



The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Fighting Poverty – Feeding Families

Registered Charity No: 1096814

Autumn 2019



I have always believed ...

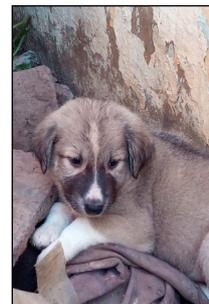
...that it is impossible to change anything significant in a short period of time. Growing up in Africa, I saw so many foreign aid agencies setting up projects for 3-5 years and The Gambia is littered with failed projects. When we started this charity we said we would see what progress we could make in 20 years and seventeen years later we are seeing big progress.

Whilst we still have a lot of work to do, generally speaking, Gambians are embracing animal welfare and we are constantly receiving calls about animals in distress. We have been helped by the growing band of Gambian Animal Advocates who have now made three nationwide trips to sensitize rural communities and are doing great work.

In order to effect human behaviour change we must treat people with understanding and kindness and try to see their point of view. We need to earn their respect and work as a team to make life better for their animals. We don't want anyone to be afraid of contacting us for fear that we may be rude to them so our staff are always patient and polite and our "clients" always know that we will help them if it is humanly possible.

It is very easy to misunderstand the human story behind every animal we treat or help. All too often people are very quick to condemn the owners for something that is wrong with an animal. The Gambia is a poor country and veterinary resources are very limited, should we condemn owners or offer them help and teach better ways? Quite often if we attend a sick animal we will see a member of the family is also sick but cannot get treatment for their illness. We also find owners who have sought help but have been unable to find it as veterinary help is hard to find

We believe that every person deserves our respect until proven otherwise. We like to get to know the owners and encourage them to try new methods of management to avoid problems. We need to work together and involve the owners in treatment, by working like this we find they will accept and embrace change and slowly but surely attitudes and ideas are changing. The children we have taught over the years are now adults with much more understanding and appreciation for animals. We still have a long way to go but these are exciting times and, thanks to your support, we can see the change happening.



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Letter from the Director, Heather Armstrong.



Heather with Xavi, who came to us as a little orphan foal in poor condition.



Heather with Annie and her pups.

Another exciting and challenging year is coming to an end. We had the major problems of Equine Influenza and finding sufficient medicines for the epidemic, then the worry of late rains and how we would feed our animals. We have had the concerns of our aging fleet of vehicles requiring more and more maintenance and the problems of Brexit playing havoc with the exchange rate which worked against us. All these things keep us on our toes and sometimes for a while we despair, but we can also look back at all the good things that have happened, the animals we have treated and the owners we have helped. We can think of all the individual stories and animals and all the work carried out by the staff, the amount we have learned, the progress that has been made and the biggest achievement of all is that despite all the challenges, we are still here and then we are more positive.

In the following pages you will read just a few of our stories, equines are still the main focus of our work and always will be, but the animal welfare message is spreading so well that more and more we are receiving requests for help for other species. There are very few vets in The Gambia and we hope, through our work, to build veterinary capacity, but until then, it is extremely difficult to turn animals in need away as there is no where else for many of them to go.

Despite our best efforts, we inevitably end up with a few long term equine residents. Some of our project donkeys are now too old to work and have retired to spend their last days with us. We feel it is the least we can do after they have spent a lifetime working to help their families. We have made the first steps to begin an animals as therapy project for adults and children with mental and physical disabilities. It is early days yet and we have a lot of work to do, equipment to collect and training to receive but early signs have been positive and on their first visit, children from Hart House, staff and animals seemed to get great benefit from it.

We were delighted to hear from Dr. Daffeh who lectures in Animal Welfare at The Gambia College and the University that 800 students have now attended and graduated from the course. The ripples are growing and change is happening!

I cannot finish without giving my very special thanks to a lovely lady who prefers to remain anonymous but who has given us a very generous contribution towards the hay collection for two years running. It is a HUGE weight off my shoulders, to know that the animals will have feed this season. Thank you so much for your incredible generosity.

None of our progress could have happened without the help and support that you give us and we regard it very much as a team effort. Together we are achieving so much and bringing about change for the better for the animals and their families. Our sincere thanks to you all.

On behalf of our ever growing family, both two and four legged, we would like to thank you for your interest and your support and send you our very good wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

With best wishes,

Heather Armstrong

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All Creatures Great and Small.

