Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary

ONE HEALTH ONE WELFARE

INCORPORATING

- Donkey behaviour
- Humane education
- 'The Hand' assessment

A guide for animal welfare professionals, owners and carers with particular reference to donkeys

www.donkeysanctuary.co.za

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Introduction

Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary (EDS) was established in McGregor, South Africa, in 2007.

Our mission is to promote the welfare and status of donkeys through a culture of caring, which extends from donkeys to all animals and to all living beings.

By raising the status of donkeys, many related welfare issues can also be addressed.

This manual, which augments the outreach and training conducted by EDS in South Africa, promotes better understanding about donkeys.

How to use this guide

This material is designed to be used in a workshop setting aimed at improving the welfare of donkeys. Material is backed by international sources.

Please study the sections leading up to 'The Hand' assessment so that you are familiar with donkeys, their behaviours and appropriate ways of interacting with communities.

We welcome constructive feedback to improve our content. This will allow us to update the content of this publication on a regular basis.

Thank you.

This guide is also available in the library at www.donkeysforafrica.org.

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One Health, One Welfare

Veterinary teams have a wide role within society that impacts not just animals, but also humans and the environment.

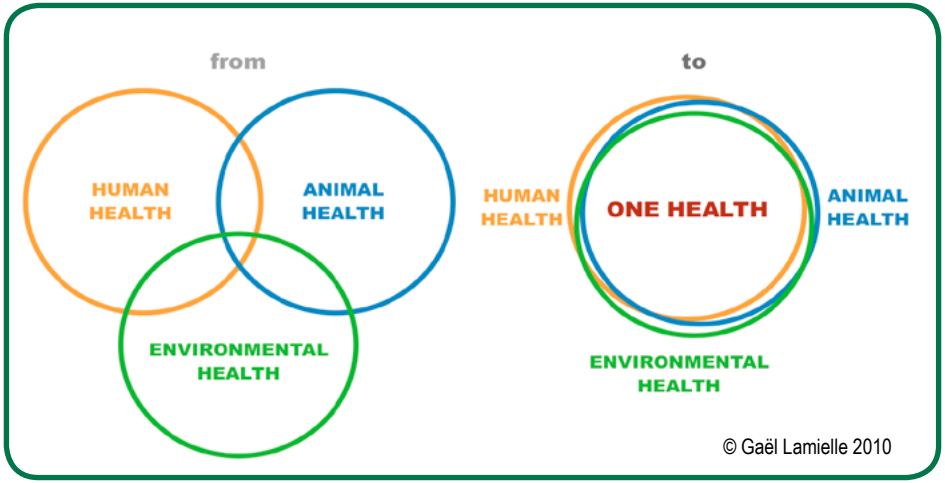
What is One Health?

In the traditional model for public health (see diagram below), there are minimal interactions between human, animal and environmental health. A One Health approach recognizes the inherent relationships and connectedness between each field.

Gaël Lamielle, veterinarian pursuing a career in public health, has said: "Veterinarians are lucky *(well that's how I see it at least…)* in the sense that they find themselves at the centre of these interactions.

Indeed, they are on the frontlines of human health when it comes to zoonotic diseases, or diseases transmissible between animals and people...

Public health is also strongly influenced by animal health. Indeed, many depend on animals for their subsistence and it is important to promote adequate animal health to ensure proper food safety and security. Animal welfare is also an important part of promoting public health from this perspective and it is important to understand that, besides the obvious ethical issues, mistreated or stressed animals are more susceptible to illness."



Animal Welfare is changing

The veterinary community has traditionally focused on animal health and production as indicators of animal welfare.

It is increasingly apparent that good animal welfare needs to include:
1. Consideration of the animal's affective state or mind – how does the animal feel?
2. An increasing emphasis on natural living which includes the consideration of whether an animal is allowed express behaviour that is specific to its species.

Socio-economic value of animals in South Africa

The value of animals in this area is often determined via:

- Sources of nutrients (milk & meat)
- Sporting & Recreation
- Culture & Religion
- Economic value
- Symbolism (wealth & status)
- Tourism & Leisure
- Social & Therapeutic

OBSERVATIONS :

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH LINKS:
https://globalhealthvet.com/2010/08/21/about-one-health/
https://www.veterinary-practice.com/article/one-health-one-welfare
http://www.who.int/features/qa/one-health/en/

Education is the answer

Wealthier owners can also have animals in poor welfare; again through ignorance or deliberate maltreatment.

To educate appropriately we need to understand the life situation of the people involved, see matters from their perspective, and respectfully indicate practical solutions or support.

Culturally-based challenges

In a complex country such as South Africa, there are differing cultural views of animal welfare. We must be aware of these, respect them and engage constructively for the benefit of all: humans, animals and the environment.

One Welfare approach

One Welfare extends the approach of (and partly overlaps) the One Health theme. The One Welfare approach enables full integration of animal welfare within other disciplines and supports sustainable development goals.

The One Welfare Framework includes five key sections, which include:

- Interconnections between animal abuse, human abuse and neglect.
- Socio-economical aspects that link with animal welfare.
- The connection between farm animal welfare and farmer well-being.
- Conservation and sustainability.
- Interconnection of animal and human welfare at the time of war or disasters.

The role of working animals in developing communities, and how improvements in their welfare supports local economies, individuals and families, highlights the impact of veterinary professionals in different societies.

Improving global health should be done through a collaborative process, rather than multiple organizations working on their own. In addition, identifying local leaders who will come on board with proposed interventions is crucial to the success of a health campaign.

The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare have produced a booklet: *Sustainable Development Goals: How the welfare of working equids delivers for development*. Here the interdependency of animal, human and environmental welfare is evident. amaTrac Uluntu has produced a summary of the role of donkeys in attaining certain SDGs - refer to the DfA library.

Societal norms

Dr Magdie van Heerden, Human-Animal interaction practitioner, states: "More and more studies today highlight the link between cruelty to animals and violence against people. This should not be seen as a linear link, thus cause and effect, but may be a reflection of the basic values and norms of a society towards those who are at its mercy."

When teaching compassion for animals, it can be broadened to include humans and the environment. In this way One Welfare becomes a reality.

The One Welfare approach promotes the direct and indirect links of animal welfare to human welfare and environmentally friendly animal-keeping systems.

