

## **Equine Development**

*Equines are one of the important constituents of livestock of the division. The State has the highest equine population in the country and 20% of 11.86 lakh equine population of the country are in J&K and out of the 20% of equine population of the state around 58% exists in Jammu division. As per the quick tabulation of the latest census carried out during 2007-08, out of a total population of horses, ponies and mules of the country 22.11%, 45.30% and 30.91% respectively are present in J&K State and of the total population of equines of the state 52%, 58% and 92% of horses, ponies and mules exist in Jammu division. These animals are mostly owned by socially and economically deprived, landless, small and marginal farmers and plays a vital role in socio-economic welfare of this population. The equines in the division play an important role in tourism industry including pilgrim tourism. These animals are generally employed to carry men and material through treacherous routes to highland tourist places, pilgrimage cites and other far flung areas. During the peak season around 18000 horses, ponies and mules are engaged at MataVaishno Devi Shrine only.*

*The equine population in the division has poor genetic potential due to lack of organised and planned equine development activity in the division. Over the years the need has been felt to give a big boost to hitherto neglected equine development programme in the division. The Department has established Equine Breeding farm with the prime objective of production of high quality donkey stallions to be used for upgradation of local equine population in the division, The department, besides, providing health cover, disease diagnostic facilities is providing*

*breeding coverage for genetic upgradation of equine population by stationing donkey stallions at various field centres for natural coverage..*