

DONKEYS for AFRICA

Promoting communication about donkey welfare

www.donkeysforafrica.org

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Skins trade: Essential we follow through with enforcement

A ban on the donkey skin trade was adopted by the heads of state at the African Union Assembly in Addis Ababa, in February 2024.

IMAGE: SERGIO LACUEVA

This decision was the result of the tireless efforts of animal welfare organisations and donkey welfare bodies across the globe. Not only large and well-known organisations, but also numerous smaller regional and local bodies and individuals had expressed their objections and concerns about the effects of the trade on both the donkeys and the people who rely on them. It took years of work, but finally, the voices of these organisations and individuals have been heard.

Responses from advocates of the ban

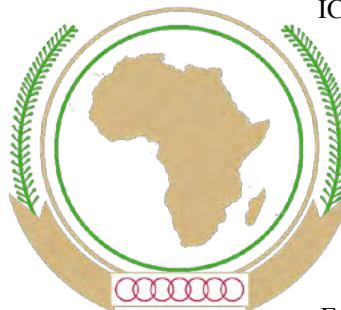
Linda Edwards, Chief Executive of SPANA, said ‘This is a historic development for working animal welfare and represents an enormous achievement for SPANA and our partners. The moratorium will save the lives of donkeys across Africa and will also help safeguard the future of the communities they support through their daily work. We know there is still work to be done to ensure the ban on the trade is enforced and illegal operations do not continue.’

Marianne Steele, Chief Executive of The Donkey Sanctuary, commented ‘This is a truly momentous result for the welfare of donkeys in Africa. This agreement from leaders of the African Union strikes at the heart of the brutal skin trade. It’s our hope that this decision will act as a catalyst for the rest of the world to act now, to not just save our donkey populations but to actively recognise their value and protect them properly.’

Dr Otieno Mtula, Regional Campaigns and Advocacy Manager for The Donkey Sanctuary, said ‘This milestone moment is just the beginning – this decision needs to be implemented and enforced by every country that makes up the African Union.’

Dr Calvin Solomon Onyango, Director of The Donkey Sanctuary in Kenya: ‘Here in Kenya we see first-hand the devastating impact of the donkey skin trade. Not just the horrific treatment of these gentle animals, but also the effect it has on women, children and the communities who rely on donkeys for their social and economic lives. We are therefore extremely pleased that Africa’s Heads of States have banned the slaughter of donkeys for their skins, across the continent. Based on what we have seen here in Kenya, if the exploitation of donkeys were to continue at the rate we had been seeing, in another three to six years, donkeys could be joining rhino and elephants as an endangered species in Africa.’

Roly Owers, Chief Executive of World Horse Welfare, said ‘Of course this significant milestone will only benefit donkeys if these decisions are now put in practice and collectively ICWE stands ready to help to do just that.’



Dr Raphael Kinoti, Regional Director, Brooke East Africa responded that ‘We must all applaud AU heads of states for taking these bold and drastic measures for a good cause. We urge all AU members to uphold the decision for the good of all.’

Emmanuel Sarr, Regional Representative, Brooke West Africa: ‘This is a historic moment. Even if it is not the war that we have just won, we have at least won this African battle which, I hope, will one day be global. I will be proud to tell my children that I witnessed and contributed to this moment.’

Each country now has to implement the ban legally, make sure it is enforced and that transgressions receive harsh penalties.

Realities of the skins trade

We asked Janneke Merckx, Campaigns Manager (Skins) at The Donkey Sanctuary, to comment on the AU moratorium on the skins trade.

“This ban will inevitably move part of the trade underground, as we have seen in countries who have previously banned the trade, and that there is a number of people currently relying on the trade for their livelihoods.

However, we have all witnessed atrocities in this trade whether it was legal and (somewhat) regulated or not, and even a fully regulated trade would be entirely unsustainable. And when you weigh up the relatively small percentage of people who currently make a living from the trade versus the millions of people relying on donkeys as working animals to sustain their livelihoods, it shows that the trade harms many more people than it benefits.

While the demand exists, there will be a donkey skin trade. Our hope is that by disrupting the trade in source countries,

making it more and more difficult for the industry to source skins in this way, we can tip the scales towards investment in sustainable raw materials instead.”