Overall, the role and impact of the veterinary profession at local, national and global level should not be underestimated.

OBSERVATIONS :

DISCUSS and share: Examples of this as experienced in your environment.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH LINKS:
https://www.onewelfareworld.org
https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/what-we-do/advocacy

Examples of culturally relevant interventions

Kenya

Gaël Lamielle from Western University (California).

Medical and veterinary students on the One Health and Rural Health rotation, together with Kenyan medical and veterinary professionals, worked on health issues common to humans and animals in local communities.

Promoting healthy behaviours is an integral part of improving health. However, this may be very difficult if the proposed behaviours are not compatible with local cultural practices.

The following questions were determined essential in implementing long-lasting interventions:

- What does the affected population perceive as health concerns? Should we be focusing on a different problem?
- What interventions have failed to promote change in the past? Why did they not succeed?
- What are barriers to enacting interventions? These may be cultural, logistical, political or other issues.
- What could be solutions to overcome these barriers?
- What are best ways to successfully convey health messages or education to local population (e.g. radio, town meetings, flyer or other activity) and who should receive those messages?

South Africa

A project at the University of Pretoria, Medical and Veterinary Rural Integration and Collaboration (MAVERIC), was conducted in the Itireleng community of Laudium in Pretoria West.

The MAVERIC initiative applied the One Health concept of multi-disciplinary upliftment. Students from both the Faculty of Veterinary Science and the Faculty of Health Sciences collaborated to make this initiative a success.

The outreach provided much-needed integration between medical and veterinary students, as well as a better service to the community. Students worked with a particular community over a relatively long period of time in order to understand the dynamics of the community in terms of inter-personal and animal-human interactions.

This exercise applied the One Health concept of multi-disciplinary upliftment.

Humane education

Humane Education can be defined as:
"A process that encourages an understanding of the need for compassion and respect for people, animals and the environment and recognizes the interdependence of all living things."

This takes us back to One Health, One Welfare.

There is a well-documented link between childhood cruelty to animals and later criminality, violence and anti-social behaviour. Humane education can break this cycle and replace it with one of compassion, empathy and personal responsibility.

Humane education (HE) is a concept that encompasses all forms of education about social justice, citizenship, environmental issues and the welfare of animals. It recognizes the interdependence of all living things.

This is values-based education that:

- Develops sensitivity to all life, appreciation of diversity and tolerance of difference.
- Encourages children to become more compassionate and learn to live with greater respect for everyone.
- Provides opportunities for children to develop a sense of responsibility and a duty of care for their surroundings and the natural world.
- Contributes to the development of children's attitudes and critical thinking skills, which can increase their self-esteem.
- Empowers children to make decisions and take action as responsible world citizens.

Animal welfare education is just one element of humane education.

Reaching children

There are many successful humane education (HE) programmes for children. Children are receptive, their minds are inquiring and active and they have huge supplies of natural enthusiasm.

HE can take place in formal settings such as school classrooms, at Animal Care clubs, and in formal and informal supervised contact sessions with animals. Showing children similarities between their own feelings and body language and that of animals creates understanding and compassion.

Simple methods include story-telling where the children participate in choosing appropriate gentle, loving and kind actions, playing with soft animal toys, and puppet shows with the animals speaking and sharing their feelings, fears and joy. Puppets need not be fancy: a simple glove with a donkey head and ears is easy to make.

Lessons can include practical demonstrations such as taking two apples, keeping one cool and carefully stored whilst the other is scarred with a knife, bruised and left in the hot sun. After a few days, the difference in "well-being" of the two fruits will be obvious and can be extrapolated to living creatures.

Asking children to carry heavy (age-appropriate) loads to feel how difficult it is can be effective.

Carrying such a load in a simple back-pack for the duration of a school day without removing it to rest, will illustrate the importance of off-loading animals when not actually transporting goods. Pulling an appropriate cart themselves will also create awareness of the difficulty of the task.

Related examples can be implemented, always respecting the children whilst showing the effects of bad practices. The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust makes the point that: "Lessons are focussed around being as fun and interactive as possible to ensure that they are very memorable for the children.

This often results in great hilarity and helps the children to absorb the information more easily and retain what they have learnt."

Reaching adults

Information on good welfare practices can be combined with HE. Raising awareness of appropriate behaviours is the starting point.

This can include pointing out that a donkey in good welfare can work more effectively than a poorly cared for donkey. The power of example is important: if a few owners practise good welfare, their animals will be evidence of the advantages. Introducing a competitive element may work.

Practical examples similar to those for the children can be practised. Pulling a cart themselves with the loads differently distributed can give a powerful illustration to the owners of the extra work required with badly laden carts.

***It is important to identify respected leaders in a community**, to enlist their support and positive action, train them in humane methods and mentor them. This can ensure continued good welfare and better attitudes in the community. There is no instant solution and it is a long, slow process that requires commitment from all concerned.*

OBSERVATIONS :

A boy cuddles a rabbit at a SPANA animal awareness workshop.

Elders teaching children proper animal interaction is an essential component for healthy communities.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH LINKS:
http://www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk/education.htm
http://amatrac.wixsite.com/amatraculuntu

Changing attitudes

A project in South Africa, *amaTrac uluntu*, engages with the community and provides training and support for interested owners of working donkeys.

Small business training is coupled with animal welfare training. The focus is on the care of your assets, including equipment and animals. They gauge which owners understand basic donkey welfare and show signs of compassion.

Once these Village Champions are identified, they educate children and adults in their villages. They usually work with children from donkey-owning families first and include other children and adults as the interest grows in the village. These principles can be applied in most countries and communities.

Successes

Cameroon: The Foundation for Animal Welfare in Cameroon (FAWCAM) relates: "We are proud to say that we are successful in our mission in Bui Division of Cameroon with a strong emphasis on the humane treatment of donkeys and respect for natural habitats. In one of our public talks, someone stood up and confessed that he is very sorry about the way he has been treating his donkey. He didn't know that a donkey is a sentient being which could be responsive to or conscious of sense impressions."

Field reports of Animal Welfare Officers show the appreciation:"FAWCAM is amazing".

"If FAWCAM could continue in this spirit, almost everybody in Bui Division will like to own a donkey."

