

The Five freedoms: vital for animal welfare

“All living things make up a balanced ecosystem, have their rightful place within this system and earn the necessary consideration and respect for that place and balance. Animals are sentient beings. They do not have a voice, we humans need to protect them and give them a voice and this is where the concept of animal rights is rooted.”

Lieza Swennen, Lilongwe Society for the Protection and Care of Animals (LSPCA), Malawi



In 1965 the UK government commissioned Professor Roger Brambell to lead an investigation into the welfare of intensively farmed animals. His report stated “An animal should at least have sufficient freedom of movement to be able without difficulty, to turn round, groom itself, get up, lie down and stretch its limbs”. Brambell’s Five Freedoms developed from this basic recommendation.

The Five Freedoms have since been adopted world-wide by professional groups including veterinarians, and organisations including the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Animals in the care of humans should have:

- 1) Freedom from hunger or thirst by ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour.
- 2) Freedom from discomfort by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area.
- 3) Freedom from pain, injury or disease by prevention or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
- 4) Freedom to express normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and company of the animal’s own kind.
- 5) Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering.

The current approach to animal welfare increasingly recognises the importance of the animal’s affective or emotional state, and the importance of natural living.

Meeting the Five Freedom conditions

All who engage with animals should hold the Five Freedoms as a goal. In reality their attainment will vary: over time and in different conditions. For example, an animal at its home, awaiting a sterilisation operation, might be assessed as below: nil per mouth but all other conditions being met successfully.

Knowledge is essential

Knowledge of the relevant species is essential to provide animals in our custody with the Five Freedoms. For example: knowledge of appropriate food, appropriate environment, diseases that may be encountered, their prevention and treatment, conditions that may trigger mental suffering, and - a challenging one - normal behaviour. Which ‘normal’ behaviours are acceptable or not? Does sterilisation deprive an animal from exhibiting ‘normal’ breeding behaviour? Does the end result justify the means?

Working animals and those in production farming conditions are particularly at risk of deprivation of their freedoms. However, many spoilt pets also suffer in different ways: wrong diets, lack of exercise or mental stimulation, lack of company of their own kind.

Working donkeys

Donkeys need mental stimulation. This is often lacking in sanctuary or private settings and has to be provided artificially. In addition, a single donkey seeks company: of its own kind or failing that, of another animal. Perhaps donkeys in well managed working situations experience better welfare than their ‘retired’ friends?

If all Five Freedoms are met, together with stimulating working conditions, varied interaction opportunities and enough rest and time to ‘get on with the business of being donkeys’ working donkeys can be very happy.

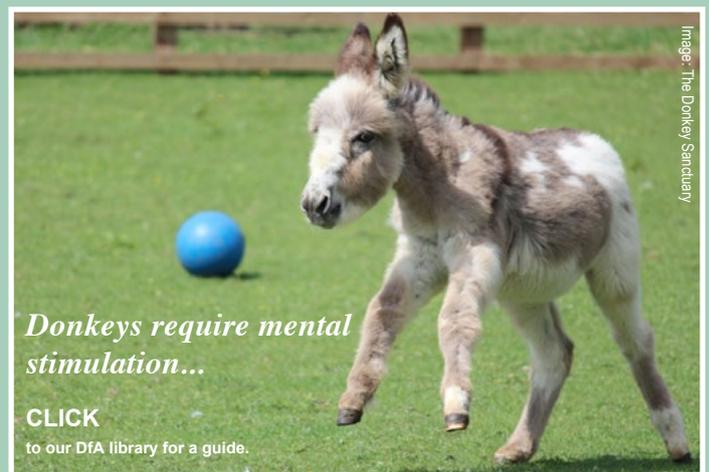
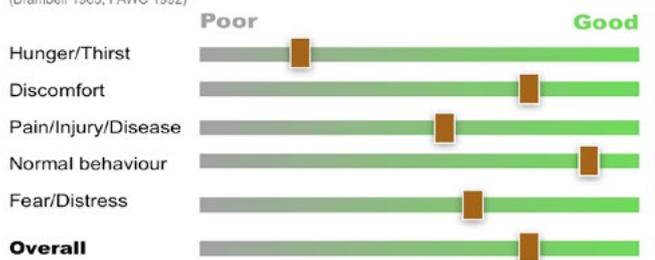
Educating owners that a happy, healthy donkey will be more productive and for longer than an overworked, ill-treated one, is ultimately to the benefit of all concerned, whether long-eared or short-eared.

Education and recognition of the sentience of donkeys lies at the root of this approach.

An example of how you can evaluate your donkey using:

The Five Freedoms & Animal Welfare

(Brambell 1965; FAWC 1992)



Donkeys require mental stimulation...

CLICK to our DfA library for a guide.

CLICK to watch a compelling video about this subject:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vj-FlxO2E38>

Correct hitching is important – for donkeys and owners

Valuable information has been produced on appropriate harnessing and carts. However, hitching donkeys correctly is sometimes a neglected aspect. Correct hitching can reduce injury and increase the effectiveness of working donkeys.

