

DONKEYS for AFRICA

Promoting communication about donkey welfare

www.donkeysforafrica.org

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Moringa trees Credit Network for Animals

Moringa – the miracle tree

Moringa oleifera is a fast-growing, deciduous tree. It is widely cultivated for its young seed pods and leaves, used as vegetables and for traditional herbal medicine. In developing countries, moringa has the potential to improve nutrition, boost food security, foster rural development, and support sustainable use of land. It may be used as forage for livestock, a micronutrient liquid, and is reputedly a natural anthelmintic.

Matabeleland Animal Rescue and Equine Sanctuary (MARES) in Zimbabwe reports: *“At the end of the dry winter months there is little or no grass in the Hwange areas. The subsequent lack of nutrition for pregnant jennies and their unborn foals results in an abortion rate and loss of the jenny of 70%.”*

Alternative feed

MARES has been developing a cheap alternative feed to distribute to the donkey owners in this area. Eighteen months ago they established a moringa tree plantation. During the past year MARES was able to distribute feed made with moringa leaves harvested from the plantation. The dry moringa is mixed with nutritious grass cut and baled from the bush during the summer, as well as some wheat bran to bind it when making pellets. Pelleting makes it easy to transport the feed to remote villages.

The donkey owners have reported a record number of surviving foals from the donkeys that were fed this season.

MARES says “It is on a small scale at the moment until our trees mature properly, but we are confident that we are going

the right direction to alleviate this crisis. As you know, moringa is called the miracle tree and we are finding that it has huge beneficial properties for the donkeys.”

[MARES Rescue & Rehabilitation Facebook Page](#)





Cart at an Outreach project

Free welfare services: yes – no – or maybe?

There is a central issue in animal welfare work. Should owners receive free services from animal welfare organisations, or should they pay an amount, however small? Arguments can be made for both approaches. The concept of counter-performance can be a powerful motivator. Or would they stay away if expected to contribute in some way – causing suffering to the animals?

Thank you to everyone who responded to this question. We received so many in-depth replies that this topic will run over into our next newsletter.

A summary of some reactions follows below.

First of all: there is no single, simple answer. The solutions may differ, depending on the specific community, the circumstances and the type of service being offered.

Free treatments

It often takes time for the benefits of treatments to become noticeable. Owners may need to see results before they accept the process. Once they see positive outcomes, they may be more willing to pay for further interventions. This is especially true when working with recognised groups or associations of owners, rather than with individuals.

When free treatment undermines community participation, ownership, and local responsibility, it can weaken the very behaviour-change processes on which sustainable animal welfare outcomes depend. As a result, the effectiveness and resilience of the broader system may be compromised.

Where programmes have historically provided services free of charge, the abrupt withdrawal of support may have unintended negative consequences for both communities and animal welfare. A gradual, well-communicated transition strategy that promotes responsibility, affordability, and sustainability is more appropriate.

Charities should retain flexibility to make compassionate exceptions in emergency or critical welfare cases where immediate support is necessary to prevent significant suffering.

Note this warning: even in emergencies, charities should resist establishing dependency because free services are very addictive and work against development of more locally appropriate and sustainable services.

Tension exists between immediate access to services and the long-term goal of fostering ownership, responsibility, and sustainable behaviour change among animal owners. Blanket free-service or reactive “fire-fighting” approaches may risk creating dependency and weakening local accountability.

Problems with charging fees

At times, it is unethical and unprofessional to withhold support when an animal is at high risk and assistance is feasible. Fees should not create barriers for vulnerable households and discourage timely access to essential animal welfare services.



Cart donkeys in South Africa

Some organisations noted that even a very small fee can become a barrier to owners bringing their animals for treatment. Many owners simply stay away rather than coming through. The risk of animals suffering because owners do not attend, may outweigh the potential benefit of charging a fee.

This may be countered by encouraging participation in other ways, such as attending education sessions, assisting during outreach activities, or working with an organisation in improving husbandry and welfare practices. Alternatively, “pass-on-the-gift” which does not deal with cash but with items. For example, based on a written agreement, a donkey is provided to someone who doesn’t have, and after some years he gives back another donkey which in turn will be given to someone else.

Realities and challenges

There is a need to balance compassion with sustainability, ensuring that support addresses immediate needs. This should also foster ownership, accountability, and long-term self-reliance within communities.

From the onset of an activity, owners must understand that any charity work is a subvention to their own effort. They should not expect continuous support but rather look for ways of generating funds themselves.

Charities should focus on building local capacity for lasting benefit: working at policy and community-level, using practical, educational, One Welfare-focussed interventions. Owners then have the responsibility to keep the activities alive and contribute towards them, financially or otherwise.

There should always be an exit plan for any charity, and this is likely to involve a short period of high input and a longer tail off period of reducing inputs as more and more elements of the work are taken up by local institutions.

Regarding working equids, owners and communities should cover their own recurrent costs, and a charity could help fund the establishment and short term running of clinical and training services.

There is always a cost involved with any support. But to what extent can a charity continuously provide or deliver that service to the same owners? This may be the greater question to answer.

