



The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Fighting Poverty – Feeding Families

Registered Charity No: 1096814

Spring 2021



We have the will, we just need to find a way!

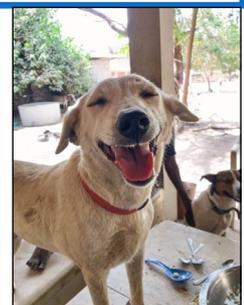
There can be very few people on this planet who have not been affected by Covid. It has been an incredibly stressful, worrying and very sad time for so many. It could have been a disaster for this little charity but..... we are still here! Not only are we still here, but we are working harder than ever before with all the calls for help that we are receiving.

No two days are ever the same and the diverse problems that we see means that we are never bored. The increase in cases has highlighted areas in which we need to improve. One of our priorities is to address the causes of the injuries that we see such as poor harnessing, however we have found that the fistulous withers that we had attributed to poor harness, may have other causes. All too often we are constrained by lack of laboratory facilities and experienced laboratory technicians which means that we need a lot of guesswork with our treatments. Not only would better facilities help the animals in our care but it would help to achieve greater knowledge of the problems that we deal with.

Since the pandemic began we have been dealing with more and more dogs as there are very few other places that most Gambians can take them to find affordable help. Without the help of the small charities who carry out dog neutering in normal times, the dog population has grown and so has the incidence of rabies. We have seen two donkeys and two dogs with Rabies in the last few months. We are desperate to welcome back both small animal and equine vets to carry out a big neutering campaign as well as continuing our work with the equines. Neutering and rabies vaccines will help both the equines and humans. We have so many plans and with more funding we could achieve so much more. Our monthly running costs are increasing so we are spending more just to maintain the workload we have now. Please consider fundraising for us, setting up a standing order, remembering us in your will or letting others know of our work. We have come a long way, but there is so much more to be done.



We all need a reason to smile and these are just some of the broken souls who found their smiles with us



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Letter from the Director, Heather Armstrong.

Greetings,

When my late sister, Stella and I founded this charity we thought we would give it 20 years and if we had not made an impact by then, we would give up and retire. We never envisaged the charity would grow so much or how much would be achieved in a relatively short time and with comparatively small amounts of money.

The change in recent years has been enormous. Attitudes are changing, children are learning and though it makes a great deal more work for us, it is so encouraging that Gambians in particular are taking time and trouble to report animals in distress to us. We have come to realise that it is not that people do not care, but more that they did not know where to turn to for help. Veterinary care costs money which many cannot afford so people are bringing all species in need of help to us, not just horses and donkeys but also dogs, cats, sheep, goats, turtles, birds and even recently a monkey in distress. The work can be emotionally challenging, but when you look at all those animals who turn the corner and go on to thrive and enjoy life, the rewards are enormous and make it all so worth while.

The last year has been an extraordinarily difficult time for everybody. It has been a worrying time for all charities but for us our supporters have been incredibly generous and have kept us going through this dark time. I have been touched and humbled at how people have rallied round for us, people who have lost their jobs and businesses have helped in kind, collecting, sorting and selling on E-bay for us. One supporter has set up an online business making lovely things to sell for us <https://www.facebook.com/Sugar-Dragon-101673371943283/> Many people made donations for our recent shipment. Thank you ALL so much! Sadly costs are increasing, our work load is increasing and we need your help now more than ever before. Thanks to YOU we have come further than we ever imagined we could. Lets see what we can achieve together in the next 10 years!

With sincere thanks,

Heather



Volunteers

With the increased workload we have had, our staff have been run off their feet. With the increased number of dogs requiring specialist nursing care and the increased level of staff training and administration poor Emily has been run off her feet. We are looking forward to welcoming another qualified veterinary nurse to help us for a year. Megan MacLeod will be joining us in early May and we extend a warm welcome to her. We hope she will enjoy her time with us and help the centre continue to run at the highest possible standards.



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Rays of Hope

Nothing gives me more pleasure and hope than to see the centre buzzing with Gambian and overseas students. We haven't seen the latter for a long while due to Covid but the Gambian students and Animal Welfare Advocates have been doing great things. Many of the original group who founded their association after attending a workshop at our Sambel Centre, have now graduated. They are posted around the country as agricultural paravets or teachers. St. Vincent de Paul School, have started an Animal Advocates club for the children they teach. Each day the children water the donkeys by pumping water from the village well. We heard recently that between them they had raised enough money to have a borehole in the village specifically to water the animals.

