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Assessment of the Welfare of Racehorses in Central Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

As many other developing countries, animal welfare issue is not a big concern in Indonesia. This is more neglected in livestock which produces foods such as beef cattle, goat, sheep and pig. It is easier to understand the level of welfare in animals which have more direct contact with human such as companion and working animals such as horses. This study then was aimed to assess the level of animal welfare of horses used for racing in Central Java, Indonesia. In these two decades, equestrian sports such as racing and riding have been getting more popular in Indonesia and resulted the use of horse as racing object also increased. By respecting the five freedoms of animal, we assessed the welfare of 200 heads of racehorses, belong to 13 owners in Central Java Indonesia. From various sources of literatures and management practices on regular basis 25 five indicators were selected to describe the five freedoms of animal attributes. Racehorses were individually assessed using those indicators. The assessment was complemented with information on farm level such as feeding, housing and health care management, exercise, training methods, and human-animal interactions. The data were analysed descriptively. The results showed that 60.1 %, 22.9 % and 12.1 % of racehorses had relatively good, moderate and poor welfare respectively. In conclusion, most of horse used for sport activity especially racing are well handled. Welfare assessment based on objective parameters can be used as first step to improve horse welfare in Indonesia, but need continuous improvement to make better quality of those horse's life and the racing and equestrian riding itself.

Keywords: Five freedoms of animal, Indonesia, racehorse, welfare assessment