

**GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR
DIRECTORATE OF VETERINARY & A.H. SERVICES**

**THE MANIPURI PONY CONSERVATION
AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY,
2016**



MANIPUR



GAZETTE

**EXTRAORDINARY
PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY**

No. 451

Imphal, Friday, December 23, 2016

(Pausa 2, 1938)

**GOVERNMENT OF MANIPUR
SECRETARIAT : VETERINARY & ANIMAL HUSBANDRY DEPARTMENT**

NOTIFICATION

Imphal, the 23rd December, 2016

No. 1/16/2016-Vety : A draft Manipuri Pony Conservation and Development Policy was published vide Resolution No. 1/16/2016-Vety(Pt.) dated 8th November, 2016, inviting all stakeholders and the general public to submit their comments by 4.30 p.m. of 22nd November, 2016.

After considering all comments which were received, the State Cabinet approved the Manipuri Pony Conservation and Development Policy, 2016, in its meeting held on 28-11-2016.

The Governor of Manipur is now pleased to notify the "Manipuri Pony Conservation and Development Policy, 2016" as attached.

The Policy shall come into effect immediately.

L. LAKHER,
Principal Secretary (Vety & AH),
Government of Manipur.

THE MANIPURI PONY CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY, 2016

1. Introduction

The Manipuri Pony is one of the five recognised equine breeds of India and is very important and critical for the State as well as the country as part of the national gene pool.

The Manipuri pony has been indispensable for Manipuri society for its socio-cultural association for centuries. Its antecedents, however, are not clear as one source states Tibetan ponies as its ancestors while another source states its origin to be a cross between Mongolian wild horse & Arabian. However, all agreed that it was derived from an ancient stock. In some manuscripts it is referred to as *Mangal-sa* or Mongolian animal. In Manipuri mythology, the Manipuri pony was regarded to have descended from "*Samadon Ayangba*", the winged steed of Lord Marjing, one of the guardian deities of Manipur.

The Manipuri pony was so highly regarded that it was never used as a draught animal. The Manipuri pony, though a small breed of 11 to 13 hands, is known for its unique stamina, agility, intelligence, speed, manoeuvrability and great adaptability to harsh geo-climatic conditions. It is rightly regarded as the original polo pony as the modern polo is derived from the traditional *Sagol Kangjei* of Manipur.

Manipur ponies figure prominently in the Manipuri way of life. Besides its association with traditional events of "*Lai Haraoba*" and its use in sports like polo & horse race, they were also used as mounts for Manipuri cavalry which was feared throughout upper Burma during the 17th century.

2. Need for Conservation and Development of the Manipuri Pony

The population of this highly valued breed is dwindling rapidly in recent times, from 1898 in the 17th Quinquennial Livestock Census 2003 to only 1101 in the 19th Quinquennial Livestock Census 2012.

Food and Agriculture Organisation publication on World Watch List on Domestic Animal Diversity has listed the breed as "an endangered animal". Shrinkage of wet lands which is the natural habitat of Manipuri Pony due to rapid urbanisation and encroachment, lack of polo ground/polo playing areas in the rural areas, restriction of use of ponies except in the game of polo, uncontrolled diseases and the exodus of the ponies to neighbouring states and countries are some of the factors to which the decline of the population of the pony in the State is attributed.

The situation now calls for immediate implementation of conservation programmes through formulation of a holistic policy on conservation and development of the Manipuri Pony. The State Government has also declared Manipuri Pony as an Endangered Breed in 2013. Conservation of Manipuri Pony will require not only the policy and programmes of the Government but also the collective efforts of all stake holders like Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), pony lovers, owners and also

the general populace of Manipur towards the goal of conservation of this precious breed of the State.

3. Constitution of Manipuri Pony Conservation and Development Board

A Board called the Manipuri Pony Development Board will be constituted by the State Government with members from the State Government, universities and NGOs including experts from inside and outside the State for effective formulation of work plans and activities and their implementation.

The Board shall coordinate with all stake holders for effective implementation of the policy fulfilling its objectives.

The Board will comprise of the following members:

- | | | |
|--|---|------------------|
| 1. Hon'ble Chief Minister, Manipur | - | Chairperson |
| 2. Hon'ble Minister (Vety. & A.H.), Manipur | - | Vice Chairperson |
| 3. Administrative Secretary (Vety. & A.H.)
Govt. of Manipur | - | Member Secretary |
| 4. Commissioner (Revenue), Govt. of Manipur | - | Member |
| 5. Director General of Police, Manipur | - | Member |
| 6. Principal Chief Conservator of Forest,
Manipur. | - | Member |
| 7. Director (Veterinary & A.H.), Manipur | - | Member |
| 8. Director (Tourism), Manipur | - | Member |
| 9. Director (Youth Affairs & Sports), Manipur | - | Member |
| 10. Director (Agriculture), Manipur | - | Member |
| 11. Director (Horti & Soil Conservation), Manipur | - | Member |
| 12. Head of Department, Animal Science,
College of Agriculture, CAU, Imphal | - | Member |
| 13. President, Manipur Horse Riding & Polo
Assn. | - | Member |
| 14. President, All Manipur Polo Association | - | Member |
| 15. President, Manipur Pony Association | - | Member |

4. Breeding Strategy of the Breed

True to breed multiplication of the Manipuri Pony is important at this juncture. This can be achieved through the establishment of preserves as free traditional style commons for natural breeding that is economically sound and on the strength of local custom and practice as well as the establishment/strengthening of Manipuri Pony Farms for scientific breeding where all breeding data are recorded. This will provide a holistic approach that recognizes, respects and strengthens the indigenous traditional knowledge of keeping the animal.

