

Study in India will impact African donkeys

A paper “Mapping the Indian donkey and mule population and potential intervention strategies and partners” was recently published by the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Kenya, and The Donkey Sanctuary, UK.



IMAGE:ILRI

Although the estimated donkey population in developing countries has risen over the last four decades, this research found that their numbers have decreased significantly in India. Recent livestock census data shows that the mule population there has decreased by 67% and the donkey population by 71% compared to a decade ago. The price of donkeys has risen accordingly, adding to the difficulty of owning and working with them.

The reduced utilization of donkeys in various sectors in India was due to urbanisation, social development, mechanisation and lack of grazing land. India lost 31% (5.65 million hectares) of its grassland area within a decade, largely due to overgrazing, poor management and deforestation.

The study also found that donkeys and mules are owned by underprivileged communities that use these animals in breeding, the brick kiln industry and transport of construction materials.

Households that were involved in breeding equines were found to be the least earning, prone to food insecurity and lacking access to services such as cooking gas, electricity and animal shelters.

Implications of the declining donkey populations

- Loss of income and alternate livelihood for donkey-dependent communities.
- Loss of genetic biodiversity of donkeys.

ILRI conducted this baseline survey only for six states so there is a need for gathering of further data on working equines and the communities that own them.

Potential intervention strategies and partners are identified in the research. One aspect mentioned is the emergence of a donkey milk value chain.

Comments from readers of the study

The donkey skin trade does not seem to be among the reasons for the decline in numbers of donkeys. Is there perhaps an ‘informal’ trade between India and China?

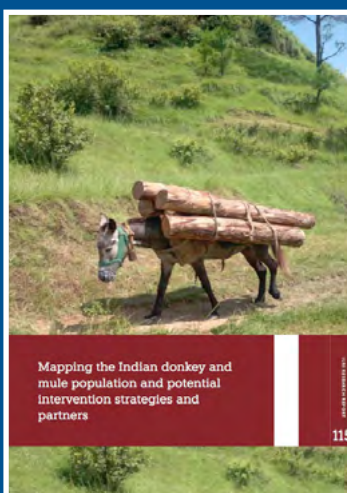
The study does not mention the cross-border flow of donkeys and mules to Nepal, nor donkey fairs generally. There is also little mention of the effects of climate change.

Donkeys for Africa is aware of declining numbers in working donkey populations in parts of Africa.

What lessons can be learnt from this research in India – what commonalities exist with African conditions?

How can we explore and propose ways of conserving the donkey populations in Africa?

Please share your thoughts and experiences.




Mules have decreased by 67% and the donkey population by 71%

The paper is available in the DfA library

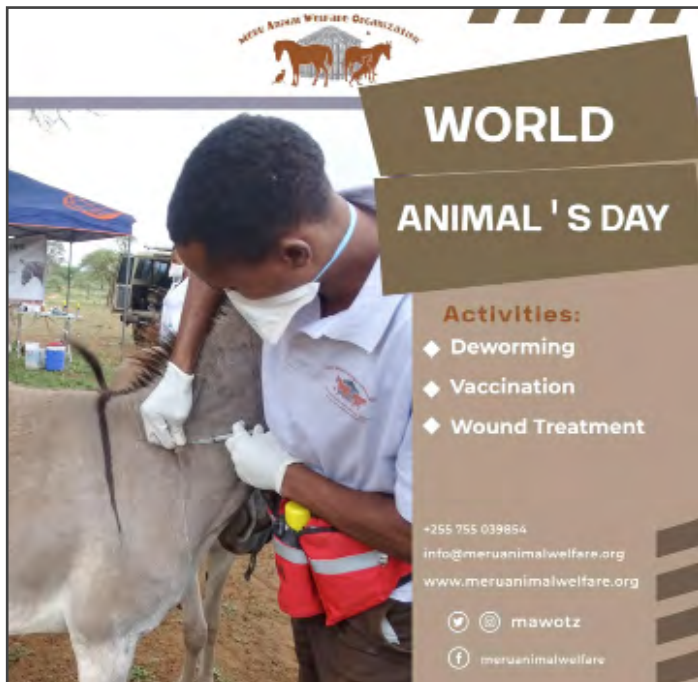
World Animal Day

World Animal Day is observed on 4 October. This year's theme was "Great or Small, Love Them All". The goal is to highlight the importance of all beings, great and small, and allow even the most overlooked animals to be appreciated for what and who they are.


 In Samochima Village in Botswana, the Okavango Animal Welfare Trust administered deworming and wound treatment medication.

 Meru Animal Welfare Organisation in Tanzania offered free deworming, wound treatment, and vaccinations for animals.

