

**Impact assessment of a charity training programme on health of working horses in Lesotho**

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To assess impact of an equine charity's farriery, saddlery and nutrition training programme in Lesotho on horse health and owners' knowledge and husbandry practices. One survey (S1) was undertaken before the first training programme began (April-June 2007) and one (S2) 20 months after its completion (August-October 2009). Randomly selected horses (S1: n=312 vs. S2: n=245) underwent structured clinical examination; blood and faeces were sampled for haematology, biochemistry and worm egg count. Tack was assessed for condition, cleanliness and fit. Owners were interviewed using a pre-tested local language face-to-face questionnaire. Differences between surveys were assessed using Chi-squared and t-tests. Most horses provided ridden transport (S1:79% vs. S2:91%). Forefoot shoeing frequency increased (S1:14% vs. S2:29%, P=0.02) but overgrown forefoot horn frequency was unchanged (S1:45% vs. S2:42%). Owners noted trained farriers' enhanced skills but poor shoeing affordability. Tack availability, condition and cleanliness remained suboptimal but bridle fit improved. Tack-associated injuries (S1:58% vs. S2:78%) and pain on spinal palpation (S1:53% vs. S2:72%) persisted. Mean body condition score remained suboptimal (S1:2.5 vs. S2:2.1), although many owners (S1:62% vs. S2:41%) recognised their animal's diet was unbalanced. A minority of horses had low red blood cell count (S1:21% vs. S2:17%). Strongyle infestation was endemic (S1:88% vs. S2:89%) and most horses had ticks (S1:59% vs. S2:76%). While some positive impact was achieved, key horse health issues remain and sustained intervention may be required before improvements are seen. Results could aid in selecting community-based intervention topics. Acknowledgements: World Horse Welfare; Lesotho Department of Livestock.