Abstract

Donkeys have been serving mankind for several millions of years. The phrase the beast of burden describes their utility as pack animals in many parts of the world as they play a significant economic and social role in transport, whether riding, pack transport or pulling carts. They may also be used for farm tillage. Working donkeys suffer from various welfare constraints that need to be investigated and ameliorated. These welfare constraints significantly reduce work productivity and life of the donkey and hence the owners livelihoods. A study to determine welfare differences between working donkeys in both rural and urban/periurban settings of mwingi central sub county of kitui county-Kenya was done. A total of 396 donkeys were sampled out of a donkey population of 35,361 in the sub county. A confidence level of 95% and a sampling error of 5% were used. The 396 donkeys were proportionately allocated into urban/peri-urban and rural settings as 215 and 181 respectively. The study used donkey physical welfare parameters namely lameness, evenness of the hoof, eye conditions and body condition score to compare the two sets of animals. There was more lameness in animals working in the urban /peri-urban setting (14.4%) compared to the rural settings (11.6%). The physical welfare indicators namely hoof evenness, overgrown hooves, body wounds ,scars, eye discharges and corneal opacity were shown to have significant differences at p at $p<0.05$ level between the two sets of animals.