

Title:

Review of Brooke India euthanasia policy (2006-08) to facilitate decision making

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Abstract:

The Brooke India is working in seven states of India with twenty equine welfare units at district level. The working equines are sustained by marginalized livestock owners and are important means of transportation of goods, people particularly in hill areas; brick kiln, tourism and other farm uses. These animals are viewed not only in terms of economic support but emotional attachment by equine owners.

In Brooke, euthanasia is one of the major means of relieving immediate and long lasting pain & suffering commonly encountered in working equines.

The paper aims to review the Brooke India euthanasia activity for a period of three years (2006-08) in terms of its direct and partnership operation, unit wise accomplishment, compensation money, seasonality, species, work type and circumstances of euthanasia.

The paper explains its variables from its 256 reported euthanasia done by Brooke India veterinarian. It was observed that nine District Equine Welfare Units (DEWU) reported a total of 145 euthanasia and three Partner Equine Welfare Units (PEWU) reported a total of 111 during the above specified period. The finding highlights the large and small group (viz. work type, species, and equine welfare unit) in terms of euthanized animal. Regarding the cause of euthanasia, lameness is the most prevalent cause. Out of 256 cases, 42 euthanasia cases were done due to problems related to lameness.

The study had quantified various issues related to operational importance during that (2006-08) period. Such operational and clinical issues quantified across all operational units will enable the organization in decision making. It will also support Brooke India and other animal organization to focus on cause and prevention of animal's pain and suffering.

Key words: euthanasia, decision making, equine, compensation, pain & suffering

Introduction:

In Brooke (www.thebrooke.org), euthanasia is one of the major means of relieving immediate and long lasting pain & suffering commonly encountered in working equines. The Brooke has laid out policies and protocols to practice and promote euthanasia within the organization as well as at institutional and stakeholder levels. It is now needed that we have to evaluate the trends in euthanasia, so that the policies and protocols can be accordingly revised & updated. The Brooke treatment data were used to look at certain specific variables like, number of animals euthanized

with relation to species, work types, the terminal cause of suffering by the animal, seasonal trends, compensation paid and understanding developed among Brooke staff and other stakeholders on concept of euthanasia and its implementation.

Definition and Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Equine

The term euthanasia is derived from the Greek terms "eu" meaning "good" and "thanatos" meaning "death." Euthanasia means the good death. The average person defines euthanasia in lay terms as, "putting a horse to sleep" or "putting a horse down". The understanding is that euthanasia is pain free and peaceful. The act of going to sleep is a pleasant and pain free experience.

Guidelines for Recommending Euthanasia

The following criteria were advised to consider in evaluating the immediate necessity for euthanasia of the animals to avoid incurable, excessive, and unnecessary suffering:

1. Is the condition chronic and incurable?
2. Does the immediate condition carry a hopeless prognosis for life?
3. Is the horse a hazard to itself or its handlers?
4. Will the horse require continuous medication for the relief of pain for the remainder of its life?

Coping with the loss

Owners purchase their horses to support their livelihood for his family. After a horse has died, it is natural and normal to feel grief and sorrow for the animal owner and his family.

To bufferised the emotional and financial loss, Brooke use to pay a token amount to the animal owner as well as to buried the animal properly.

Method:

The Brooke clinical teams working in different district were keep record of their activity including euthanasia cases.

A format called 'Euthanasia form' used to collect consensus of its owner and information of the euthanized animal. The euthanasia format give detail about the animal identification, species, work type and information related to its circumstances of putting it in a pain less death.

The 'Euthanasia form' of 2006, 2007 and 2008 were collected from DEWU and PEWU and compiled to analyze its situation.

However, due to lack of organizational reporting system no data related to euthanasia were recorded in PEWU during the year 2006.

The MS excel tool use for data analysis.

