

## Title

### **Firing (a mutilation) on working equine: A comparative ethnic practice in Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad city**

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## **Abstract**

*Working equine species are reared by its owing community for their livelihood which were worked as draught, pack, ridden, and other purpose like ceremonial or breeding purpose.*

*In lack of veterinary services or following some traditional practice, equine owing community many a times bear mutilation practices of hot iron firing to treat their animal, which cause multiple welfare problems to equines.*

*The firing which cause mutilation to animal and consider as an offence in Indian law and referred in Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 1960 as non-cognizable offence.*

*The paper aims to study the ethical practice of firing on working equines; in terms of species and work type. The paper also cover the inter-city prevalence of firing with general attitudes of animals.*

*Henceforth the study was proposed to analyzed existence of such practice in Delhi, Lucknow and Huderabad cities in India through welfare assessment tool. A total of 867 animals were assessed during the period 2008 to 2009 comprising of 67.47% horse, 17.99% donkey and 14.5% mule. It was found that practice of firing was reported among 2.88% of the population. The prevalence of firing was found to be more in the regions of Hyderabad. (12 out of 133 animals). Species wise and work type wise horse and transportation of people by cart (TPC) group were more prone to firing mutilation. Findings show that 3.9% horse, 0.79% mule and 0.64% donkey were mutilated with firing.*

*The study had find out the vulnerable animals in concern with their species and work type in three cities. Such welfare issues quantified across country will enable service providers like Animal Husbandry department and municipal bodies to focus their activities.*

## **Introduction:**

The Brooke ([www.thebrooke.org](http://www.thebrooke.org)) is an international equine charity working in India and several other developing countries since 1934. The Brooke India is working along with its partner organizations for working equine belongs to poorest of the community with the vision of sustainable improvement of equine welfare.

The description of animal welfare as adopted by OIE (Office International des Epizooties) in May 2008 is "animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives". Dawkins (2008) defines welfare by way of two questions "are the animals healthy; do they have what they want?"

The Brooke aims to achieve welfare of working equines by using the frame work of "five freedom" as per Farm Animal Welfare Council (FAWC-1979). They include 1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst; 2. Freedom from Discomfort, 3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease. 4. Freedom to Express Normal Behaviour. 5. Freedom from Fear and Distress (Wathes, 2009).

The Brooke, U.K. along with University of Bristol, U.K. developed a tool- welfare assessment (WA) (Pritchard et al., 2005) in 2003 covering both physical and mental status of animal.

Firing is usually practiced by equine owners and local health providers for thousands of years traditionally as a treatment for chronic lameness especially for joints. Firing may also be used for decoration or as identification mark in any part of the body. The practice is performed without proper restraint and application of sedatives (and analgesics). Firing is the application of a heated metal instrument (usually referred to as an iron), to the skin and in some instances to the deeper tissues of the affected area.

During the process of firing animal experiences severe pain and discomfort, as a result welfare status of animal compromised. Finally an open wound forms in the area of firing which quite often leads to other complications. Even though prevalence of firing is less but from animal welfare point of view it is important because of its intensity of pain and suffering.

In Prevention of Cruelty to Animals 1960, mutilation consider as an offence. In PCA (1960) section 11 (1) (k), firing as a mutilation could consider as a cruelty and it is a non-cognizable offence.

In this paper effort has been made to study the data of three cities on firing issue comparatively with four other variables to find out the most vulnerable group and their mental demeanor.

## **Methods**

"Guidance notes to accompany working equine welfare assessment" a protocol developed by Pritchard et al., 2005 was applied to assess the prevalence and intensity of firing lesion in Delhi, Lucknow and Hyderabad during the period of 2008 and 2009.

In the study four intensity of measuring firing was considered viz .score 0-no firing lesion, score1-healed lesion, score 2-firing lesion with broken skin or redness, score 3-firing lesion with visible muscle and bone. Scars are usually hairless. Record any sign of firing lesion or scar of any size on any part of the body and use the score appropriate for the most severe part of the lesion.

Six trained welfare assessor assessed the animals and Brooke para-veterinarian guide the team to reach animals at their grazing or working sites.

## Sampling

The animals were sampled according to census sampling from Brooke operational sites and were assessed at their working spot or at their stable.

In each site, data were recorded by hand and entered into a dedicated web-based data base of Bristol Veterinary School. The data base was transferred to MS access application and analyzed of each welfare parameter.

