

The true value of donkeys

New ideas are emerging where donkeys can again play a wider role in agriculture and other 'low impact' sustainable activities.

There is a growing trend towards sustainable and productive farming systems using animal drawn implements.

Chris Garrett of The Donkey Sanctuary states that "Equine power is not just something out of history, to be dismissed. With the right investment, the right tools, and the right training it is a viable power source, and an organic one for the future. The heavy horses, the mules and the donkeys are an amazing resource that has fallen out of fashion, but they will be back."

Peta Jones of Donkey Power points out: "Tractors and related equipment are expensive to buy and maintain, apart from polluting the environment.

The use of large machines which effect wholesale clearances and overturning of the soil are now recognized as being the worst imaginable approach to agriculture. The use of less damaging machines and a donkey-drawn ripper planter is the ideal technology. Cattle and horses can do it too, of course, but as heavier animals they can have their own bad effect on soils and are also heavier consumers of water and vegetation."

Imagine a world where working with these animals is a desirable and respected option to mechanisation. Donkeys will then be accorded the attention and respect they deserve at all levels of society.



Donkeys have long played a crucial role in the survival and sustainability of communities with no alternative resources.

Whether tilling the soil, drawing carts, transporting people, goods or crops, donkeys are an indispensable resource in remote areas where fuel-dependent vehicles are a rarity. In developing areas donkeys also work effectively and uncomplainingly. Using 'donkey power' as a more intelligent method of co-operative energy is slowly emerging as an alternative solution, challenging past perceptions held around the world.

A sustainable development guide

The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare have published a brochure showing how the welfare of working equids contributes to achieving the UN goals of sustainable development.

Members of the United Nations have endorsed 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare have produced a brochure showing how the welfare of working equids contributes to achieving six of these goals, by benefitting some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society. Simple interventions can empower owners to keep their working equids healthy and ensure their continued productive benefit.

These interventions include improved access to good, affordable harnessing, hoof care and veterinary interventions, and, above all, the empowerment of their owners with better knowledge of equine management. Many welfare organisations caring for donkeys are doing just that.

By providing knowledge to owners of working donkeys, the lives of these animals and their owners are improved.



This brochure is available on our website

CLICK

Protecting donkeys through legislation

The African Animal Welfare Strategy of the African Union (AWSA) has as its mission:

“An Africa where animals are treated as sentient beings.”

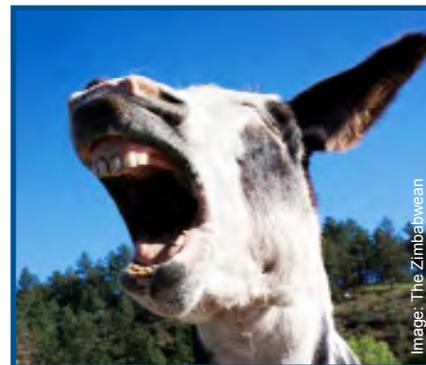


Image: The Zimbabwean

Laws protecting animals, their well-being and their treatment at the hand of man, exist in many African countries. Unfortunately these laws are often very old, with insufficient punishments to act as effective deterrents.

DfA invited comments from our readers and correspondents from around Africa.

Correspondents from **Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Namibia** and **Botswana** mentioned that their animal protection laws are very old and outdated, and need reviewing. Such reviews are currently in process in South Africa and Botswana.

Existing laws are not enforced

Complaints that the laws are not enforced adequately, are not punitive enough and that corruption results in perpetrators escaping the consequences of their offences, came from **Kenya, Malawi** and **Tanzania**. Frank Alkado of ASPA in Tanzania said: “There is the Tanzania Animal Welfare Act of 2008. This act is not enforced and implemented fully. ASPA is working on this but more support is needed.”

Charities instigate prosecutions

Generally prosecutions were instigated by animal welfare charities in almost all the countries. Julius Chulu from **Malawi** stated that “Enforcement is done through collaboration with NGOs, Police, and the Veterinary Department. More needs to be done in terms of reviewing the act as well as making people aware of its availability and importance.”