IMAGE: TDS

REPORT ADDRESSING THE GLOBAL TRADE

This report by The Donkey Sanctuary (TDS) focuses on donkeys in global trade: covering wildlife crime, welfare, biosecurity, the impact on women, and implications for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- There has been an estimated 160 per cent increase in ejiao production in the five years between 2016 and 2021.
- Based on current manufacturer reports and available data, the minimum number of skins required by 2021 was 5.9 million.
- If production continues to grow at the present rate, this could reach a minimum of 6.8 million skins required by 2027.
- China’s donkey herd has diminished from 11 million in 1992 to just under two million.
- Donkeys suffer at every stage of the process, from inhumane capture, to transport to slaughter.

Wildlife traffickers

Business-to-business (B2B) and social media sites act as platforms through which illegal wildlife products are sold alongside donkey skins.

Biosecurity

When animals and their products are transported, there is a risk that they may spread harmful diseases to humans and animals. This includes zoonotic diseases.

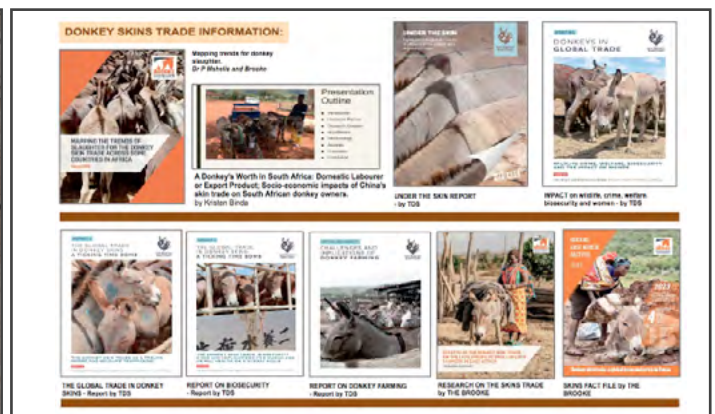
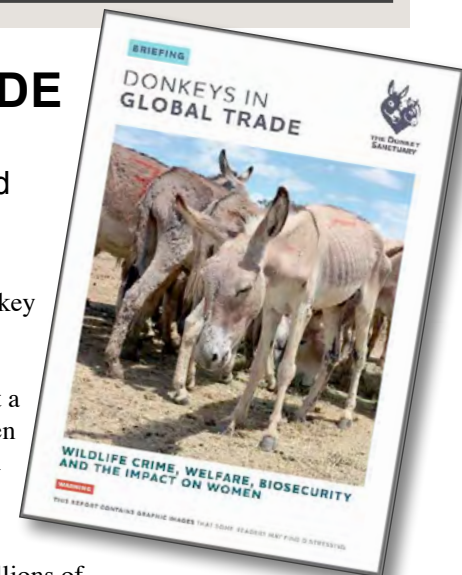
Impact on women

The loss of a working donkey can have a devastating impact on a donkey-dependent family. Without a donkey, it is usually women or children who are forced to carry the load.

SDGs

Donkeys are critical to millions of people and the global trade in donkey skins undermines global efforts to achieve the SDGs.

The report ends with a series of recommendations to address the above factors. The reports by TDS and other information about the skins trade are available in our library.



Integration of women in the veterinary sector in West Africa

A WOAHP study in Senegal and Togo identifies constraints and opportunities relating to women in the field of animal health. It also explores how veterinary services can promote gender equality in the sector. The study focused on education for veterinary paraprofessionals, career pathways and animal health service delivery.

Both women and men used to stereotype women as physically weak and scared of animals. However, these stereotypes are fading in younger generations. According to the research, female students tend to have better attendance and academic performance than their male counterparts, although levels of oral participation are considered to be comparable for both genders.

However, lecturers believe that, compared to male students, female students are less likely to take the initiative, show leadership skills, be proficient with digital tools, and participate actively in practical classes.

Women encounter various difficulties in getting promoted or establishing their own businesses. When it comes to career

<https://rr-africa.woah.org/en/news/still-a-minority-integration-of-women-in-the-veterinary-sector/>

paths, women tend to work in urban areas and the public sector due to factors like security and the need to balance work with family life.

Veterinary regulatory bodies and professional organisations have a crucial role in promoting women in veterinary and veterinary para-professional (VPP) fields.

This should be done by:

- promoting the profession of women VPPs among livestock farmers,
- adapting practices and interventions to alleviate constraints faced by women,
- helping reconcile women's work-life balance with the constraints of working in rural areas, and
- promoting the representation of women in decision-making bodies.