## Results and discussions:

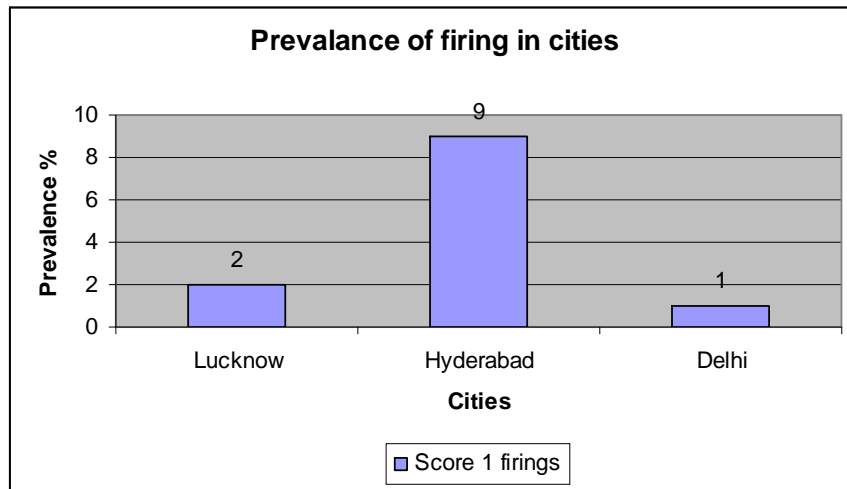
### ▪ General discussion:

A total of 867 equine were assessed as sample; 337 animals from Delhi, 133 animals from Hyderabad and 399 animals from Lucknow. Among that 585 were horses, 126 mules and 156 donkeys from all three cities.

### 1. Prevalence of firing in three cities; Delhi, Hyderabad and Lucknow

The comparative prevalence of firing lesion in Delhi, Hyderabad and Lucknow shows that, all the firing lesions were superficial or healed or scar (score-1). Score 2 firing lesion reported in a donkey of Lucknow, which was less than one percent of the sample population.

Prevalence of firing was 2% in Lucknow, 9% in Hyderabad and 1% in Delhi.



Graph A: Prevalence (%) of firing lesion in Lucknow, Hyderabad and Delhi

The finding also gives information that Hyderabad had the maximum firing lesion compared to other two cities.

## 2. Species wise distribution of firing:

The table 1 shows that, maximum number of firing animals were horses (23), followed by mule (1) and donkey (1). The prevalence of firing in horse in all cities was 4.98%.

Among horses highest number of fired animal reported from Hyderabad (52.2%) followed by Lucknow (34.8%) and Delhi (13%) respectively.

Table 1: Species wise firing lesion in Lucknow, Hyderabad and Delhi

Species/ sites	Lucknow	Hyderabad	Delhi
Donkey	1	0	0
Horse	8	12	3
Mule	0	0	1

## 3. Distribution of firing according to work type:

In all three cities, animals from six work types were found with firing lesion. These work types were Transportation of Goods by Cart (TGC), Transportation of People by Cart (TPC), Transportation of Goods by Pack (TGP), Ceremonial (Cer), Bricks transported by cart (BKC), and Bricks transported by pack (BKP).

There were 207 animals worked as TGC (transportation of goods by cart) and 111 animals worked as TPC (transportation of people); out of these animals 9 (4.37 %) TGC and 11 (9.9 %) TPC animals were having with firing lesion.

Table 2: Firing lesion among different work type

Cities/Work type	TGC	TPC	TGP	Cer	BKP	BKC
Lucknow	4	1	1	0	2	1
Hyderabad	3	8	0	1	0	0
Delhi	2	2	0	0	0	0
Total	9	11	1	1	2	1

## 4. General demeanor among fired animals:

General demeanor (i.e. assessment of animals interest in surroundings: curiosity and spontaneous movement of its body parts to correspond with its surrounding) of animals were also assessed to monitor their mental health. A three score system categories adopt for general attitude.

Table 3: General demeanor among fired animals

	Attitude Score 0 (Alert)	Attitude Score 1 (Depress)	Attitude Score 2 (Severely depress)
Lucknow	8	1	0
Hyderabad	11	1	0
Delhi	3	1	0

Here 22 fired animals show alert demeanor (attitude score 0), 3 fired animals show depress demeanor (attitude score 1) and no animals fall in the category of severely depress (attitude score 2) category. Animals of Delhi looks more depress as one fired animals show depression out of four.

### **Discussion sections**

The finding of Lucknow, Hyderabad and Delhi city gave a comparative picture of firing animals. The study tried to covered all the work type and species of each selected cities and hence the most vulnerable work type and species were emerge out.

The study demonstrates a higher percentage of firing lesion among horse (species wise) compare to donkey and mule. Swelling of tendon and accumulation of fluid on limbs in most working horse; this may be lead owners to miss treat with hot iron rods. It is evident that TGC and TPC animals bear more firing lesions compared to other work types which may be attributed to over work (heavier load and more work duration).

The study will enable service providers like Animal Husbandry department, local municipal bodies and other organization dealing with animal cruelty issues to focus their activity on create awareness among equine owners/ stakeholder to stop these brutal activity. This enables them to cater the services to the needy animals and contribute to animal welfare in a more effective way. On the other hand this study could also be used to monitor the most needy animals for an effective animal welfare programme.

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