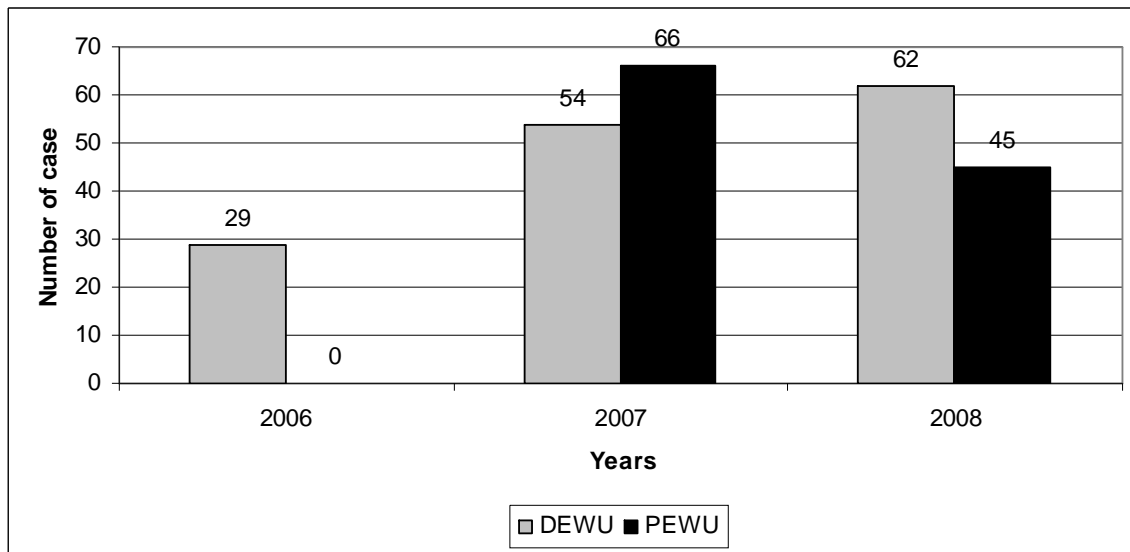
Results:

The results of this study were discussed according to its operational and clinical importance. The result were discussed in the following headings of euthanasia cases in District Equine Welfare Units (DEWU) and Partner Equine Welfare Units (PEWU), species wise euthanasia case, clinical

cause wise of euthanasia case, work type wise euthanasia cases, seasonal pattern, unit wise euthanasia case and compensation for euthanasia.

A. Euthanasia case in DEWUs and PEWUs:

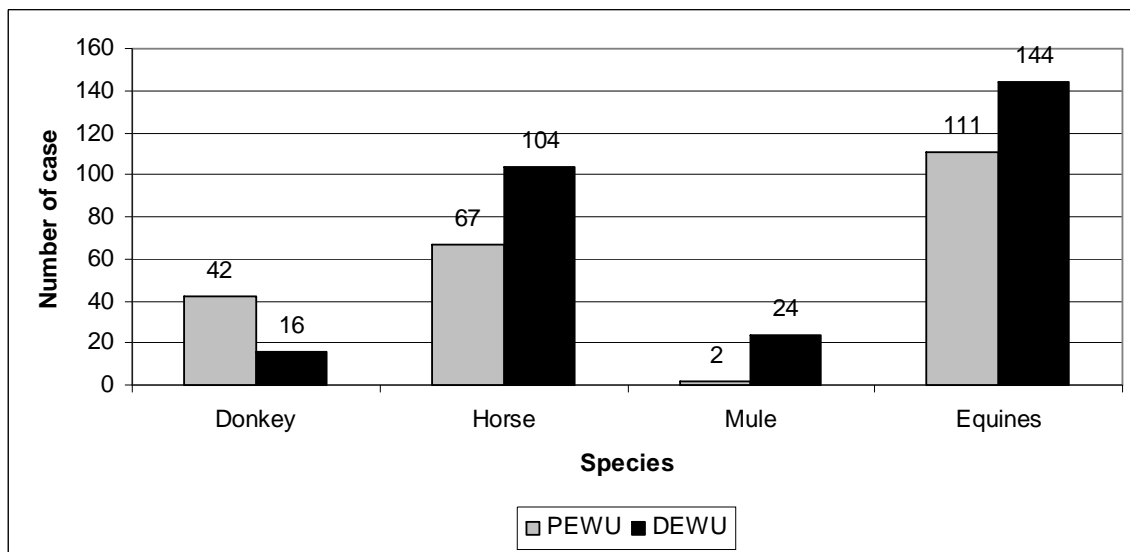
Compilation of euthanasia report from May 2006 to September 2008, show a total of 256 euthanasia cases which includes direct and partner operations. Nine DEWU reported a total of 145 euthanasia and three PEWU reported a total of 111 during the above specified period (Graph 1).



