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Press Release 28 March 2019 MSPCA wants to see action before more horses suffer and die from exhaustion and folklore husbandry.

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Every utility role historically occupied by horses has been filled by technology, making its role in transportation a dubious tradition. Therefore it is time to accept that it is no longer justifiable to perpetuate the practice of inflicting slavery on these animals for transportation and perhaps it is time that we stop flagging tradition as excuse. The only role left for the horse to occupy is that of companion animal and leisure. In every other aspect of our society we have accepted that new knowledge informs our practices today, which have overwhelmingly shot most traditions down one by one.

Most laws regulating the keeping and treatment of horses aim to reduce their impact on human activities. Animal welfare consideration in laws on horses are sparse and weak. This leaves horses unprotected from cruel slavery and folklore husbandry[[1]](#footnote-1). The result of folklore husbandry is a failure to provide animals with one or more of their 5 welfare needs and shows inadequate education of the keeper.

The MSPCA wants to see subsidiary legislation to set up minimum standards for the keeping of all horses, much like the recently introduced Keeping of Dogs Regulation AND for such laws to be enforced. We understand that there are different settings in which horses interact with humans and each setting requires an added layer of protection.

Although the MSPCA is convinced that there is  no necessity for horses to be used in transportation, while they are still a reality we live with, we would like to see a legally defined heat index range when horses are not allowed to be used for transport or sports. Although temperature has been suggested as the parameter to measure when deciding whether a horse should be worked, science clearly shows that humidity is as relevant because even at low temperatures it reduces the animal's ability to dissipate body heat that arises from exercise. Other factors such as the maximum incline, maximum load and working hours need to be limited to reduce harm as much as possible.

The MSPCA believes that horses, whether kept for work or leisure, deserve to be housed to a minimum standard that protects their 5 freedoms. This includes parameters on how all horses are to be kept in stables pertaining to size of enclosure, the necessity to be housed with other horses and the equipment allowed in the handling of horses. The MSPCA strongly believes Malta needs to move away from the window dressing actions of the past and start doing and implementing legislation that actually produces protection for animals. For Malta to evolve into a country that takes actions that work, politicians need to accept that some (or even many) people must get upset.

Il-MSPCA tixtieq tara azzjoni qabel aktar żwiemel ibgħatu u jmutu minħabba sħana u prattiċi antikwati.

Kull xogħol li storikament kien isir miż-żwiemel illum issib makkinarju li jagħmlu floku, li jfisser l-użu taż-żwiemel fit-trasport hi tradizzjoni dubjuża. Wasal żmien li naċċettaw li mhux ġustifikabbli li nkomplu nżommu żwiemel skjavi billi nużaw l-iskuża tat-tradizzjoni. L-unika rwol li fadal ghaż-żwiemel biex jokkupaw hu dak ta’ annimal domestiku jew rikreazzjonali. F’kull aspett ieħor tas-soċjeta aċċcettajna li għarfien ġdid u teknoloġijja ibiddlu x’nagħmlu u kif isiru affarjiet, u hafna tradizzjonijiet tilfu posthom waħda waħda.

Il-liġjiet li jirregolaw l-użu u trattament taż-żwiemel fil-maggoranza jippruvaw inaqqsu l-impatt taż-żwiemel fuq attivitajiet umani. Ftit issib ezempji fejn il-liġi specifikament tipproteġi iż-żwiemel u spiss ma jkollomx saħħa. Dan iwassal biex iż-żwiemel ma jsibux protezzjoni minn skjavitu u prattiċi antikwati (folkore husbandry)[[2]](#footnote-2). Ir-rizultat ta dawn il-prattiċi antikwati hu li l-annimal ibati għalxejn u juri nuqqas ta edukazzjoni ta’ min iżomm iż-żwiemel.

Il-MSPCA tixtieq tara żieda ta’ leġiżlazzjoni sussidjarja li tintroduci *minimum standards* ghaż-żamma taz-żwiemel, simili għal li sar reċnetement għall-klieb u li dawn il-liġijiet iridu jiġu nfurzati. Nifhmu li hemm varjeta ta’ attivitajiet li jinvolvu żwiemel u għalekk ikun hemm bżonn regolamenti speċifiċi għal-dawk is-sitwazzjonijiet.

Għalkemm il MSPCA konvinta li m’hemmx neċessita għaż-żwiemel fit-trasport, ġaladarba qiegħdin hemm tixtieq tara regolamenti li jipprojibixxu l-użu taż-żwiemel meta il-*heat index* itellifhom milli jibirdu, li għandu jigi estiż ukoll għal-tiġrijiet. Is-suġġeriment li dawn ikunu projbiti abbażi tat-temperatura biss nafu li hu wieħed żbaljat minħabba li l-umdita taffetwa daqs is-sħana. F’temperaturi iktar baxxi fejn l-umdita tibqa ttellef, iż-żiemel xorta ma jirnexxilux jibred mis-sħana kkawzata mill-eżerċizzju. Affarjiet oħra bħall-piż massimu, l-anglu tat-tlajja u ħinijiet tax-xogħol ghandhom jiġu limitati biex titnaqqas il-ħsara fuq l-annimal.

Il-MSPCA temmen li żwiemel, jekk hux miżmuma għax-xogħol jew rikreazzjoni, haqqhom li jiġu miżmuma fi standard li jippermettilhom il-5 libertajiet. Dan għandu jinkludi parametri fuq kif kull żiemel ghandu jinzamm speċjalment id-daqs tal-istalla, in-neċessita li jkollu access għal żwiemel oħra, u x’tip ta’ għodda tintuża fill-moviment tagħhom. Il-MSPCA temmen li għadda iż-żmien li Malta tagħmel ligijiet tal-vetrina li ma jwasslu mkien u sar iż-żmien li il-liġijiet u azzjonijiet iwassluna għall-vera protezzjoni tal-annimali.

Pero biex Malta timmatura b’dan il mogħod, il-politici iridu jaccettaw li se jridu jilfsu xi kallijiet.

For more information about the MSPCA please visit [www.maltaspca.org](http://www.maltaspca.org)

For interviews, opinion pieces and news please use our press contact.

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The MSPCA is a non-profit non-government voluntary organization aimed at protecting animal welfare and rehoming abandoned animals, registered with the commission for voluntary organizations.

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1. Folklore husbandry is an emerging term describing the phenomenon of unevidenced, pseudoscientific, convenience-led habit and opinion handed down from one ill-informed animal keeper to the next.  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Folklore husbandry is an emerging term describing the phenomenon of unevidenced, pseudoscientific, convenience-led habit and opinion handed down from one ill-informed animal keeper to the next.  [↑](#footnote-ref-2)