In addition to the many equine patients that we have, a few more have joined the family. Annie, the dog was trotting along one day unaware that a decree had been put out to kill stray dogs in a village which had been suffering losses to their goat and sheep flocks. In UK farmers can shoot dogs that worry sheep but in Gambia guns are not easily available and bullets are expensive. It is easy to understand why hungry people want to kill dogs that worry their flocks, but poor Annie had no idea what was happening when missiles were hurled in her direction. She ran and hid in our yard. Two days later she produced 6 beautiful babies. We put a collar on her to demonstrate she was no longer a stray dog and once she trusted us, she became a delightful addition to the GHDT family.

Her pups have found homes and one is even going to live in Holland!



Two other older dogs came to join us, both in dreadful condition. Sadly Asha, who had suffered with a broken leg for months before she joined us succumbed to her injuries and malnutrition. The other, Jackie Sparrow, turned out to be diabetic, but despite our best efforts to control her blood sugar with daily insulin we had to make the sad decision after some months, to put her to sleep. Both Asha and Jackie were adorable animals whose plights touched us deeply. They taught us so much. Despite years of suffering as street dogs, they were gentle, forgiving animals and they rewarded us with smiles and tail wags. They are sadly missed and will not be forgotten.

Prince Harry the Camel has been joined by three other camels who came to us in poor condition. There is a mother and daughter, Helen and Aisha who were both afflicted with very bad ringworm. Despite our lack of camel handling training, Paul, our senior paravet, managed to give the baby enough baths to cure her and now all we have to do is to get Helen to gain some weight and we shall be happy. The third camel, Luke, has become Harry's friend. Harry has changed a lot, he enjoys the company of people now and enjoys being scratched. He also seems to be very fond of cats and they in turn like him, there are often cats rubbing up to him in the paddock.



Mama Cat, arrived in a sack with her two remaining kittens after being rescued by a kind Gambian man. He had found that children had killed her kittens using hunting dogs and brave little Mamma cat was desperately shielding her last two kittens with her body. Sadly one kitten was so badly wounded that it had to be euthanized, but Mama and Mischief have remained with us and are part of the rodent patrol unit. They are a delightful addition to the GHDT family.

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The Education Project

We are lucky to have very dedicated staff who do a good job when they teach in schools. The Education Project is one that we would like to expand if funding permits. Staff salaries and transport can be quite expensive so if anyone would like to sponsor the Education Project we would love to hear from you.

Numu Jaiteh, leader of our school education team writes



“The Education program is just one of the activities of the GHDT. Teachers are employed to instruct children about animal welfare in some schools in regions two and five. In region two, we teach in five schools from Monday to Friday ranging from Upper and Lower Basic schools. Before this vital program was introduced children were not aware that animals are sentient beings. They tended to overwork them and underfeed them, especially the donkeys. They did not water them regularly or give them regular health checks or proper shelter. They also sometimes throw stones at dogs and cats in the streets because they did not understand that they too have feelings.

Today they know that animals have feelings. They are taught to identify the rights of their animals. They are taught that it is their right to have quality feed, plenty of fresh and clean water, shelter and veterinary care. Today they know the causes of wounds, signs of a sick animal and some common diseases and their causes and cure. They know that equine's teeth keep growing and have to be rasped regularly. These children are now taking good care of their animals. They know that GHDT is the place to look for help as far as animals are concerned. They know that their dogs can be injected against rabies and they bring their dogs to Makasutu for rabies injections or if they are sick. This is due to the awareness they have about animals. At the end of every term we evaluate their level of understanding of the subject and the ones with high marks are awarded a prize as a way of motivation. They freely come to Makasutu with their teachers or sometimes alone just to visit the animals. They talk among themselves about animal welfare. Thanks to the management of The Gambia Horse And Donkey Trust.”

The education Projects costs us £300 per month at present. If anyone would like to contribute to enable us to expand our work in education it would be much appreciated. In order to reduce transport costs, we would like to purchase motorbikes which cost £1,500. If you would like to help please get in touch either by email to ghdtooffice@gmail.com or by calling 01306 627568



Gift Aid.

Every year the cost of running GHDT goes up. We really need to make the very best use of the donations that you give to us. Gift Aids enables us to claim an extra 25% on your donation with no extra cost to you. To qualify for Gift Aid you must have paid income or capital gains tax (in the UK) for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) at least equal to the tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs that you donate to will reclaim on your gifts for that tax year. Other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. We can claim Gift Aid on all donations that you make if you could fill in the form we have attached to this newsletter.



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Riding for the disabled.

Ever since we began the charity I have had a dream that our lovely permanent resident animals, cats, dogs, donkeys and horses may be able to help people with both physical and mental special needs. We know first hand how healing and calming our animals can be and I feel sure they could help others.

