

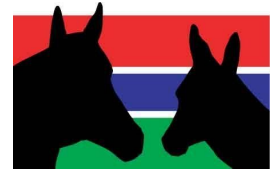


# The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Fighting Poverty – Feeding Families

Registered Charity No: 1096814

## Summer 2026

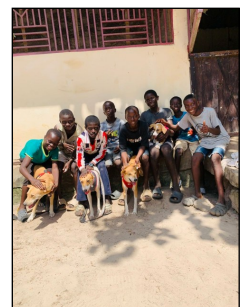
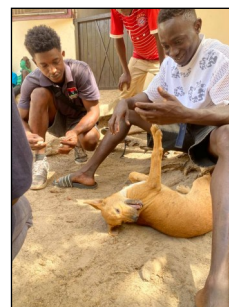


The last six months have given us a lot to be thankful for. We are making so much progress with animal welfare and the issues surrounding it. There is so much to give us hope for the future. The Gambia is really changing for the better regarding animal welfare and there have been many recent examples of this. Apart from the increase in calls we receive reporting animals in distress, a man was prosecuted and imprisoned for abusing his donkey, the police have been stopping vehicles for carrying animals in a non-welfare friendly way, the fire service has been rescuing animals in distress and most recently, before the celebration of Tobaski, where rams are killed (just like our Christmas when turkeys and geese are killed) one enlightened Imaam gave a sermon before the day to urge people to care for the animals with kindness and to minimise suffering during the slaughter.

More and more schools come to visit us, and the staff take every opportunity for them to interact with the animals and to learn as much as they can whilst they are with us. We have had colouring books printed with information in them and in the future, when the books have arrived in the country, every child will receive a book and a box of colouring pencils on their visit.

Every weekend, our yard is filled with young men, and we hope that girls will soon join them, who come to visit to have their dogs and puppies checked over. We had wanted to begin training classes with them, but weekends are busy, and we are always short-staffed on weekends, so it hasn't happened yet. If there are any dog trainers out there who fancy an extended break, volunteering with us and teaching the children and our staff, you would be warmly welcomed. We would also like to have a dog show at the end of it for best handlers and condition etc. It worked for the horses when we had shows and I am sure it would work for the children and their dogs.

We cannot claim to have brought about these changes on our own. We are blessed to have the assistance of two superb Gambian vets, one works in practice in Sweden, Dr. Buba Badjie, the other is of course our very own Dr. Kebba Daffeh, who is otherwise known as Dr. Animal Welfare. These two incredible Gambians have mentored, and supported the Animal welfare Advocates Association, a group of well over 1000 young people who have helped to bring about all these changes. We all work very closely together, and it is wonderful to witness the change that is happening. None of this could have happened without the help we have been given by YOU, our supporters, and we are deeply grateful to you all.



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## Letter from the Director, Heather Armstrong.

Greetings,

Running a charity like ours is a combination of joy, sorrow, pride in our staff and at times disappointment, frustration, fear (when the funds don't come in) and worry. On most days there are challenges, but my mantra is and always has been, "problems are here to overcome" and we try to overcome them one by one.

We have come a long way in 24 years, but we still have a great deal more work to do. I want our centres to run to a high standard, and we are working on that.

Our latest challenge is a looming feed crisis. Getting enough hay to feed all the equines that come into our care in a year is a huge challenge. We cannot simply go to a feed store and order it; we have to drive around all the little farms, negotiate with the farmers, use a small truck to access the hay, then transfer it to the very large lorries that bring it the 200 miles to our centres. It is hard work and expensive. The harvest happens in November, and we have to buy a year's worth of hay quickly before the Senegalese traders buy it all. Last year, unexpectedly, it rained hard after the harvest, and a lot of hay was spoiled before it could be collected. If the hay is wet, it grows a mould that is dangerous to feed, so we had to search high and low for the late-harvested hay, which was clean. Together with the smaller amounts of hay available for purchase, we had not anticipated the growing number of equines being brought for our help or the dramatic increase in the price of hay, which has tripled in price in a year. This is causing problems for private owners as well as for us. We are praying for a good harvest in November, but in these days of climate change, nothing is assured. In the meantime, we are shipping out high fibre feed to hopefully see us through to November. It is not only the hay that is a problem, the bran and hard feed have also quadrupled in price. We have sent some pallets of feed out, paid for out of our reserves, and following an appeal, more pallets will follow, but the future is a little uncertain at the moment. It is another challenge to be overcome!

We are so grateful to everyone who has responded to our appeal. You really are lifesavers, and we cannot thank you enough.

We hope to see many of you at Hickstead this year.

Best wishes

*Heather.*



## Calling experienced small animal vets.

In March, Billie, a vet from Germany who has visited us several times before, came for an extended visit with 3 other vets, two of whom had visited us as students. It was lovely to have them back, and we managed to hold a lot of neutering clinics, with many dogs spayed and castrated. A Swedish vet named Kat also made a return visit to us, and she neutered many animals during her visit. The total number of dogs neutered is about 80 and rising. We need to do so many more so we are looking for small animal vet volunteers to help us please. For further information, please email [ghdtooffice@gmail.com](mailto:ghdtooffice@gmail.com).



