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**An appraisal of the welfare standards of the bullock cart animals in the Southern Province of Sri Lanka**

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Despite the widespread use of modern means of transportation, bullock carts are still used in many parts of the world including in Sri Lanka. Maintenance of good welfare standards of the animals is of utmost importance due to financial, legal and ethical reasons. Objectives of this study were (i) to appraise the present welfare standards of the bullock cart animals and (ii) to identify welfare problems. Forty two bullock cart animals in three districts (Galle, Matara and Hambantota) in Southern province were studied. The welfare standards of the animals were judged by using a scoring technique based on the five freedom concept of farm animal welfare. The most comfortable welfare aspect of the bullock cart animals were identified as the pains, injuries and diseases. The welfare standard of the animals in relation to hunger, thirst and malnutrition was judged “good” only in 58% of the animals and 40% of the animals were ranked “poor”. Non-availability of water *ad libitum*, poor night feeding and inability to offer good and adequate diet were the major reasons for low welfare standard for this domain. The least comfortable welfare domain was the “freedom from discomfort”. The main contributory factors were the excessive work load of the animals. Around 70 % of the animals were judged to receive at least a “satisfactory” level of welfare standards. It was concluded that improvements in simple management practices such as provision of *ad libitum* water, good feed and proper housing facilities can further improve the welfare standards of the animals.