Examples of ineffective hitching:



Here we see four donkeys abreast. They appear to be in good condition. As far as can be judged from the picture, only the middle two are effectively moving the cart. Possibly the outer two, who look younger and fitter than the inside ones, are being trained. However, they are not pulling on the cart, but sideways on the mouths of the others. With the reins to the outer donkeys, steering is taking place when the outer donkeys push sideways on the other donkeys.



Images: SPANA

In this picture only the middle donkey seems to be attached to the cart. The outer two are most likely tied to the central one. Only one donkey is effective in moving the cart. Whilst it does not have a bit, which is good, the rope across the nose is causing rubbing and discomfort.

When training about harnessing, we should remember the final step: connecting the donkeys effectively and kindly to the vehicle or implement to ensure minimum distress and maximum efficiency.



People, Animals and the Planet: One Health One Welfare held in Kenya



This successful Africa Animal Welfare Conference was presented by the Africa Network for Animal Welfare, in partnership with UN Environment.

259 delegates attended the three-day conference with 53 travelling from 25 different states across Africa and from overseas.

Speeches and presentations are available at: <https://www.aawconference.org/index.php/en/about-the-conference/>



Of interest was the presentation on Donkey Powered Solid Waste Management in Hawassa city, Ethiopia, presented by The Donkey Sanctuary in conjunction with Hawassa University. This presentation is available at:

https://www.aawconference.org/2018_Presentations/Donkey_Powered_Solid_Waste_Management.pdf



Manual for One Health, One Welfare

This manual, which incorporates ‘The Hand’ welfare assessment, has been produced by Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary in South Africa and is available in the DfA library.

The manual is intended for use in a workshop setting. Let us know if you find it useful and send us your comments. <http://www.donkeysforafrica.org/library.html>

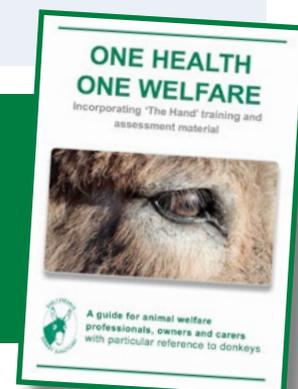
Workshop for working equid welfare



The International Coalition for Working Equids (ICWE) is made up of 17 member organisations including Brooke, The Donkey Sanctuary, SPANA and World Horse Welfare. It promotes and helps to implement the welfare standards of working equids world-wide. ICWE funded a Working Equids Welfare Awareness Day in Lesotho in October, as part of the African Regional Seminar for the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Focal Points for Animal Welfare.

This event was a closed training workshop for OIE Animal Welfare Focal Points.

Tozie Zokufa, representative of the International Coalition for Animal Welfare, said: “The event was superb and eye-opening, informative and well organized. The experiential exposure was very welcomed and we learnt a lot from the local community in Lesotho. This coalition has proven that working together we can achieve more.”





The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust (GHDT)



f /gambiahorseanddonkey

www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk

The Gambia is the smallest country in mainland Africa, surrounded by Senegal with the exception of its western coastline along the Atlantic Ocean.



Prior to the establishment of GHDT in 2002, there was little veterinary infrastructure or financial support for farmers in this country. This was an example of a One Health, One Welfare issue, with humans, animals and the environment negatively affected by common factors.

The Trust's aim is to reduce rural poverty in The Gambia through improving the health, welfare and productivity of working animals. GHDT believes in creating a long term, sustainable solution by providing the Gambian people with the skills and knowledge to prevent and solve their own problems.

Mobile veterinary clinics

The Mobile Veterinary Clinic team travels to villages to provide health checks and treatments, deworming, equine dentistry and farriery services to animals in need. The main focus is on working horses, donkeys and mules, but no animal in need of veterinary care is turned away.

Common problems

Trypanosomiasis (also known as Sleeping Sickness in humans) is widespread and affects large numbers of working equines. Caused by a blood parasite passed on by Tsetse flies, this disease is easily treated but can be fatal if left untreated. African Horse Sickness and tick fever also present serious challenges to equines here. Other common veterinary problems include internal parasites, wounds, burns, lameness, and colic. Furthermore there was a belief that donkeys do not feel pain and they were not given the respect that they deserve. That seems to be changing with the input of GHDT.

The GHDT Centre

Much of the work centres around the Makasutu Training Centre and the Derek Knottenbelt Veterinary Hospital, providing long term treatment for in-patients. Serious illnesses and injuries have been successfully treated here, including equines with burn injuries, broken legs, severe fungal infections, laceration wounds and emaciation. Volunteer vets and overseas universities are welcomed for research and to share knowledge with both their own students and Gambian students.

School Education Programme

Equine care and welfare is taught to children in Grades 5 and 6 where the children are typically between 9 and 12 years old. Young boys are usually the main carers for the family's animals in The Gambia so educating them about correct care for their animals can make an immediate difference.

Workshops

These are held in villages and towns to teach farmers best practice for caring for their working animals.

Badly manufactured and poorly fitting harnessing materials cause a large amount of animal suffering. Farmers are informed about the best types of harness and correct fit, loading of carts and equine care. They are very keen and willing to learn and workshops are always extremely well attended.