Pupils from this school made a visit to our Makasutu centre and they recited poems they had written to our staff. One pupil, Diya Jallow, wrote this beautiful poem which demonstrates real empathy and understanding. The ripples of animal welfare are growing and change is happening and the young people of The Gambia give us so much cause for optimism.



Here I am ...

Here I am, chained and alone

I stand in this circle I made on my own

I am pacing around, just wanting to play

But I can't get away from this damned chain.

It hurts my neck and weighs my soul

I feel as if I am dead and they are digging my hole

Just bring me inside, let me lay at your feet

After all these months, it is you that I need

We can leave this in the past, I just want to be free

Please don't ignore my cries and let your eyes see.

By Diya Jallow
St. Vincent De Paul School

Parvo Virus

The dog population has been growing, but there was recently a Parvo Virus epidemic which killed a great many young pups. Children kept bringing us more and more sick puppies. With so many dogs in our care already we were very worried about it spreading to them. We are extremely grateful to Lawrence Williams who gave his consent to use one of his buildings close by as an isolation unit for the pups. Nursing Parvo Virus patients requires intensive care nursing and the pups received day and night care. We are proud to say that out of 28 dogs we only lost four puppies and many young pups returned home to their joyful owners. We learnt a lot about treating the disease. We also learnt the importance of teamwork.



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Apprentices

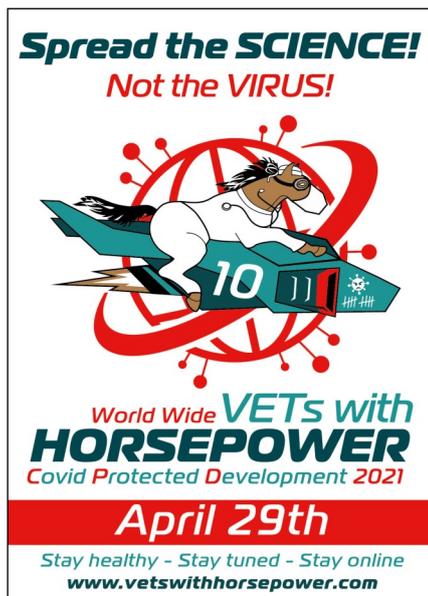


Due to the pandemic, our apprentice programme has been slightly disrupted. We do have apprentices and they are being taught by our staff rather than visiting vets, but our work load has been so high that quite often the theory lectures are missed. They are getting a great deal of practical experience but we hope they will catch up on their theory once our volunteers return (Please note that I am thinking positively here!)

The apprenticeship programme has been very successful and many of the previous apprentices are helping animals in their own areas now and earning a living from it.



Vets with Horsepower



Vets with Horsepower <http://www.vetswithhorsepower.com/> are the most remarkable group of people. The charity was founded by Professor Derek Knottenbelt and consists of a group of senior equine vets who share a passion for motorbikes and for sharing their considerable expertise and knowledge. Their enthusiasm for raising funds was curtailed last year, and although they cannot ride again this year, you cannot keep good people down and they are holding an online event instead. They have given us support to build and equip Makasutu and they are always there with help and advice when we have difficult cases. They are holding a 24 hour continuing professional development event on the 29th April, but if you pay your registration you will also be able to access all the talks afterwards. They have made places available free of charge to delegates from developing countries and we are delighted that many vet professionals from The Gambia will be participating.

Appeal for equipment

We are currently collecting :

- Small bits 4.5" or smaller
- Pony size head collars
- Cotton wool
- Needles and syringes
- Veterinary equipment
- Veterinary medication
- Dog & cat cages
- Fabric girths
- Enrichment toys for our patients
- Examination gloves



Thank You, Thank You Thank You

We would love to thank everyone individually, but experience has taught me that when we do that, as soon as the newsletter goes to press I think of 10 more names that should have been included! We would like to thank everyone who has helped us with donations of money, equipment, voluntary help or even with kind words of encouragement when we are at our lowest ebb. When we are packing the shipments we think of you all as we pack the goods for transporting and we often wonder about the previous equines who have used the equipment. YOU are the people who enable us to do the things we do, the ones who really care and go to the trouble of collecting and shipping/delivering to us. You respond to our appeals to help individual animals or raise funds for neutering clinics. You make things happen and we thank you so much for your support.

