

“Hard to Digest” Donkey Welfare Issues

This was the subject of the keynote address delivered by Dr Eric Davis of the University of California Davis, at the 2021 Donkey Welfare Symposium held during November. The theme of the Symposium was Donkey Nutrition but Dr Davis focussed on a different aspect of “hard to digest” – human reluctance to accept opposing views.

He pointed out that all living creatures and organisms on our planet Earth, “a tiny blue dot that won’t get any bigger”, are interlinked and potentially cause stress on the planet’s

resources. Humans cause problems but are also good at finding solutions. This requires intellectual honesty and willingness to compromise. Negotiate with an open mind. Stop demonising those whose attitudes differ from yours. Acknowledge the viewpoints of others.

Skins trade welfare issues

Dr Davis drew parallels between the skins trade that leads to donkey farming, and the farming methods for other species used as food resources. To address such challenges it is necessary to examine human beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. This is where change can begin.

<https://ce.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/symposia-article/2021-donkey-welfare-symposium>

Open forum on donkey welfare concerns

Hosted by the University of California Davis on Wednesday 1st December 2021.

The panel comprised Alfonso Lopez (Senior Corporate and Government Relations Consultant with Becker & Poliakoff), Emily Marquez-Dulin (CEO Brooke USA), Donkeys for Africa Editor Annemarie van Zijl, and Sian Edwards, Campaign Manager at The Donkey Sanctuary.

Their presentations highlighted donkey welfare issues across Africa, as well as the international trade in donkey skins. Some observations were:

The United States is the world’s third largest importer of ejiao products. The Donkey Sanctuary exposed the link of criminal activity such as wildlife poaching, running alongside the donkey skins trade. There is a need to disrupt the movement in the trade by educating law enforcement, shipping companies and dealers about this.

Petitions are gathering ground, spreading information about the trade around the world. More education of governments and end users is needed. Once enlightened about the realities of the trade, they must be involved in campaigning against it. Mapping and recording of abattoir operations across Africa is needed. The need for an advocacy pack, constantly updated, to be shared between groups lobbying for the closure of donkey abattoirs, was mentioned.

Research is underway to find alternatives to ejiao sourced from donkey skins, either using other sources or artificial cultivation.

Active participation by viewers of the Zoom proceedings resulted in energetic discussion. These open forums are planned to happen every three months in future.

Donkeys for Africa will keep you informed and provide the link to this forum as soon as it is available. We urge our readers to get involved in future such discussions – contact editor@donkeysforafrica.org to be kept updated.

Annemarie van Zijl, editor of DfA and co-founder of Eseltjesrus Donkey Sanctuary will present an African perspective at a **FREE OPEN FORUM on Donkey Welfare Concerns** hosted by the University of California Davis. **Wednesday 1 December at 11am PST • 1pm CST • 7pm GMT • 9pm SAST**
<https://ucdavis.zoom.us/j/93064675321?pwd=dHZVWSl0Z3h6NmhQR3hPS1JOU3dzUT09>
Meeting ID: 930 6467 5321 • code: 745921

DONKEYS for AFRICA

Brooke USA, Donkeys for Africa and The Donkey Sanctuary will lead presentations to start the open discussion

One Health, One Welfare

- for a better and greener tomorrow



The 5th Africa Animal Welfare Conference took place from 1 – 3 November 2021 in Accra, Ghana.

<https://www.aawconference.org/>
https://www.aawconference.org/2021/Programme_5th_Africa_Animal_Welfare_Conference_Action_2021.pdf

World Horse Welfare (WHW) and its partners initiated a global survey in low and middle-income countries to investigate the effects of COVID-19 on working equid communities. Results of the global survey have been published in the journal *Animals*, which can be accessed at <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/11/5/1363>.

Penny Ward (WHW) and Paseka Kompi (National University of Lesotho) conducted surveys in Lesotho and reported at the Africa Animal Welfare Conference.

Results of survey in Lesotho

The pandemic caused increased economic hardship, with a decrease in household income. Households struggled to meet their basic needs and had to make trade-offs, especially concerning their equids. Horses and donkeys were sold to generate extra cash to provide for basic household needs in the wake of the pandemic.

Families tended to stop purchasing supplementary feed or accessing services for their remaining equids. A deterioration in equine health since the start of the pandemic and a greater

decline in equine body condition were reported. The situation was made worse by the combination of lack of cash for extra feed, medication, and services for their equids, as well as supply shortages, disruption of livestock extension services and restrictive government regulations.

