

## ***An intervention strategy for assessing and improving the welfare of Brazilian draught horses***

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The MSU Equine Welfare Intervention Strategy (EQWIS-ACTION<sup>®</sup>) encompasses systematic data collection, followed by development of culturally sensitive educational strategies to improve horse husbandry skills amongst owners. This strategy can be implemented in a 10-day period. ACTION stands for: **A**ssessing horse welfare; **C**ompiling relevant information; **T**ailoring intervention strategy; **I**mplementing strategy; **O**rganizing local resources; identifying **N**ext target population. This protocol was tested in two communities in the township of Cachoeirinha, Brazil, where more than 500 draught horses are used by the low-income population to transport materials. We interviewed owners (n=14) and inspected their horses (n=24). Additional data were obtained in the neighboring city of Porto Alegre, home of more than 5,000 draught horses, where we conducted random sampling of 110 animals, assessing body score, soundness, workload and coat quality. Based on our observations, we developed an educational manual and conducted workshops hosted by the targeted communities. We structured local networks to assess the long-term validity and guarantee the sustainability of MSU EQWIS-ACTION<sup>®</sup>. The interview data showed that body condition scores (BCS) averaged 3.1 (scale 1-9) with a range from 1 - 5. The majority of horses scored as thin (50%); 41% scored as very thin and 9% rated as adequate. Ninety-six percent of horses had harness lesions. None of the horses had been vaccinated; none were receiving trace mineral salt; and none were receiving adequate deworming; less than half were receiving water during the work day. Four months post-intervention, BCSs had improved: 15% were very thin, 27% were thin and 48% were adequate. Prevalence of harness lesions had decreased by 34%. All had received tetanus vaccination and dewormer, were receiving trace mineral salt, and were being offered water during the work day.