The Donkey Sanctuary's CEO, Marianne Steele, issued a statement explaining the special donkey-human connection: "Side-by-side, donkeys and humans have fetched water, tilled fields and endured war, famine and drought. When natural disasters occur, donkeys guide us through treacherous conditions, providing relief in hostile environments. Donkeys are curious, intelligent and sensitive creatures, able to feel a wide range of emotions. It is this sense of empathy and loyalty that makes them such valued and trusted companions."



Fresh water collection reservoirs built

 The Donkey Sanctuary (UK) recently joined forces with Action Aid on a project in Sissala, northern Ghana. New boreholes were drilled in strategic locations and the water collection reservoirs were reconstructed. Consequently less time is now spent in collecting water. This results in better hydration for the donkeys as well as improved collection and domestic use of water.

A further aim of the project is to offer donkey welfare and veterinary training to help women provide their animals with good nutrition, care, proper hydration and disease control. Training manuals on key concepts of donkey welfare were distributed to teachers and children in Sissala. Training sessions focussed on increasing awareness of donkeys as sentient animals with feelings, deserving humane treatment. Other training includes veterinary care to curb animal disease, and training on making suitable, affordable harnesses. This supports community initiatives by using local products, which in turn reduce injury and wounds, helping donkeys to be more comfortable and productive.

To find out more about Action Aid and to see where they function in Africa, visit <https://actonaid.org/countries>



The improved water collection points also help in hydrating the donkeys, while owners are updated about donkey care. IMAGE:TDS

Jarjeer Mule & Donkey Refuge

www.jarjeer.org | www.facebook.com/jarjeermules



Mission: To relieve the suffering of working animals in Morocco in need of care and to encourage and assist owners of equines to maintain standards required to keep animals safe and in good health.

The logo is clear, irrespective of what language is spoken, and signals shelter. The Refuge is based on such square buildings.

Most donkeys, mules, and horses in **Morocco** are working animals, used to remove refuse, transport goods, and to assist tourists. **Jarjeer Refuge** is situated in the Berber village of Oumnass, 24 km south of Marrakech in the foothills of the High Atlas Mountains.

After retiring from the legal profession in England, Susan Machin and her husband Charles decided to live in Morocco as they had a connection with the kingdom going back several decades. They adopted a young donkey called Tommy from SPANA in Marrakesh and shortly thereafter a female donkey as its companion. Soon they had accumulated 12 rescued donkeys.

Susan felt very strongly that working animals in Morocco should have retirement rights at the end of their lives, and receive the best care and treatment when injured. This led to the establishment of Jarjeer Refuge in 2014. There are now over 260 equids at the Refuge.

Jarjeer employs 22 staff who are all trained to deal with equines. The donkeys, horses and mules know the staff and respond to them very willingly. The government prefers Jarjeer to employ Moroccans; that is very important in terms of animal welfare and the way forward. The relationship between the animals and the Moroccan staff has resulted in enhanced human awareness of what caring really means.

Susan relates that “Our staff are magnificent and show incredible skill and kindness towards the animals. Every animal is assessed on a daily basis. We also enjoy the services of a local vet who is compassionate and supportive. We have become the biggest consumers of animal food in

the area. All the food has to be brought in as we live in desert conditions. We also have a truck that we use to collect donkeys and mules from all over Morocco and the time of two of our staff is very much taken up with travelling the length and breadth of the Kingdom.”

Visitors to the Refuge

Tourists are heartened to visit a place of peace and calm where Moroccans are working in absolute tranquillity with the animals. “Public visits have become a joy to us! We meet so many interesting people from all over the world and we try to make their visit as pleasant as possible. We never ask for money or donations but we do give them a card with all our details when they leave. We never want to become a commercial enterprise as the work with the animals is the priority” says Susan. “Creating a secure work place with prospects for the staff not only assists the team but in turn benefits the local area and their families. Jarjeer would not be what it is today if it was not for our team.”

Devastating earthquake

A serious earthquake struck the Atlas Mountains late on Friday 8 September 2023. A large number of charitable organisations quickly established Morocco Earthquake responses to provide immediate and urgent veterinary treatment to injured and abandoned animals. Working alongside such charities as SPANA and Welttierschutzgesellschaft (WTG), e.V. Network for Animals, Jarjeer provided refuge for animals affected by the earthquake. They also assisted in distributing animal food where it was needed most.



Emergency feed delivery being provided by Jarjeer in the aftermath of the earthquake.

From Meru Animal Welfare Organisation (MAWO) – Tanzania

www.meruanimalwelfare.org

Donkey Clinics

MAWO continues to conduct mobile rural donkey clinics throughout their region of Tanzania. So far this year more than 1,000 donkeys have been treated for various medical and health problems. They also hosted ten students and two professors from Kansas University (USA), who assisted at the clinics.

