Introduction

- Donkeys still play important livelihood roles in Africa despite mechanisation. This is because of poverty, limited infrastructure and their resilience to disease.
- Floods are a perennial challenge within the Kano plains bordering Lake Victoria in Western Kenya.
- The effect of flooding on donkey welfare is often overlooked, as most ‘humanitarian’ efforts focus on people and other domestic animals.
- We enumerated the challenges of perennial seasonal floods on the welfare of working equids within the Kano plains of Western Kenya (Figure 1).

Methods

- 8 focus group discussions were facilitated with an average of 18–30 donkey owners, users and local service providers in Kano plains of Western Kenya.
- A participatory rural appraisal tool was used called “If I were a donkey”.

Results

Most people (63%) felt that floods interfere with the five freedoms. In particular, members of the focus group discussions reported:

- Loss of shelter (68%)
- Risk of death as a result of road traffic accidents (42%)
- Little feed available (74%) (Figure 2)
- Zoonotic disease flare-up: for example, anthrax spores in the soil are exposed, leading to outbreaks and death in donkeys and humans (89%).

Conclusions and recommendations

- Awareness creation for county authorities on donkey welfare is necessary prior to the perennial flooding period in relevant areas.
- Authorities and welfare groups should support equine welfare programs in flood-prone areas: for example, vaccination against anthrax as well as options for shelter and feed provision prior to flooding.
- Additionally, disaster authorities should take responsibility for carcass disposal in these areas.
- Preventive vaccination against anthrax can save lives of susceptible equids when done prior to flooding.

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