



The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Fighting Poverty – Feeding Families

Registered Charity No: 1096814

Spring 2022



Happy Birthday to us!

This year marks our 20th anniversary. The years seem to have flown by but for a small charity we have achieved so much!

It has been an incredible journey, so many adventures, so much learning, so many lovely people who came into our lives at just the right time to enable us to take the next step forward. We have also had our fair share of worry and troubled times. On one occasion many years ago, I was due to travel out with a heavy heart to create redundancies and really reduce the work we did due to a shortage of money, when literally two days before, a legacy arrived and saved the day — someone is clearly looking out for us. We have laughed together and cried together but most of all we have had fun and made lasting friendships and real achievement.

Our Gambian staff should be very proud of themselves but so too should the many volunteers who have trained them and contributed to the development of the charity and the country. We have built two centres, treated thousands of animals, provided bits and headcollars, trained farriers and equine dental technicians, harness makers and cart builders, worked in schools and provided practical training for over 1000 students.

All the work and dedication has led to some incredible changes. Many people now seek our help for suffering animals of all species, not just horses and donkeys. If there were other animal charities that we could refer other species to we would, but having spent 20 years teaching animal welfare, we are not able to deny help to those kind souls who have compassion for a suffering animal, but are not able to afford vets fees. There is a growing awareness that animals do have feelings, it is being taught in schools, Imams are giving sermons relating to animal welfare and Animal Advocates groups are springing up throughout the country. More and more students and paravets are coming to spend time and learn with us and knowledge is shared and disseminated.

Most exciting of all is that The Gambia has plans to establish a Faculty of Veterinary Science and there have been meetings and discussions on how we can collaborate to provide more training for the students. We have always wanted to help to build veterinary capacity and leave a lasting legacy for the country and this would be such an exciting thing to support.

Every single one of you has been a part of this journey. Your donations, help, advice, professional expertise, friendship and support have helped us to reach this point and we thank you all sincerely and invite you to join us for the onward journey.

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Letter from the Director, Heather Armstrong.

Hello,

The last six months have been very turbulent for us. The good news is that we have been able to welcome back volunteer vets, for both the equines and the small animals. It has been so good to have them back and to be able to share our concerns about patients with qualified vets. Thanks to our wonderful vets, already in 2022 we have spayed 108 dogs and 17 cats, we have castrated 112 dogs and 18 cats and we have vaccinated 309 animals for rabies.

The bad news is that having survived through Covid thanks to your generosity, we now face one of the biggest challenges in our history. Due to the global economic crisis people no longer have extra cash for charities, so our income has fallen sharply. Unfortunately, like everyone else our costs have risen. Fuel, feed and shipping have increased dramatically. To add insult to injury, the pound sterling has weakened so we are getting less local currency to the pound and the money we do have is not going so far. We shall have to reduce our services and reduce shipments and generally tighten our belts if we are to survive. If you could please fundraise for us in whatever way you can, we would be very grateful. There are fundraising ideas on our website www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk

Another big blow for us has been the loss of so many of our horses due to an undiagnosed neurological disease has also brought us to despair as you will read later in the newsletter. It has caused so much heartache.

It is very rewarding to look back over our last 20 years and to reflect on how far we have come. It began with a couple of horses and a stable block. Neither my late sister, Stella nor I envisaged the charity as it is now and we could not have reached this point without a HUGE amount of help and goodwill from so many people and I know if she was still here she would want to join me in thanking each and every one of you. Thanks to you and to the grant makers who have trusted us with their funds, so much has been achieved. Despite the hard work and heartache, the rewards, and the satisfaction of knowing people and animals have been helped, students trained and attitudes to animals improved, has been immense.

Please remember we cannot do what we do without your help.

Best wishes

Heather



How you can help us and save the planet

We have learned that there is huge waste in so many sectors. Many things go into landfill that shouldn't. We use a lot of bandages in our work and we know that offices, hospitals, clinics and ambulances have clear outs for new stock and so many perfectly good bandages and dressings in their sealed wrapping are thrown away. We could give them a good home and they could save a life. If you are a veterinary surgery and up grading or closing down or simply having a clear out and don't know what to do with your supplies and equipment, we can give them a good home. Veterinary and animal supply companies, if you have excess stock or stock that is close to date, we will happily relieve you of them. Not only will you be helping a small charity, but you will also be helping to reduce waste.