The Gambia: The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust observes that little by little attitudes are changing. Children who learned to enjoy and respect their animals have grown up to be animal lovers themselves and are now teaching the next generation.

South Africa: *amaTrac uluntu* shares: "One of our Champions used to treat his donkeys as other owners do, chasing them and whipping them from the field to his house. Naturally, the donkeys were cross and terrified and kicked. The village people observe this behaviour and don't link it to a feeling. After being involved with the HE programme, he started to take treats to the field with him, call the donkeys by their names and approach them slowly and kindly. The donkeys now accompany him calmly, one tucked under each arm or walking quietly behind him. The village people quickly changed their views that donkeys kick and bite for no reason.

In some villages, people threw boiling water on donkeys that went into their yards to drink the very limited water available. This kind of abuse has now stopped. Areas have been allocated with water for donkeys to drink.

If the donkeys enter their yards they call the Village Champion to remove them. This has taken almost a year to achieve, but it's achievable."

Children now report incidences of abuse or poor welfare to the adult Village Champion, who then either goes to the family to discuss alternatives or speaks in a community meeting or addresses the matter through one of the elders, village chairperson or chief.

It is a slow process, but results from this training are being witnessed.

When informing people about the humane treatment of animals, respect is essential at all times.
Focus on anything positive to engage owners and identify leaders. Recognise their challenges, ask for the reasons for current practices. Make sure that new ways are realistic, achievable, understood and sustainable.

Children and animals often have a natural bond. Educating the youth about humane behaviour towards animals has a wider benefit to society.

EXAMPLES OF HE PROGRAMMES:
http://www.hsi.org/assets/pdfs/equine_wellness_curriculum.pdf
https://spana.org/about-us/professionals/education-professionals/

The trade in donkey skins

The trade in donkey skins for export to the East has become a significant factor in the global economy.

The skins trade is a prime example of a bad welfare issue: it is an example of bad health and bad welfare for the animals, humans and the environment.

The health of the animal does not influence the value of the skin, leading to bad welfare practices.

In Africa, impoverished owners may sell their donkeys for short-term gain.

Donkeys are stolen from rural areas, leaving the communities that depend on them for survival, stranded. The underground trade involves unspeakable cruelty to these animals.

As the skin is the only item of interest in most cases, carcasses are dumped and left to rot, creating environmental and human health hazards. Poorly managed abattoirs can create environmental, human and animal health hazards as well as additional welfare hazards.

DISCUSS and share: How better education can help stem the tide against needless animal slaughter.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH LINKS:
www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/what-we-do/issues/donkey-meat-skin-and-milk
http://www.donkeysforafrica.org/library.html

Donkey farming viability

Breeding and farming donkeys poses many challenges. The initial perceived opportunity of commercial donkey farming is extremely challenging, expensive and time-consuming to operate with good welfare.
See the infographic:

Donkey Breeding:

1. Long gestation (around 12 months)
2. Low fertility
3. Slow to mature (physical & hormonal: around 3 years)
4. Propensity for difficult births
5. Slow to wean (6 to 10 months)
6. Lack of research on donkey reproduction
7. Resistance to genetic manipulation and artificial insemination

Donkey Farming:

1. Propensity to hyperlipaemia (>50% cases are fatal)
2. Stress-related infectious diseases (eg equine herpes)
3. Zoonotic diseases (eg toxoplasmosis, brucellosis, e-coli)
4. Competition for resources (land, fodder, water, energy)
5. Pollution. A 200kg donkey produces 3.5tn of waste per year
6. Increased need for hoofcare and behavioural enrichment
7. Additional welfare challenges in any production system

Source: The Donkey Sanctuary

OBSERVATIONS :

What is Animal Welfare?

The World Organisation of Animal Health (OIE) develops various standards for improvement of animal health, welfare and veterinary public health through member states' participation. The Terrestrial Animal Health Code (OIE, 2011a) states that: "Animal welfare means how an animal is coping with the conditions in which it lives".

"An animal is in a good state of welfare if (as indicated by scientific evidence) he/she is healthy, comfortable, well nourished, safe, able to express innate behaviour, and if he/she is not suffering from unpleasant states such as pain, fear and distress.

Good animal welfare requires disease prevention and veterinary treatment, appropriate shelter, management, nutrition, humane handling and humane slaughter/killing."

Why is welfare important?

Animals are sentient beings and therefore have a right to the ***Five Freedoms*** which are the standards we aspire to in the measurement of welfare.

Sentience

- Sentience is the capacity to experience suffering and pleasure.
- It implies a level of conscious awareness.
- Animal sentience means that animals can feel pain and suffering and experience positive emotions.
- Studies have shown that many animals can experience complex emotions, e.g. grief and empathy. (Douglas-Hamilton et al., 2006; Langford et al., 2006)
- Animal sentience is based on decades of scientific evidence from neuroscience, behavioural sciences and cognitive ethology.

The Constitutional Court in South Africa recognises animal welfare as a constitutional issue.

In a Constitutional Court case ruling in Jan 2017 judgment began with a quotation that animals are "companions, friends and brothers" to humans and noted the SPCA's efforts to defend the welfare of animals.

The court also said that animals are worthy of protection because "animals are sentient beings that are capable of suffering and of experiencing pain", and discussed how the courts have begun to recognise this in recent cases.

The NSPCA commented: "Of great significance is the recognition of the sentience of animals and the importance of animal protection and welfare. We feel vindicated and consider this a notable victory for the welfare of animals in South Africa."

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH LINK:
https://www.animallawreform.org/

The five freedoms

The five freedoms were originally developed from a UK Government report on livestock husbandry in 1965. They are a summary of rights for animals under human control, including those intended for food or which act as working animals.

These guidelines are used as the basis for the actions of professional groups, including veterinarians and have been adopted by representative groups internationally including the World Organisation for Animal Health.

