

Women's Practices and Donkey Behaviour in Kitui, Kenya

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Brooke East Africa

The Brooke East Africa is a branch of the Brooke UK which is an international animal welfare charity committed to improving the lives of working horses, donkeys and mules in some of the world's poorest communities.

Initial processes in any given project site is the conducting appraisal of welfare situation of donkeys to and the knowledge, attitudes and practices of owners and users to identify and prioritize welfare issues to be targeted.



Brief Background

Kenya is located in East Africa bordered by Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, South Sudan and Somalia. It comprises 47 counties and has a total national donkey population of 1.8 million.



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Kitui County

- High donkey population (136,621 which is 8% of the 1.8 million donkey population in Kenya)
- No other organization/government working to address donkey welfare issues in this region
- A number of welfare issues had been identified that affected working donkeys in the area



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Why women in Kitui?

Women represent a large proportion of donkey owners and users in Kitui County.

99.7% of the donkeys examined were pack animals used to aid in household chores i.e. ferry water and firewood; and carry light goods such as cereals and vegetables to and from the market. Women depend on these donkeys for their livelihoods.



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Kitui County is in the South East part of the Country



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A woman fetching water with her donkeys
from a watering point - seasonal river



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Objectives

- To examine the frequency of body lesions and negative behavioural indices in donkeys
- Identify any potential contributing human practices that can be targeted for intervention



Methodology used

Brooke EA staff taken through a 2 week training on The Brooke's SEBWAT approach that included field practical and a standardization process. 2 staff were required to work together on the same animal and reach a consensus on the score.

A 2 day training on the HBI tool was conducted and a pre test done on the tool with the data collectors before actual data collection.



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Animal Based Indicators (ABIs)

Animal Based Indicators were assessed using The Brooke's Standard Equine Based Welfare Assessment Tool (SEBWAT).



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ABI (Body lesions)

Severity Score 0 Lesion



No Lesion
Skin clearly not broken

Severity Score 1 Lesion



A healed lesion. Photo show
both grey and pink hairless
skin



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Severity Score 2 Lesion



skin and immediate subcutaneous layers are broken

Severity Score 3 Lesion



lesions deep to show muscle, tendon or bone



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Behaviour/ Observer approach

Score 0 – Alert but not afraid, calm but not apathetic

Score 1 – apathetic, dull or non responsive

Score 2- Nervous, frightened or aggressive



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Human Based Indicators(HBIs)

Human based indicators were collected through structured questionnaires targeting donkey owners/users and direct observation of the donkeys while at work.

Key aspects that were asked were on whether they kick/shout/whip their donkeys and an observation made on these practices

Observation on the women harnessing practices



Sampling Approach

A total of 138 randomly sampled women were interviewed across Kitui County in 9 town centres that were purposively selected in August 2014 for a period of 5 days.