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Zahra

In the last year we have all been made aware of the plight of people in Afghanistan and Ukraine as a result of war and political change. In Afghanistan particularly, the plight of females in many professions has been highlighted. Recently a retired vet who had volunteered with us phoned and told me of a young lady vet who was in hiding in Afghanistan. It seemed no country would give her refuge. Vets from other countries cannot practice in UK without sitting the RCVS exams and meeting the very high standards set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. Although she is a qualified vet in Afghanistan, she needed somewhere safe and peaceful to study and gain practical experience to enable her to sit her exams and hopefully work in UK which has a big shortage of vets. Fortunately the Gambian authorities gave her permission to come and volunteer and study with us and she will be tutored by visiting vets as well as tutors online.

It has been a huge change for her as she had never left her country or her family before. We are very lucky to have her with us as we are all leaning from each other and she is a welcome addition to the GHDT family.

Recently I was telling her that hopefully this time next year she would be earning a good salary as a vet. She said that when she qualified, she would like to return to The Gambia to give something back to the country. I pointed out that as a developing country she was unlikely to earn a big salary in The Gambia. Her reply caused a lump in my throat, *"I don't need a big salary from The Gambia, it has given me my life, how can I ever repay that?"*



Calling All Vet Schools and Volunteers.



I was stopped by a young lady vet at a conference last year. She had been out to spend some weeks with us for her electives just prior to graduation. Until Covid, each year a group of students would come together with two lecturers to help with our huge case load. She thanked me for the opportunity and told me what a huge help it had been to her to learn what can be done with very few resources, and how she learned to think "outside the box" and to cope with almost any emergency. She said the work had given her far more confidence and she felt she was a better vet as a result. It was so lovely to hear that we had played a part in helping her.

Since Covid we now work with small animals too so we are willing to take students from many more Universities and we can provide small animal as well as equine volunteering opportunities. We also welcome veterinary nurses, equine dental technicians, farriers, physiotherapists and other therapists to volunteer with us and to help train our staff and students. It is a win/win situation as all parties benefit enormously.

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Deep sadness

We do this work because we love animals and care about their welfare. So many animals came to us in a serious condition and it gives us immense joy and satisfaction to heal them and watch them recover to become beautiful fit animals who respond to the love and care given. In the last six months we have experienced deep sadness and so much pain that it almost makes us question why we do it, but at the same time it helps us to understand the challenges faced by the farmers of The Gambia.

A mystery disease has picked off many of our beloved long term resident horses and many of our patients. Maxi, Nelson, Hechi, Mansajang, Diva, Charlie Watts, Dermott Kennedy, Sohm, Simon, Chinook and Lady Johnson have all died of it. Now we are hearing of other horses dying of it further afield. There is a sad lack of veterinary facilities in the country so we have sought help from everyone we know and we are grateful to the vets and scientists from Scotland, South Africa and Dubai who have offered support and advice and it looks as if we shall be sending brains and samples overseas, once we get the correct licenses in place.

Whatever the disease is, it does not appear to be affecting the donkeys to the same extent. It is very important that we find the causes of this disease, not only for the animals in The Gambia and for their owners, but with climate change it is only a matter of time before these diseases affect Europe so we need to be ahead of the game and find answers and treatments NOW. There is so much to be learned and it has the potential to help animals all over the world. It would also give comfort to know that our work and their lives had not been in vain. In the meantime at least we know we did our best and they died having known kindness and food, a privilege denied to many.



Maxi



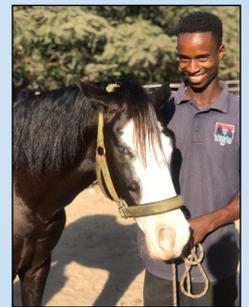
Hetchi



Mansajang



Sohm



Simon

***Despite the challenges and frustrations that we face on a daily basis,
we have a lot of mini miracles to tell you about.***



Giovanni came to us with a badly infected hock, he was a very sick donkey and we had doubts that he would last the night. Thanks to excellent nursing, he is making good progress and should make a full recovery.



Lady Rested came into us with her chest wall wide open and we could see her lung below was punctured. Under direction from UK vet Elsa Bromhall, who talked us through the operation on Zoom, Zahra did a magnificent job of cleaning the chest and closing the wound. It was touch and go for a while, but Lady seems to be heading in the right direction now and we are hoping for a full recovery.