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## Music to our ears

We were recently visited by a German vet called Saskia, who stayed with us for 10 days and was a great help to the staff. She recently sent us this lovely letter, which gave us all a big morale boost.

*Dear Heather,*

*I just wanted to sincerely thank you for giving me the opportunity to spend more than a week helping at the Horse and Donkey Trust in Gambia. It was truly an unforgettable experience filled with so many beautiful, emotional, and also deeply impressive moments.*

*What I saw there especially from a medical perspective fascinated me so much. I was incredibly impressed by the amount of work that is being done every single day for all those animals in need. Seeing so many street animals being rescued, treated, and eventually finding a loving and safe home at your farm was something very special.*

*I was also deeply touched by the way every single animal is cared for with so much love and dedication. Every staff member worked with genuine passion and heart. Watching how lovingly everyone treated the horses and donkeys, taking them on walks every day, washing and caring for them, and maintaining such a high standard of hygiene and medical care was honestly beyond anything I expected.*

*To be completely honest, I never would have imagined finding such an incredibly well-organized and compassionate place in Gambia, and I am truly amazed by what you have created there. You and your team are doing something very special, and I feel very grateful that I was allowed to experience it firsthand.*

*I also hope that my donations of the horse bits will be useful and perhaps help raise some money, or maybe even be used directly for horses and donkeys in need.*

*Thank you again from the bottom of my heart for this unforgettable time and for everything you and your team do for the animals.*

*Warm regards,*

*Saskia*



## Rabies

Many of you will know that for a long time we have been trying to vaccinate as many dogs as possible, and this came to the attention of The Global Alliance for Rabies Control, who invited us to become one of their Centres for Excellence. This involved at least three members of staff undergoing training in different aspects of rabies and then studying to pass some tests. Much to my surprise, many on the team decided to do it, and they have all passed their first test/exam and have a certificate to prove it. They are now studying for their second certificate. They have also undertaken to give every school trip that visits, a lecture on Rabies, how to recognise it and avoid it and what measures to take if you are bitten.



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## Liverpool students.

We have been thrilled to have 7 students and their tutor, Luke Edwards, to spend time with us in the last weeks before they graduate in June. We can certainly provide them with a lot of experience in a short time, and they have been of great help to us. They have attended two large mobile clinics and treated a total of 169 animals at those clinics, as well as many inpatients and daily patients who drop in for treatment. Unfortunately, the airline lost their baggage on their outward-bound journey, and it took a while to retrieve it but we hope their visit has been of benefit to them and we wish them luck in their future careers.



## Staff ingenuity.

I am constantly pleasantly surprised at the lengths our staff will go to in order to assist animals in their care. We recently had two paralysed rams in and apart from the normal red light treatment and physiotherapy, they came up with helping them in the dog support carts. This worked well and both rams have now fully recovered and returned to their homes.



## Vet nurse wanted.

We are looking for a capable vet nurse with a spirit of adventure, a sense of fun, a good sense of humour and, ideally, experience of living and working in Africa to help our staff develop their organisational skills. It is essentially a volunteer position, but airfares, accommodation, board, insurance and a small stipend are provided. Please apply to [GHDToffice@gmail.com](mailto:GHDToffice@gmail.com).



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## New Trustees.



Jessica Kidd

For the last 24 years, The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust has grown and developed with the same team of Trustees. Many of us are rather “mature”, and we thought that some fresh young blood would be an asset. We are very pleased to welcome Jessica Kidd as new Trustees to help us. Jessica and Alex, who we mentioned in our last newsletter, are both experienced equine veterinarians and have long supported the charity. We hope they will take the charity forward for the next 24 years.

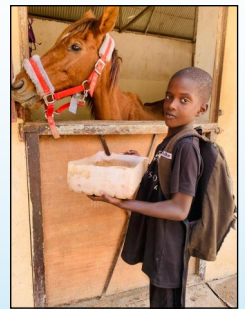


Alex Thiemann

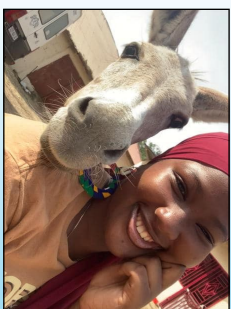
## Marry



Many of you may recall the story of Marry, a horse who came into our care in very poor condition. Her owner had purchased her like that with the hope that he could rehabilitate her, but soon found out that he simply could not afford it. During a conversation with him, we discovered that he runs a football Academy for the children in his area, and many of you were kind enough to send us a football kit for him to use. He now regularly brings the children to help out, groom the horses, wash buckets, clean paddocks etc. Marry remained with us. She seems fine and content but has not gained as much weight as we would have liked though she enjoys her extra feeds! She has dental problems, strange conformation and age is not on her side.