EVERY ANIMAL SHOULD HAVE:

1. **Freedom from hunger and 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 through 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 five freedoms have expanded to encompass the five domains:
1.Nutrition 2.Environment 3.Health 4.Behaviour 5.Mental state

The five freedoms focus on the minimising or removal of negative physical or mental states, while the five domains model clarifies that animals must be provided with opportunities to have positive experiences. Recognition that animal welfare management should also include the promotion of positive experiences and states led to these five provisions. (*David J. Mellor*)

Provisions	Animal Welfare Aims
1. Good nutrition: Provide ready access to fresh water and a diet to maintain full health and vigour	Minimise thirst and hunger and enable eating to be a pleasurable experience
2. Good environment: Provide shade/shelter or suitable housing, good air quality and comfortable resting areas	Minimise discomfort and exposure and promote thermal, physical and other comforts
3. Good health: Prevent or rapidly diagnose and treat disease and injury, and foster good muscle tone, posture and cardiorespiratory function	Minimise breathlessness, nausea, pain and other aversive experiences and promote the pleasures of robustness, vigour, strength and well co-ordinated physical activity
4. Appropriate behaviour: Provide sufficient space, proper facilities, congenial company and appropriately varied conditions	Minimise threats and unpleasant restrictions on behaviour and promote engagement in rewarding activities
5. Positive mental experiences: Provide safe, congenial and species-appropriate opportunities to have pleasurable experiences	Promote various forms of comfort, pleasure, interest, confidence and a sense of control

DISCUSS and share: Do you have experiences of animals demonstrating sentient behaviour? Aware of any social media links that show such behaviour?

Also: How can the rights of animals be better protected?

Natural behaviour of donkeys

The ancestors of our domesticated donkeys evolved to travel long distances in search of sparse vegetation and a limited water supply. Domestication causes many problems such as overfeeding, boredom, poor social interaction and the intricacies of human interaction.

Protective behaviour

In most situations today, donkeys kept together tend to live as herd animals and can be territorial. This is an instinct that donkeys may have inherited from their ancestors. This can lead to donkeys being aggressive towards smaller animals such as sheep, cats, dogs and chickens when defending their territory.

Not all donkeys assume the role of guardians of smaller livestock such as sheep. The donkey has to be introduced to the sheep at a young age and preferably alone. This means that the donkey is not allowed to 'be a donkey' or learn normal donkey behaviours.

Survival responses

Donkeys are naturally prey animals, and their response to any threat can be either fight or flight. As donkeys become domesticated and are fenced in, their ability to move away from fearful experiences has been restricted and fighting has become their only option to save themselves when threatened.

A bite or kick from a donkey can cause serious harm. You should never approach a donkey without due care.

At rest

Donkeys can rest lying down or while standing. Resting often seems to be a communal activity, with one donkey remaining on guard.

Donkeys, when exposed to stressful environments and not properly cared for, can end up fighting.

Resting, with one donkey watching over the herd.

Grooming

Donkeys moult and shed winter coats. They can be seen rubbing themselves against tree barks and fences.Donkeys also groom each other and if living in a group, may have a specific grooming partner.

Donkeys often roll, shake and groom after resting. This revives flattened coats, removes some ectoparasites and moulted hair. There is usually a favoured sandy rolling patch used by herd members in turn.

Be aware that rolling can be a sign of colic: then the donkey will roll anywhere, repeatedly, and not shake its head on getting up.

Social bonds

Donkeys are herd animals. A single donkey is lonely and seeks attention, will bray often and show signs of depression. Domesticated donkeys can live to an advanced age, sometimes to over 40 years of age, and social relationships are important.

Once a social bond between certain donkeys has been identified, it is important to never separate these companions as this will cause tremendous stress. Always work with them together.

When a donkey dies, allow its friend(s) to stay with the body until they have lost interest, otherwise it may cause stress and even life threatening illness as they continue to search for their dead companion.

Donkeys generally prefer the company of their own kind, but may also form bonds with other animals if no donkeys are close by. Always respect such bonds.

Leadership

There seems to be no specific order of leadership within a group of donkeys.

There may be a dominant male as far as mating goes, but complex social relationships often form within a group of donkeys.

Donkeys are social creatures.

Grooming is a social activity.

Sensory perceptors

Donkeys are sophisticated visual communicators and communicate much information by posture and slight postural changes. They are good at picking up visual cues, but can sometimes be startled by items at the edge of their field of vision.

Always approach donkeys from the side, as they have good peripheral vision but have blind spots right in front of them and behind them.

Long Ears

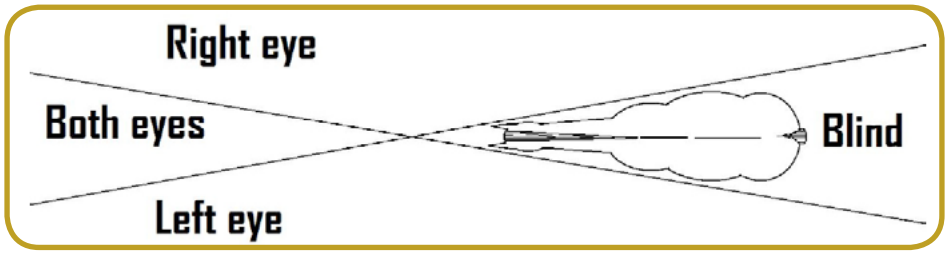
Donkeys have a keen sense of hearing. Always speak quietly and in a calm tone to a donkey when approaching it.

Their ears also help them to stay cool due to the high blood supply to this area.

Donkeys make use of their ears in their body language and the tilt of their ears can indicate interest, fear, happiness or annoyance. Ear movement is also often observed by fellow herd members.

The practise of handling donkeys by twisting their ears is not only painful but can lead to permanent nerve and muscular damage, preventing the donkey from communicating normally with its fellows, as well as affecting its hearing and leading to infections.

Damaged ears limit hearing and communication.



Sense of taste

Donkeys' sense of taste enables them to distinguish between edible and inedible foods as they browse, and they prefer a varied diet of mainly highly fibrous plant materials.

Donkeys are trickle feeders and need small amounts of feed regularly to keep the gut healthy. Although donkeys have adapted to more arid conditions, they do need clean, fresh water available to them.

> ***"Donkeys are very good at being donkeys"***
> Ben Hart, Behaviourist at The Donkey Sanctuary (UK)

Their sense of touch is mainly through their sensitive lips covered by thousands of touch-sensitive hairs.

Breeding

Female donkeys come into season roughly every three weeks for four to six days and during this period they may be difficult, or extremely social.