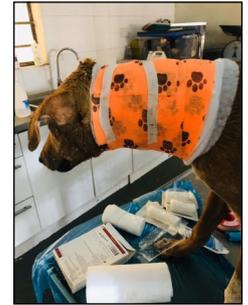
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Koa

We were recently contacted by a lady who had a puppy dumped in her garden. It had a chain embedded deep into its neck. She called us immediately and we were able to collect the pup. It was a difficult process to remove the chain but thankfully the staff managed it under general anaesthetic. It will take some time to heal over, but Koa has been offered a superb home with a wonderful dog trainer who grew up in The Gambia. We plan to document his progress from dumped stray to super trained dog and we shall show the world that our little bush dogs are capable of achieving great things and they should not be overlooked by people looking to home a dog.



Rasta

Rasta was brought to our centre for treatment. Despite being almost non weight bearing in one leg, he was harnessed to his cart. He was so lame with chronic arthritis that euthanasia was suggested. The owner refused and returned a few days later with a police officer and removed him. He was seen later by one of the staff being whipped and pulling a loaded cart at a gallop on the street. It was the first time we used the cruel laws we had found and the horse was removed into our custody. He initially improved on pain relief, but the sad decision to euthanise him was taken when we could not give him the quality of life he deserved.



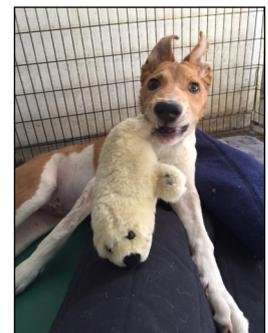
Macron

Macron was born on North Bank. Sadly his mother died at birth. His owner contacted us to ask if we could raise him. He was brought across on the ferry to Banjul where we met him and took him on the 30 mile journey to Makasutu. He is doing well and loves his many new friends.



Michael

Came to us with a very bad case of tetanus and his whole body was rigid so he was unable to walk. Thanks to excellent nursing, amazingly he rallied round and had to learn to walk again. During his recovery, he made friends with one of our dogs who is called Mango. When his very grateful owners came to collect him, they kindly offered Mango a home too. Our staff become very fond of the patients they treat and Obama, one of our paravets, pops in to see Michael and Mango on his days off and receives the warmest of welcomes.



John

Came into us in a very bad way with a severely fractured jaw. Somehow the staff managed to position it and wire it using his remaining teeth to anchor the wire. John healed well and his jaw is now very stable so this happy customer has gone home.



Possible Future collaboration.

The University of The Gambia has recently been exploring the possibility of establishing a Faculty of Veterinary Science and they approached us to see if we would be willing to collaborate with them and make our facilities available for training students and providing them with practical experience. Our response was an emphatic “yes” as a major part of our remit is to build veterinary capacity in the country and to further contribute to that would be a huge source of pride. It is early days yet, but there is huge potential for playing a part in something really exciting!



Gambian Animal Welfare Laws

We were always aware that there were some robust animal welfare laws in The Gambia but we had never managed to find them on paper. Recently a chance meeting with a dynamic young Gambian lawyer changed that. The Gambia does indeed have some excellent laws, but they are a little outdated in terms of penalties. We were also surprised that very few police officers were aware of the laws.

We organised a meeting of veterinary professionals, Animal Welfare Advocates and police representatives to discuss this and we will work hard to encourage the powers that be to update the laws for the benefit of animals.

Emily

Emily joined us shortly before the Covid pandemic began. When it became clear that this pandemic was pretty serious, we offered to evacuate her back to UK for her safety but she refused and didn't want to abandon the animal's in her care.

Emily has been our longest serving volunteer and her strength of character, determination and passion for animals has been incredible to see. Her nursing skills are superb and the miracles she has achieved are testament to this. I often say that patients just dare not die on Emily's watch, Hechi, Dexter, Michael, Charlie, Naranja and so many dying animals benefitted from her outstanding care.

Whilst we truly appreciate what she has done for the charity, she does seem to attract “adventure” and has rescued her dog from the jaws of a crocodile, had brief encounters with scorpions, walked forests alone at night to find lost animals and even sadly came across the body of a young girl whilst out dog walking. She is also excellent at collecting dogs and cats and even a 300 lbs Green Turtle. Life is never dull with Emily around and I am sure my hair wasn't quite so grey before her arrival!

We are deeply indebted to Emily, she grabs life with both hands (hers and all her patients too) and she has been a huge help to the charity.

