

World Association for Transport Animal Welfare and Studies (TAWs)



Common ground: moving forward with animals

TAWs/TAA/BVA workshop held 15 April 2004, Silsoe Research Institute, UK

Moving forward with harnesses

Report of discussion group

The group comprised of nine people from four countries with varied interests in both equine and ox harnessing.

As each person introduced themselves it became clear that there was a huge amount of research and experience available to draw upon, but that it was not easily accessible with many of the participants being unaware of the each other's work.

With this in mind, there was general consensus that a web-based resource should be established to provide as many links as possible to related information sites. It was agreed that these should include not only links to charities working in the animal traction field, but also links to working horse and oxen sites where there was often considerable discussion on harness related topics and details of events where practical demonstrations were to take place. These links should be accessible from the TAWs web-site, which should act as a portal to the various other organisations.

All participants undertook to provide as many appropriate links as possible and will be contacted with a view to this information being available by the end of June.

It was noted that some 70% of observed injuries in overseas project areas were harness related and that there was a very urgent need to address this problem. It was not in the scope of the discussion group to provide specific remedial harness designs and indeed there was general agreement that there was no single correct design of harness but that there were many differing types dependant upon the availability of local materials. What was concluded was that all of these various designs needed to conform to some basic principles in order to avoid unnecessary injury. With this in mind the group undertook to publish draft principles for harness design for both equines and oxen by the end of June 2004.

The final point that arose concerned the availability of animals both for research purposes and to provide field workers with hands-on experience prior to them working overseas. It was agreed that TAWs would act as a contact point for those seeking animals to work with and that TAWs would endeavour to locate appropriate animal owners where possible.