



KSPCA & BROOKE EA

# Horse Welfare Assessment

# Horse Welfare Assessment in the Greater Nairobi Area

Author: Lidewij Rouhof

Published by The KSPCA & Brooke EA, May 2023



# Executive summary

The horse welfare assessment conducted by the Kenyan Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (KSPCA) with support of Brooke East Africa (BEA), examined the current state of horse welfare in the Greater Nairobi Area. This report presents information on the numbers of horses, where they are, how they are used and their welfare situations, aiming to identify the critical welfare challenges and possible responses, while placed in the social, economic and cultural context of horse keeping in Kenya.

## **The assessment identified serious welfare concerns.**

The overall number of horses in the Greater Nairobi Area is estimated to be around 1000, of which at around 500 horses are unregistered. The unregistered horses are used for various activities like riding lessons and to offer services as pony rides in hotels and malls. In some cases they are displayed for people to have photoshoots, even for political campaigns. While the assessment found that most private horse owners care for their horses adequately and with good intent, there are significant and widespread welfare concerns, including but not limited to: poor care and harsh use at riding schools and stables; horses who have to work long hours without rest or sometimes even while having injuries; horses not receiving the right health care; and illegal cross-border trade of ponies with inhumane transportation practices. The causes of the poor horse welfare situation are multifaceted, including insufficient knowledge, inadequate financial resources, divergent viewpoints and dispositions towards horses and their welfare, and a lack of monitoring practices and a regulatory framework.

**It is imperative to take action as the aforementioned challenges pose a risk to those using the horses as well as to horse health issues and in some cases even serious suffering and death.**

Improving horse welfare in the Greater Nairobi Area, and by extension, in the whole of Kenya, will require a long-term commitment and a multifaceted approach that addresses the various factors contributing to the current situation.

We believe that this inquiry is the first of its kind and limitations arising from insufficient data must be acknowledged. Nevertheless, as a foundational study, the report provides guidance for individuals and organisations concerned with the horse welfare situation and on next steps in programme design.

# Table of Contents

## 01

### Background

- Scope of the assessment
- Research design
- Limitations and gaps
- What it means to keep a horse

## 02

### Findings

- How many horses are there?
- Where can we find them?
- Illegal trade and movement
- Observed welfare issues
- Listening to our key informants, starting to understand why

## 03

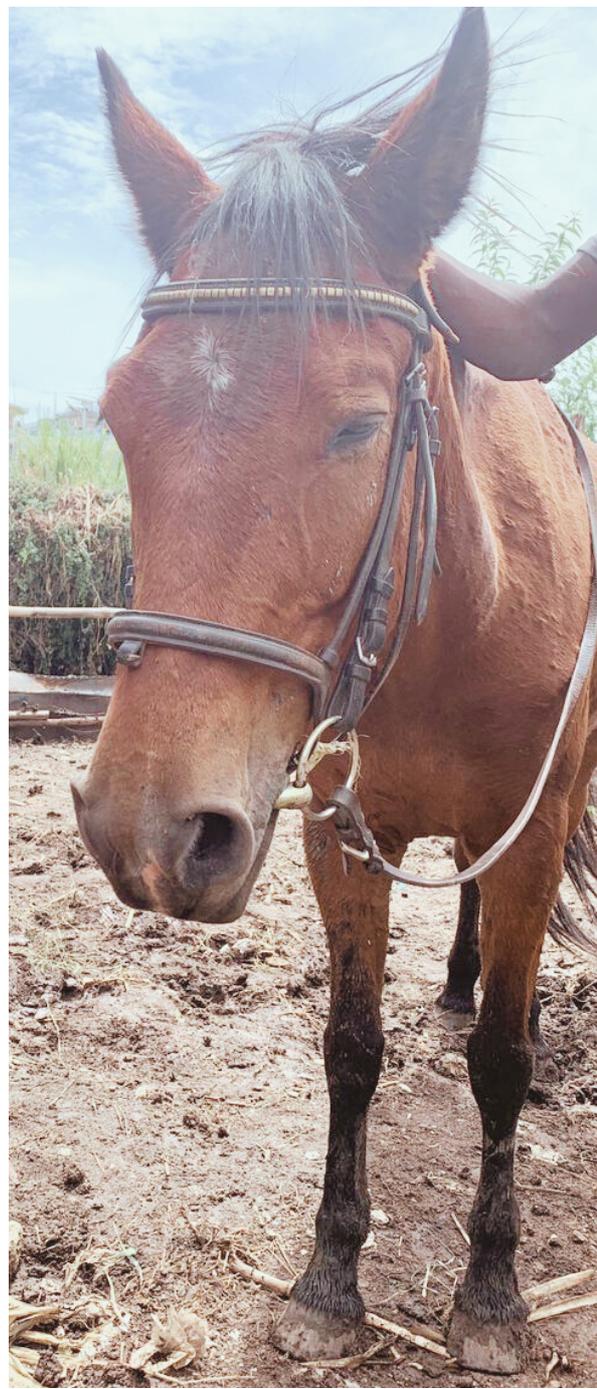
### Who is involved?

- Stakeholders' responsibilities

## 04

### Way forward

- Questions we could not answer
- Legal framework
- What is currently being done?
- Recommendations



# Background

In Nairobi in recent years, horses have become more visible in public spaces than ever before. They are seen in parks, malls, at social events and at a growing number of riding schools. At the same time, there has been an increase of cases reported to the KSPCA of horse abuse and horse mistreatment. While these cases vary in type and severity, in the last four years, the KSPCA has responded to dozens of complaints focused around 15 cases, resulting in active cases with 60 to 70 horses and there are currently 24 horses in KSPCA care. The KSPCA also has pursued criminal and civil cases under the CAP 360 Animal Welfare Act under the Laws of Kenya. The most shocking case included recovered horses who were on the brink of death after the KSPCA responded to reports from the public. Unfortunately, not all of these horses have survived. They represent the extent of the welfare problems the KSPCA is facing.