A positive report came from Gambia

“There are animal welfare laws but many people, including the police, are unaware of them. However through radio programmes and a growing number of Gambian animal welfare advocates, things are changing pretty fast. The police have

invited The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust to speak on their radio programme in local languages every week. It is all very positive,” said Heather Armstrong, Director.

The invisibility of donkeys to politicians

A problem is the invisibility of working equids to governments. Historically, they have paid little attention to improving the health and welfare of these animals.

A disturbing response came from FAWCAM in **Cameroon**:

“It is over thirteen years now since we submitted a Draft Text on Animal Legislation to the Minister of Livestock Fisheries and Animal Industries and to the Minister of Justice and even to the Prime Minister of Cameroon for further necessary action with Parliament but to no avail. The matter is still kept in abeyance, and we do not know what to do next. This means that there are

no laws yet in Cameroon protecting animal welfare. We are however still following up the issue with the Ministry.”

Why we need the law to help

The implementation of welfare legislation is crucial for working donkeys, as their well-being impacts directly on their owners’ quality of life. Short-term gains through overwork, over-loading and neglect are not only cruel but also short-sighted. Where education and appeals to decency fail, deliberate offences must be seen to be punished severely.

“Never ever be afraid to do what is right, especially if the well-being of a person or an animal is at stake. Society’s punishments are small compared to the wounds we inflict on our soul when we look the other way.”

– Martin Luther King Jr



Donkeys are often in the front line of experiencing abuse, due to working conditions or ingrained prejudice.

Share your thoughts with us:

Let us know how you envisage a more caring and effective animal welfare environment.
Email editor@donkeysforafrica.org.

The AWSA document is available on our website

CLICK

The mission of The Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad (SPANA) is to "Improve the welfare of working animals in the world's poorest communities, through treatment, training and teaching."

Contact Ms Pippa Young,
SPANA Country Director
(Botswana), at
info@spana.org.bw

Donkeys in Botswana have a dedicated mobile clinic...

... and a team supporting global donkey welfare issues

SPANA Botswana was opened in 2015 and is led by country director, Ms Pippa Young. It operates the first mobile clinic specialising in providing support to working animals around Botswana.

The immediate need in Botswana was to establish veterinary care and treatment as well as animal welfare education in a land where vast distances and a lack of infrastructure often create logistical challenges.

"Since the launch of SPANA Botswana my team has treated over 10 000 animals via our mobile units" says Pippa. Her team visits communities, treating animals and educating owners. The primary conditions encountered in their visits are wounds, lameness, ocular and abdominal problems. SPANA also distributes free equipment including bits, headcollars, saddle packs and hobbles, enabling welfare conscious care.

Collecting information

In addition to the daily duties and emergency care provided on a 24/7 basis, this team has initiated and participated in the collection of disease data, parasite information and welfare issues, which SPANA presents to government agencies and also uses to educate local and national leaders, promoting care and to lead advocacy change.

TREAT, TRAIN & TEACH

Three guidelines at SPANA:

- 1) **TREAT** by providing free veterinary care when animals suffer or when emergencies strike.
- 2) **TRAIN** by building expertise among veterinarians and promoting humane care by animal owners.
- 3) **TEACH** by helping children to develop positive beliefs, respect and compassion towards animals.

Countering the skins trade

SPANA has been intensively involved in addressing the inhumane donkey skins trade. Pippa and her team are committed to seeing a halt to the trade across Africa until its impact is assessed. "This impact is often unrecognised, with thousands of donkeys being slaughtered in inhumane conditions, and serious long-term consequences for local human populations who depend on working animals for their livelihoods" she said. In tackling the skins problem, SPANA works alongside The Donkey Sanctuary, Brooke and World Horse Welfare, to raise global awareness of the issue and assist authorities to keep track of the legal and increasingly illicit trade in donkey skins. SPANA also works closely with a number of government agencies in Africa to implement bans or restrictions on the slaughter of donkeys and export of donkey products.

Creating a change

SPANA Botswana has been instrumental in addressing a major welfare issue, affecting hundreds of abandoned donkeys at an abattoir, which then led to a national change in policy. Enforcement is critical as in some cases bans on the trade of

donkey skins have caused this trade to move underground.



Young donkey owners displaying the new halters supplied by SPANA for their donkeys at Samochima, a rural area in the remote north of Botswana.