Do other organisations, countries and veterinary bodies experience this? In some countries female veterinarians vastly outnumber male colleagues. We would love to hear your comments.

Village Donkey Champions teach wellness & humane education

Michelle Griffith from *amaTrac uluntu* in South Africa, reports:

www.facebook.com/workingdonkeyowners/



amaTrac uluntu's One Health One Welfare donkey work this year is to teach Village Donkey Champions how to provide basic treatments for their donkeys and to provide humane education for learners in seven village schools. We are grateful to World Horse Welfare for supporting this work.

Basic wellness

The donkey owners we work with in the Tyhume Valley seldom provide even basic treatments for their donkeys, and problems can become severe when not treated. In addition, untreated and septic conditions can be transferred to the humans that work with them. As in most rural areas, veterinary services are rarely used.

Two of the common conditions that owners can treat themselves are wounds and eye allergies/infections. In the first

training session, the Champions learn what a healthy donkey and environment should look like. This gives owners a baseline to then be able to determine if their donkeys are not well.

Humane education

It is always a delight to engage with children and to be a part of their change in how they view donkeys and the environment we live in.


We presented our first session in four schools last term. Although learners identified the work donkeys do as helping the community, baseline views remain the same as in most areas we have worked in: donkeys are useless, they kick and bite, and feel no pain. Young boys reported that donkeys are only useful as transport. They steal them at night to visit other villages. One such young boy presented himself with a broken arm because of whipping a donkey while galloping it to another village.



Left: Teaching about healthy donkey ears - without cutting.
Right: Humane Education at one of the primary schools in the area.



A practical solution *water for the water carriers*

 Donkeys in Tanzania are used to fetch water for domestic use and for other animals. In the process their own need to drink is often overlooked.

Meru Animal Welfare Organisation has addressed this problem by developing a water trough that can easily be moved to different water sources.

Affordable plastic tanks that are easily available, are each split to create two water troughs. This is also a good way of recycling the plastic tanks. Plastic is better than metal because in metal troughs the water would heat up in the sun.

The cost per trough is reasonable and provides access to water for more than 100 donkeys per day. MAWO says “Please make sure your donkeys have drinking water before the journey back home with your water.”



TEACHING MODULES NOW IN FRENCH

The animal welfare teaching modules by VETS UNITED for animal health professionals are now available in French. Register to access the French version:

www.teaching-animal-welfare.org/fr

Forward this information to your French colleagues and anyone who might be interested.



Animal-Kind International Grant programme

Animal-Kind International is planning their 2024 Africa-Based Animal Welfare Organization Grant Programme.

Applications will be considered from 21 May 2024. Supporting documents are on their website at:

<https://www.animal-kind.org/grant-program-2024>

Applications close on 21 June 2024.

Animal-Kind International accepts proposals from animal welfare organisations based in Africa that help cats, dogs, donkeys, or horses, and secondarily from organisations working to improve the welfare of “livestock” (i.e., cows, goats, sheep, chickens). Eligible organisations must have been active in the animal welfare sector for at least three years and be able to demonstrate results.

BRAZIL BUSY BANNING SKIN TRADE

Apart from Africa banning the donkey skin trade, the progress in Brazil is also heartening. The bill to ban donkey and horse slaughter has passed both the Agricultural and Environmental Commissions in Brazil’s Congress, and will next go to the Parliamentary Constitution and Justice Committee.

From the Editor

The World Veterinary Association (WVA) held its 2024 international conference in South Africa, with a mouth-watering array of topics and renowned presenters.

From presentations on “The resilience of animals and doctors of veterinary medicine under conditions of war in frames of One Health” by professionals based in the Ukraine, to the 10th WVA Global One Health Summit, to the future success of veterinary women – there was something guaranteed to interest everyone lucky enough to attend.




Donkey-focused topics included a seminar on the Donkey Skin Trade, presented by Joe Collins, Chief Veterinary Advisor at The Donkey Sanctuary. Joe also presented How to perform field castration of the donkey – something that many of our readers would have loved to attend.

This rich feast of information and interaction with colleagues remains a mirage for many of us, while we confront the daily realities of field work under challenging conditions.

But comparisons are unfair, and welfare workers battling against great odds

deserve equally as much respect and admiration as accomplished academics.

Never underestimate the value of your work – whatever it may be. Every contribution helps to build a foundation of knowledge.

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