Graph 1: Euthanasia case in DEWUs and PEWUs

B. Species wise euthanasia case:

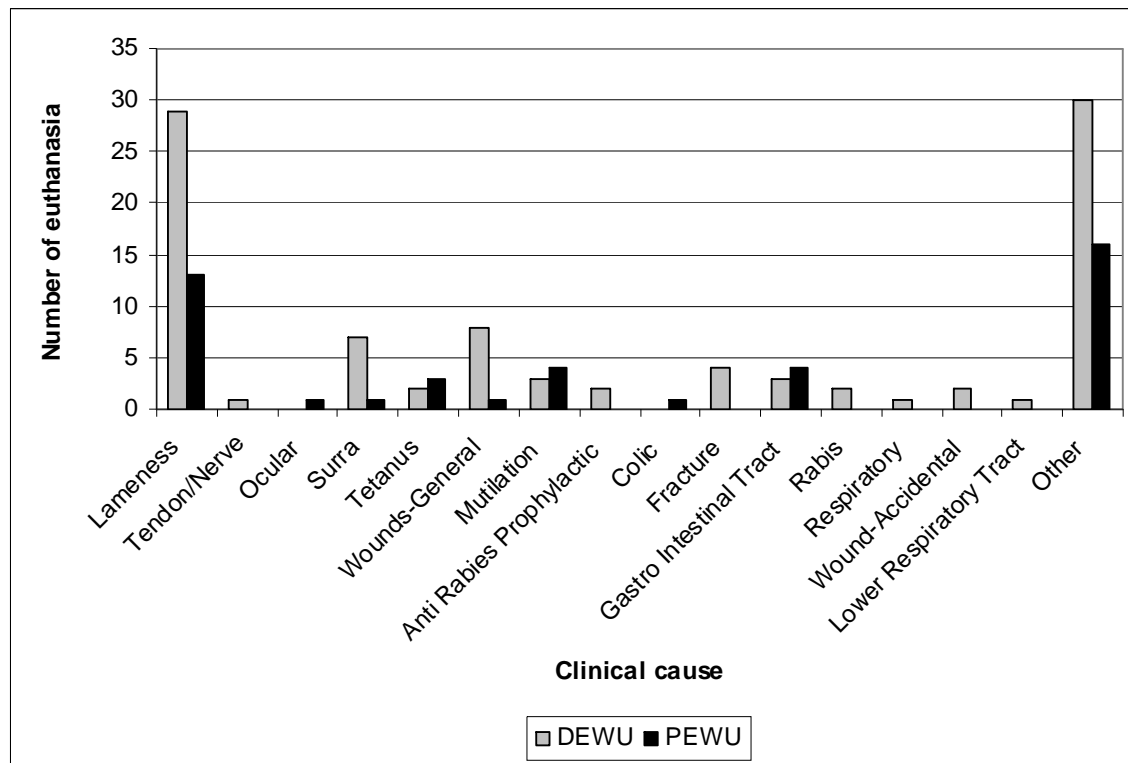
An analysis related species shows that a total of 171 horses, 26 mules and 58 donkeys were euthanized (Graph 2). The species of one animal was not reported which was euthanized in DEWU.



