



SENTIENT

VETERINARY ASSESSMENT

DAIRY CATTLE IN INDIA

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Commissioned by: Sentient

Date of preparation: August 2026

Purpose: Initial assessment of footage to identify animal welfare concerns and provide a basis for further review.

Published by: Expertise for Animals gGmbH,
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GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The cattle and buffaloes are housed in simple, often heavily worn structures. The housing generally provide no or limited equipment for feed and water provision. If animals are fed with different kinds of troughs, they are forced to eat while standing or lying instead of their ethological need of grazing while walking slowly. In some enclosures, tarpaulins are installed as makeshift shade. Manure accumulation in the lying area is common, and many animals show visible soiling of the coat, consistent with limited manure removal. Footage show many animals are kept in areas with the presence of waste and discarded materials.

Individual conformation assessment of all documented animals was not conducted. However, many of the animals displayed suboptimal body and limb conformation. Body and limb conformation can be influenced by multiple factors, including genetics, nutrition, housing conditions, and management practices. In particularly pronounced cases, specific limb deviations or other conformational abnormalities were noted.

KEY FINDINGS

The main areas of concern can be summarized as follows:

- Tethering.
- Painful nose ropes.
- Alopecia.
- Skin injuries and pressure sores.
- Impaired claw health.
- Poor body condition including emaciation.
- Signs indicative of malnutrition.
- Signs of disease and animals requiring veterinary treatment.
- Inadequate care of calves.
- Unsuitable flooring and poor hygiene.
- Adverse and insufficient housing environment.
- Non-continuous access to water and feed.

Overall, the findings indicate substantial and recurring animal welfare concerns. The findings suggest that the documented housing and management conditions do not consistently provide an environment that adequately meets the animals' physical health, behavioural, and welfare needs.

ASSESSMENT OF VIDEO RECORDINGS

The following section presents the animal welfare concerns identified in individual video recordings. Selected screenshots from the videos are included to illustrate the documented animal welfare concerns. The video clips were generally short and provided only brief observations of the animals and their housing conditions. Consequently, the assessment represents an evaluation of the findings that were visibly identifiable within the respective clips and does not constitute a comprehensive clinical examination of the individual animals.

VIDEO #1

Severe integument alterations on hindquarters (hairless patches, skin discoloration, plaques of dirt), highly likely due to tie stalls with hard, non-bedded flooring without dung channels or slatted manure areas leading to excess excreta on the floor.



Tethered cattle perform all activities, including feeding, resting, defecating, and urinating, within the same confined area. When cattle cannot move away from hard, wet, and soiled flooring, they are forced to stand and lie in their own excreta. This substantially reduces their comfort and impairs skin health.

VIDEO #2

Painful tethering due to a local nose rope. The rope pierces the nasal septum and is secured behind the head of the animal. Attached to the nose rope are two additional ropes, which are connected to the floor at two lateral attachment points. As the nasal septum is highly innervated and sensitive, head movements are likely to cause pain due to traction on the rope. Additionally, the use of a rope can cause irritation and inflammation of the nose. A study on dairy cows with local nose rope showed that it can cause stress.¹



VIDEO #2 - CONT.

Generally, the short tethering documented prevents typical head movements, such as raising the head to a normal position while standing, and completely prevents turning around for body grooming. Licking, scratching and rubbing movements performed with the tongue, horns and hooves are essential for self-grooming. To reach more distant parts of their bodies, cattle swing their heads far backwards. Tethering prevents this movement.

VIDEO #3

The footage shows a cow suffering from wet ocular discharge, which could be due to an infection. The discharge attracts flies, which may increase the risk of fly-transmitted pathogens. Note that it is possible that the footage shows face flies, which can penetrate the conjunctivae of the cow's eye tissues,



triggering tear production. However, this cannot be determined directly from the available footage. Flies constitute a persistent source of disturbance for cattle. Cattle respond with various avoidance behaviours, including head movements, ear shaking, skin twitching, and restlessness.² Note that there is no evidence that cows cry tears as humans.

VIDEOS #4-5

The footage shows a young calf tethered on hard floor without bedding and shelter from sun as well as no access to water. Although the available footage does not allow for a determination of how long the calf is kept in this location, even short-term housing must meet minimum requirements to safeguard the welfare of the animal. These include access to water, protection from direct sunlight, and suitable, soft bedding. Otherwise, the calf suffers from thirst, hunger, distress, heat stress and other negative welfare, health and behavioural consequences.