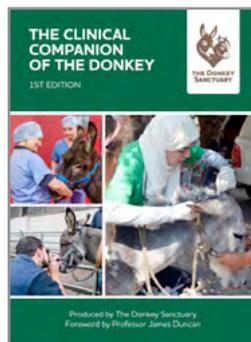
Activities conducted by SPANA include:

- Helping to run workshops with local police forces and regulators in countries such as Zimbabwe to ensure that laws and regulations are effectively imposed.
- The SPANA team and other local groups successfully lobbied to prevent a major new donkey abattoir from opening in Zimbabwe.
- In Tanzania, SPANA provides support to a local partner to educate Maasai people in how to protect and secure their animals.
- Botswana community education programmes raised awareness of the 'ejiao' industry and the long term economic impact of selling working animals.

New reference book about donkeys

The Clinical Companion of the Donkey

This textbook, compiled by The Donkey Sanctuary, concentrates on the differences in the equine species that are unique to donkeys. It includes a chapter on donkey behaviour, fundamental to understanding this unique animal and for effective and safe handling and treatment. Ben Hart, behaviourist at The Donkey Sanctuary says: "Donkeys aren't small horses with big ears, their behaviour is very different, so understanding the fundamental difference between donkey and horse behaviour is crucial in the early recognition of problems and correct treatment of donkeys and mules. The donkeys' stoic nature, reduced flight mechanism and tendencies to show less fear signals are vital to understand for anyone who wants to make informed diagnoses when treating donkeys."



To download a free copy of The Clinical Companion of the Donkey please visit - <https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/clinical-companion-of-the-donkey>

WEVA Congress

The 2018 World Equine Veterinary Association (WEVA) Congress: April 21st -23rd in Beijing, China, with more than 50 lecturers from Australia, Belgium, Chile, China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Saturday 21st April: the official launch of The Clinical Companion of the Donkey at this conference.



International Donkey Day

This day is celebrated in May every year when we honour the contribution made by donkeys to the welfare of the communities that depend on these animals.

Let us know how you celebrated the role played by these humble and long-suffering servants of mankind in your country. Send us images and personal stories to share in our next issue.

A lighter moment...

We told you donkeys assist at construction sites..



www.askideas.com

"Is the legalisation of donkey slaughtering in Kenya necessary?"

A National Donkey Welfare Campaign debate was held in the college of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences at the University of Nairobi recently. The motion was:

"Is the legalisation of donkey slaughtering in Kenya necessary?"

Representing opposing points of view, were: donkeys need to be protected, the current rate of slaughter is alarming and they may become extinct. Donkeys underpin the livelihood of "poor communities" in Kenya.

Legalizing the meat trade will bring about healthy ways to slaughter them as opposed to the uncivilised slaughtering going on. A lot of business-minded people would take the opportunity to invest in donkey breeding to feed the market, hence creating employment and income.

Donkey meat is edible and legal in Kenya. The problem is the illegal and domestic poaching of donkeys which are then slaughtered for the skin trade. The skins are easier to transport and more valuable than the meat. The discarded meat goes to butcheries and is sold to consumers without their knowledge. If it were slaughtered in a humane manner within a legalized donkey slaughter house, the consumer would be told before the purchase of the meat.

We trust that healthy debate resulted in informed attitudes.



Corrections - Issue #5

Animals for Work referred to Dr Bojia Endebu Duguma and Mohamed Aly Tawfik, and the brick kilns are at El Saf. The youth initiative in Zimbabwe was assisted by Mwamfumba. Our apologies for the misspellings.

From the editor

Communication is a two-way street, a process of sending and receiving information among people. Communication facilitates the spread of knowledge and forms relationships between people. Communication is vital for change and improvement. After just one year we see that Donkeys for Africa is an effective communication portal, sharing awareness and knowledge about projects, organisations large and small, successes and concerns. There is on-going interaction on our facebook page and our website provides additional resources which are being accessed on a regular basis. We are confident that donkeys benefit from the expertise we share and that you, the people involved, are recognised for their dedication. And we enjoy communicating about donkeys – we hope you do too! We welcome your comments and contributions and look forward to growing our shared passion for donkey welfare throughout Africa.



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