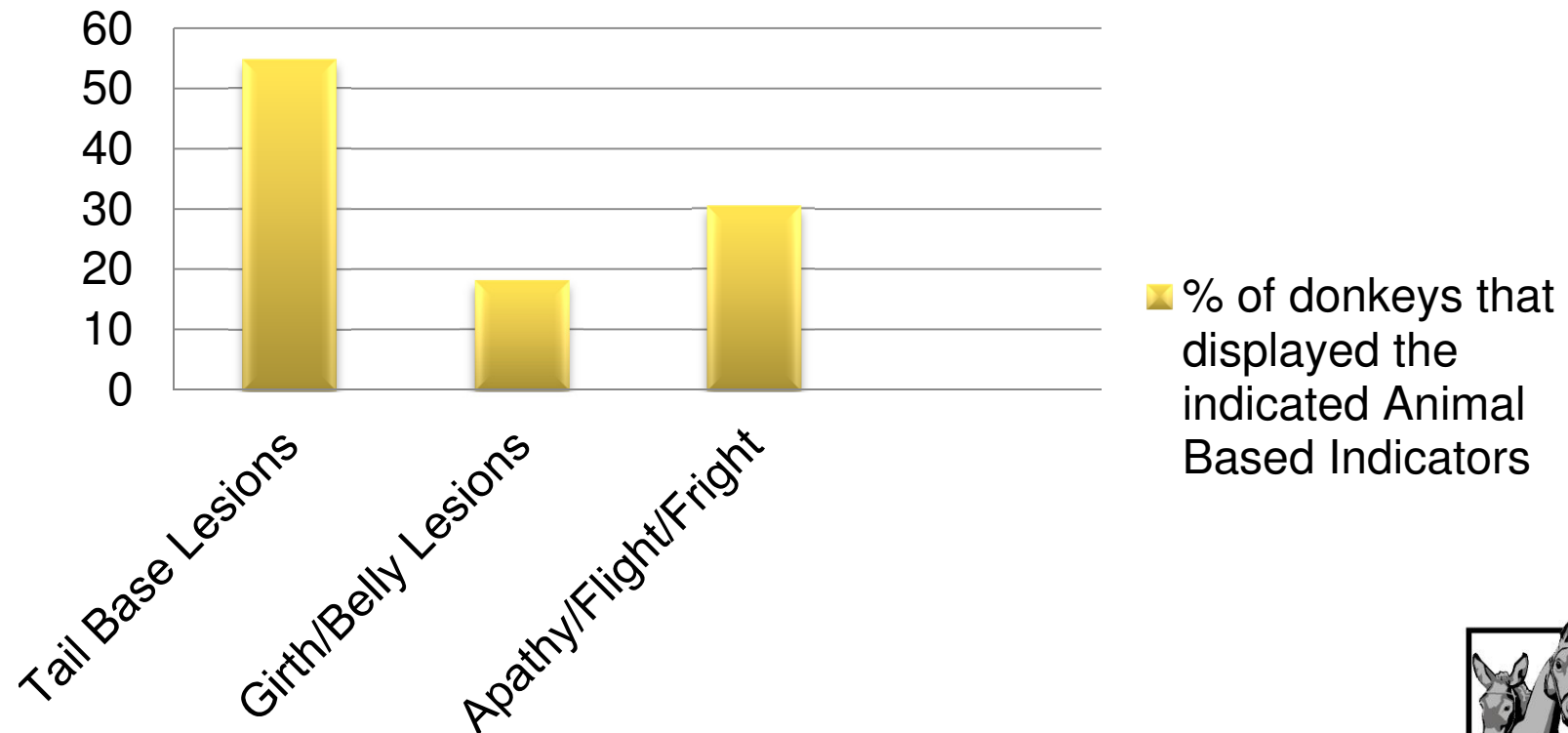
344 donkeys were assessed using random sampling at key watering points where a majority of the owners convene to collect water and at home for ease of access