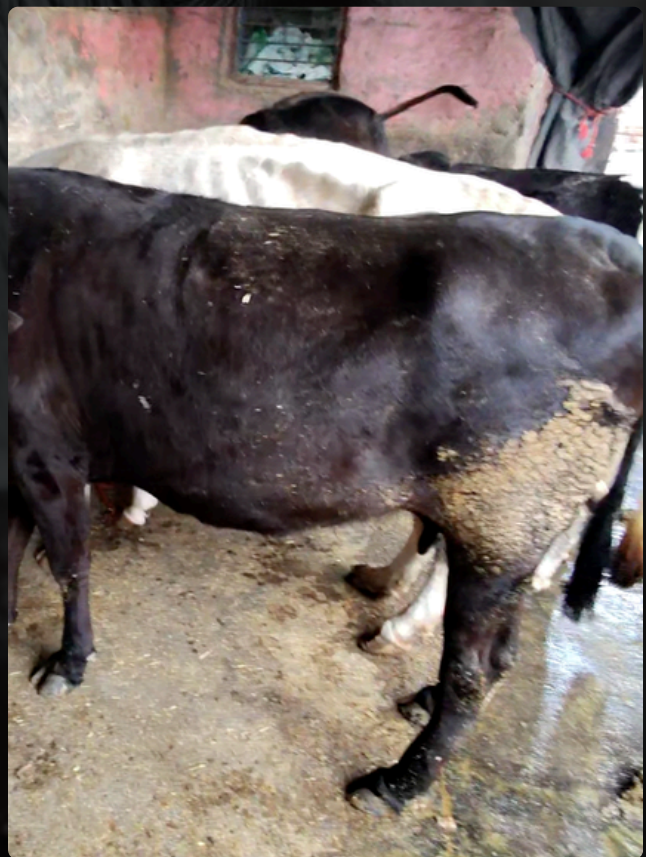
VIDEOS #4-5 - CONT.

The rope is so short that the calf cannot seek out a shaded area or reach a watering trough. Animals of all age groups should have continuous access to water to meet their biological drinking needs. Additionally, in combination with unrestricted exposure to sunlight the situation is unnecessarily stress-inducing for the young animal (including heat stress). Bedding is an important environmental effector of calf wellbeing, especially since young calves spend most of their time lying on the floor.



VIDEO #6

The young female cattle suffers from a hairless patch and reddish skin on the lateral side of her left tarsal joint. If the animal remains in this adverse housing environment — characterized by hard concrete flooring contaminated with feces and urine and the absence of bedding — the hairless area is highly likely to progress into a painful lesion.



VIDEO #6 - CONT.

The other female cattle shows severe plaques of dirt on her hindquarters, which developed highly likely due to the conditions in the tie stall with hard, non-bedded flooring, lack of dung channels or slatted manure areas and therefore flooring contaminated with feces and liquids. Additionally, she has a local nose rope, which is in itself painful. It cannot be conclusively determined from the available video footage whether the animal is tethered by the nose rope. It is also not clearly discernible whether the animal shows nasal discharge.



VIDEO #7

The housing environment is characterised by makeshift structures, including plastic sheets used as curtains and for providing shade. The flooring consists of hard concrete without bedding. Since there are no dung channels or slatted manure areas, feces must be removed manually. The animals are tethered in varying orientations and positions relative to one another. Holstein-Friesian cattle are housed together with buffalo.



VIDEO #7 - CONT.

The cattle are tethered with ropes attached to nose ropes, which have been assessed above as having a negative impact on animal welfare.

One cow suffers from a painful lesion located at the hip. The lesion is most likely a painful pressure sore, which develops due to prolonged pressure on the skin of bony prominences, ultimately leading to tissue necrosis. Additionally, abrasive floor surfaces can additionally impact the skin negatively. The affected area shows signs of skin ulceration. The lesion is located on an area that is contaminated with feces, which compromises hygiene and may provide a route for the transmission of pathogens.



VIDEO #8

The footage shows two buffalo cows with severe plaques of dirt on hindquarters, highly likely due to tie stalls with hard, non-bedded flooring without dung channels or slatted manure areas. If hygiene management is poor, the animals are exposed to feces, which leads to health problems, like gastrointestinal issues, mastitis, and infection of the skin in the claw area (digital dermatitis), discomfort and negative welfare.



VIDEO #8 - CONT.

In the background, a poorly developed buffalo calf is visible. The animal has a hunched back, a rough, dull, grey coat, and hair loss around the eyes. The animal may suffer from multiple issues, such as systemic infections, fungal skin infection, parasites and malnutrition. The animal is experiencing a significant lack of welfare and veterinary care.



