



Poor Treatment of Horses Threatens Tourism in Indonesia

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The condition of carriage horses working long hours with little water, rest, or medical care has begun to concern activists and local officials in Indonesia's Gili islands. They say the poor treatment of the animals could prevent people from visiting the islands.

Some tourists have expressed concern about the health of the horses.

[Melissa, Australian Tourist]:

"The horses looked like they got tired. They work for many hours from what I gather. They are probably (working) 18 out of 24 hours."

A survey conducted by a local animal rights group found that many tourists cut their trip short after seeing the condition of the horses.

[Femke den Haas, Co-Founder, Jakarta Animal Aid Network]:

"Some people are leaving earlier because they don't agree with the way the horses are treated. So I am very positive and very sure that it will have a big effect on the tourist industry on Gili Trawangan and Gili Air and Gili Meno if nothing is improved."

Activists are calling on the government to improve the conditions for the horses.

[Femke den Haas, Co-Founder, Jakarta Animal Aid Network]:

"The improvement doesn't need to cost a lot of money. It's more a matter of putting all the forces together, setting up a good management and enforcing the new regulation, basically that's all. So the horses should have a rest every two hours, they should be able to have a resting ground where they can graze, where they can play because the horses need that too. And they need fresh water."

But some say the horse owners have done their best despite the limitations on the island.

[Simone Sauren, Biologist]:

"They do actually the best they can. On the island we don't have a vet. So with no veterinarian for the horses, all the owners of the horses really have to learn from each other and there is no help from outside."

The local tourism department says some steps have been taken. The governor has sent a veterinarian, nurse and a blacksmith to the Gili islands to take care of the horses.

Horse carriages and bicycles are the only transportation on the Gili islands. With their deserted island beaches, coral reef diving, and evening parties, they are a popular draw for tourists.

