

DAHD Issues Guidelines for Welfare and Management of Working Equines on Pilgrimage Routes Across India

Health Certification, Testing and Insurance Made Compulsory for Animal Welfare & Pilgrim Safety

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The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD) under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying has released “[Guidelines for the Welfare and Management of Working Equines during Religious Pilgrimages in India.](#)” The guidelines provide a uniform framework for the registration, health certification, acclimatization, and welfare management of working equines (horses, mules, and donkeys) engaged in carrying pilgrims and goods during yatras such as the Amarnath Yatra, Char Dham Yatra, Vaishnodevi Yatra, and Manimahesh Yatra etc.

The provisions include mandatory registration and tagging of all equines, health certification with compulsory testing for glanders and equine influenza, and a minimum acclimatization period before deployment in high-altitude areas. Veterinary check-posts are to be established every five kilometres along pilgrimage routes, equipped with veterinarians, para-professionals, medicines, IV fluids, and quarantine facilities. Humane working conditions have been emphasized through the **provision of rest sheds, potable water, scientifically defined load limits, and prohibition on night movement**, while **insurance coverage for all working equines has been made mandatory** to ensure accountability and safeguard animal welfare. Vaccination schedules and surveillance measures, in consultation with ICAR–NRCE will further strengthen disease prevention and control.

Animal welfare has been prioritized in these guidelines as the well-being of equines directly impacts their performance, the safety of pilgrims, public health, and the livelihoods of families who depend on them. By ensuring rest, water, treatment facilities, defined load limits, and a ban on harsh equipment, these guidelines promote responsible use of animals while supporting both welfare and sustainable livelihoods. The guidelines also aim to ensure safety of pilgrims and promote sustainable pilgrimage management while extending support to local administrations and veterinary authorities.

DAHD in coordination with State Governments, Shrine Boards and Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCAs) will facilitate and oversee the implementation of these guidelines to ensure their effective adoption across pilgrimage sites. These guidelines have been prepared through a consultative process involving subject experts, stakeholders, State Governments, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) and the ICAR–National Research Centre on Equines (NRCE), Hisar.

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