

The Gambia Horse and donkey trust

Fighting Poverty- feeding families

Registered Charity No. 1096814

Patrons:

Pippa Funnell mbe, Sarah Fisher, Anthony Head, Elliman Secka, Nigel Havers

PRESS RELEASE:

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Food Crisis Causing the Loss of Equine Lives

The combined effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate shocks and conflicts such as the war in Ukraine are causing huge food shortages across West Africa which is having a devastating effect on both people and animals. The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust (GHDT) are a UK registered charity who have been working to improve equine welfare in The Gambia for the past 20 years and they are seeing first-hand the horrific impacts of the food shortages.

Heather Armstrong, Director of the charity said "It is becoming increasingly difficult to source enough food for the animals in our care. We are seeing an increase in the number of completely emaciated animals being brought to us for care, simply because their owners have been unable to source enough food for their animals. Often they are too far gone for us to be able to save which is heart-breaking for all involved." She went on to say "In the past couple of years, animal feed prices have increased three-fold or more in some cases. This is extremely difficult for us as a charity as it means our costs have risen dramatically, but it is even worse for Gambian equine owners who simply don't have enough money to pay for these continually increasing costs."

Many Gambian families rely on their working equines for their own livelihood, using them for farming or transport purposes. If their animal becomes malnourished and unable to work, then the family lose their ability to earn an income and a vicious cycle of poverty is created. The GHDT is now having to look further and further afield to source enough food to support the equines in their care, which currently include 62 donkeys and 12 horses, not to mention the 3 camels, 2 cows, 14 goats and 7 sheep who also require access to forage. In addition to the equines, the GHDT also care for more than 85 dogs and 40 cats in desperate need of help.

"It may become necessary for us to source additional feeds, such as sugar beet, from outside of The Gambia to enable us to keep the animals in our care alive and enable them to continue their healing journeys. We are fully aware that this is not sustainable and it is also extremely costly, which puts a huge amount of strain on a small charity like ourselves, but we have to take whatever steps we can to ensure the health and welfare of the animals we are responsible for" said Heather.

When forage is so limited, the charity also see an increase in the number of sand colic cases due to the sandy ground conditions and the equines searching for tiny scraps of forage on the floor. This brings additional welfare concerns as well as increased costs for treatments and nursing care at the charity.

The GHDT are appealing to anyone who may be able to help during this crisis for donations towards their feed costs, to enable them to continue saving the lives of equines desperately in need. If you are able to help, online donations can be given via Justgiving at <https://www.justgiving.com/GHDT> or can be sent by post to Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust, Brewery Arms Cottage, Stane Street, Ockley, Surrey. RH5 5TH

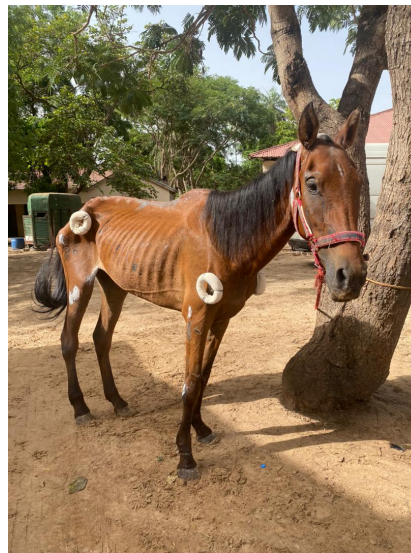
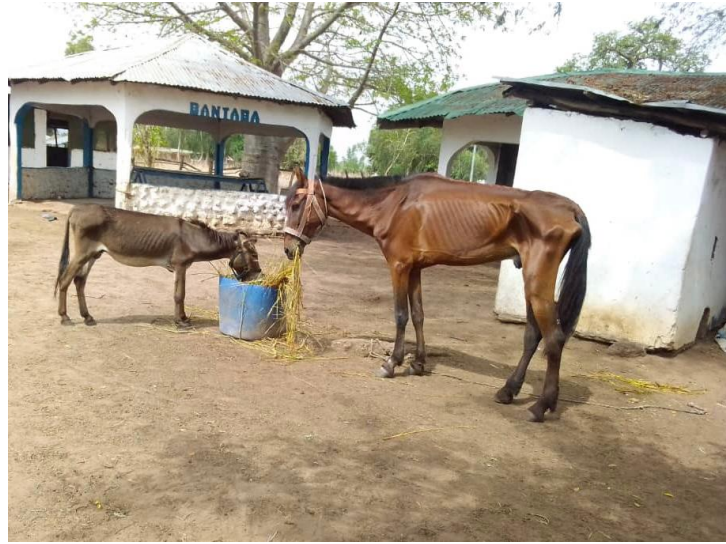
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Photos:



Some of our recent emaciated patients. The ones with 'donut' rings on them – these are sutured to their skin to protect them from injury when they lay down because they are so thin that they quickly develop pressure sores over boney prominence's without additional protection.

Editor's notes:

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust is a small UK registered charity, founded in 2002 by sisters Heather Armstrong and Stella Brewer. The aim of the GHDT is to reduce rural poverty in The Gambia through improving the health, welfare and productivity of ALL animals, but working animals in particular. With no tradition of horsemanship in The Gambia and a combination of poor management, high disease risk and poverty, farmers were investing comparatively large amounts of money for a working animal only for it to die, too often within six months. Not only was this causing further hardship for the farmers, it was also creating a serious animal welfare problem and the veterinary services did not have the infrastructure or finances to be able to help the farmers.

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