The high number of case reporting reflects a growing concern about the horse welfare situation in the Greater Nairobi Area. Firstly, there is an increase of riding schools that present as legitimate businesses while not all uphold animal welfare standards. There are an estimated 10-15 riding schools with the majority of them having opened in the past five to seven years. This increase of riding schools and other services such as pony rides in hotels and malls, is likely due to a combination of factors, including a growing interest in equestrian sports and leisure activities. One informant said, "In the past you could

only find horses and a couple of riding schools in Karen, that is where all the horses were. Now there are so many riding schools all over!" The informant also mentioned that from time to time, horses wander around in the streets of Lavington or Kilimani. These wandering horses are part of the second concern as there is almost no information on who holds responsibility for their care. While some horses are registered and issued with permits at the Polo Club, Jockey Club and for horses participating in competitions through the Horse Association of Kenya (HAK), there is no general requirement to register horses and so the identity and ownership of wandering horses and those at the aforementioned riding schools, stables, hotels and malls, is usually hard to verify.

A saying often heard while conducting the horse welfare assessment has been, "Everyone knows and no one knows." The purpose of the assessment was to shed light on the situation while gathering information on the numbers and locations of horses in and around Nairobi, to understand the ways they are used, to identify critical welfare issues and to place this all in the social, economic and cultural context of horse keeping and horse welfare in Kenya. It has tried to tie together what is known and to unravel the unknown, in the context where no known research or study on the subject matter has been conducted before. With establishing a baseline like this, projects and programmes can be designed to target the most pressing welfare issues and achieve the impact necessary to

improve the situation. This report should be considered as an initial assessment that has not been able to go into great depth in all areas, nor capture all challenges.

Lastly, but importantly, we should note that the limitations of this assessment are partly due to a level of secrecy or unwillingness to disclose information on the part of some informants. This may be for several reasons, such as: a lack of trust in the motives behind the assessment; a lack of confidence that the KSPCA would respect confidentiality or perhaps a fear that honest admissions would result in KSPCA seizing horses; fear of attracting negative consequences from fellow community members if speaking up; an awareness that disclosure would bring unwanted attention to welfare abuses and even criminal practices. This limitation is considered as a finding on its own. Members of the horse community in the Greater Nairobi Area, connected to the whole of Kenya and beyond, have their own reasons to “know but not know”.

## Scope of the assessment

While there is the acknowledgement that horse welfare challenges are also identified outside of the Greater Nairobi Area, the scope of this assessment was to stay within the Nairobi County borders. This was in part a practical matter given the lack of data and the limitations of resources. In addition, this area is where growing welfare concerns have been identified by project partners

BEA and the KSPCA, and where potential future projects will primarily be implemented. The research focused on working horses outside of the racecourse and the polo club, and not on the horses that are registered for competition through HAK. These horses are governed by regulatory frameworks of the organisations. However, several of these bodies have been consulted to discuss the identified welfare challenges for future collaborative purposes, including the transferring practice where retired race and polo horses are often found in care at the aforementioned assessed stables, having been sold on.

## Research design

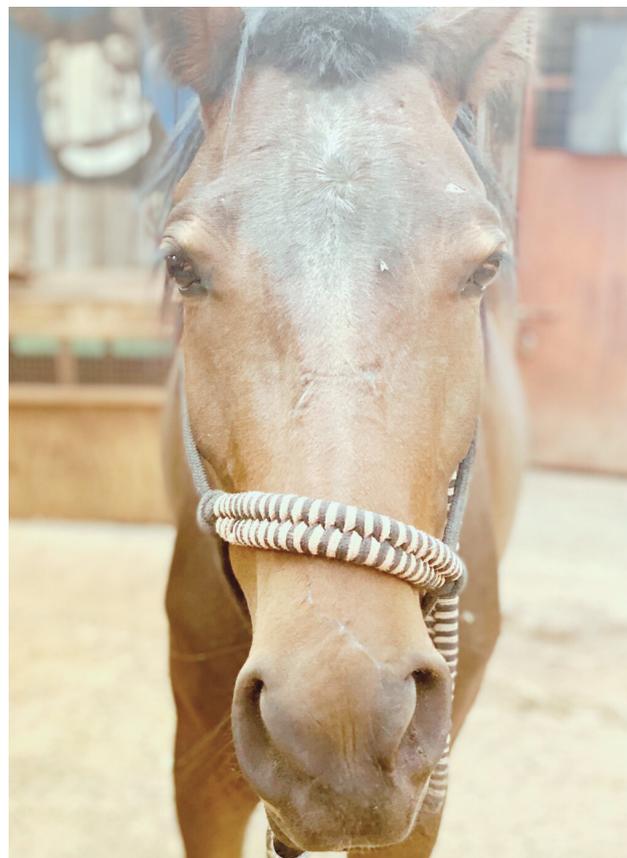
To explore the various aspects of horse welfare for this baseline study, a qualitative and exploratory research design has been implemented. Qualitative and exploratory research methods, in particular stakeholder mapping, semi-structured interviews, and field visits, have created a deeper understanding of experiences and contextual factors, and explored the attitudes and behaviour of relevant stakeholders in-depth. Through a comprehensive understanding of the salient issues among diverse stakeholders, it is possible to design future projects that align with their priorities. Interviews were conducted until the data was saturated as revealed by repeating themes. The field visits were to almost all identified riding schools and stables in the Greater Nairobi Area, accompanied with guiding questions that

included an attitude questionnaire. At these riding schools and stables, a group of KSPCA inspectors have also used a welfare checklist. This checklist has been developed with the help of a veterinarian and is based upon the animal welfare assessment tools of BEA. It is important to note that the checklist didn't assess individual horses but rather the general conditions of all horses combined at these locations. The scope of the welfare check included, among others, physical appearance and behaviour of the horses and health care, and an assessment of the environment.

## Limitations and gaps

Throughout the research it has become apparent that in certain instances, there has been a provision of conflicting information. In most cases, stables and riding schools have established a working relationship with the KSPCA but it should not be overlooked that some of the stable owners and managers referred to a relationship of perceived conflict. This is because KSPCA's mandate to intervene and enforce improvements in animal welfare can result in pressure to improve that is not appreciated by stable holders and managers, who may prioritise costs and other factors over welfare. In some cases, the KSPCA, with the support of the County Department of Veterinary Service and the police, has even seized horses and recorded criminal complaints. Secondly, due to the informal character of some of the services provided and difficulties of

establishing ownership, a feeling of unease was occasionally noticeable. Such a sense of apprehension was also detected when talking to grooms. It is suspected that some of the horses we have researched are connected to criminal activities such as illegal cross border trade. Thirdly, as developing rapport with grooms was found to be challenging, the report does not encompass their perspective and attitudes to the extent envisaged. Given their central position within multiple intersections and networks, they represent a compelling focus for future research. Finally, while intentionally not included in the scope of research for this assessment, it should be noted that various informants have expressed welfare concerns of safari horses within conservancies, in addition to the horses used by the army and police, and could be another focus for further research.