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FENCING

We have always had a big dilemma with fencing. We had tried to make post and rail fencing with thinner coppiced branches in order not to destroy trees, but determined donkeys and termites made short work of them. We are constantly constrained by funding but wanted to be as eco friendly as possible. We have a great many visitors to our centre so electric fencing is not an option as the visitors like to pet the animals. Thanks to an unexpected donation we were able to invest in some PCV fencing which looks really lovely, is safer for the animals and, in UK at least, is guaranteed to last in excess of 30 years. Even if it only lasts half that time, it will save us a great deal of money. We have purchased enough to do the internal perimeter fencing and if it can keep the likes of Jeffrey and GK contained (they are perpetual escape artists) we shall try to use it to divide the paddocks. If anyone would like to contribute towards the fencing fund we would be most grateful.



RABIES



There seems to have been an increase in Rabies in the last six months and we have seen two donkeys and two dogs infected with it. Quite apart from the incredible suffering to the animal, it is a real threat to our staff and anyone who comes into contact with the animal. It costs us in the region of £100 per person to have our staff vaccinated and they still have to have a post exposure injection if they come into contact with a rabied animal. One of our dreams is to have a nationwide rabies vaccination campaign and eradicate rabies in The Gambia. It is possible. I believe that if we all worked together, the Government, ourselves, the vets in private practice and perhaps other charities and with the help of volunteers from abroad, it could be done, particularly if we could get help from the vaccine manufacturers and the international animal health organisations. We need to do a nationwide dog count to know how many dogs need to be vaccinated first but inevitably Covid has held us back. In the meantime, we do what we can vaccinating and neutering as many dogs as we can and collecting vaccination syringes and needles so that when the time is right we shall be prepared. Wouldn't it be a fantastic thing to be the first rabies free country in Africa? If the campaign then moved into Senegal, it would prevent us becoming reinfected. This would be such an achievement and would help the Gambian people and animals. It would benefit the struggling tourism industry too. We like to make our dreams come true! If anyone would like to sponsor it or become involved or knows of people who could make it happen please contact us.



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TELL ME AND I FORGET;

TEACH ME AND I MAY REMEMBER;

INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN AND UNDERSTAND...

It is all too easy for an animal lover to become very angry when they see animal abuse. The instinctive reaction is to shout at and abuse the perpetrator. We have learned that this usually only makes matters worse and the abuser also becomes angry and takes it out on his animal. Education helps and our staff are instructed to always stop and politely explain to the owner why beating is wrong and how they can get a better response from the donkey in a more humane manner. We also remove the stick. Recently a young lad came to visit his sick puppy. He had been followed by his other dog who lay quietly and waited for him whilst he was in the unit. When he was ready to go home his little dog was fast asleep curled up in the sand and without thinking he picked up a piece of broken hosepipe and beat her with it to wake her up. The staff members who witnessed it were astounded and all very angry. The dog was removed and put in a kennel. After some discussion Emily and Fatou went to see the child's mother who told them he was a "difficult" child who refused to go to school and spent as much time as possible away from home with his dog in the bush. His difficult behaviour meant that he himself was beaten regularly, so it was normal behaviour for him and he passed it on to his dog. We discussed the possibility of giving him a job and his parents agreed. He was a quiet "shut down" little lad who would not look you in the eye but he was keen to come and learn more about dogs. On his second day, when he was given a uniform, his face lit up. Fatou and Moss are his mentors and he is turning out to be a hard worker and very keen to learn and he clearly likes dogs. He has been with us for a few weeks now and although there have been a couple of set backs, his whole demeanour has changed and he is gradually becoming a responsible member of the team. In time, when he is ready, we will encourage him to try formal education or perhaps teach him to read and write but in the meantime the team have had some insight into how corporal punishment can perpetuate problems. What he learns with us may also make him a more understanding adult.