I contacted an exceptional man, Geoff Hunwicks who runs a home for children with learning disabilities, Hart House Gambia www.harthouse.gm or if you would like to make a donation to them, <http://www.harthouse.gm/donate> It is the only home of its kind in The Gambia. Geoff agreed to bring some children to visit to see what their reaction would be and it was such a resounding success that more visits are planned in the future. We would like to develop this aspect of our work and would like to collect equipment such as carriages that are easily accessible for the disabled and saddles for both donkeys and horses that might give some extra stability.

There were some particularly interesting aspects of this visit. One of the pups, JoJo, who we have decided to keep as she was a slightly shy and retiring little girl, showed great empathy for the children and seemed to enjoy their company and was really sensitive with them. Jeffrey and GK who are normally very mischievous were also gentle. Our staff who had never heard of anything like this also took great pleasure to see the smiles of the children so we hope that this will be a regular feature for us all.

If anyone with expertise in this kind of work wanted to come out and volunteer and train us, we would love to hear from you.



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Rasta, the power of LOVE

Rasta came to us after suffering a dreadful injury to his head in a fall. He certainly had brain damage and was unable to swallow. He could only move around in circles to the left. He was clearly a well-cared for horse and his Gambian owner adored him and visited him daily. We tried our best for him and he was tube fed several times daily. We even purchased a blender so that we could blend all the goodies to go in his tube feed. The weeks passed and we could see no real improvement and we started to raise the subject of euthanasia with his owner who wept at the thought and said he wanted us to keep trying. We passed the time that was recommended but still his owner could not bring himself to give his consent.



Finally one Monday he said he agreed but begged us to let him have a last afternoon with his beloved horse. He bathed him and fussed him and finally came to us choked with emotion and said he just could not give his consent. The following day as Heather and Paul were discussing his future Rasta was playing with his water and trying to drink as he frequently did, when they thought they saw him manage to swallow. They could not believe their eyes and watched intently and a little while later he managed it again! Gradually over the next few days his swallowing improved as did his ability to walk in a straight line and he grew into the magnificent stallion you see in the picture. If Rasta hadn't had an owner who cared deeply for him, he may well have been euthanized, but instead he taught us a lot, especially about the importance of good nursing care.

Peter

Peter had been working on the beach. He is an older fellow and was clearly having problems coping with life. His teeth needed rasping and he began to lose weight. A concerned tourist purchased him and tried to improve his life from a distance but he continued to lose weight and developed a skin condition. We were asked to help him. We try very hard not to be a sanctuary as we need the space for the sick animals who need our help, but Peter needed our help too. He is a kind gentle creature and he has responded well to life at GHDT. He may think he has been retired, but along with some of the other older horses and donkeys, we have a plan for them to provide therapy for people with special needs.



The Show and Thomas Cook

Sadly the demise of Thomas Cook has affected us badly. Many of our volunteer vets have had to cancel because the increase in fares has been prohibitive. Many of our regular volunteers for the show which is on December 7th, have also had to cancel so this year we have no equine dental technicians or farrier. Thanks to **The British Equine Veterinary Association** we shall have two vets and a nurse to help us and provide training for two weeks over the show period and a number of local people have kindly offered their help with preparing the show ground so all is not lost and we are very grateful to everyone for their help. If you would like to sponsor a class for the show, it costs £70 per class and if you would like to have a banner up or a free advert in our next newsletter we would be happy to do that. The rosettes this year are once again being kindly donated by **Durham Rosettes**. We hope that another cheaper airline will restore normality for us and all the Gambians involved in the Tourism sector who have suffered so very badly.

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Apprentices

Our apprenticeship scheme serves both to help people to find work and to build veterinary skills in The Gambia. Apprentices come to us for one year and are taught basic veterinary and animal care skills. It is hoped that their certificates will enable them to find work more easily but at the very least they can return to their communities to earn money by providing basic care such as farriery and wound dressing etc. It costs £550 to sponsor an apprentice for one year which is a lot of money, but perhaps a group of friends can get together to sponsor? Sadly, we only had one sponsor for this year so our female apprentice is learning on her own.

Our graduating apprentices will be receiving their awards at the annual show on December 7th. If you would like to sponsor an apprentice, please contact us.



Amie Bah, who has completed her apprenticeship and is now working with us in Sambel Kunda.

Ultrasound machines

Sadly our two old and much renovated ultrasound machines have ceased functioning. We have tried to repair them in The Gambia but without success. If any vet surgeries are upgrading their machines and would consider either donating or selling at a very special price, we would be very grateful indeed.