# What it means to keep a horse

Keeping a horse anywhere requires effort, knowledge, responsibility and considerable financial and human resources. To keep a horse at a stable, and providing all the needs it requires, will cost between KES 30.000 – 40.000, per month, excluding veterinary expenses. This is in the context of the average monthly income in Kenya being KES 20,123, according to an article of the Business Daily in 2022.

Responsible horse keeping includes:

- Horses need access to **shelter** to protect them from (harsh) weather conditions such as rain and (extreme) heat. The shelter needs to be enclosed and constructed with material that doesn't pose a risk of injury. The shelter needs to provide enough space for the horse to have a visual horizon and there needs to be access to bedding material.
- Horses require a **balanced diet**. They need constant access to hay, supplemented with grains or pellets to meet their nutritional needs. Feed needs to be of adequate quantity and quality depending on their size and workload. Horses also need clean, fresh water at all times as they can drink up to 10 gallons of water a day.
- Horses need **regular exercise** to stay healthy and happy. They require daily turnout in a paddock or pasture.
- In order to ensure optimal well-being, horses require proper **conditioning for work**. It is essential to tailor the workload to the horse's capacity and to avoid overburdening the animal with appropriate rest periods.
- If horses are being used for work, they need properly fitting **tack** which also requires maintenance.
- Horses need **training and socialisation** at the appropriate age, which is skilled work and may take years. Horses should generally not be ridden under the age of 2 nor worked after 20–25 years old, depending on fitness levels. Horses live up to 30 years and should not work during their retirement.
- Horses need regular **grooming** to maintain their health and hygiene. This includes brushing their coat, cleaning their hooves and checking for injuries.
- Regular **veterinary care**, including vaccinations, dental checkups and deworming is essential. Horses also need regular hoof trimming and teeth floating.
- Horses are large and powerful animals and as handling them can be dangerous, it is important to take precautions to ensure the **safety** of both the horse and handler. This needs to be done through the training and socialisation, as well as by wearing appropriate footwear and hard hats, and handling the horse with care and respect.

# Findings

## OBSERVED WELFARE ISSUES

There are around 500 unregistered horses in the Greater Nairobi Area.

The majority of the unregistered horses are kept in poor conditions.

None of the stables and riding schools in the Greater Nairobi Area adhere to the horse welfare standards established for the assessment.

The observed welfare challenges are unaddressed and unrecognised by important actors.

Consumers of horse services are at risk.

Ponies are illegally imported into the country.

The provision of specialised care for horses is constrained.

## IMMEDIATE CAUSES

There is a widespread lack of knowledge on horse welfare and horse keeping

No formal institutional arrangements for welfare assurance, such as monitoring and regulation.

There is no central registration system for horses.

There is a lack of accountability, with unclear delineation of responsibilities and complexities of mandates of involved actors.

There are limited opportunities for veterinarians to pursue specialised training or expertise in equine medicine.

## UNDERLYING CAUSES

There exists an old-fashioned narrative of how and why horses are kept in Kenya.

Equines are solely considered as a commodity with profit as the main objective.

## How many horses are there?

One of the objectives of the assessment was to determine the population and location of horses in the Greater Nairobi Area as there is no source of data on this issue. Naturally, it remains difficult to be certain as there are discrepancies between figures and locations provided by stable owners and horse handlers, and those estimated through cases by the KSPCA. Using a combination of methods including horse counting in stables, observations of wandering horses, and informant estimations, a preliminary estimate of the horse population in the Greater Nairobi Area is around 500 horses.

This number excludes the 300 horses that are registered by HAK (who have at around 480 horses registered throughout the country), the 100 horses at the racecourse and about 100 horses at the Polo Club. The overall number of horses in the Greater Nairobi Area is estimated to be around 1000.



*Horse recovered by KSPCA after investigation in 2021*

## Where can we find them?

An informant shared an observation on the number and use of horses which we believe sharply exposes the current issues: there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of horses in Kenya over the past three decades, but horses are now owned and used differently. They are no longer only kept by very wealthy individuals or at the absolute elite end of sport and private ownership but they are now rather deployed in public spaces and outside of the wealthiest communities.

The majority of unregistered horses are primarily used for riding classes, with a notable concentration of stables in Kitisuru and Karen. (Karen is a suburb of Nairobi, historically populated by white settlers, with other Kenyan excluded by pass laws and is perceived as extremely wealthy). Additionally, there are approximately 10 ponies employed for short rides, photoshoots, and at events, with an estimated 20 additional horses considered to be wandering in various areas, including Uhuru park. It must be noted that especially in the latter cases, it is hard to establish if the horses and ponies are used for multiple purposes as sometimes housed in a stable and other times they are leased out.

## At the mall

The pony goes back and forth. The tack doesn't fit and there are a couple of wounds forming on his back. The pony looks tired and although standing on its legs, it seems like he is too heavy for himself. Little kids pay 500 bob to go back and forth. Big men pay the same; back and forth and back and forth. If it is quiet, you could even go for a back-and-forth ride for 200 bob! There is no water around and when asked the handler about where the pony rests, the man is deflective and doesn't want to answer. The pony goes back and forth.

## At the stable

Shadow is leased by Lisa's parents from the stable owner for KES 35.000 a month. The stable owner does not hold any official documentation for Shadow but it is a decent price to keep a horse and Lisa really likes Shadow. Shadow is registered with the HAK as Lisa participated in jumping competitions. The stable owner provides food, and care by a groomer, while Lisa is the only one who rides on Shadow during riding classes. Lisa has riding classes a couple of times per week, but never longer than 2 hours a day. Lisa also comes over sometimes to groom Shadow herself. The care in the lease agreement also includes veterinary services but most vets are only contacted in case of emergencies. However, when Lisa sees or notices that something is not right with Shadow, her family will call a vet themselves. The family sometimes buys extra hay themselves as they suspect that Shadow doesn't get enough quality food. Shadow is generally well-taken care of although Lisa is getting too big to ride her. Switching to a horse is a big step and, besides, Shadow is a pony with who Lisa wins jumping competitions.