The range of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has yet to be fully measured, but clearly the devastating consequences linger.



Mules – a significant research design



Between 2008 and 2016 The Donkey Sanctuary undertook a community-based intervention in Ethiopia.

The focus was the control and prevention of epizootic lymphangitis (EZL) in cart mules in Bahir Dar. You are urged to read the full article which is of interest not just to working equid people but to people interested in participatory epidemiology, community-based animal healthcare, and the design of animal health and welfare services.

About EZL

EZL is the most visible and prevalent of the infectious diseases affecting equids in Ethiopia. It is chronic and contagious, caused by a fungus that can live in the soil. It is endemic to Ethiopia, particularly in the hot, humid upland areas. Control is challenging, with no completely satisfactory treatment. Spread is thought to be through the presence of open wounds, close contact, flies, and poor work, hygiene, or husbandry practices. Early identification and intensive follow-up are critical for successful therapy and treatment requires continuing owner compliance.

Community ownership & improved service provision

EZL was treated topically with tincture of iodine (2%) and sodium or potassium iodide was administered via drinking water or feed, bearing in mind that lengthy treatment can lead to iodine toxicity.

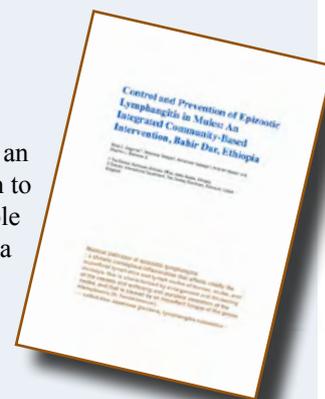
Muleteers attended structured, subject-based workshops

which aimed to raise animal welfare awareness and change behaviours. Other activities aimed at changing attitudes, behaviours, and practices regarding mule transport within the municipality transport officials and traffic police.

The project raised competence in mule husbandry and EZL prevention strategies; strengthened veterinary competence; facilitated more mule-friendly traffic, transport, and waste disposal guidelines and practices; supported mule-community bylaws to control EZL; and established a supportive network between stakeholders, including trusting relationships between muleteers and veterinary services.

Results

A significant reduction in EZL prevalence was recorded over the course of the project and illustrated an affordable and sustainable approach to improving mule welfare. An example of a simple, inexpensive remedy to a serious problem, but reliant on the commitment of all concerned with the mules.



See the research at
<http://www.donkeysforafrica.org/Resources/PEL.pdf>

NAWA – the Namibian Animal Welfare Association



The mission of NAWA is to promote community-based animal welfare and protection across Namibia. This recognises the concept of One Health, One Welfare: that human well-being is inextricably linked to animal health and welfare.

NAWA's pillars are: education and training, outreach and rescue, to influence animal welfare legislation, and special projects.

The background

NAWA works mostly in the regional area of Groot Aub, an impoverished village with approximately 20 000 households, most without running water, ablution facilities or electricity. Donkeys, used for transportation and daily chores, are at the bottom of the priority list for the inhabitants.

“We have yet to come across an Equine who is ridden or driven without a bloodied mouth or open sores on their mostly emaciated body.”

On seeing the “barbaric and primitive tack and harnesses which they must endure for endless hours on a daily basis, we decided that something must be done, but we realized that throwing money (which we don't have) or harnesses at the problem would not prevent it from re-occurring...”

Donkey harness project

The donkey harness project was initiated by NAWA with the support of a grant from The Foundation for the Horse, illustrating the power of collaboration between organisations and indeed, even between countries. The carefully planned project has two phases:

- 1) Purchase and import humane donkey harnesses from Matabeleland Animal Rescue & Equine Sanctuary (MARES Zimbabwe) at reduced rates, to provide immediate relief to the most critical cases of ill-fitting donkey harnesses and thereby avoid further agony.
- 2) Understand the harness design concept, get expert training and advice on manufacture, design, materials needed and fit to donkey. Identify community champions, set up a workshop, buy the machinery and materials necessary and get the community involved through basic skills transfer of harness making, thereby uplifting the community, and ultimately addressing the welfare needs of the donkeys in a sustainable manner.

International collaboration

A group met at Bela Bela in South Africa. From South Africa: Have a Heart Equine Sanctuary Bonnievale's Mark Ward, Have a Heart Equine Sanctuary Bela Bela and Lost Paws Sanctuary Bela Bela.

From Zimbabwe: MARES' Claire Einhorn (the designer of the humane donkey harness), their harness maker, vet and farrier. From Namibia: from NAWA Janine van Rooyen and Vicky Stiemert, and Yvonne Le Roux –Project Leader for Project Donkey.