Graph 2: Species wise euthanasia cases

C. Clinical cause wise of euthanasia case:

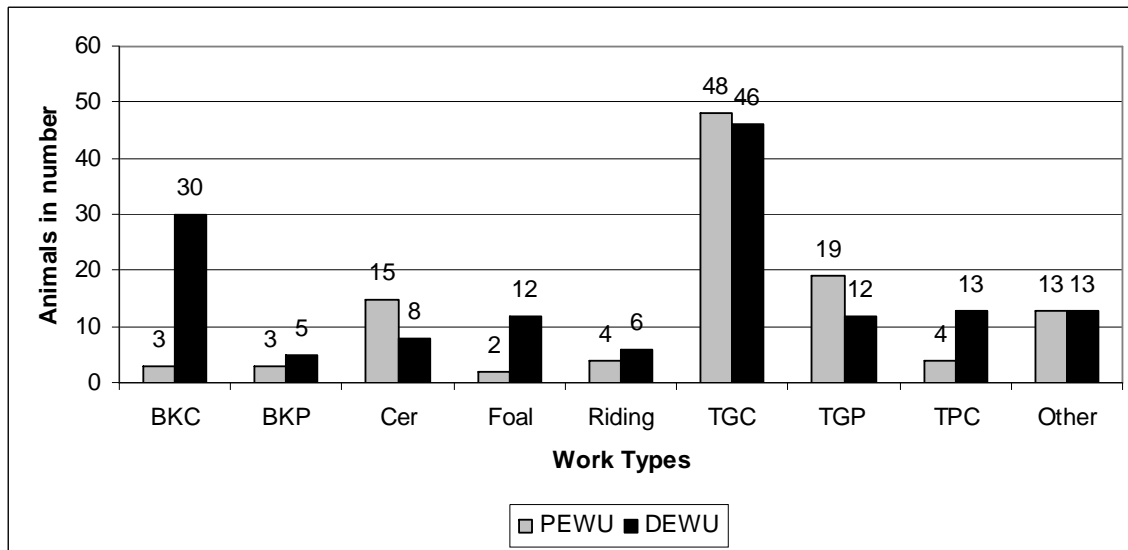
There were more than 15 major causes came up as incurable conditions or highly painful/suffering state of life where veterinarians have to conduct euthanasia. Among most important were lameness, Surra, wounds and gastro intestinal tract (GIT) diseases. Out of 256, 42 euthanasia were done due to problems related to lameness (Graph 3).



Graph 3: Clinical causes of euthanasia

D. Work type wise euthanasia cases:

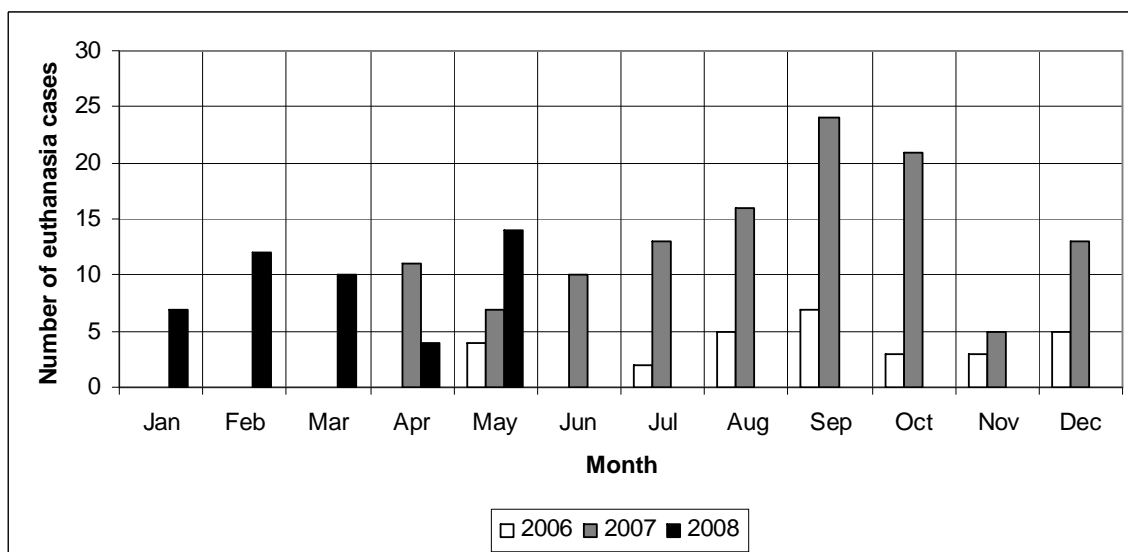
The data analysis shows that Brick-kiln cart animals (BKC) and animals transporting goods by cart (TGC) were the highest risk group. A total of 33 BKC and 94 TGC were euthanized during the period (Graph 4). The graph also shows the number of work type wise euthanasia case of brick kiln animal with pack saddle(BKP), ceremonial (Cer), foal, riding, transporting goods in pack saddle(TGP), and other like engaged in breeding.