In the stables, next to Shadow, there is Dusty, a retired race horse. This means that Dusty has had official papers but now that she has been sold, she is not registered anymore. Dusty is also owned by the stable but is not leased to an individual. This means that Dusty has a very different life than Shadow: Dusty is being ridden for more than 2 hours a day, sometimes by children or adults who are too heavy. Her tack is old and not the right size, creating wounds on her back. The groomers or stable owners are not too concerned about these wounds and the

veterinary care is limited to emergency situations. While she does have enough space to graze around, she doesn't have full access to water and quality food.

## On private land

Spirit also used to live in the stables. Spirit is privately owned by Catherine who leases a stable spot. Spirit is imported from South Africa, meaning that she has official import papers but she isn't used for competitions meaning that Spirit isn't registered locally. While at the stables, Catherine arranged that Spirit is being taken care of by a groom she has known for a long time and who has been trained outside of Kenya. Catherine bought quality hay and her groom made sure that Spirit always has constant access to food and water. Catherine also made repairs to the stables when needed. After some time, Catherine managed to acquire her own land and Spirit now lives there.

## Wandering around

It is so dark outside that Ahmed and his friend cannot see well. The ground is hard, but Ahmed doesn't care. They have crossed the border and there is still a long walk ahead of them. He is dreading all those miles to come but they have the horses and they need to finish the job. They got the horses in Somalia, will walk them to Nairobi and that is how they will make some money. Once arriving in Nairobi, the horses are in bad condition: along the road it was hard to find water and they only let the horses roam on grass from time to time. There is no place where the horses will be stalled, Ahmed found out. They can earn some extra money if they stay around, if they walk the horses from one place to another.



Horse recovered by KSPCA from a stable with 5 others

# Illegal trade and movement

While trying to unravel what is known and unknown at the same time, it became increasingly clear that oversight of the horse sector outside of the established HAK, Polo and Jockey Club, is limited.

There is a significant number of horses in the Greater Nairobi Area who do not have official papers. Officially, it is unknown where they come from while unofficially we know that “the whole border [with Ethiopia] is porous really”, as an informant has stated. “All the time. We have ponies crossing the border any time. If I would give you a number, I would say at around 30 per week.” He elaborates on the risk posed to the welfare of these ponies during transport. Another informant said, “Once in the country, we don’t know where they will end up. Some come to Nairobi, stay here for a while, wandering, or are being sold. Some of them are being sold as Kenyan ponies to Uganda.” The profit margins are gigantic, “Ponies are being bought for like KES 50.000 and being sold again for KES 300.000 to 400.000.” Informants reported serious welfare concerns about these ponies.

## Observed welfare issues

Horses are not native to Kenya and are often understood as needing the same care as any livestock animal. However, as outlined before, horses need specialist care. Using our welfare checklist, we

identified a range of welfare concerns. Every stable that we visited presented at least half of these concerns.

### Shelter

- Broken down stables
- Small spaces
- No proper bedding equipment
- A substandard environment forming a risk

### Diet

- Not always having access to clean water
- Not enough food, often no quality food

### Exercise and work

- Working long hours and little to no rest
- Working while having injuries

### Health care

- Limited dental care
- Limited feet care
- Not properly vaccinated or dewormed

### Safety

- Bad saddling
- Bad tack

# Listening to our key informants, starting to understand why

Many informants agreed that there are welfare problems and described their own attempts to deal with them. An individual who previously engaged in horse riding elaborated on her attempts to improve the conditions at some of the stables but she cannot anymore. "Because of the conditions really, it breaks my heart to see that, nothing improves or only very slowly." She described some of the welfare concerns mentioned above, and blames a lack of knowledge among those charged with the care of horses. "We Kenyans are no riders," she told me, continuing to say, "Horses were brought into our country by the British and the horses have been in Karen. We don't know what to do with a horse! We deal with them like we would with our cattle and sheep." Problems with care are attributed to inadequate knowledge and a poor understanding of horses in general, as multiple informants have expressed, "We believe that horses should help us, not the other way around, just like with donkeys." Another informant said that the same approach used with donkeys applies to horses, "If you don't work the donkey, it will die."

Some of these same informants do not agree that there are pressing horse welfare challenges.

There are divergent perspectives regarding what animal welfare entails and these attitudes are best understood in the broader discourse on horse welfare in Kenya. While malnutrition and wounds from improper track use are symptoms of poor practice, understanding the underlying context in which these practices occur is crucial in addressing the animal welfare challenges effectively. As one informant noted, "Animal welfare concerns entail considerations of religion, culture, policies, and individuals' perceptions of animal welfare."