VIDEOS #9-10

The footage show buffaloes standing in front of a high feeding trough. They are fitted with rope halters that pass across the nasal bridge. One buffalo has a severe constriction wound on the nasal bridge. This injury causes pain and provides a portal of entry for pathogens.



VIDEO #11

The footage shows three calves tethered close to a brick wall next to a street. They are tethered with short ropes and are lying on a hard floor without bedding and shelter from sun as well as no access to water. These issues have already been described in greater detail in a previous section.

The smallest calf on the left may be a stunted/poorly developed animal, since the animal has a rough coat and is also noticeably small. The animal in the middle is also stunted/poorly developed. Her body size appears disproportionate to her stage of development, since she already shows horn growth but is notably small and has a very long and rough coat. As the footage is very brief and provides no further contextual information, no further assessment can be made.



VIDEO #12

One buffalo shows a wart-like growth on the third eyelid of the right eye with purulent secretion. The pus may be due to a secondary infection. The animal needs immediate veterinary care, since the animal may suffer from an ocular neoplasia (cancer). Additionally, the buffaloes show a low BCS (Body Condition Score), with deep cavities around the tail head, prominent tail head, hipbones, spine and ribs as well as deep depression between backbone and hipbones



VIDEO #13

Multiple dairy cows and buffaloes are kept in close conditions in a stable and tethered with ropes. One animal shows severe plaques of dirt on her hindquarters and dirt on her udder as well as on her flank, which developed highly likely due to the conditions in the tie stall with hard, non-bedded flooring, lack of dung channels or slatted manure areas and therefore flooring contaminated with feces and liquids.



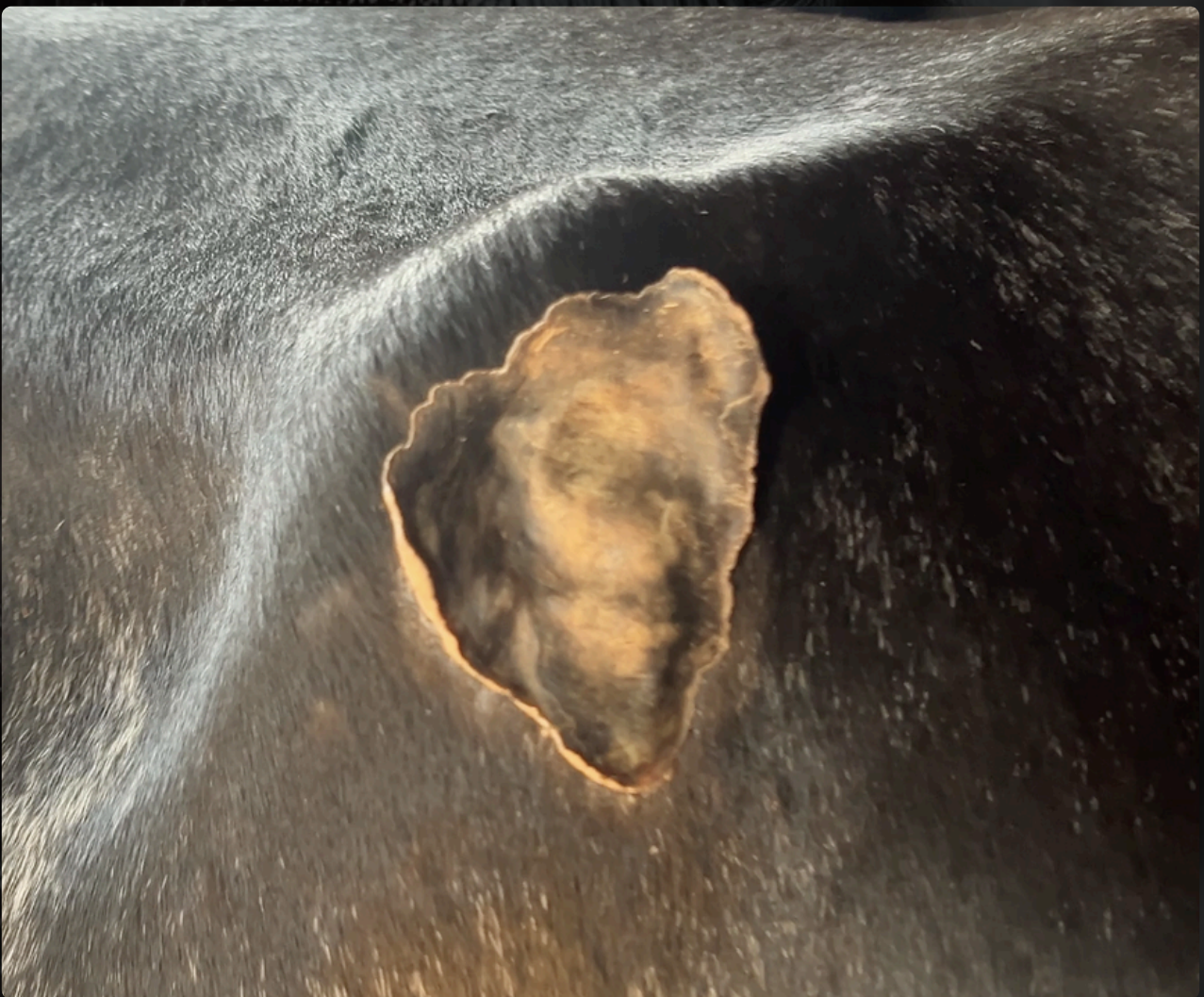
VIDEO #13 - CONT.

