

Donkeys need to be loved

There is a unique character in every sad, dejected, maltreated animal.

Donkeys that feel safe will open themselves to us and there is a rich variety of behaviours, attitudes, expectations and characteristics to discover if we only have the time to interact. Acknowledging donkeys as sentient beings will add to the relationship between the animals and ourselves.

What is in a name?

An often unconsidered question in assessing the well-being and status of an animal is to ask the owner if it has a name. Stephen Messenger, Senior Writer for The Dodo, points out that "Names are like passkeys which unlock our empathy. Giving animals names ultimately often means little for the animal, but it does change the way we regard them."

Feelings

Recognising that a donkey has feelings and experiences pain and emotional distress, lies at the basis of Humane Education. Donkeys grieve at the loss of a partner and such behaviours are well documented. Seeing young, healthy donkeys galloping for the sheer joy of it, and playing with companions relates to similar behaviours of other species, including humans.

Repair broken spirits

The secret ingredient is good health and emotional security. Mistreated and abused donkeys suffer from broken spirits.

Recently a donkey sanctuary in South Africa rescued a lone

donkey that had been neglected. She existed in a small, inaccessible camp with no grazing and no shelter from the blazing sun. When the rescuers arrived to remove her, she was lying on bare ground. She did not get up when approached and it was clear she had given up any expectation or hope of matters improving in her life.

Once removed to safety, with grass and a soft, shady resting place, immediate veterinary and farrier care, she spent a few days recovering. Then her true character emerged: a definite, strong-willed but extremely affectionate animal who enjoys attention and the company of people and other donkeys. Possibly an ideal situation for this lucky donkey, difficult to realise in some areas, but the aspirations for humane treatment of donkeys are global.

Animal welfare workers have to keep some emotional distance from the animals they come into contact with, or their work becomes unbearable. However, recognising the emotions of an animal enables us to enjoy the satisfaction of a case that turns around the life of the animal for the better. Alleviation of suffering is just that: changing unbearable circumstances into good quality of life.

Animals are just as much entitled to that as humans.



Take the time to look deep into a donkey's eyes – the wisdom you see will humble you.

Know about good news stories about rescued donkeys? Please share them by emailing editor@donkeysforafrica.org

RECOGNISE PAIN IN DONKEYS

This is a challenge to many donkey welfare practitioners as donkeys have far more subtle ways of expressing pain than horses or other animals.

An article by Rebecca Whay, PhD, of the University of Bristol School of Veterinary Sciences, shows that working donkeys may have an awful lot of problems but, at the same time, seem so calm. "When you learn to watch their behaviour it's like watching them shouting" she says.

Rebecca continues "We're not good at recognizing stillness and inactivity as a sign of pain. We're used to recognizing people saying they're in pain and exhibiting pain behaviours and eliciting a response from others. And we need to understand that that's just not what donkeys do."



The above image is purposefully misleading about what people may consider to be a donkey in pain. This donkey is resting, content with her head on her treat bowl. This is a happy donkey.

Donkeys in pain tend to be stoical - not wanting to let anyone know they are suffering.

Read, and share this information

<https://thehorse.com/19896/study-reveals-working-donkey-pain-behavior/>

ADVICE

Effective harnessing

ensures productive, happier donkeys

Please consult 'The Good Harness Guide' in our library.

Harnessing a donkey properly for work is important. Once the actual harness that fits onto the donkey is suitable, don't forget about the hitching parts.

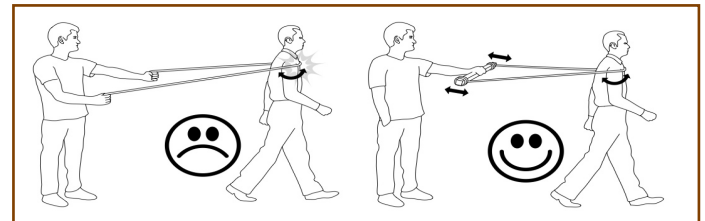
- Swingle trees enable the harness to move freely with the donkey without causing rubbing wounds, by balancing the pull from alternate shoulders as the animal walks.
- The traces (the straps by which the animal pulls) attach to its ends, and in the other direction the vehicle attaches to its middle.
- The action of swingle trees can be demonstrated easily by using a stick and some string or rope. Here is an example:

Find a human to be a donkey.