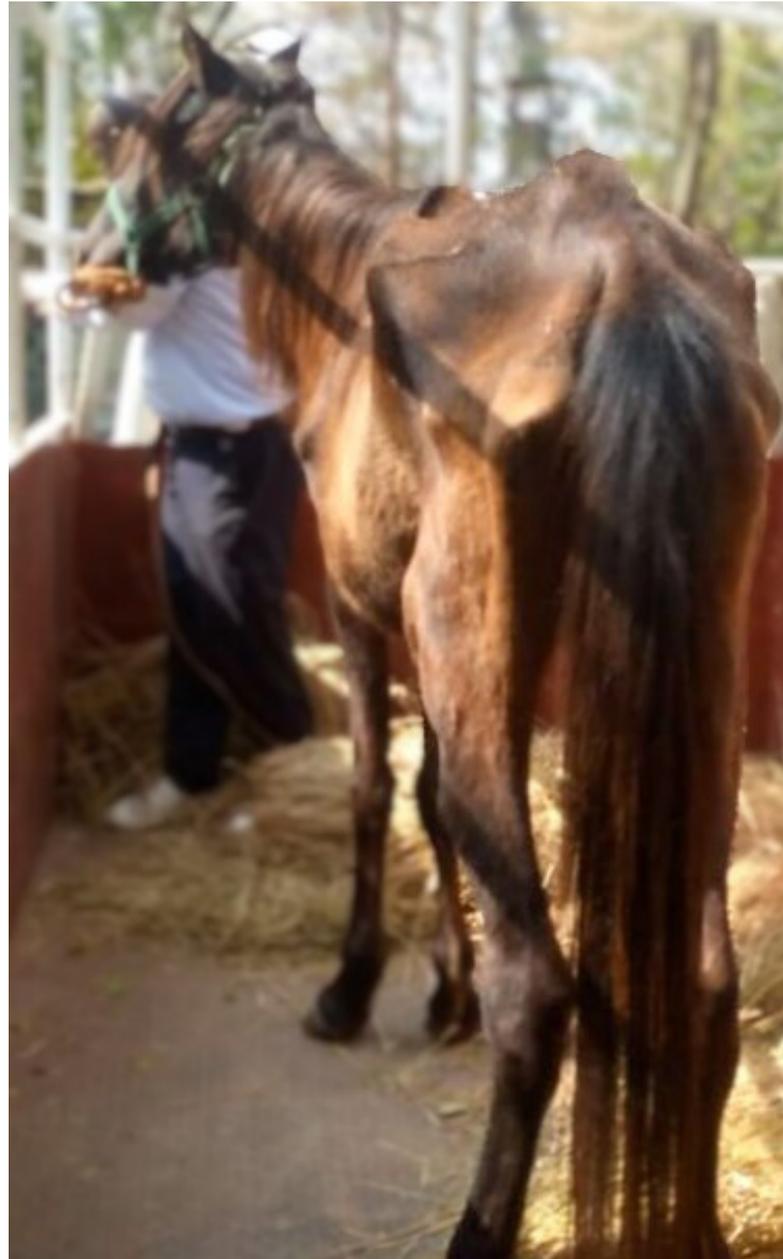
Horses were introduced in Kenya by the British in the late 19th century. The first recorded import of horses was in 1890 by Frederick Lugard, a British colonial administrator, who brought six polo ponies to Mombasa. From then on, the British continued to import horses, mainly for military and recreational purposes. In the following century, horse racing became popular and several racecourses were built throughout the country, including the Ngong Racecourse in Nairobi, which opened in 1914. Horse racing was a pastime for the British colonisers and it wasn't until after Kenya gained independence in 1963 that horse riding slowly gained attention from Kenyans of all backgrounds. Nevertheless, the horse world is still mostly associated with rich white Kenyans as an informant mentioned: "You find the horses in Karen. Karen is elitist." The prestige that comes with the horses sometimes leads to unfortunate situations: "It is expensive and people don't seem to understand

that you not only buy a horse, you also have expenses to keep it. And that is a lot of money.”

Some informants are not convinced that the problem is cultural context or insufficient knowledge or a lack of capacity. A veterinarian observed, “All of them [stable managers] will tell you that they vaccinate and deworm themselves but I can tell you that they do not. Most horses that are being treated at those stables are not being taken care of in that way.” Another challenge to the idea of lack of knowledge came from the observation that even where the KSPCA has intervened to direct improvements repeatedly, practice does not change. This issue is illustrated by an informant who refers to a stable owner with whom the KSPCA has had dealings:

“The horses are repeatedly being exhausted before kids will ride on them because he [the stable owner] knows that the horses otherwise will be a risk to hurt them [the children]. He knows that his horses can be aggressive because they are not being handled in the way they are supposed to be.”

In these examples, the implication is that profit is the primary goal and there is no incentive for these specific horse owners to improve the welfare situation.



*Horse recovered by KSPCA with 2 others in November 2021*

# Who is involved

It is important to understand who is involved in the care of horses and who has responsibility for what. This proved particularly challenging in the horse owning and using community, as roles (and therefore) responsibilities are often unclear.

People who are directly engaged with working horses within the scope of this assessment are categorised into 7 segments: Stable owners and managers, users of horse services, private horse owners, stable hands/caretakers, veterinarians, governmental bodies and animal welfare organisations concerned with the current horse welfare situation. There is also the Jockey Club, Polo Club and Horse Association of Kenya (HAK) who have important roles to play in improving the current horse welfare situation.

## 1

### Riding schools and stable management

Predominantly, we found that stable owners assume the role of stable manager and in all cases own horses privately too. However, in some instances, the interrelation of these two roles is indistinct, further indicating the limited

transparency in ownership arrangements: stable managers could not shed light on the question of who the owner was or wasn't clear about who manages the stables on a day to day basis. While it should be acknowledged that stables vary in level of professionalism, the main interest of the stables and riding schools are to make money through riding classes, by leasing their privately owned ponies and horses and by accommodating privately owned horses. From a business standpoint, certain stables demonstrate a greater investment in horse welfare, recognizing the appeal of well-maintained horses and stables in attracting high-end clientele. In contrast, a majority of the riding schools cited limited financial resources as a primary constraint in providing minimal standards of care.

## 2

### Users

There are different types of users: individuals who house privately owned horses on their own land, those who enrol in riding classes with a leased horse, who partake in riding classes with available stable horses and those who take upon the services offered at hotels and malls like pony rides. These users break down into two broad groups: firstly, those possessing the requisite knowledge and skills to engage in horse riding and care-taking, with an interest in horse welfare. Secondly, there are those with limited exposure and knowledge, many of whom comprise one-to-two times consumers who occasionally

participate in horse related activities: perhaps buying their child a riding lesson, hiring a pony for a birthday party or similar. We have even seen horses hired by political candidates to promote campaigns. Some of them described the experience, "I like horses, they are magical!" and "It is something new, not a lot of people do it." Furthermore: "We now finally have access to horses too", where this man explained that horses are not only available to the white rich elite anymore. Horses, not native to Kenya, are considered as a symbol of prestige and with their growing presence in the public sphere, people want to see what it is all about: "I want to know why riding a horse is so cool, that is why I am taking these classes."

# 3

## Private horse owners

Understanding private ownership proves to be complex because it is difficult to trace or attribute ownership. There is no consistent system of registering horse ownership, so it is often unclear or even disputed. Nevertheless, the level of care provided by different horse owners is important to understand in order to discuss responsibilities and accountability issues. It should be noted that different financial capacities also place a role in the level of care provided. Private ownership can take various forms, including (1) individuals who house horses on their own land;

(2) individuals who house their horse(s) in stables at their preferred riding school or stables, (3) individuals who own a horse but lease their horse to (3a) another individual who seems to be the only one who rides the horse or to (3b) a stable owner who may keep the horse for the owner but seems to have the right to determine who may ride and how often. Finally, there are the (4a) stable owners who own horses and use them in their riding schools and (4b) stable owners who lease horses to individuals.