She will be so badly missed by all and Makasutu will never be quite the same again.

(Since starting this, Emily's successor changed her mind about joining us at very short notice so Emily is kindly extending her stay until a successor has been found.)



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Calling Vets and Nurses

In addition to short term volunteers, we are looking for long term volunteers who would be willing to stay for at least a year on a similar arrangement as Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) We provide airfares, board and lodging and pocket money and health insurance.

In addition to day-to-day management of the yard, we require people who are good at teaching and knowledge sharing. And we want our centre to provide world class care for our patients.

Are you looking for adventure in a friendly country where your efforts will really make a significant difference? Please see below some of the wonderful volunteers who have brought us to where we are today. Each one of them has really made a beneficial impact on this world that has lived on long after they left Gambia.

"Had the most amazing volunteering experience to date. Communication with the charity made organising the trip a dream. The staff and the Gambian people are so helpful and friendly. The days were long and full packed with lots of hands on experience. Your work is so appreciated and you feel like your work is directly impacting the welfare of the animals and people who live here. It's so nice to be putting our skills to such a worthy cause. A large part of the work is education of both the staff and pet owners so what you do continues to help over time. I was well looked after, although a basic way of living and working did not really want for anything. I cannot wait to book my next trip."

Louise Ash

Short-term volunteer May 2022

Just some of the special people who contributed to making us the charity we are today.



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Apprentices

Our apprenticeship scheme is very popular and with high unemployment we receive a great many applications. Many of our apprentices are now helping farmers in their home villages and some we have retained to work full time for us.

If you would like to sponsor an apprentice it costs £600. They come and work for us and have training in care and management and simple veterinary procedures. They remain with us for one year and if they gain their certificate, they are permitted to register as an auxiliary with the Vet Council so they have the means of benefitting their community and earning an income.



Hickstead

Thanks to the generosity of the Bunn family we shall be back at Hickstead once more this year.

The Al Shira'aa Hicksted Derby is from **23rd –26th June** and the Longines Royal International Horse Show is from **27th –31st July**.

We look forward to seeing you and your dogs again. Please come and shop at our stand and catch up with our news.



THANK YOU....

We would like to thank Animal Support Angels without whose help we simply could not feed so many dogs and cats and the Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust for their support with our dog neutering programme.



Please leave us a gift in your will....

Would you please consider leaving us a gift in your will?

Whilst we would much prefer our supporters to be fit and well, please consider a legacy in your will to enable us to continue our work.



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20th Birthday Celebrations!!!

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

would like to invite you for an evening of cheese, nibbles and entertainment in a big marquee in the lovely English countryside.

13th August 2022

8:00pm - 10:30pm



Tickets available in advance only at £25 each

*Wine, beer and spirits
available at the bar
during the evening.*

From ghdtooffice@gmail.com

Oakwood Hill Recreation Ground

Oakwood Hill

Surrey RH5 5PU

Free parking on side available.

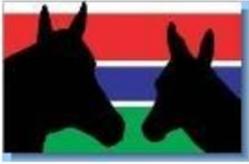
Also plenty of camping, hotels, B&Bs near by too.



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A regular donation by Standing order really helps by creating a greater stability for the future of this vital charity. In return we will send you our newsletter to ensure you are kept up to date with our activities

To pay a regular amount by Standing Order, please complete this form in **BLOCK CAPITALS AND POST TO:**

GHDT, Brewery Arms, Stane Street, Ockley, RH5 5TH

To Manager of:

Bank name: _____

Bank address _____

Post code: _____

Please pay the following amount to:

Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Sort Code: 60-11-17

Account number: 19505043

I agree to pay the sum of monthly yearly One off donation

Please write amount in words here _____

Starting on (date) / /

(until cancelled with my bank)

Please debit my account:

Account No. _____ Sort code: / /

Name: _____

Address: _____

Post code: _____

Signed: _____ Date: / /

Gift Aid Declaration

The chancellor allows us to claim tax back you have already paid on the value of your donation – but only if you sign the form.

Please treat this donation and future donations (until I notify you otherwise) as a Gift Aid donation. I confirm I am a UK tax payer

Signed: _____ Date: / /

Please tick here to confirm that you happy for The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust to keep you updated on our work, marketing and fundraising using the details you have provided above. Without this consent GHDT will not be able to contact you under new General Data Protection Regulation.

You can unsubscribe at any time by sending email to ghdt@gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk

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