Graph 4: Work type wise analysis

E. Seasonal pattern:

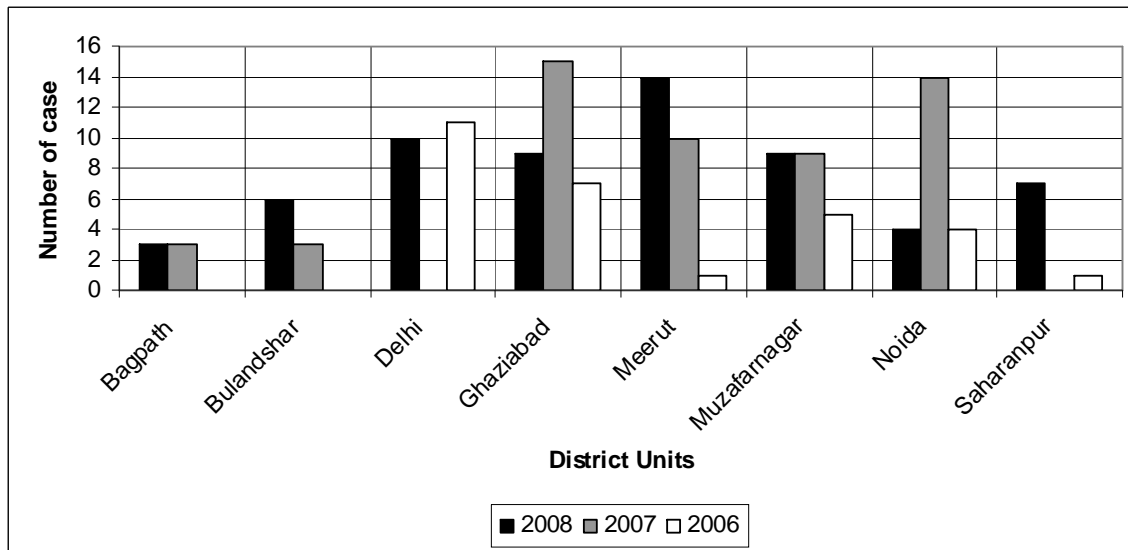
In 2006, no PEWU data on euthanasia was reported. The trend shows (Graph 5) a moderate raise in figures during September. In 2007 again a raise was noticed during August to October. In 2008, a raise noticed in the month of May.



Graph 5: Seasonal pattern

F. Unit wise euthanasia case:

The direct unit wise analysis shows that DEWU-Baghpath, Bulandshar and Saharanpur had comparatively lesser number of euthanasia when compared to Ghaziabad, Meerut, Muzaffar Nagar, Delhi and Noida (Graph 6).