Not all horses are kept on private land or in stables. Free roaming horses are often seen around Nairobi, grazing on unoccupied land or, as another example, by the side of the road. Some are attended by handlers while others weren't. Ownership of these horses remains unclear, including of those horses and ponies present at malls and hotels. When inquiring about horse ownership, there were no definitive answers provided, suggesting that the handlers do not own the horses and that there is a business owner involved in the background. One informant said, "Horses don't just roam around, they are owned by someone." This is supported by multiple other informant accounts referencing the characterisation of the business owners as "big men": "Some of these men are known but most are not." A veterinarian said: "Sometimes someone calls me and says that I have to go here and there because there are horses who need vet care. I just cannot always go, not knowing if I will be paid or not. I would then ask who

the owner is. They will hang up or they will say they call me back but then that never happens.”

One of those “big men”, so to speak, participated in the assessment. Because there has been a difficult relationship between him and the KSPCA resulting from the confiscation of horses in the past, he was guarded in his responses, and there are doubts about the answers he provided. He did say that the majority of his horses are leased to hotels and that there is always someone there to provide care. The expectation of the type of care isn’t great as the horses in his stable were in very poor condition. The man does not know where his horses in the hotels rest. This particular man has worked with horses for over 30 years and he shared: “back then, *muzungu* got rich so I can do that too.” (Muzungu is a Swahili term that refers to a person of European or white descent.)

## 4

### Stable hand/caretakers

The primary responsibility of stable hands (also known as grooms or syces in Kenya) is to provide care for horses to which they are assigned. Typically young men, grooms undergo training by the more experienced peers at the stables. As there are no formalised training programmes, information is shared within the network of grooms or is self-taught. According to numerous informants, the compensation for

grooms is poor and they suggested that the prevalence of competition among stables contributes to a high rotation of grooms, as a groom who is not performing adequately may be able to secure employment at another stable that is unaware of his previous shortcomings. Some informants mentioned a culture of alcohol abuse and the lack of career development opportunities into stable managerial positions, as a reason for poor performance.

Grooms who work for private horse owners are more likely to have acquired the appropriate knowledge and skills through courses and/or training overseas or are taught by the private horse owners themselves. They also often are assigned to horses for a longer period of time and may be better paid and feel more personally valued.

## 5

### Veterinarians

The veterinarians are considered as a category on their own due to the specific role they play and the different responsibilities they hold. They are grouped in various professional organisations. Within Kenya, general veterinarians can acquire specialised expertise in equines through a process of mentorship and experiential learning while working with donkeys and horses. It is noteworthy that there is no official educational pathway in the country for

specialisation in this field. Within the Greater Nairobi Area, we estimate that there are fewer than five private veterinary practitioners who possess the knowledge and skills requisite for the assessment and treatment of horses, of which only two have specialised educational qualifications.

Veterinarians have both legal and professional responsibilities when it comes to animal abuse or neglect. In general, vets have an ethical and legal obligation to report suspected animal abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. In Kenya, the Animal Welfare Act provides legal guidelines and states that veterinarians have indeed a duty to report suspected cases of animal cruelty, abuse, or neglect. Failure to report such cases can result in penalties, including fines.

## 6

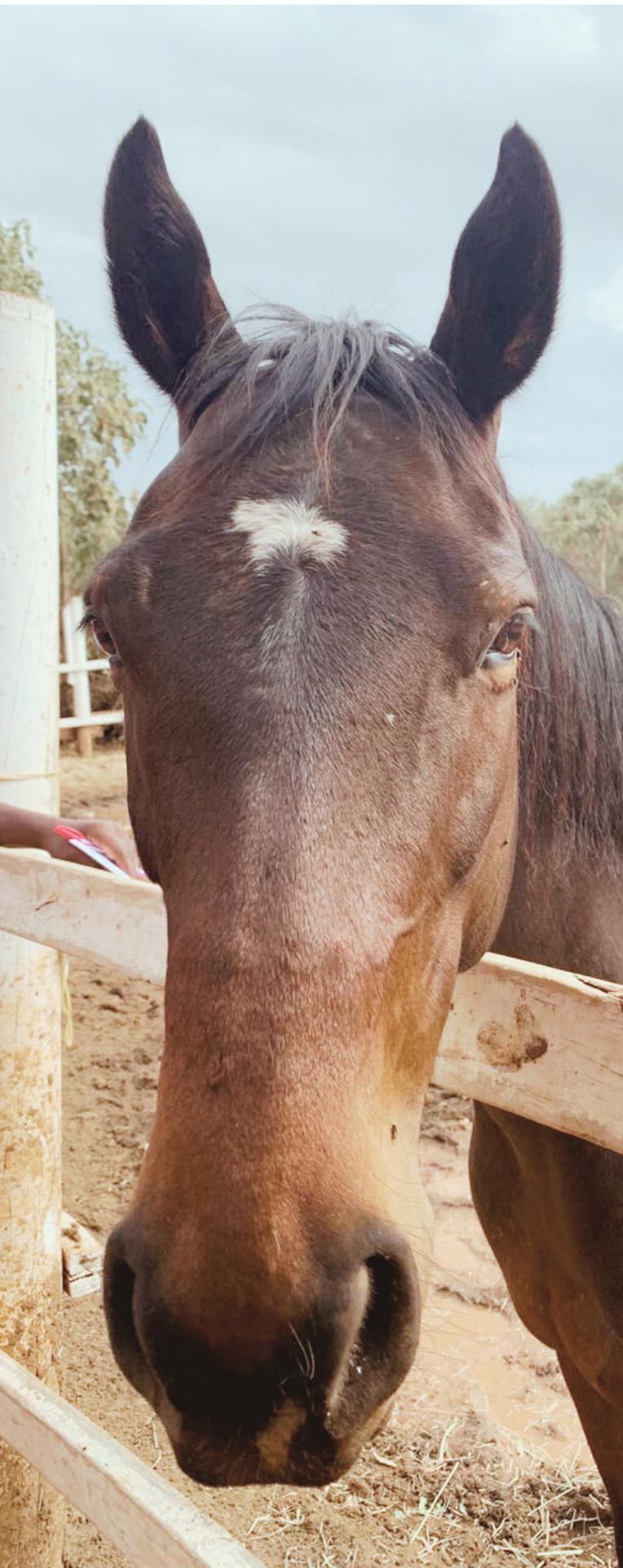
### Governmental agencies and other professional bodies

The **Kenya Veterinary Association (KVA)** is a membership organisation which is registered under the Societies Act, Cap 108 Laws of Kenya. Its mandate is to act as a watchdog for the veterinary profession to ensure proper management of veterinary issues that impact on the welfare of the veterinarians with an overall aim of enhancing animal welfare. Its code of ethics outlines the professional responsibilities of veterinarians.