Network for Animals provided financial support.

During the event over 60 local donkeys received better harnesses, veterinary attention and farrier work and more than 20 carts were repaired. A basic bitless bridle was designed for local production by the community in Bela Bela.



Back in Namibia

NAWA returned with samples and will identify community champions and source the correct materials and machinery. The detailed and correct skills transfer to the community champions is critical. Community teams will produce the different elements and learn to assemble and fit them.

The aim is to go into production in January/February 2022 for Phase 2, to produce enough harnesses for a massive outreach programme, hopefully throughout Namibia. This is a perfect example of organisations learning from each other and capitalising on available experience. Let us encourage more African projects to follow their lead.

“We have yet to come across an Equine who is ridden or driven without a bloodied mouth or open sores on their mostly emaciated body.”



DOWNLOAD THE NAWA PROFILE AT
<http://www.donkeysforafrica.org/Resources/NAWA.pdf>



Webinar on Animal-drawn transport

presented by the CSIR and Limpopo Provincial Government, South Africa.

Presenters were drawn inter alia from CSIR, FAO and the Faculty of Veterinary Sciences at Onderstepoort, University of Pretoria.

Dr Alfred Kgasi of the University of Pretoria spoke about the importance of Primary Animal Health Care. Animal owners must be empowered with knowledge and encouraged to do structured daily observation of all their animals to identify early signs of diseases. Donkeys should be viewed as assets that deserve care.

Dr Quixi Sonntag, also from Onderstepoort, introduced a project – “Donkey carts in rural Limpopo Province: a community perspective”. The importance of not “parachuting in and then leaving” was emphasised. The local Bahananwa Donkey Friends project is in progress. We look forward to further reports on this project.

also be familiar to you in your setting. Well done, GHDT – never underestimate the reach of your work.

What do you think?

A comment from a very experienced veterinarian and donkey welfare practitioner: “Vet schools need to start including veterinary service delivery as a specific subject in itself (in my opinion!).” How do you interpret this, is it practical and if you agree, how would you like to see it implemented? Let us know at editor@donkeysforafrica.org



Zambezi Working Donkey Project

www.zambeziworkingdonkeyproject.org/

This young project is making a measurable positive impact on the lives of working donkeys and their owners in Southern Zambia.

With the support of organisations such as Animal Aid Abroad and Veterinarians without Borders – Sweden, ZWDP is changing the attitudes and practices of owners to enable their donkeys to be healthier and more productive; One Health, One Welfare in action.



Please share your experiences

Behaviourists and people who love donkeys often have stories to tell highlighting the intelligent “problem-solving” abilities of these animals. The question is of course, what the donkey sees as a “problem”. Often it is related to access to food, or to companions. Please share your experiences with us – we

would love to hear from you.

Help us to make your newsletters more useful

Donkeys for Africa is entering its fifth year and we want to make sure that the time you spend reading our newsletters, is of use to you and your organization (and to donkeys).

Please send us a short email indicating what sort of content you prefer:

- More academic articles and research
- More profiles on organisations or individuals
- More information on conferences, symposia and webinars
- More advice on running a non-profit donkey welfare organization effectively
- More practical information on donkey care and welfare
- More about the skins trade, how it affects countries and how to address its impact
- Any other aspects you would like to see covered

We are here to help you to help more donkeys more efficiently. Let's hear it from you!



THE GAMBIA HORSE & DONKEY TRUST

<http://www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk/autumn2021.pdf>

Do read The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust newsletter, to realise that you are not alone in facing sometimes overwhelming challenges; see the power of including all religions and beliefs to join in your work; read about joys and sorrows that may



From the Editor

Another calendar year has sped past leaving devastating consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in its wake. The effects of the virus have impacted negatively on many walks of life, including animal welfare. For poor communities loss of income and loss of equid welfare support has meant less care for working equids, creating a vicious circle of results: weaker animals, less able to work, thus less income, even less care.

However at other levels animal welfare remains active in the hearts and minds of dedicated people.

Conferences and symposia continue to take place, research happens. But let us not lose sight of the fact that many, many organisations have experienced cuts in funding for various reasons. We plead with the large equid welfare bodies to do their utmost to reach far-flung, “little” organisations that desperately need support now, more

than ever. They need you. In the words of GHDT: “helps us dare to plan ahead”.

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www.donkeysforafrica.org

Donkeys-for-Africa



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