Behaviour will vary according to each individual donkey. This normally only happens in the summer months and only if environmental and welfare conditions are favourable.

The gestation period lasts for 12 to 14 months before the foal is born.

When a foal has been socialised with other donkeys and allowed to develop correctly through the phases of juvenile development, it is less likely to exhibit behavioural problems as a mature animal.

Donkeys have a reason for everything they do. To a donkey, its behaviour is justifiable – it is we humans that sometimes find their behaviour difficult or inappropriate.

The key to working with donkeys is to accept that there is always a reason for a particular donkey behaviour.

Try to look at things from the donkey's point of view and understand how the donkey feels.

The nature of the donkey is not to be aggressive, stubborn or difficult, but purely to learn and survive. They are good at learning to avoid activities they find difficult, frightening or painful.

Donkeys are intelligent, have good memories and learn very easily.

OBSERVATIONS :

Every donkey has its own unique sound.

Lips have touch-sensitive hairs and help their sense of touch.

Gestation period is between 12 to 14 months.

A rare occurence: healthy full-term twins.

Understanding donkey body language

Communication

Donkeys communicate with each other through the use of body language such as biting, kicking or running away – this is normal behaviour and they use this way of communication with humans as well. What humans may see as 'difficult' behaviour is often just the normal language of donkeys and they expect us to understand, just as we expect them to understand our language.

Alert:
Ears forward, focussed on something.

Threatening behaviour:
- Mild biting threat – ears lay slightly back, neck is extended towards the opponent.
- Strong biting threat – ears are right back, mouth slightly open, ready to bite. If the threat or opponent moves away, they will not follow through.
- Mild kick threat – ears laid back, rump turned towards the threat.
- Strong kick threat – if the threat remains, the rear hoof will be lifted and tail lashed before the kick is delivered.

Always make your presence known in a calm manner when approaching a donkey. Normally a warning is given by an anxious donkey which means you should slowly back away.

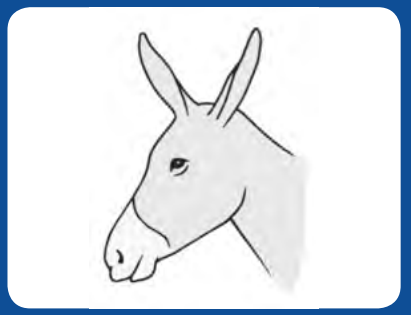
Appeasing behaviour (Jawing):
This is submissive behaviour shown by subordinate animals or by a donkey requesting grooming. This looks like an exaggerated chewing movement in which the lips never meet, the jaw moves up and down with the teeth mostly covered and the corners of the mouth drawn back. The ears are held out sideways and the neck is horizontal.

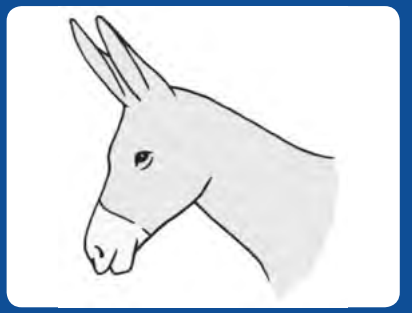
Affiliative behaviour:
Displayed to reduce the distance between donkeys. This includes greeting behaviour, mutual grooming and play. Greetings are given by touching with the nose to the nose, flank, rump or shoulder. The ears are directed forward.

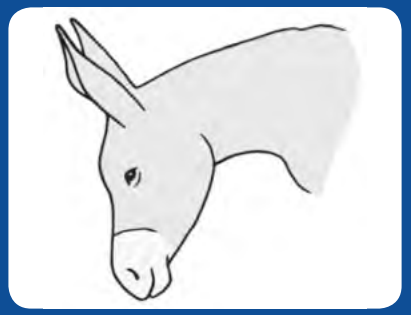
Remember:
When the ears are laid back – be careful as the donkey may feel nervous or threatened. When the ears are facing forward, the donkey is interested and curious and may want to interact.

Always look at the whole donkey, as some do not have full use of their ears anymore due to old age or mutilation of their ears.

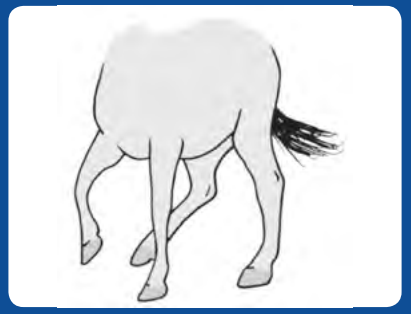
OBSERVATIONS :

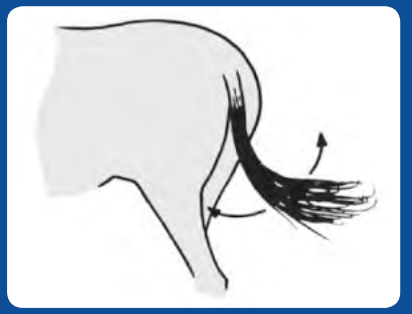

Ears upright - happy and at ease


Ears forward - alert


Resting

Ears back - cross or unhappy


Stamping - about to kick


Swishing tail - stay away

The international donkey welfare assessment tool:

The Hand

The hand serves as the prompt and easy guide for remembering the parameters that are examined in this simple welfare assessment.

Such a structured approach can be applied to one animal, a group or a whole population. It has been developed for donkeys but can be applied to any animal species *(including humans)*.

By describing the animals in this structured way, quantitative assessments and change in welfare can be measured. This enables us to determine the success of educational activities and interventions.

All scores rely on an assessment on a scale of one to five. With the exception of the Body Condition Score, a score of 1 represents the best situation, or first prize, and 5 represents the worst case.

