



Abstract

# Distribution of Animal-Powered Logging for Timber Harvesting in Hungarian State-Owned Forests <sup>†</sup>

Ákos Malatinszky \* and Csilla Ficsor

Department of Nature Conservation and Landscape Management, Institute for Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences, 2100 Godollo, Hungary

\* Correspondence: malatinszky.akos@uni-mate.hu

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**Abstract:** Small-scale forestry and sustainable forest operations represent a key interest in Europe. Although animal-powered logging could be, in part, considered less harmful to topsoil, wood stands, saplings, and natural values than heavy machines, this method is rarely covered by scientific studies. Our main aim was to explore the occurrences of horse logging in Hungarian state-owned forests, especially those that are close to nature areas. We contacted every forest district in Hungary ( $n = 116$ ) by phone in 2013 and 2021. While 39 out of the total 116 Hungarian state forestries hired teams that apply animal logging (a draft horse in every case) in 2013, their number fell to 24 in 2021. Within this data, the number of constantly hired horse logging contractors fell by 53.3% (from 30 to 14). Only three forest districts owned a horse stock in 2013 (the others employed contractors), while five owned them in 2021. However, none of them used horses for logging (only for touristic and hunting activities). All teams operated at least partially on nature conservation areas in both studied years. Despite this negative tendency, 34 out of the 44 forestries that operate on hilly and mountainous areas still claim horse logging in 2021, but they cannot find suitable people and horses. It is important to conserve animal logging and promote it among potential loggers with training and financial incentives.

**Keywords:** animal logging; draft horse; forest district; low impact; log skidding; nature conservation area; small-scale harvesting system



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