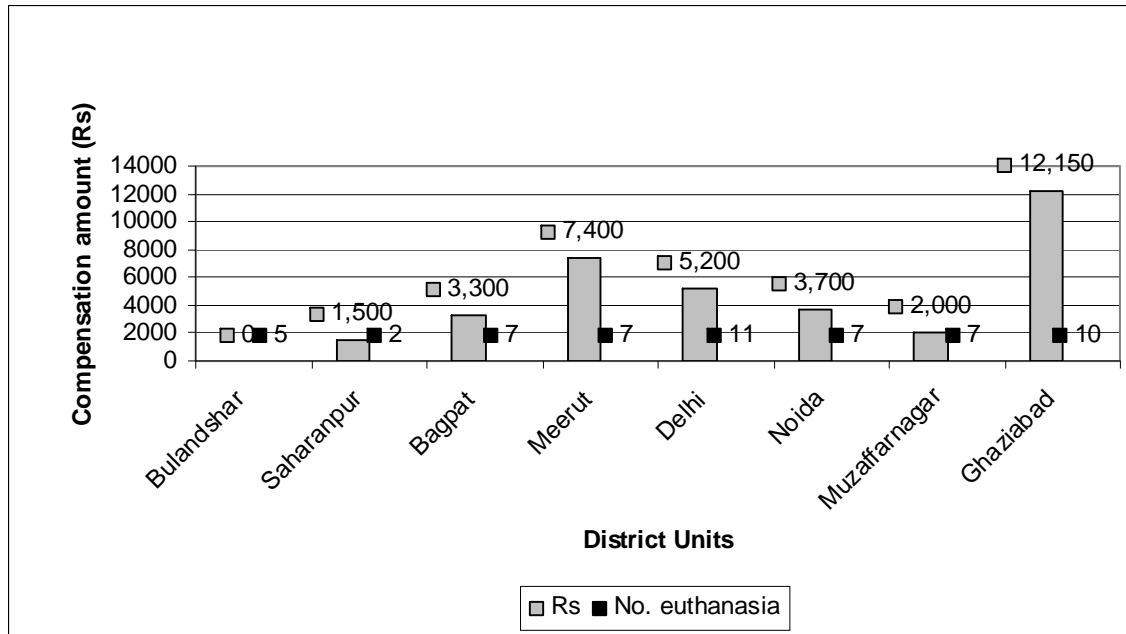


Graph 6: Unit wise euthanasia

G. Compensation for euthanasia:

A six month (April to September, 2007) data on compensation paid were analyzed to see the utilization of euthanasia fund. The amount of compensation paid was very from unit to unit and case to case, as it decided by the concern veterinarian as per the situation.

Ghaziabad and Delhi unit spent Rs 12,150/- and 5,200/- as compensation for 10 and 11 euthanasia case respectively. On the same time period, 5 animals were euthanatized in Bulandshar without any compensation amount to their owner.



Graph 7: Compensation for euthanasia

Discussion:

This review 256 euthanasia case in three year time period provides an over all scenario of Brooke India's euthanasia policy and its interrelated issues. It necessarily does not represent the skill of Brooke veterinarian and view of animal owners towards euthanasia.

The review and analysis was based on 'Euthanasia form', which is mandatory for veterinarian to fill before the animal put pain less sleep and hence it brings a authentic ground information of its clinical and operational concern.

This study demonstrates that euthanasia cases were more in horse in species wise across all units. Chronicle lameness, Surra, wound were come up as major clinical cause for euthanasia, however there may also suffer from multiple syndrome. Seasonality of euthanasia could not project clear picture. However a moderate rise shown in the month of September and May of that particular time period which may be seen as the beginning and end of summer. The finding of number of animal and amount of money spend to compensate the animal owners for euthanasia facilitate operational decision maker to view on their staff approach and existing socio-economic status of animal owner. It was evident that money spends as compensation did not proportionate to numbers of euthanasia case as seen in case of Saharanpur (two euthanasia case against 1,500 rupees) and Bulandshar (5 euthanasia case against no compensation money) unit.

The study will enable decision makers to review their activity and make necessary amendment in their policy and field operation. It will also help them to compare the direct operation with partnership operation or comparison with itself.

The equine caring organization can work on preventative measure for those reveal of disease and other risk factors which lead to pain and suffering of animal.

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