimately affecting the reconstruction programme. At the same time brick kilns of Terai region is having high demand of brick kiln.
- Stress for owners and animals
- Unemployment on the equine owner and handlers.
- Since most of the animals are send to hilly region they will be used for carrying construction materials resulting in overwork for animals

3. EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED REGIONS AND AFFECTS ON WORKING ANIMALS:

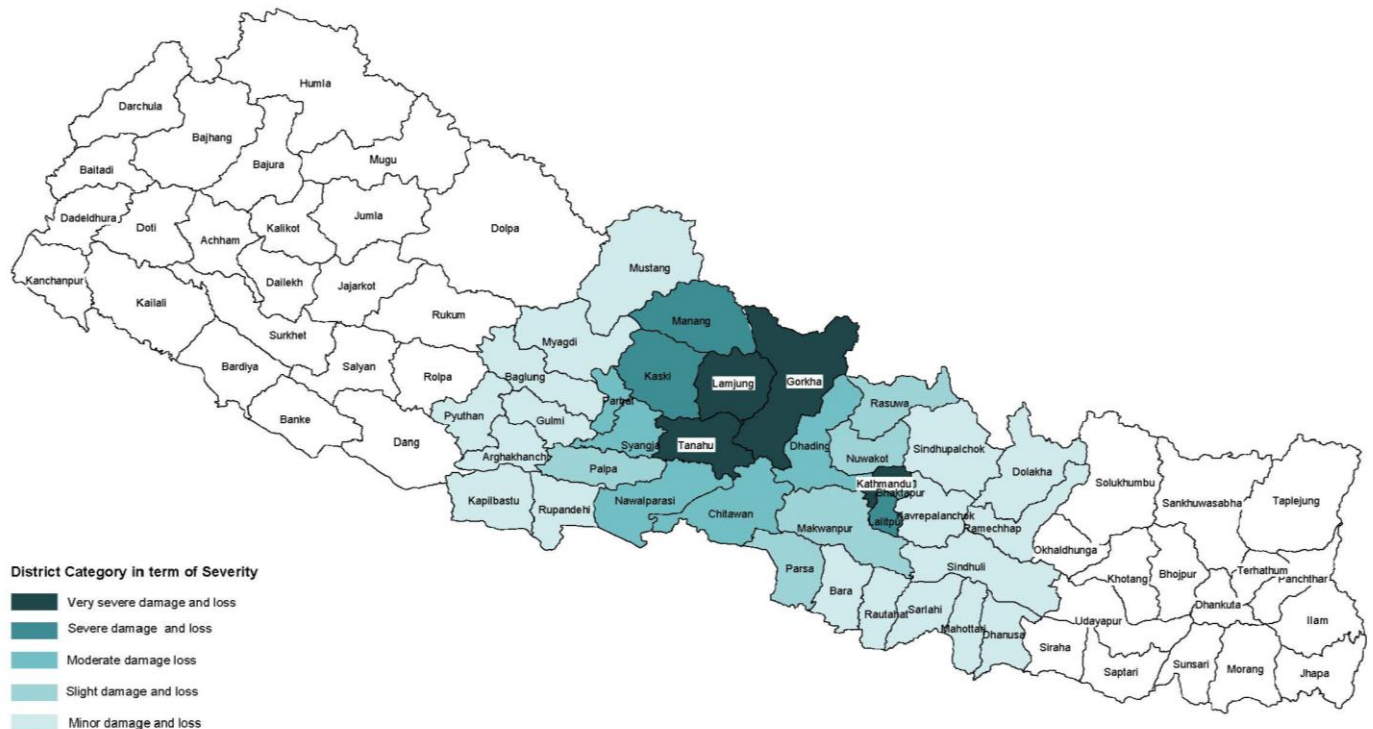


Figure 1. Severity of District in Earthquake. (Source: RCHC Office Nepal)

Since the epicenter of the earthquake fell on the Gorkha, Dolakha and Sindhupalchowk district, most of the district from the hilly regions remained affected. With countless loss of lives and properties, people also suffered the loss of their animals. Animals are the primary source of income for most of the people of Nepal. Hence the death of their animals has undoubtedly made a huge difference in their lives.

Where donkeys, mule and horses are used in the Kathmandu valley it didn't suffer much casualties. But death of 300 working animals has been recorded in Gorkha. Our team in the process of our research managed to call the DLSO (District Livestock Office) of each district to record the casualties. No any deaths were recorded in district like solukhumbu, Rasuwa, Nawakot and Sindhupalchowk except some minor injuries. Our team reached up to Rasuwa and Nuwakot and treated 3 injured mules. While the mountain region remained quite unaffected by the quake.

Team of Animal Nepal is coordinating with related district livestock offices of affected districts if they need any help. Most of them are requesting us to provide some food supplement and vitamin. Since the brick kilns are collapsed in Kathmandu valley, brick kilns of Terai region is getting high demand of brick. Once the demand is high working equines and people needs to work hard to meet the demand. So Animal Nepal is planning to reach out some districts of Terai region as well.



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