Other animals, including the calf, also show plaques of dirt on their hind quarters. Multiple animals have a very low BCS (Body Condition Score). For a description of the signs indicative of a low BCS, see the preceding sections.



VIDEO #14

One animal has a hairless skin lesion on the back. The lesion is covered by a thickened, dry, irregularly shaped structure that appears to overlie the skin. Its margins are dry and crusted and are markedly elevated from the underlying skin, giving the lesion a mushroom-cap-like appearance. The cause is unclear.



VIDEO #15

The footage documents multiple dairy cows and buffaloes tethered in an open stable. The area behind the animals is filled with piles of manure. One animal developed overgrown claws, see later section for more information. Almost all animals are tethered with local nose ropes, which are painful, see previous sections for more information.



VIDEO #15 - CONT.

Blood is visible on the floor under a standing cow. However, the footage does not provide sufficient detail to determine the cause and welfare consequences. Some animals show plaques of dirt on their hindquarters and flanks.



VIDEOS #16-17

The footage show multiple dairy cows from different breeds, buffaloes and young calves are kept in close conditions in a stable, some in makeshift structures from various materials. They are kept on hard, non-bedded flooring without dung channels or slatted manure areas leading to excess excreta on the floor.



VIDEOS #16-17 - CONT.

They are tethered with local nose ropes, which are painful. Some cattle suffer from severe plaques of dirt on their hindquarters. For description on the welfare consequences of the housing design, lack of cleanliness, and nose rope, see the preceding sections.



VIDEOS #18-19

The buffalo in the footage suffers from an abnormal, overgrown claw on the right hind leg, which needs corrective trimming. The dairy cow in the footage shows overgrown and irregularly shaped claws on her back legs. Continued tethering and lack of movement are risk factors for impaired claw health. Overgrown claws can lead to abnormal limb alignment, as well as pain and lameness in severe cases.



VIDEOS #20-21

The footage shows multiple tethered cows in an open stable, standing on plastic mats and feces. One cow suffers from hairless patches with reddish skin as well as mild swelling on the lateral side of her right tarsal joint. Plastic mats can mitigate the adverse effects of hard flooring; however, due to their abrasive properties, they cannot completely prevent the occurrence of skin lesions. Moreover, the plastic mats in the documented stable do not cover the entire floor surface and are already damaged, resulting in exposed and protruding edges that may adversely affect skin health. If the cow is not treated or brought to an area with soft bedding, the lesion may potentially worsen, leading to painful skin ulceration.



VIDEOS #22-23

Calf with alopecia on right hind leg, the stomach and naval area are wet. Alopecia can have multiple reasons, from neonatal diarrhea, prolonged contact with wet and dirty flooring to parasites or skin infections as well as self-sucking or cross-sucking behaviour. The calf needs veterinary care and an environment that supports their recovery and welfare.



VIDEO #24

Tie stalls with hard, non-bedded flooring without dung channels or slatted manure areas leading to excess excreta on the floor. Severe manure accumulation due to limited manure removal. Most cattle in the stable show low body scores.



VIDEO #24 - CONT.

One buffalo has an unusually long hair coat, while multifocal areas of alopecia are present. This combination may indicate an underlying dermatological, nutritional, or metabolic disorder. However, the underlying cause cannot be determined from the footage alone.



VIDEO #25

The footage documents cattle feeding from a trough. This feeding praxis stands in contrast to their ethological need of grazing while walking slowly. During grazing, the fore legs are positioned one in front of the other in what is known as the grazing stance. In this position, the animals' heads are held somewhat lower than when they are required to stand with both forelegs side by side. This enables them to reach grasses close to the ground. Feeding from a trough leads to an unnatural posture.



VIDEO #25 - CONT.