**Helloooooo
to you!**

Would you PLEASE consider leaving us a gift in your will? Equines are doing so much to help the people of The Gambia to feed their families but they in turn need help and veterinary care when they are sick.

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. There are benefits for leaving to charity too!

Calling All Small Animal Vets!

Up until now we have only had equine veterinary volunteers helping us, but we are now actively seeking small animal vets and nurses to help us. We have so many small animals being bought in to us now and many people request for their animals to be neutered. There are many animals in rural areas that need to be neutered. It would also help to control the spread of rabies, both by keeping the population of stray dogs down and because we would be able to vaccinate the stray dogs that we catch. If we could organise several clinics each year it would significantly reduce the stray dog population and relieve a lot of suffering. It would also encourage the caring owners who are trying to do the best for their dogs but cannot find help in the rural areas.



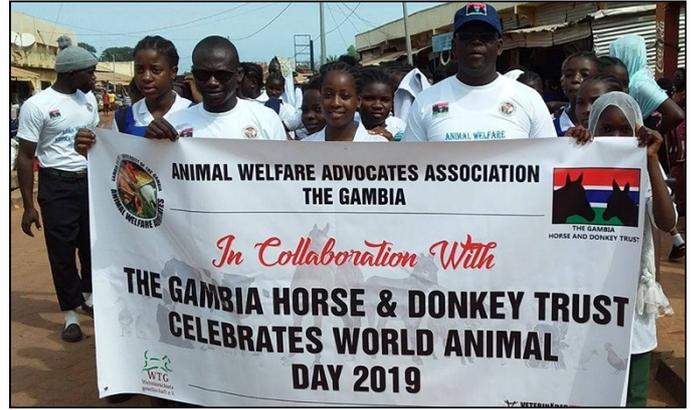
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World Animal Day and World Rabies Day.

October the 4th is World Animal Day and this year, once again we joined forces with the Animal Advocates to celebrate. The Advocates felt it would be a good idea to go to the other end of the country and focus attentions there. They held a march, radio programmes talks and debates, treated animals and held a competition for school children for which we awarded the prizes. Owners and farmers who cared well for their animals were also awarded prizes. It was a huge success and the Advocates are to be applauded for their enthusiasm and innovative ideas to get the welfare message across in such a way that people really think about it.



We also celebrated World Rabies day together with The Department of Livestock Services and the Animal Welfare Advocates by holding a rabies vaccination clinic in Brikama. It was very well attended and many horses, donkeys and dogs and their owners attended. There was a great deal of discussion both by professionals and owners about the importance of vaccine and reducing the number of stray dogs and cats through spaying and neutering which is one of the reasons we are calling for volunteers to help us with this.

Long term volunteers.

After a year helping us out we are saying a sad farewell to Karelhia our Venezuelan vet. Karelhia has done a great job of caring for the volunteers and animals and restructuring the administration of the hospital. Thank you for your time and efforts Kare. We hope it has been a good experience for you and we wish you well for the future. When one door closes, another door opens and we shall be welcoming Emily Elgar, a veterinary nurse, to take over from Karelhia. Emily has volunteered with us for a month earlier this year so she has a little bit of experience of the busy life that we lead. We need long term volunteers to help to train the staff, take care of the short term volunteers and maintain the high standards we expect at our centres. The work has increased dramatically and we know it is too much for just one volunteer so if anyone would like to help Emily on a long-term basis (at least a year) please do contact us. For long-term volunteers, airfares, pocket money and living costs are provided.



THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

We hope you have enjoyed our newsletter and we want you to know that none of the work you have read about could have been done without the support of each and every person who helps us, whether it is with donations of money, tack, equipment, grants, volunteering your help, fundraising for us or simply giving us encouragement. There are too many people to name individually but we hope you know just how much you are appreciated and how grateful we are to you for all that you do for us. We are lucky to have such wonderful supporters and you are helping to improve the welfare of working equids and raise awareness of animal welfare to all animals. You are also helping their owners. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts and we wish you all Seasons Greetings and Good Health and Happiness for 2020.

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Amount £ Date / /

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Postcode

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OR

I am not a UK taxpayer

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2. If your circumstances change and you no longer pay enough income or capital gains tax to cover the amount claimed by the charity, please contact the charity/CASC
3. If you pay tax at the higher rate, you can claim further tax relief via your Self Assessment tax return (currently 25p for each pound you give)**
4. Please notify the charity if you change your name or address

* Gift Aid is linked to basic rate tax. Basic rate tax is currently 20%, which allows charities to reclaim 25 pence on the pound.

** Higher rate taxpayers can claim back the difference between basic rate and higher rate tax.

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