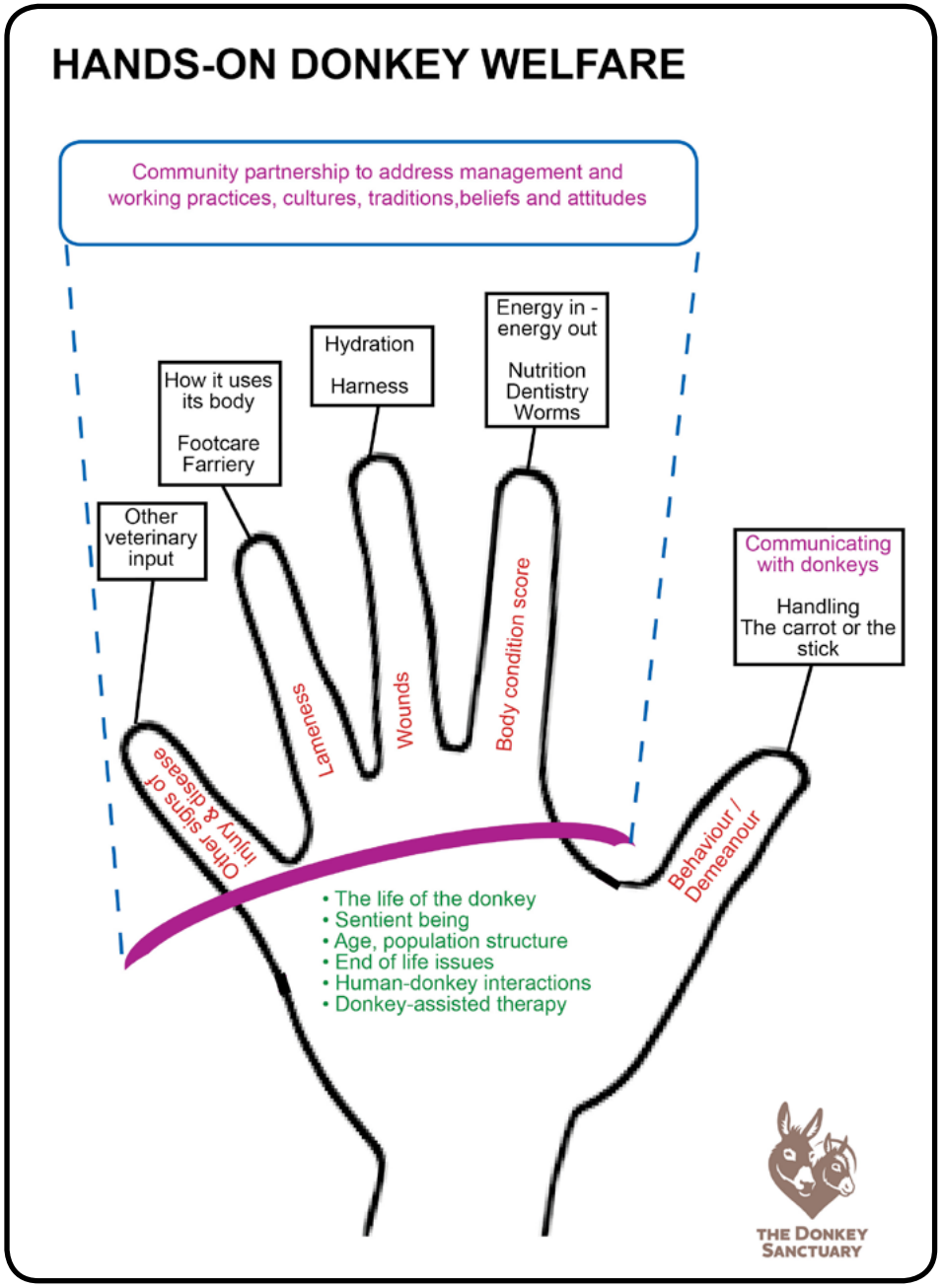
Be calm

Remember to stand and observe before entering the donkey's space.

Consider your own body language – be small, quiet and unaggressive. Move as though you are moving through thick oil.

OBSERVATIONS :

REFERENCE: Application of the Hands-On Donkey Tool for Assessing the Welfare of Working Equids at Tuliman, Mexico, Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science.



Using the 'The Hand' approach for donkey welfare analysis

Thumb
Behaviour/ Demeanour

Observe the donkey, ideally with its owner, or just while it is busy being a donkey. Notice its behaviour and demeanour, and also the quality of communication between the donkey and its handler.
Does the donkey have a name? Does the handler communicate gently by talking to the donkey, or communicate by beating it with a stick? Is the donkey's body language defensive or evasive, or relaxed?

A score of 1 represents a happy donkey in harmony with its happy owner. A score of 5 represents a miserable, unhappy and fearful donkey. Behaviour is influenced by the ability, experience and confidence of its handler.

A nervous handler will lead to a nervous or stubborn donkey. Often an owner or handler's skill can be assessed from the donkey's behaviour or reaction when the handler is around.

Misunderstanding donkeys' true nature and behaviour leads to the incorrect but common belief that donkeys are stubborn.

It is human perception that labels donkey behaviour as stubborn or inappropriate.

To the donkey, its behaviour is always justifiable.

Index finger
Body condition score (BCS)

This five-point scale is applied to many animal species, with 3 representing the ideal body condition; neither thin nor fat.

A score of 1 represents an emaciated animal and 5 an obese animal.

Different species, and different animals within a species, may carry fat in different body areas.

Body Condition Score takes into account the entire body of the donkey: some fat deposits may remain even when the body condition generally is normal. In such a case the overall condition determines the score.