Donkey Welfare Champions

This programme trains women community leaders on donkey welfare issues, how to make humane harnessing, and how to prevent injuries and disease. Donkeys travel to and from markets with heavy loads, with improper harnessing causing injuries.

Volunteers

MAWO welcomes volunteers and visitors from around the world. Whether you have veterinary training or are just an avid animal lover who wants to support Tanzanian communities, MAWO can curate an unforgettable volunteer experience for you. Details at www.facebook.com/Meruanimalwelfare

A big thank you to SPANA and WHW for their on-going support.

Animal Law Reform update

In our previous newsletter (#39) we reported on the webinar series presented by Animal Law Reform South Africa (ALRSA). Topics addressed included Wild Animals, the Constitution and the Environment; Companion Animals and Society; and Enforcing Animal Protection Laws and Farmed Animals.

The project team is in the process of compiling a document from the input received, to make concrete recommendations about the pathway to legal reform. They plan to release this document in the first quarter of 2024 for further input. There will also be further consultations with the animal protection community and other key stakeholders in 2024.

Apology for giving the link as www.animallawreform.org.za to their website in our last issue: it is www.animallawreform.org while their email contact is contact@AnimalLawProject.org.za

From the Editor

Our only constant is change.

We all face changes every day – whether it is a simple change in the weather, a change to our planned schedule or catastrophic changes in our environment such as earthquakes, floods, fires, drought or war. Change affects us all and we each deal with change in our own way.

The fear of change is also a constant. We can draw up risk management plans, succession plans and strategic plans to create a sense of security and preparedness. Making sure that these plans are practical and ready to be implemented immediately and effectively in a crisis, is another story.

Collaboration leads to action

Animal Aid Abroad is funding outreach activities to help working donkeys in the town of Makhanda in South Africa.

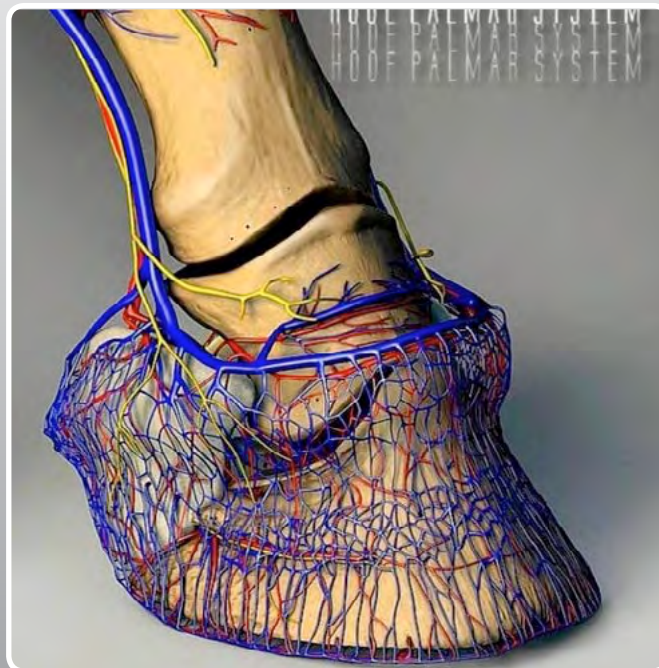
Local veterinarians, together with *BlindLove South Africa*, will provide health checks, gelding opportunities, hoof and dental care, and improve harnesses and carts over a period of time. Donkey owners will be consulted about new bridles modelled on those from *Namibian Animal Welfare Association*. *Finnegan's Tools* in Ireland donated hoof sanders and picks.

Staff from BlindLove and veterinarians involved in the project also attended a welfare workshop on One Health, One Welfare, presented by *Esel'tjesrus Donkey Sanctuary*.

BLOOD VESSELS INSIDE THE HOOF

www.facebook.com/heartandsoulconfidencebasedhorsemanship

The palmar portion of the foot is made up of several important structures that support the foot and the limb of the equid. Blood is pumped through arteries to the hoof and is assisted in its return through a “pumping mechanism” in the hoof. There are no muscles in the lower leg or hoof to aid in the return of venous blood to the heart. Look at the intricate mesh of blood vessels taking blood to and from the hoof. This underlines the importance of healthy, correctly shaped hooves.



Beware of being so caught up in providing day-to-day relief in your animal welfare work that you can't put aside the time to consider possible risks, see them as opportunities, and plan actions to implement in a crisis.

Funders also like to see such forward thinking, creating confidence and willingness to support your work.

 editor@donkeysforafrica.org

 www.donkeysforafrica.org

 www.facebook.com/donkeysforafrica

DfA is supported by

 Esel'tjesrus Donkey Sanctuary

www.donkeysanctuary.co.za