The mandate of the **Kenya Veterinary Board (KVB)** is to exercise general supervision and control over veterinary training, business, practice and employment of veterinary surgeons and veterinary paraprofessionals in Kenya and advise the government in relation to all aspects thereof. The Board derives its mandate from the Veterinary Surgeons Veterinary Paraprofessionals (VSVP) Act, 2011. The CEO of the KVB noted that “Animal welfare is rather a new concept. It is now also part of our code of ethics” and, “Animal welfare issues are being highlighted more and more but we are not where we want or need to be.”

The **Directorate of Veterinary Services (DVS)** is the national government agency, tasked with regulating, promoting and monitoring animal health and welfare across the nation. During an interview with a DVS officer, he indicated that his primary focus is on managing animal import and export. In response to an inquiry about ponies allegedly being brought into the country illegally from Ethiopia, a subject often mentioned by informants, the officer indicated that the agency was not aware of these practices but would initiate investigation.

At the local level, the delivery of animal health services is primarily the responsibility of **county and sub-county veterinarians**. These vets provide a range of services, including veterinary extension services, disease monitoring and control, animal welfare management, and advisory services to livestock keepers. The KSPCA collaborates with the county vets in a range of ways and are often contacted for support on cruelty cases and animal seizure operations. The level of support



provided by county veterinary offices may vary from one county to another, as noted by some informants.

# 7

## Animal Welfare Organisations

There are two main animal welfare organisations concerned with horse welfare.

The Kenya Society of the Protection and Care of Animals is Kenya's leading animal welfare organisation working on the frontline of emergency rescue, cruelty investigation, shelter and rehoming, humane slaughter and community-based animal welfare programmes. The KSPCA is recognised in law and has officers authorised to intervene on animal welfare issues under the Animal Welfare Act (CAP 360).

Brooke East Africa (BEA) is dedicated to improving the welfare of working equines, including horses and donkeys. They work to promote sustainable solutions for improving the lives of animals and communities that depend on them.

# Stakeholders' responsibilities

Stakeholder	Responsibility
Stable owner/manager	Ensure safety and well-being of clients and horses.
Users	To only make use of horses who are well-taken care of at stables who adhere to horse welfare standards; to make use of the right equipment.
Private horse owners	Adhere to the fundamental principles of responsible horse keeping.
Stable hands	To have, or acquire, the right skill set and knowledge to take care of a horse properly and by doing so, wearing the right gear.
Veterinarians	To treat horses only when specialised in horse medicine; to report cases of horse abuse or neglect.
KVB	Issuing licenses to qualified veterinarians; ensuring that veterinarians adhere to professional ethics and best practices; establishing and maintaining standards for veterinary curricula to ensure quality of education and training.
DVS	Overseeing veterinary services, animal health and livestock production in the country; to enable an environment of cooperation and an infrastructure for reporting and monitoring of animal welfare challenges.

Stakeholder	Responsibility
County Vets	Delivery of animal health services; to enforce veterinary regulations and standards within their jurisdictions; to provide support on cruelty cases and animal seizure operations.
Brooke EA	To promote sustainable solutions for improving the lives of equines and communities that depend on them.
KSPCA	To promote animal welfare; addressing issues related to animal cruelty and neglect; to collaborate with other enforcing agencies to take appropriate (legal) action against animal abuse and neglect.
HAK	To promote and support the equestrian community; registration of competition horses; collaborate with other equestrian organisations to advocate for the needs and development of equestrian sports.

# The way forward

Improving the horse welfare situation in the Greater Nairobi Area will require a long-term commitment and a multifaceted approach that addresses the various factors contributing to the current situation, where there is a lack of appropriate knowledge on equine husbandry and welfare standards, a lack of monitoring practices, and unclear mandates in order to act. The assessment has revealed that numerous uncertainties persist, and it is recommended for follow-up research to clarify these.

## Questions we could not answer

During the course of the assessment, it has proven difficult to determine the exact location of horses in the Greater Nairobi Area. It is recommended that Geographic Information Systems (GIS) be utilised to accurately determine the precise locations in question. Furthermore, several questions have emerged which we were unable to address. For future studies, it is imperative these inquiries are pursued and answered to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the topic at hand.



- What are the import and export practices and how is this done?
- From a business perspective, how can a stable owner generate profit with its expenditures?
- To which authorities can veterinarians report cases of animal abuse? And, in cases where veterinarians fail to report cases of animal cruelty, abuse and/or neglect, what consequences do they face?
- How do organisations like the Jockey Club, Polo Club and the HAK register and monitor horses?

While these questions haven't been answered in this particular assessment, they do not form an obstacle to start with drafting solutions. Effective solutions for the way forward necessitate a collaborative effort from diverse stakeholders who are invested in addressing the problem at hand. This would require a collective commitment and a shared responsibility to work towards a common goal, and involves fostering partnerships between organisations with complementary expertise and resources and to have a dialogue on a desired framework to operate in.

## Legal framework

In order to improve the general animal, and particular horse, welfare situation, the law can provide a framework in doing

so. The Kenyan law on animal welfare is primarily governed by the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, also known as CAP 360. Some of the key provisions of the act that can support in achieving horse welfare improvement:

- Prohibiting cruelty to animals: The Act prohibits any person from causing unnecessary suffering to any animal, including by failing to provide adequate food, water, and shelter, or by causing physical harm or injury to the animal.
- Regulations: The Act allows the Minister of Agriculture to make regulations for the better implementation of the Act, including regulations related to the licensing of animal keepers and other measures to promote animal welfare.
- Enforcement: The Act empowers inspectors to investigate allegations of animal cruelty and to take action to protect animals where necessary. It also establishes penalties for offences related to animal cruelty.
- Powers of inspectors: The Act authorises inspectors to enter premises where animals are kept in order to investigate allegations of cruelty or neglect, and to take action to protect the welfare of animals where necessary.

# What is currently being done?

It must be noted that some individuals have already taken the initiative to address the issues they perceive as limited horse care. One former horse rider reported establishing a groom training program, which she has implemented at various stables to some extent, while another rider has addressed various issues with the stable owner for improvement. There is also an informant who organises jumping competitions in a manner that is not posing a risk for the

horse. Furthermore, being unsatisfied with the conditions at a stable, a group of horse riders pooled their resources to construct a paddock. These efforts must be acknowledged and praised, while we also need to recognize that more consolidated effort of a collaborative nature is needed in order to tackle the observed challenges. The proposed recommendations will create sustainable solutions that benefit both the animals and their human stakeholders.