Get them to swing their shoulders and pretend to be a donkey walking (on the spot, not moving). Put a rope around their chest and shoulders and hold it rigidly in your hands.

- You now are the cart, your arms are the shafts. Your volunteer donkey will soon complain that the rope hurts.
- Now tie each end of the rope to the opposite ends of a two foot stick. Again place the rope around your volunteer's shoulders and either hold the centre of the stick loosely, or tie a short piece of string to the centre of the stick and hold that.
- Get your volunteer to 'walk' again; this time there will be no pain. The stick or swingle then moves with the shoulders.

Note the difference. Now apply this when next you harness a donkey to a cart.



Proper harnessing will ensure better productivity because then donkeys are optimally and humanely utilised.

Donkeys remain an effective eco-sensitive transport solution and will never become redundant



Turkey experiences the same challenges and seeks similar solutions as required in Africa.

The increased preference for mechanical and electrical apparatus in the interests of modernisation, has led to decreased popularity of working donkeys. However some areas still use donkeys for practical reasons: in Mardin Municipality in southeast Turkey, where many streets of the mountain fortress are too narrow and twisty for use by motor vehicles, donkeys are used to collect household waste.

Similarly the prices of donkeys in the Yozgat District in central Turkey increased seven-fold when many local people abandoned their tractors because of high fuel prices and reverted to the age-old and trusty beast of burden.



Patient donkeys waiting for their owners in the hillside village of Mardin.

Image: Flickr

INSPIRATION

Making a difference

Normally we profile achievements from organisations who are helping donkeys in Africa. But here is an amazing story about an individual.

A woman who is making a difference for many animals in a remote area in Africa.



Ansie Gildenhuys lives and works in Samochima



Google Maps shows the remote village of Samochima.

Village, in the north-west of Botswana about 10km from Shakawe, bordering the Caprivi Strip in Namibia.

This woman loves all animals and feels it is her calling to be in this remote area to reach out to people and animals.

"This is a very poor community and there are no veterinary

or support systems to assist" she explains.

All needy animals receive care from Ansie's heart: dogs, cats, donkeys, horses, goats, chickens, cattle, wildlife and birds. She believes in leading by example, and by building up relationships with the local villagers.

Animals in this area experience brutal living conditions, and this is reflective of conditions many people themselves experience. Working equines face injuries due to ploughing, pulling carts, hobbling and frequent crocodile attacks when they go for water.

Challenges

When asked what her biggest challenges are in providing support and care for equines in this remote area, Ansie replied "Lack of understanding and knowledge of how a donkey can be more productive, and little to no funds to buy much needed medicines for helping animals in distress."

Ansie mostly purchases basic medical supplies herself, when in Maun or visiting South Africa. Occasionally she is lucky to receive items donated.

Support

Ansie has contact with a number of veterinarians from Onderstepoort in South Africa and from Maun Animal Welfare Society (MAWS) who bring clinics to her remote area. SPANA Botswana has also held workshops for donkeys and their owners in the area. Veterinarian friends residing in Canada provide helpful advice on line.

Educating the youth

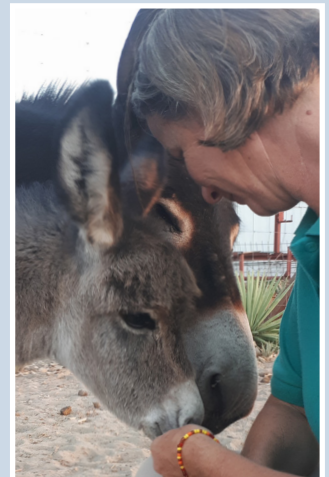
Although there are no humane education opportunities for the children in the area, Ansie leads by example, showing children who bring animals to her how to treat the animals with respect, love and care. She explains: "I have in the past run a workshop for children with the help of local friends, who are also my moral support. The subject of the day was - treat an animal with love and you will have an animal who respects you. We will do another workshop if we can find the funding."