How do YOU feel about this difficult question? Email editor@donkeysforafrica.org

We will continue this discussion in the next newsletter, with direct quotes from our respondents.

Deworming – further responses to the discussion in our previous newsletter



Carine who cared for donkeys in Switzerland, reported that all the faeces in their fields were collected at least twice a week. Twice a year samples were sent for coprology analysis, and they were always under the deworming threshold. Carine observes that “the analysis was cheaper than a treatment!”

From MARES Sanctuary in Zimbabwe: “Faeces samples are always sent for egg counts before any deworming. We are now in our eighth year where we have not had to deworm a single one of our horses.

If we notice that a donkey brought in, is failing to improve, a gastrodiscus egg count is requested as well as the normal Worm Egg Count. Recently this was done for a new donkey that was not doing well. Gastrodiscus came back positive with a count of 30. On washing the stools after deworming (we only gave 1/4 of a Nilzan tablet) we counted 115 worms in one stool. On veterinary advice, we waited two weeks before giving the rest of the dose. After a month we noticed an improvement in the donkey’s health.

In the rural areas we do blanket deworming with only Panacur which is safe for dung beetles, as most of our outreaches border the Hwange National Park. We normally do deworming towards the end of the rainy season in April, and again in November, as we have noticed if the grass is scarce we see donkeys eating cow pats. Since our deworming programmes the owners have remarked on a huge improvement in their donkeys.”

Dr Martin Achiri in Cameroon raised the interesting point that co-grazing with ruminant populations (susceptible to different types of worms) is a common scenario in rural communities of Africa. Can this positively or negatively influence worm infestation in donkeys and horses? Co-grazing can help with strongyles control in donkeys. Concerning other types of worms, can there possibly be a different effect, and how do we put all this together, to holistically advise or do worm control in the different co-existing populations?

New name, same mission



**Working
Animals
International**

The new name for SPANA

An interesting “change of face” but still doing the same essential work: well-known SPANA has undergone a facelift and name change. The organisation is now known as Working Animals International. We wish you well on the road ahead, already so well mapped out! Do visit their new website at <https://www.workinganimals.org/>



Okavango Delta Outreach - Botswana

In May 2026, Maun Animal Welfare Society (MAWS), supported by Animal Aid Abroad (AAA), took outreach programmes to remote villages in the Okavango Delta in Northern Botswana.

Rabies vaccinations and sterilisation campaigns for dogs and cats were implemented.

The equine section of MAWS was also involved and was accompanied by Ansie Gildenhuys and the farrier Thomas Haimbiri.

Donkeys and horses from six villages were dewormed, treated for wounds, and received hoof care. Owners were educated on humane harnessing, and worn harnesses and harmful bits were exchanged for correctly fitted and appropriate equipment.

Severe hobbling wounds were noticed and addressed, and owners were shown how to use old hoses instead of thin nylon ropes.

The numbers of equids treated, are impressive:

- **Gunotsoga Village:** 7 horses, 1 donkey.
- **Seronga Village:** 7 horses, 51 donkeys.
- **Beetsha:** 4 horses, 13 donkeys.
- **Gudigwa:** 70 horses, 14 donkeys.
- **Eretsha:** 1 horse treated with a crocodile bite wound.
- **Sepopa:** 3 horses, 5 donkeys.

A total of 92 horses and 84 donkeys were treated, benefiting both the animals and the communities that rely on them. However, there is still much work to be done in these areas, and a return visit is planned. <https://maunanimalwelfare.com/> and <https://www.animalaidabroad.org/>



Wire bit handed over by owner



New bits (at top) replacing harmful bits



Humane hobbles using hosepipe



The annual report of the Meru Animal Welfare Organisation (MAWO) working in Tanzania, is available on their website:

<https://www.meruanimalwelfare.org/>

They also welcome volunteers.



The half-yearly newsletter of The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust is available at <http://www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk/summer2026.pdf> Their Director, Heather Armstrong, believes that "problems are

here to overcome." An admirable attitude!

Enjoy reading about their progress and maybe even consider volunteering at this most worth-while project, while learning and practising animal care and welfare.



Petition to impose AU moratorium on donkey skins trade in South Africa

South Africa maintains a legal export quota of 10 500 donkey skins per year. Help South Africa to get in line with other African countries that have banned the export of donkey skins. Please sign the petition at <https://e.org/9ywRpyHmrD>

From the Editor

We are delighted with the responses to our question about payment for welfare services. This topic affects everyone, whether delivering or receiving animal welfare support. Some replies will be featured in greater depth in our next newsletter, and it is still not too late to send your thoughts.

The trade in donkey skins continues: legally in a few countries, unfortunately, and illegally - despite legislation - in progressively thinking nations. Constant vigilance is essential.

Donkeys remain in danger of exploitation on so many different fronts. They are often undervalued, misunderstood, and abused through ignorance. It is our duty and privilege to ensure that their contributions to society are honoured, as well as the unique qualities they possess. We owe it to them not only as a species, but also to the families that rely on them as an integral part of their survival strategy.

Let us draw strength from one another. We are all striving towards the same goal - better lives for donkeys.

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