Hechi Some of you may remember Hechi who is probably one of the thinnest horses we have ever seen. Our charity was blessed to have had a horse called Lazarus as its founder. He showed us what is possible as he was possibly even thinner than Hechi. Not all of the "skinnies" make it, but we will always give them a chance. Gradually Hechi overcame all the odds of Trypanosomiasis, Epizootic Lymphangitis and severe emaciation. He also has only one eye. He has had a hard life and at some stage during his life his tendons have been damaged so the thought of returning him to work weighed heavily on us. His owner was a kind man who had bought him cheaply from a rogue dealer and took him straight to the veterinary centre who referred him to us. Recently the owner

came to see him and was delighted at his condition and thought he could put him to work. When we pointed out to him Hechi's handicaps he was very receptive and said he would sell him which we knew would be a downward spiral for him. This is where Hechi's Club members came in, a group of wonderful people who made donations towards his purchase and keep. Hechi's future is assured. Some will point out that it would have been more economical and perhaps a better use of funds to have euthanized him, but it brings a huge sense of satisfaction and achievement to the staff to help the animals in our care and with each case we learn so much! We believe he has earned a well deserved retirement. **Thank you for helping him to have a happy retirement.**



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A request for ideas

Our staff have has a great deal of training from visiting vets, equine dental technicians, farriers and draught animal technicians but if you ask them all what they would like to be they would say a vet. Sadly for them, none of them have the basic school qualifications to get into vet school but they do have the ability to be excellent paravets which is what The Gambia needs. There is no veterinary training in The Gambia and the courses run at Gambia College and the University are focussed on farm animal production. We would like to establish or find an online course with a focus on equines and small animals that would suit paravets all over the world in association with a recognised vet school or College that would give them an internationally recognised qualification. If anyone has any knowledge of how we could go about this or knows of an existing course we would be very interested to get feedback from you. If this could be done it would help to improve animal welfare all over the world.



CALLING ALL VETS!

We have been missing our volunteer vets and we are all in need of some training and a boost to our morale! For small animal vets there are so many animals that require neutering as well as a wide variety of different conditions to broaden your experience. We can guarantee equine vets that you will learn a lot and that you won't be bored. We run two busy hospitals with a big caseload and we ask you to share your knowledge with our staff and students. The Gambia is not on the red list, the cost of Covid travel tests is coming down and if travel opens up more in the next month we shall be ready and waiting to welcome you with open arms..... and the sunshine to lift your spirits is guaranteed! Please email the address at the bottom of the page for more details.



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Help us raise much needed funds...

CAPTAIN TOM 100

THE GAMBIA HORSE AND DONKEY TRUST SUPPORTERS INVITED TO CELEBRATE CAPTAIN SIR TOM'S ACHIEVEMENTS IN SPECIAL FUNDRAISING EVENT



Following the outpouring of heartfelt messages since the death of Captain Sir Tom Moore on 2 February, his family pledged to celebrate his life with an event that everyone, in the UK and around the world, could be involved in. That event is the Captain Tom 100 and The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust is proud to be inviting our supporters to take part.

How it works

It's so simple. All participants need to do is dream up a Captain Tom 100 challenge based around the number 100 and do it at anytime and anywhere over Captain Tom's birthday weekend – starting on Friday 30 April through to Bank Holiday Monday 3 May, but feel free to extend it as you wish. The challenge could be walking 100 steps or running 100 metres, scoring 100 goals, baking 100 cakes, climbing 100 stairs, hopping 100 laps of the garden, building 100 sandcastles, writing a 100-word poem, flipping 100 pancakes – anything at all, inside or out. Once supporters have chosen their challenge, they can fundraise or donate to The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust <https://captaintom100.justgiving.com/get-involved?charityId=147260>

VIRTUAL LONDON MARATHON



This is the **VIRTUAL** version of the Virgin Money London Marathon, the marathon that everyone wants to do at least once in their lifetime. The virtual Virgin Money London Marathon will return this year, giving participants the opportunity to take on the world's greatest marathon on the course of their choice from 00:00:00 to 23:59:59, wherever they are on the planet. You don't have to be a runner to complete this event, it can be done as a walk. 50,000 Runners/Walkers in the virtual event will join a record 50,000 participants who will run the traditional Virgin Money London Marathon from Blackheath to The Mall.

VIRTUAL LONDON MARATHON 2021

Date: Sunday, 3rd October, 2021

Location: Anywhere

Event Distance: 26.2 miles

Registration fee: £10

Fundraising target: Minimum £100 or as much as you can.

All finishers receive official London Marathon T-shirt and medal.