See the score chart on page 28

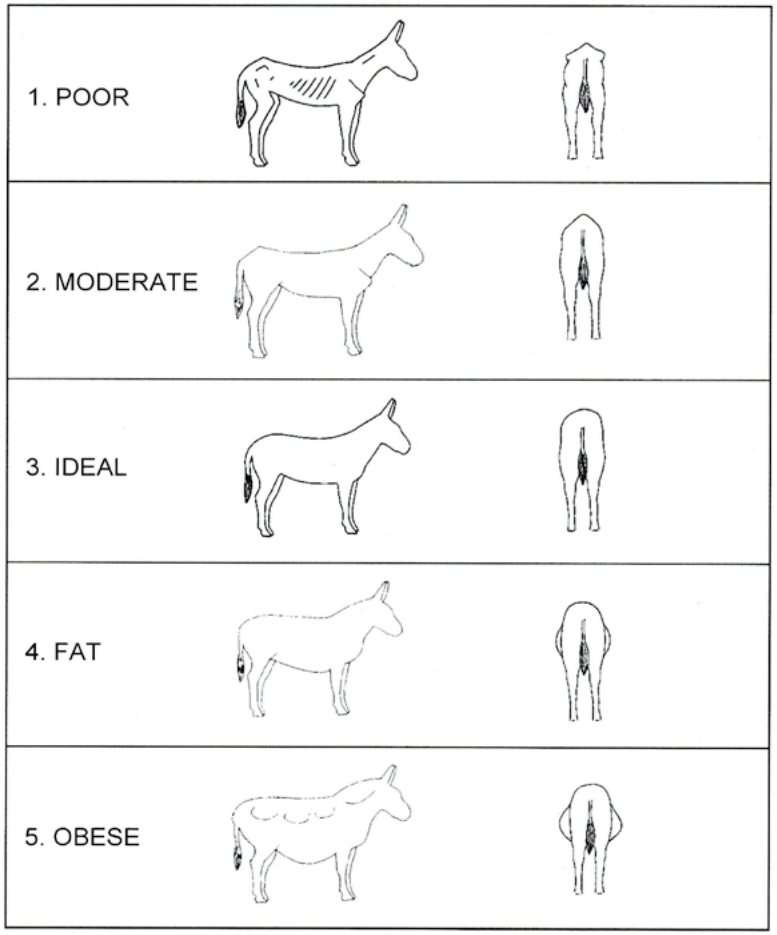
Amy from a home where she was being 'killed with kindness' with a BCS of 5. Note the pads of fat on the torso and the crest on the neck.

Spokie with a BCS of 1½.

Sheila has a roll of fat on her neck, a remnant from when she was overfed to be sold as lion food. Her BCS now is 3 in spite of this fat deposit.

Donkey body condition score chart

Note: Fat deposits may be unevenly distributed especially over the neck and hindquarters. Some resistant fat deposits may be retained in the event of weight loss and/or may calcify (harden). Careful assessment of all areas should be made and combined to give an overall score.



Donkey body condition score chart

Condition Score	Neck and shoulders	Withers	Ribs and belly	Back and loins	Hindquarters
1. POOR	Neck thin, all bones easily felt. Neck meets shoulder abruptly, shoulder bones felt easily, angular.	Dorsal spine of withers Prominent and easily felt.	Ribs can be seen from a distance and felt with ease. Belly tucked up.	Backbone prominent, can feel dorsal and transverse processes easily.	Hip bones visible and felt easily (hock and pin bones). Little muscle cover. May be cavity under tail.
2. MODERATE	Some muscle development overlying bones. Slight step where neck meets shoulders.	Some cover over dorsal withers, spinous processes felt but not prominent.	Ribs not visible but can be felt with ease.	Dorsal and transverse processes felt with light pressure. Poor muscle development either side midline.	Poor muscle cover on hindquarters, hipbones felt with ease.
3. IDEAL	Good muscle development, bones felt under light cover of muscle/fat. Neck flows smoothly into shoulder, which is rounded.	Good cover of muscle/ fat over dorsal spinous processes withers flow smoothly into back.	Ribs just covered by light layer of fat/muscle, ribs can be felt with light pressure. Belly firm with good muscle tone and flattish outline.	Cannot feel individual spinous or transverse processes. Muscle development either side of midline is good.	Good muscle cover in hindquarters, hipbones rounded in appearance, can be felt with light pressure
4. FAT	Neck thick, crest hard, shoulder covered in even fat layer.	Withers broad, bones felt with firm pressure.	Ribs dorsally only felt with firm pressure, ventral ribs may be felt more easily. Belly over developed.	Can only feel dorsal and transverse processes with firm pressure. Slight crease along midline.	Hindquarters rounded, bones felt only with firm pressure. Fat deposits evenly placed.
5. OBESE	Neck thick, crest bulging with fat and may fall to one side. Shoulder rounded and bulging with fat.	Withers broad, unable to feel bones	Large, often uneven fat deposits covering dorsal and possibly ventral aspect of ribs. Ribs not palpable. Belly pendulous in depth and width.	Back broad, unable to feel spinous or transverse processes. Deep crease along midline bulging fat either side	Cannot feel hipbones, fat may overhang either side of tail head, fat often uneven

OBSERVATIONS :

Middle finger
Wounds

As with behaviour, wounds are assessed on a score of 1 to 5, with 1 representing no wounds, and 5 the worst wounds you have seen.

Note any patterns of wounds and qualify your score by mapping them on a diagram of a donkey.

You may identify clusters of wounds, particularly in a group of donkeys, which tells you a lot.

For example you may see a repeated pattern of wounds on the fetlocks (lower legs) caused by hobbling, on the back and the chest (harness wounds), on the rump caused by whipping, or on the mouth from poor bitting.

This identifies harmful practices by the community which can be successfully addressed through discussion and education.

Ring finger
Possible lameness

Be aware of how a donkey indicates discomfort. How does the donkey uses its body? How does the donkey move? Is it comfortable in its environment?

How is its environment managed and maintained? Are hooves maintained? Scored from 1 to 5 as above. Study the donkey as it moves. Sometimes the causes are obvious.

Little finger
Other signs of injury or disease

Scored from 1 to 5. This often requires a clinical examination by a professional veterinarian.

Details of the problems are required. Often skin conditions are included here.

ADDITIONAL RESEARCH:
A guide on how to make, fit and use a packsaddle and The good harness guide by Chris Garrett at. www.donkeysforafrica.org

Harnessing wounds are common and the donkey should not be worked until the wounds have healed completely. The harness must also be improved with suitable padding or by being adjusted.

Some injuries are caused by accident. Andy sustained wounds on his eye sockets when he staggered into a wooden structure whilst recovering from a general anaesthetic. These wounds did heal and there was complete regrowth of the hair.

Overgrown hooves as a result of neglect. Corrective trimming has to be done in stages to allow the tendons to adjust.

Laminitis stance: with weight taken off the front feet by bringing hind limbs further under the body. Laminitis is a painful inflammation inside the hoof structure.

Palm of the hand

The whole life of the donkey as a sentient being

This includes aspects such as age, where a donkey was bred, age when separated from its mother, age when it started working, how many owners it has had, how many homes, companions, end of its working life, opportunities for relationships with other donkeys, donkey/human interactions, donkey assisted therapy interactions, end of life issues, etc.

