WELFARE OF WORKING EQUIDS

Article 7.12.12.

Appropriate workloads

Equids continue to develop until over the age of five years so consideration should be given, according to workload, as to when working life commences. In general this should be three years of age or more but never less than two years of age. Animals that are subjected to excessive work too young in life will usually suffer from leg and back injuries in later life, resulting in a much-reduced working life.

Consideration should be given to the animal’s overall condition, and other factors such as climate, and the work load should be adjusted accordingly. In particular, special considerations should be given to old animals and to mares three months before and after foaling, in order to not jeopardise pregnancy and allow the foal sufficient suckling access and resting time.

In general, animals should work a maximum of six hours per day and should be given at least one, preferably two, full day’s rest in every seven-day period.

Request for Scientific Rationale: During the 85th General Session, Uruguay, on behalf of the 29 countries of the Americas, intervened and noted that the text highlighted above was very prescriptive, and that outcome based measures should be recommended. The United States of America (USA) understands that “more scientific arguments are needed to support the deletion of the text” (Draft Final Report 2017, Technical Sessions 1, 85SG Paris 21-26 May) in Chapter 7.12., Article 12, which reads “Animals should work a maximum of six hours per day and should be given at least one, preferably two, full day's rest in every seven-day period.”

However, the United States requests the scientific information (e.g. peer reviewed references) used by the ad hoc group to support its expert opinion, and any specific “empirical knowledge” (Draft Final Report 2017, Technical Sessions 1, 85SG Paris 21-26 May) used as the basis for recommending this standard. The United States appreciates being invited to provide additional scientific information which could allow the Commission to adjust this Article. Once the United States receives the requested information from the OIE and better understands the rationale, we will be able to provide appropriate comments.

Consideration should be given to the weather conditions (work should be reduced in very hot weather). Breaks should be given at least every two hours and drinkable water should be provided.

All animals should receive sufficient good quality feed corresponding to their individual requirements. Drinkable water and roughage should be available to aid digestion.

Sick or injured animals should not be worked. Any animal that has been under veterinary treatment should not be returned to work until advised by the veterinarian.

Outcome based measurables: behaviour, body condition and physical appearance, handling response lameness and fitness to work.

...