PROBLEM	SOLUTION	ACTOR(S)
In some cases, horses are solely considered as a commodity with profit as the main objective.	Stable certification scheme; business licensing	Stables, the KSPCA, HAK, users, Private horse owners, DVS
Stables not adhering to welfare standards	Stable certification scheme; business licensing; groom training	Stables, the KSPCA, HAK, users, private horse owners, DVS, stable hands/caretakers
Lack of monitoring practices and horse ownership registration	Registration regime	DVS, County Vets, private horse owners
Lack of knowledge on horse welfare standards and horsekeeping	Groom training; public education campaigns	Stable hands/caretakers, users, private horse owners, Brooke EA, the KSPCA

Limited educational and/or training qualifications on horse medicine	Specialised training in horse medicine	KVB, KVA, Veterinarians, University
Limited cooperation between responsibility holders	Establishing horse welfare coalition	Stable owners, DVS, County Vets, animal welfare organisations, private horse owners, HAK, Jockey Club, Polo Club

## Recommendations

The table above presents the solution corresponding to the particular problem. It is important to note, however, that the problems are interrelated and that it is recommended that a Horse Welfare Coalition can implement some, and advocate for all of the proposed remedies.

### Establishing a horse welfare coalition

While relevant stakeholders have already initiated collaborative efforts to address horse welfare challenges, the establishment of an official coalition comprising all relevant stakeholders at different authority levels, is desirable. The current situation presents a critical moment to address the issues before they escalate further, and several organisations and individuals have already demonstrated an impetus to act. Notably, the KSPCA's established working relationship with a significant proportion of the stable and horse owners provide a positive momentum towards this effort.

Conclusively, such a coalition would create a clear landscape for all people engaged with horses to operate in and it will precisely create an enabling environment to tackle the lack of accountability and the unclear delineation of responsibilities. The coalition would develop and implement a combination of regulatory frameworks and practices to raise minimum standards and generate incentive activities to exceed those standards.

There is the immediate opportunity for such a Horse Welfare Coalition to work together on a voluntary certification scheme, develop and implement groom training, and to advocate for business licensing.

### Certification scheme

A voluntary certification scheme for stables to promote good practices. It involves a set of standards and guidelines that stables must meet to receive certification. Once a stable meets all of the requirements, they can receive accreditation and display the certification to demonstrate their

commitment to horse welfare. This would encourage private owners to use the accredited stables to house their horses, and for consumers to take riding classes at these accredited establishments. The stable owners can attract clients and justify asking for higher fees.

Such a certification scheme involves regular inspection, as an example by HAK and the KSPCA to be done annually. A reporting mechanism would be crucial in order to uphold the certification quality, and needs to be presented to users of riding schools and stables. The scheme can include the following components:

- Facility requirements: the stable must meet certain physical requirements, such as adequate shelter, clean water supply and safe fencing.
- Health management: the stable must have a program in place to manage the health of the horses, including regular veterinary care, vaccination schedules, and appropriate nutrition.
- Training and supervision: the stable must provide training and supervision to its staff, ensuring they are knowledgeable in horse care, handling, and behaviour.
- Safety: the stable must have protocols in place for emergency situations.

### **Registration and licensing regime**

A licensing regime for all horses in Kenya would involve a system to register and license horses. While the specific details

of such a regime would be determined by the relevant authorities and governing bodies, below are some components that could be included. The failure to execute any of these components could result in enforcing consequences e.g. a fine. There is precedent for this scheme, such as dog licensing in Nairobi.

- Microchipping: a unique identification system, such as microchipping, would be required to ensure that each horse is registered only once and can be easily identified.
- Registration: horse owners would need to register their horses with the appropriate government agency, providing basic information such as the horse's name, breed, age and any relevant medical history. Preferably this would be done at the national level by the DVS.
- Business licensing: whether it be a riding school or a service provider of pony rides, in order to use horses to make profit, the DVS can issue licenses to businesses only when the horses are registered.
- Fees: a registration fee could be charged to cover administrative costs and ensure that the licensing regime is self-sustaining.
- Renewals: horses would need to be re-registered periodically, perhaps on an annual basis, to ensure that the information on file is up to date. County vets can be in charge of the re-registration process.

- Compliance: compliance with certain standards and regulations related to horse welfare could be made a condition of registration, and non-compliance could result in revocation of the licence.

### Groom training

Properly trained grooms are able to recognize signs of illness, injury, or stress in horses and respond appropriately, as well as provide appropriate care and attention to horses on a daily basis. Implemented groom training can be part of a requirement of the aforementioned certification scheme. Grooms who have successfully completed the groom training would also have a higher chance to grow into managerial positions at the stable.

Groom training can include the following components:

- Horse care: grooms should be trained in the basics of horse care, including grooming, feeding, and watering horses, as well as recognizing signs of illness or injury.
- Handling and behaviour: grooms should be trained in the proper handling techniques of horses, as well as recognizing and interpreting equine behaviour, and riding.
- First aid: grooms should be trained in basic first aid for horses, including wound care and responding to colic or other emergencies.
- Safety: grooms should be trained in safety procedures for themselves and the horses.

### Public education

By raising awareness of the needs and best practices for caring for horses to the general public, users can make more informed decisions. Public education initiatives can be implemented by the Horse Welfare Coalition, and can include a range of activities:

- Workshops and seminars: stables can host workshops and seminars on topics such as basic horse care, handling and behaviour for their consumers, or make this part of their offered riding classes.
- Awareness campaign by the (local) government of what it means to keep a horse and to promote responsible horse ownership.
- Collaborations with local schools to provide educational resources.

### Specialised educational training in equine medicine

Specialised educational training in horse medicine would involve a structured program designed to provide veterinarians with the knowledge, skills, and practical experience necessary to diagnose, treat, and manage health issues specific to horses. It is recommended for current horse medicine specialists to collaborate with universities and the KVB to develop a curriculum to ensure the continuation of specialist vet care. In the near future, such a course could be extended into a programme, potentially with the consultation and through knowledge sharing of universities abroad who are specialised in horse medicine.