When asked what her biggest wish for the equines in her area is, Ansie replied "A productive and pain free life."

People like Ansie are inspirational, working without any greater infrastructure and doing her best to improve the lives of all around her. She may not change the world, but for every animal helped, that animal's world is changed.

Ansie can be contacted via email on babopiman@gmail.com.

"Treat an animal with love and you will have an animal who respects you."



Ansie with some villagers and children of Samochima, discussing donkey care. Right, with Bolle and Liefje, two village donkeys.



Call for Abstracts

A call for abstracts and case studies for the Donkey Science and Education Session at the 2020 Donkey Welfare Symposium in California, USA, has been announced.

Due date for abstracts is June 1, 2020. The conference takes place in late October 2020.

Please email: Dr Amy McLean acmclean@ucdavis.edu or Dr Eric Davis ewdavis@ucdavis.edu for more information about submitting a 500word abstract describing your latest findings in donkey and mule research and/or novel case studies focused on donkey and mule medicine or related clinical findings.

All levels of researchers, including student researchers are encouraged to submit abstracts. All submissions will be notified of final decisions by August 1, 2020.

Media enlisted to help

The African Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW) recently held a media workshop to highlight the illegal movement of donkeys across the Kenya-Tanzania border.

Kenya has the highest number of licensed donkey abattoirs in Africa. The Kenya Agricultural & Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) predicts that donkeys in Kenya will be extinct by 2023. (See our previous issue.) Cross-border movement of donkeys into Kenya supplies the abattoirs meeting the demand for skins to export. The porous nature of the borders, poor diplomatic relations on livestock issues, corruption and lack of awareness by donkey owners about the impact of the skins trade were cited as some of the challenges to be met.

Judy Muriithi, Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, introduced a positive note, stating: "There is hope for animals in Kenya as the country's blueprint identifies the vision of the agricultural and livestock sectors".

Let us hope this will not be implemented too late.



Animal-Kind International - Difference between Partners & Grantees

Our Partners

are animal welfare organisations that someone on the AKI Board has worked closely with, in-person, on-the-ground, so we can feel 100% comfortable with their programs, their technical expertise and their administrative capabilities. We have full confidence in them and their accountability and transparency. As long as they meet our standards, our Partners receive funding from us every year. This reliable source of funding means our Partners can plan, they can grow and become strong voices for animals in their countries.

Our Grantees

In addition there is the Africa-based Animal Welfare Organization Grant Program. These Grant Recipients receive one-time funding based on a grant application. We provide administrative, technical, and other advice and support, as needed, just as we do for our Partners.

Queries? Contact Karen Menczer at karen@animal-kind.org or visit <https://www.animal-kind.org/>



From the editor - with feedback about our survey

Thank you to everyone who responded to our survey at the end of last year. Your comments help us to remain relevant and useful.

In summary, most of you were happy with our four-page format, expanding pages with special news being included when appropriate. The content, design and writing were judged to be appropriate for what we are doing. (We had some very

reference library is useful and will be expanded. This is increasingly used by donkey welfare practitioners and students.

Our Facebook communication received mixed feelings, but was found to require expanding from the audience that uses social media.

Going into our fourth year now, we are grateful for your interest and contributions that make this a worthwhile undertaking.

Stay in touch and keep the communication about donkey welfare in Africa flowing.

complimentary comments.)

Many respondents would like to get our newsletter as an attachment via an email. We are starting to make this happen with this issue.

Our website format is correct – simple and brief. The DfA

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