It is pertinent to mention that the main utility of this animal at present is

for the game of Polo and most of the pony owners practice castration/gelding of their ponies at an early age so that their ponies are easily controlled during the game. In the process, good quality ponies, possessing unique genes responsible for good performance in the polo game, have been withdrawn from the breeding pony population. The practice of using geldings in polo should be reconsidered and the use of mares as practised in the current polo playing countries may also be introduced and encouraged in the State.

Breeding strategy of the pony may be framed including the following action points:

- 1) Selection of stallions and mares having all the true characteristics of Manipuri Pony for breeding purpose.
- 2) Development of a breeding tract in every District of the State by establishing a common preserve for natural breeding with participation of local community.
- 3) Scientific breeding programmes shall be carried out through establishment/strengthening of farms of true to breed Manipuri Pony by the State Government where scientific records are kept.
- 4) Relevant laws shall be framed to prevent early castration of stallions.
- 5) Regulation of export of Manipuri Ponies from the State to other States and countries through appropriate laws which may continue till the population is stabilised in the State with complete ban of export of Manipuri Ponies.
- 6) Cross breeding of Manipuri Ponies with horse breeds imported from outside the State shall be strictly banned.
- 7) Cryo-preservation of semen of good pedigree stallions shall be undertaken under available facilities in the state for ex situ conservation.

5. Feeding Plan of Manipuri Pony

Lack of grazing land and natural habitat in the valley Districts is one of key factors for the decline of pony population in the State. Shrinkage of grazing areas deprives the ponies of nutrition in terms of quality and quantity. Therefore, fulfilment of nutritional requirement of the animal is the need of hour. The following shall be taken into consideration while preparing a feeding plan for the Manipuri pony:

- 1) The Cattle Trespass Act, 1871 shall be strictly enforced to keep the ponies off the roads and the Board shall oversee its enforcement.
- 2) The available wastelands near the foothills or any other areas around/adjacent to the breeding tract in each district may be declared as reserved/preserved for the purpose of shelter, fodder production and grazing area for the ponies taking into account the availability of water sources in the area.
- 3) The maintenance of the area may be entrusted to the local communities/

bodies, pony owners/lovers, clubs etc. under the supervision of the Board. The area may also be developed to attract tourists.

- 4) Feeding schedule and requirement of feed and fodder for different categories of ponies need to be formulated/developed.
- 5) Pasture development programmes in places wherever feasible such as common grazing ground will be initiated.
- 6) The reserved/preserved areas may also be developed to cater to tourism and recreational spots.

6. Prevention and Control of Pony Diseases

Manipuri Ponies are usually resistant to different local diseases. However, due to lack of scientific management, the ponies suffer from leg and body injuries, lameness, colic, skin diseases, and worm infection. Awareness for better scientific management with proper shelter, sanitation, feeding, health care, etc. must be initiated at pony owners' level. An action plan may be initiated encompassing the following:

- 1) Health camps, de-worming and other measures will be organised at periodic intervals at farmers'/owners' levels.
- 2) Periodic Disease Detection Programmes in collaboration with ICAR National Research Centre on Equine, Hissar, or other related institutions will be organised regularly to screen out major equine diseases prevalent in the state and to take up timely control measures.
- 3) State-of-the-art facility for diagnosis and treatment of equine diseases will be developed by the State Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department.

7. Development of Permanent Polo Ground and Race Courses

Lack of polo playing grounds at the village level, loss of interest of playing polo as a village game and lack of race courses in the State are also contributing factors of the sharp decline of pony population in the State. In the past, polo games and horse races were regularly organised at Hapta Kangjeibung and other local polo grounds under the Royal patronage. As a result, many pony owners were encouraged to breed good ponies for participation in the polo games and races. Only a few grounds are now available for playing polo in the State. Therefore, there is an urgent need for preservation of polo playing fields and race courses in the State so that the urge to rear and breed ponies is brought back to life again.

The policy envisages taking up the following action plan for preservation and development of polo playing fields and race courses:

- 1) Steps will be taken for creation of at least one polo ground in each District which may be developed with adequate infrastructures. Mapal Kangjeibung/ Imphal Polo ground may be preserved for annual State, National and International polo tournaments.

2) The management of polo grounds of villages will be entrusted to local communities and polo clubs.