Training for Equine Professionals

A number of training programmes have been developed to train locals in related trades. With the help of a team from World Horse Welfare, harness makers and farriers are trained, enabling them to develop their own small businesses whilst relieving the suffering of animals.

Courses for Livestock Assistants with equine specialities are offered at The Gambia College. Regular practical sessions are held at the GHDT veterinary centre. The equine curriculum was designed by the University of Liverpool's Veterinary School. After qualifying, students are employed by the Gambian Government and are posted throughout the country, enabling them to offer veterinary assistance where needed.

Animal Advocates trained

The attitude towards animals has changed a lot in the areas where GHDT works, especially amongst the younger people. A group of Gambian Animal Advocates do very positive work and travel nation-wide to sensitise owners in areas not previously covered. Heather Armstrong of GHDT says "The Animal Advocates lift my spirits, there is nothing like watching the energy and passion of young, dedicated people wanting to change the world. They are doing such a great job."

Watch a video about GHDT:

<http://www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk/newcentre2018.htm>

For more images about the activities of GHDT
CLICK HERE.

(Interactive version)

Changing times

The study 'Regional and world trends in donkey populations' by Paul Starkey and Malcolm Starkey (1997) used data derived from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

<http://www.atnesa.org/donkeys/donkeys-starkey-populations.pdf>

At the time of the study, China had the largest donkey population (11 million). The study stated that "for the past thirty years (and more) there has been a gradual but consistent growth in donkey numbers." It concluded that "the trends suggest that at the beginning of the twenty-first century there will be continued gradual expansion of the geographical range of donkeys in sub-Saharan Africa, with increased donkey populations in most African countries. There may also be some areas of growth in Asia and Latin America."

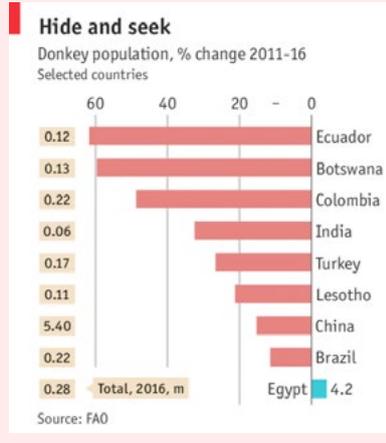
More recent studies have estimated the donkey population in China to have dropped to 6 million in 2014 (Under the Skin, The Donkey Sanctuary, 2017).

This and other numbers in the Under the Skin report conflict with some of the projections of this 1997 study.

To address a problem successfully, the problem must be specified and measured. Clearly regular and accurate assessments of global donkey numbers are crucial. Due to low status and priority, the illegal trade in meat and skins, and practical challenges, these statistics are difficult to source. Let us hope that relevant authorities will not wake up too late, when the decline in numbers has become irreversible. Quantified information enables effective intervention.

Do you have any recent accurate statistics on donkey numbers in your area or have any ideas on how to assess these? Please let us know via editor@donkeysforafrica.org

A graph from the Economist, showing how possibly donkey populations have reduced due to the trade in donkey skins.



Harsh realities

Breeding behaviours can cause problems.

This jenny, already in poor condition, collapsed and later died after being chased by donkey stallions. Stallions often fight and inflict serious wounds on each other when a jenny in season is near.



Cases have been recorded of humans injured when a stallion in harness breaks free in these circumstances, overturning the cart and injuring himself and occupants of the cart. Gelding requires knowledgeable performance under appropriate conditions.

Obviously owners prefer to keep some good jacks entire so as to ensure a supply of strong, healthy donkeys into the future. Selective gelding is but a dream in remote areas. Professional support is only available in limited quantities, short windows of time and often at considerable expense.

Apart from animal welfare issues, the owners suffer through injured or dead donkeys.

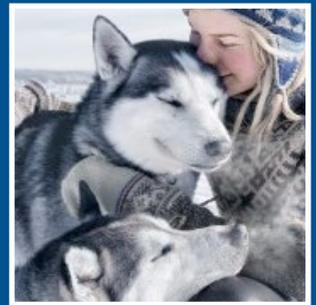
Can charitable veterinary organisations launch co-ordinated programmes to address this?

Let us know of any such programmes.

The polar opposite of donkeys in Africa

Yet so relevant to show how we are all connected:

"The failure to take care of animals can and will have catastrophic consequences that we cannot predict. A complex ecosystem may be chaotic, but it is resilient."



Jukka Ahonen,

President of the Finnish Sleddog Sports Federation

A lighter moment...

What did the jenny say to her foal?



It's pasture bedtime now..."

From the editor – It is in our hands to make a difference

Funding is an on-going challenge for all of us. Share with us how you have achieved results with less-than-great resources. Animal welfare work is often a lonely and unacknowledged task, but the satisfaction lies in each animal and owner that is helped.

Donkeys for Africa, via our website offers newsletters, resource material and a link to Facebook updates focussed on donkey welfare in Africa.

Let us know how we can serve you better via these channels by staying in touch with us. Thank you for your interest and contributions.

In the words of Nelson Mandela, "It is in our hands to make a difference".

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