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Key Findings

% of donkeys that displayed the indicated Animal Based Indicators



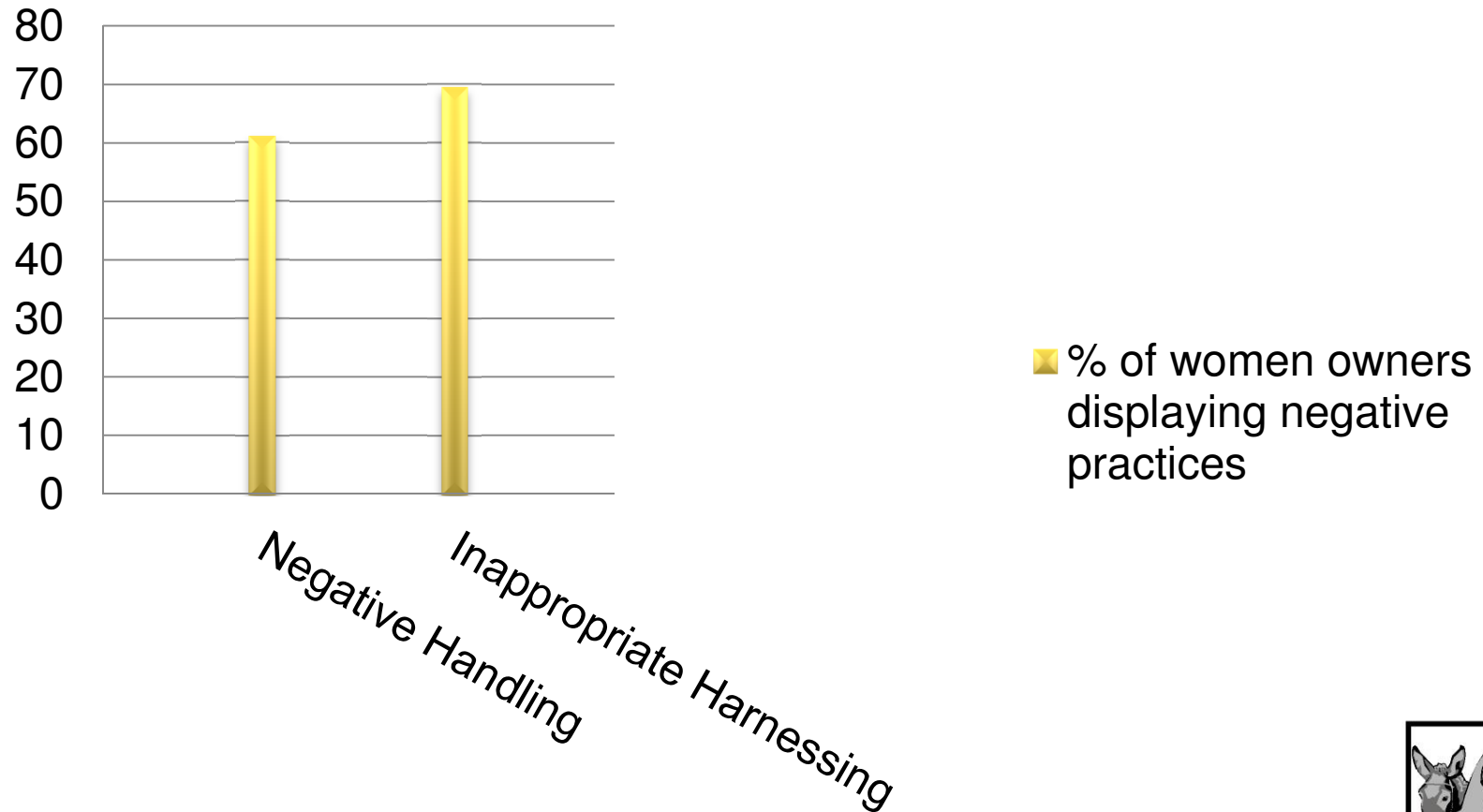
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Tail Base lesion



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% of women owners displaying negative practices



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Discussion

- High prevalence of lesions maybe contributed to by inadequate knowledge of appropriate harnessing
- High prevalence of fear/flight responses and apathy maybe contributed to by inadequate knowledge in handling skills that is compounded by negative attitudes towards their donkeys



Way forward

Through community engagement, the issues identified will be addressed through:

- Knowledge gaps – training sessions with the women donkey owners will be conducted to pass on proper knowledge that will also include practical demonstration on how proper handling. Basic wound management for wound treatment and linkage to Local service providers.



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Way forward...cont

Other approaches include the strengthening of social women groups as one of the avenues to reach out to a majority of women on Animal Welfare that advocate for peer to peer pressure that support the uptake of the best welfare.

Reviewing of policy framework on animal welfare at the county level that would encourage owners to adopt the right welfare practices.



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Way forward...cont

Support a community led monitoring system that will ensure the women are putting the new learnings on handling and harnessing practices into action for sustainability purposes.



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