3) The State may develop a race course near or around Imphal City for conducting pony races only for the purpose of popularisation of Manipuri Pony. The race course may also be used for pony related events like polo, equestrian games, etc., but it will be ensured that it is not misutilized in any manner.

8. Pony Based Employment Opportunities

In the erstwhile Manipur kingdom, Manipuri ponies were used for defending the boundary of the State and for the welfare of the common people, transportation and polo. But due to the changing political scenario and increasing mechanisation, the ponies have been withdrawn from warfare and transportation activities. The Pony is a sacred animal used in rituals and traditional and cultural activities of *Lai Haraoba*.

At present, ponies are kept mainly for playing polo and other ceremonial activities. Pony owners are not earning any income from rearing ponies. This is one of the most important factors for the decline of the pony population. It is desirable that ponies are utilised for economic activities and creation of employment opportunities for pony owners. This will ultimately help in the conservation of the breed.

This policy aims at creation of economic opportunities involving the Manipuri pony, with some possibilities being -

- 1) Introduction of pony based employment schemes by the State Government and sponsoring of such schemes by Banks for economic utilisation of Manipuri Pony in eco-tourism activities.
- 2) Re-establishment of Mounted Police in Manipur Police which will be helpful for controlling crowds and traffic in congested areas.
- 3) Establishment of a cavalry unit as body guard of the Governor of the State which may be used as escort of the Governor for Republic Day functions and at the commencement of the State Assembly in a year like that of the Presidential body guard of Union Government.
- 4) Introduction of pony/horse riding school wherein interested young boys and girls may be trained in horse riding and other related skills for popularisation of the pony among the youths of the State.
- 5) Conduct of extensive research work for scientific utilisation of Manipuri Pony at appropriate centres.
- 6) Introduction of the pony at tourist spots like Sendra, Waterfalls of Leimaram, Santhel Eco-Tourism park of Andro for pony rides and photo sessions on payment basis.

9. Incentives to Pony Keepers

Most of pony owners are landless and generally dependent on agriculture and allied activities. As they are unable to invest in maintenance of their ponies, they allow their ponies to wander on the roads, market places and garbage dumping areas. This results in the ponies feeding on garbage left-over foods and vegetable wastes discarded by hotels and vendors. This mode of feeding leaves the ponies to the mercy of nature and causes damage to their health.

Now is the right time for the State Government to reconsider improving the care and maintenance of the Manipuri pony by their individual/club owners. The State Government will consider taking up steps toward this end with the following action plan:

- 1) Organisation of awareness programmes on scientific management practices of the pony.
- 2) Provision of incentives to Polo clubs/individual pony owners in the form of maintenance allowances for their ponies in cash or in kind i.e. feed ingredients, medicines etc.
- 3) Organisation of health camps for ponies.
- 4) Organisation of pony shows regularly with awards to encourage pony owners to breed good ponies.

10. Organisation of Pony-related Events as Tourism Activities

Manipur State, in addition to its beautiful landscape, diverse flora and fauna and salubrious climate, is well known as the birth place of the game of Polo. Organisation of polo tournaments/festivals and equestrian sports as tourism events will attract both domestic and international tourists, which will in turn popularize the Manipuri pony. However, any activity involving the pony should conform to the provisions of the Performing Animals (Registration) Rule, 2011.

Toward this end, this policy envisages the following:

- 1) Organization of polo festival, pony shows, polo tournaments regularly as part of tourism events.
- 2) Formulation of a strategic plan and time bound work schedule for development of Sagol Kangjei & Polo.
- 3) Development of Imphal as an International Polo city in view of the State being the birth place of Polo.
- 4) Introduction of other activities involving the pony such as equestrian games, *arambai* throws for tourism events.

11. Establishment of a Centre of NRC on Equine

It is highly desirable to establish a centre of the National Research Centre on Equine at a suitable location in the State for scientific studies on various aspects of the Manipuri pony. Steps may be taken in this direction as below:

- 1) To apprise the Central Government and the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi, of the need for establishing a centre of NRC on Equine in Manipur.
- 2) Land required for establishing the centre will be provided by the State Government.
- 3) Tie-ups and exchange programmes will be sought from well known institutions/stakeholders.

12. Inclusion of Pony related Literature in the Text Books

The significance of Manipuri Pony needs to be brought to the knowledge of the younger generation. Literature related to Manipuri Pony regarding its origin, history and uses in the socio-cultural and political life of Manipuris need to be taught to the younger generation so that they are aware of the close relationship between the Manipuri Pony and the Manipuri society.

Considering the importance of this matter, the State Government will take steps for inclusion of suitable topics on the Manipuri Pony in the text books of appropriate subjects of the middle and high school classes.

13. Implementing Agency

The State Veterinary & A.H. Department shall be the Nodal Department for implementation of the Policy.

14. Fund

The State Government shall provide a continuous and sufficient fund for implementation of the policy preferably with the opening of a separate Head of Accounts for the purpose.

15. Amendments/Modifications of the Policy.

The policy may be reviewed on a regular basis and with experience may undergo amendments/modifications for overall fulfilment of its objectives.

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