The cattle frequently lean their carpal joints against the trough. This mechanical pressure can lead to chronic swelling and painful tissue changes in the joint area over time. The footage shows that the feeding trough is relatively high, which somewhat reduces this risk. However, the problem of the unphysiological posture associated with feeding exclusively while standing remains. Animals show severe plaques of dirt on their hindquarters. Other issues documented are nose ropes, tethering and generally inadequate housing conditions.

VIDEO #26

The video shows a young tethered buffalo calf with an unusually long, shaggy hair coat. Next to the buffalo calf lies a young dairy cattle calf with a hairless patch and a lesion on the lateral side of the left tarsal joint. The hind quarter is generally wet and dirty. The lesion is most likely a painful pressure sore, which develops due to prolonged pressure on the skin of bony prominences, ultimately leading to tissue necrosis. The affected area shows signs of skin ulceration.



VIDEO #26 - CONT.

The lesion is located on an area that is contaminated with feces, which compromises hygiene and may provide a route for the transmission of pathogens. Multiple other young buffalo calves are tethered in the stable and show severe alopecia with scaling and crusting. This can occur as a primary condition, but is more likely occurring as a secondary condition, e.g. due to malnutrition. As the general health status of affected animals is often poor, and can include conditions such as fever or diarrhoea, veterinary examination and appropriate treatment are warranted.



VIDEO #26 - CONT.

The stable also houses adult dairy buffaloes in unsuitable housing conditions (tethering, manure accumulation), that have been described in greater detail in previous sections. Note that the stable may be constructed in a way that prevents the animals from experiencing positive outdoor climatic conditions, such as sunlight; however, this cannot be conclusively determined from the footage alone. Note that the BCS of the buffaloes is better compared to footage from other stables.



VIDEO #27

Multiple different cattle (breeds as well as age groups) are tethered outdoors on a sandy area with rubble. They face lack of protection from adverse weather conditions, lack of access to water and feed, and lack of opportunities for movement. Further information cannot be determined from the video footage. A more detailed assessment of the individual animals is likewise not possible based on the footage.

VIDEO #28

Multiple dairy cows are fed from plastic troughs. They are housed in a stable with corrugated metal walls and a concrete floor covered with feces. The image zooms in on the abdomen of a cow, where a protrusion is visible. However, based on the video footage, it cannot be determined whether this represents a pathological mass or a distension of the mammary vein.

VIDEO #29

The footage shows a conflict over access to feed between two tethered cattle. The larger animal on the left reaches their head towards the other animal on the right, pulls the latter's plastic feed trough towards themselves, and begins feeding from it. The smaller animal on the right attempts to regain access to the trough.



VIDEO #29 - CONT.

The larger, apparently dominant animal displays agonistic behaviours, including head movements towards the other animal that appear to constitute horn thrusts, although the animal has been dehorned. The sclera (the white of the eyes) is visible in both animals, which is consistent with heightened arousal and agitation during the conflict and may indicate a negative emotional state. Due to tethering, there is no possibility of escaping from negative interactions with the other animal. Cattle vary considerably in the physical distance they maintain from one another. The distance depends on the animals' social rank, their relationship with one another, individual preferences, and the activity they are engaged in. Under tethered housing conditions, however, cattle cannot choose their distance from other animals themselves, which negatively impairs their behavioural welfare.

VIDEO #30

The footage shows a standing tethered dairy cow, next to her lie two young tethered calves, lying on mats. The cow repeatedly places her left hind limb tentatively on the ground, which may indicate lameness. The right fore limb may show signs of overextension and the fore limbs may be positioned very close together, with the right foot rotated outward (toed-out conformation); however, the video is too short to allow a definitive assessment.



VIDEO #30 - CONT.

The right hind limb is contaminated with fecal material and manure is present on the ground next to the animal. The remainder of the floor appears clean but consists of concrete. In combination with the severely restricted movement associated with tethering, this flooring may contribute to health problems such as claw disorders and lameness, as cattle are adapted to moving on softer ground and grazing environments.

VIDEO #31

The video documents multiple tethered cattle from different breeds and age groups. The footage focuses on a calf that is tethered with a very short tether. Although a feed trough is positioned in front of the calf, access to water or milk is not visible. The tarsal joints are soiled, which is consistent with the concrete floor being contaminated with manure.



VIDEO #31 - CONT.

Next to the calf shown are the hind legs of an older cow. Her left hind quarter is wet and dirty. Of particular note is a round swelling, approximately golf ball-sized, on the right side of the genital area. The nature and underlying cause of this finding cannot be determined from the video footage alone. As the finding may be associated with pain, veterinary examination and appropriate treatment should be initiated.



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