Remember to look at the entire picture.

Human interaction, farrier visits, dentist visits, mental stimulation, and the understanding that animals are indeed very intelligent, and sentient to emotions, all need to be considered.

Back of the hand

Knuckles

Social and economic factors surrounding the donkey's management and working practices, patterns of use over the year, cultures, attitudes, beliefs and traditions of the community as well as other human factors affecting the donkey.

In some communities donkeys are seen as not valuable (feral donkeys particularly), in others they are highly respected and valued.

Right: Dental examination. Regular care and professional veterinary support ensures healthy donkeys.
Below: A raised feeding pad for an elderly donkey.

Practical application of The Hand assessment in your work

Consultation and participation are the keys to successful change. Go in with questions – not answers.

Please apply this assessment to animals that you work with. You will need to work closely with the community and animal owners to get their involvement in finding lasting solutions.

As understanding of donkeys' behaviours grows, people will start to relate to the donkey in a more empathetic way. If all else fails, point out that the better a donkey is cared for, the better it will be able to work. It is useful to take photos where possible, with permission, for reference when re-assessing at a later stage to determine the effectiveness of any welfare actions.

Remember the following:

- **Establish who the owner is.**
- **Does the donkey have a name?**
- **Determine the sex of the donkey and if possible its approximate age.**
- **Enquire after any other donkeys owned by the same person.**
- **Enquire about who is responsible for care, feeding, fly control, cleaning of water and removal of manure.**
- **Enquire about the level of supervision.**

OBSERVATIONS :

Did you know?

Average weight: 160kg

Average Height: 112 cm (11 hands)

Paddock area per donkey: Minimum 0.5 acres (2000 square metres) per donkey, sturdy fencing (not barbed wire) and a shelter. Preferably alternate paddocks from time to time to alleviate boredom and rest grazing.
Shelter: Donkeys need shelter against extreme conditions, rain, wind and sun.

Minimum number of donkeys: at least 2 donkeys – they are herd creatures.

Feed: Donkeys are trickle feeders, like to browse and graze and need highly fibrous plant material, e.g. barley straw, oat straw or hay, teff, rye grass. They are not small horses and are not fed the same diet as horses.
Water: donkeys need access to fresh, clean water at all times.

Coat: donkeys have a longer and more coarse coat than horses, with less natural grease and are more susceptible to climatic conditions such as rain and therefore need access to shelter at all times.

Hooves: hooves are more upright, smaller, tougher and more elastic than those of a horse. Hooves grow differently to those of a horse and should be trimmed by a farrier every 6-10 weeks.

Age: Well-cared-for donkeys can reach an age of up to 40 years or older.

Elderly donkeys: a donkey is considered elderly over the age of 20 years.

Riding and working: donkeys should only be used for riding, working or driving between 4-25 years of age. The bones of a donkey are only fully developed at 4 years of age.

Maximum weight carried on the back: 50kg or one quarter of its body weight.

Maximum pulling weight: not more than twice its body weight, including the weight of the cart (±320kg).

Gelding: a colt should be gelded as early as possible, between 6-18 months of age. By two years of age a young stallion has already learnt its own strength and even after castration difficult behaviour may remain. The younger the colt, the less traumatic the surgery and the greater the positive influence on behaviour.

Female donkeys: come into season roughly every 18-24 days during the summer months and behaviour varies, depending on the individual donkey. Jennies should not breed before 4 years of age. The gestation period is roughly 12 – 14 months but can vary according to local conditions.

Death: allow companions to stay with the deceased donkey until they've lost interest, otherwise they may keep looking for the missing donkey and severe stress and even illness may result. Bereavement may last for up to three weeks.

Donkey welfare assessment summary sheet

Assessment of:	1-5 score or range	Comments, observations, seasonal variations, concerns
Behaviour/demeanour & quality of communication between donkey and people		
Body condition score		
Wounds		
Lameness & use of body		
Other signs of injury or disease		
Other work or management practices & cultural or traditional attitudes		
Other 'life of donkey' points		

OBSERVATIONS :

Donkey welfare assessment summary sheet

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Other 'life of donkey' points		

OBSERVATIONS :

We hope you found this manual useful. Please let us know how and where you have referred to it.

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Facebook: **www.facebook.com/eseltjiesrusdonkeysanctuary/**

Instagram:**www.instagram.com/eseltjiesrusdonkeysanctuary/**

Google Maps:**www.google.com/maps/place/Eseltjiesrus+Donkey+Sanctuary/**

DONKIEHEMEL – a song for all donkeys

Watch this music video at: https://youtu.be/hlPVLD62YfY
(Or search 'Donkiehemel' in YouTube) This song was composed and performed by the patron of Eseltjiesrus, David Kramer. This video, with English subtitles, poignantly depicts the plight of working donkeys and the refuge offered by Eseltjiesrus. It is ideal as an audio-visual aid when presenting a talk on this subject.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to The Donkey Sanctuary (UK) for sponsoring this communication.
All at Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary for the support in our advocacy and outreach programmes. We especially acknowledge all donkeys (*and the humans who selflessly work for the improved welfare of animals)* for their patience, humility and inspiration.

REFERENCES

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-Donkeys for Africa - www.donkeysforafrica.org
-Material from The Donkey Sanctuary (UK) - www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk
-Ben Hart - www.hartshorsemanship.com
-Dr Julius L.C. Chulu (Ph.D., MVSc, BVSc, CVSc) Veterinarian, Chief Animal Health Officer, Department of Animal Heath and Livestock Development, Malawi: The Role of OIE in Animal Welfare – delivered at African Animal Welfare Workshop, Bela Bela, April 2015
-Application of the Hands-On Donkey Tool for Assessing the Welfare of Working Equids at Tuliman, Mexico, Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10888705.2017.1351365

IMAGE CREDITS

SPANA, The Donkey Sanctuary, Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary, Brooke, FAWCAM, TDSK, TAWESO, TGHDT, amaTrac uluntu, ZWDP

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Your support improves the quality of life of elderly, frail and abused donkeys. It helps us to reach out and provide essential training and education that helps the lives of many donkeys – as well as the people who use these gentle creatures to earn a living.

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- **Visiting us**
- **Volunteering**
- **Leaving a bequest**

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