Online services we are registered with



www.giveasyoulive.com



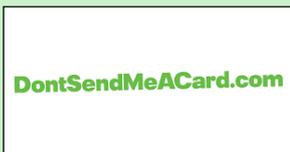
www.thebiggive.org.uk



www.easyfundraising.org.uk



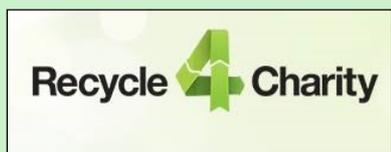
www.smile.amazon.co.uk



www.dontsendmeacard.com



www.ziffit.com



www.recycle4charity.co.uk



www.giveacar.co.uk

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Working with the owners

Every week our staff are divided up, some work on the yard with the inpatients, some attend to call outs to visit animals that are too far away to come to us, the school education team visit the schools and some go to markets on a regular visit where owners of working equines can find help with ailments and advice on care and management of their animals. We are delighted to see that in the areas where we work on a regular basis, the condition of the animals is improving dramatically.



Charlie Watts



Charlie Watts came to us in December. He was very emaciated and had been badly overworked. With good care and attention he began to put on weight nicely, but then suddenly began developing colic, lost weight and became very weak. Our Sambel team were concerned and so we moved him down to Makasutu. He found the five hour journey exhausting and collapsed on arrival, but with a bit of intensive care he is beginning to improve once more. He is typical of a Gambian horse who was malnourished as a foal, worked far too early (sometimes as young as 9 months) and worked far too hard. They are very narrow and the fore legs “come out of the same hole” We originally thought this was a “type” of horse but we then realised that young horses that grow up with us and have good nutrition develop normally.



Maya De La Rosa



Maya de la Rosa came to us in a sad state, her mother had been killed in a road traffic accident, but she was in appalling condition and covered in lice and ticks. She was sick, weak and grieving for her mother. Emily took her under her wing with the help of Creamy the dog and she has been allowed to graze on the lawn of our garden. She has brightened up considerably and has gained 6kgs in a few days! Note that in many pictures of sick animals, Creamy is never far away!



Red Patas Monkey



Someone recently arrived with a very sick Red Patas monkey. He was initially semi-conscious, but after some fluids and medication he seemed to rally. His symptoms made us think he may have had tetanus, his initial improvement raised our hopes but he sadly died during his first night with us. It is illegal to keep wildlife as pets in The Gambia without special permission from the Wildlife Department.



Rest in peace Sainey



Two years ago we had a big outbreak of Equine Influenza. It seems to affect donkeys particularly badly. One hot day as we were driving in heavy traffic, we saw an emaciated old donkey with nasal discharge and hardly aware of what was going on around him. It was only a matter of time before he either caused an accident or became a victim of one himself. Our vehicle collected him and he was nursed in our Director's garden which quickly became the isolation unit. Sainey was old and lacking in teeth but was a very sweet old fellow. He didn't look as if he would be long in this world so we decided that for his remaining weeks we would give him care and attention and lots of fuss.

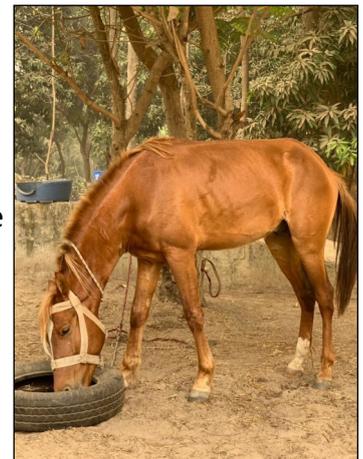
He surprised us all and rallied round, he became a favourite amongst the staff and he started to be quite a handsome old man apart from his tongue hanging out! He spent his days munching on hay and basking in the sunshine. On the 19th April he died quietly in his sleep. He had always been a gentle introverted donkey and he slipped away so quietly. He will be much missed.
Rest in peace Sainey!



Sadam



This horse was brought in to us as he was unable to stand. He had a strange milky diarrhoea. We gave him supportive therapy and within a couple of days he seemed back to normal. We were at a loss to know the cause but someone mentioned they had seen similar symptoms in horses that had eaten marijuana. We shall never know and it would never have occurred to us, but it's another one to keep in mind for future reference!



Current statistics:

As we go to press, we have in our care a total of

- 4 camels
- 90 donkeys
- 26 horses
- 41 cats (45 by the time I finished typing)
- 49 dogs and pups
- 12 Sheep and goats and a small flock of chickens, many donated by grateful owners!