## Stella

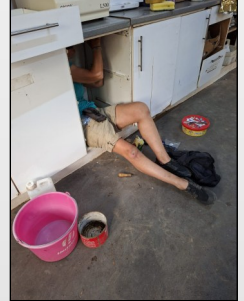


Stella, a young lady who was named after our co-founder, worked for us in her gap year, before securing a place for herself at Leeds University. Students from overseas have to first complete a foundation course, which Stella has just completed. She has done incredibly well in all her exams and has been nominated for two awards. This is an impressive achievement for a young person from abroad who had never been to UK before. We look forward to seeing her when she returns to The Gambia for her summer holiday.

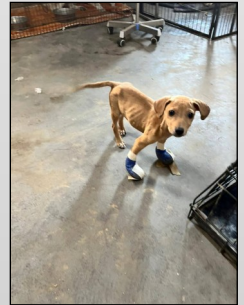
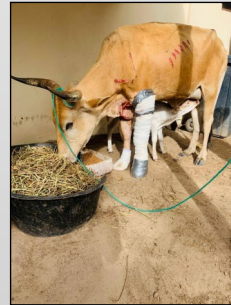
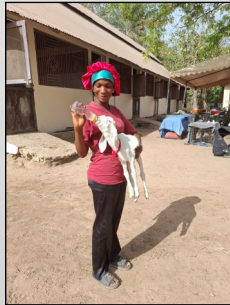


## Good friends.

This charity is blessed with some lovely friends. We strive to maintain the highest standards in our hospital, but the cabinets and drawers in our hospital were beginning to look “tired.” In these troubled times, we need to focus our funds on surviving so investing large amounts at the moment was not an option. I was discussing this with a very good friend, Stella Fuller, who is a lady of many talents and very practical. She said that she would come out with me on my next trip and sort out broken doors and drawers and keep it all running for a little longer for us. True to her word, she came out, and all we ever saw of her for the next week was a pair of legs sticking out of a cupboard as she maintained all the hinges and drawers. She was amazing! By the time we left, the hospital looked pristine. Thank you, Stella, for all the hard work, you have given us some extra time to begin budgeting for new cupboards.



## Our patients.



### Thank you.

*We are the luckiest charity on this planet, because we have the most wonderful supporters. It is always difficult to thank people individually because I inevitably forget someone and inadvertently cause offence. I would like to thank each and every person who has donated to us in any way; it is deeply appreciated by the animals and us. It is simple, we cannot do what we do without you, and you are as much a part of what we do as we are, so credit for our progress must also go to you.*

*We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.*

*Thank you!*

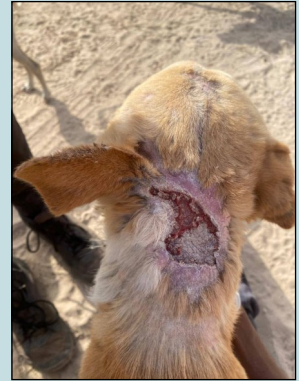
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## Maggots

We have had another hectic season of maggots and we have dealt with some horrendous injuries caused by the maggots. One such dog was found with maggots devouring his head. The smell from these wounds is horrendous. We have found that there are people who love animals, and there are others who love them and go the extra mile for them. One such lady is Tina Wheatley, who found the dog, jumped into a taxi with him, and brought him to us for treatment. She later named him Victor. He has become a fun-loving, exuberant dog who loves life to the fullest. It could have been so different for him if Tina hadn't taken the time and trouble to help him. Victor is now fully recovered and is looking for a forever home.



## Fundraising

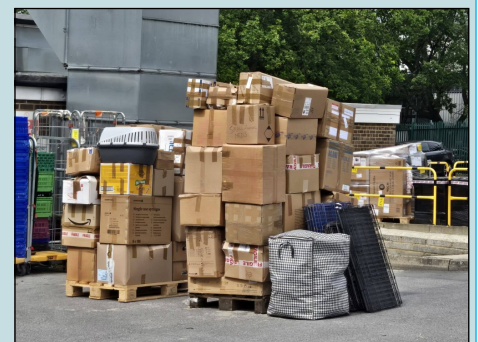
We love to hear of the different ways that people fundraise for us. One lady, Sue Stage, runs day-long boat trips through the creeks. She provides delicious breakfast, lunch and tea. There is a bar to buy drinks and even a masseuse, so for a very reasonable price, you can have a wonderful day out while also raising money for charity. Sue has raised a great deal for us as well as other charities, and she deserves a medal for all she does for animals in The Gambia.



## Troubled Times

Running a charity is not easy. It is considered good practice to try to keep one year's running costs in reserve to cover you when the road gets rocky. It took many years of scrimping and saving, but we eventually got there, and I felt that we at least had a buffer zone. Then, the world went mad, all mainly due to one person. Costs rose all over the world; donations decreased as people had to "tighten their belts"; and for us, the cost of hay tripled and feed quadrupled. In addition, a very real food crisis is looming, so we have had to dig into our reserves to purchase feed and hold an appeal. The cost of fuel has doubled, but the callouts have also increased. The staple food for Gambians is rice, and its cost has almost doubled, which means staff salaries for our 60 staff members will have to be reviewed, and the number of staff will have to be reduced if we are to stay afloat.

The cost of shipping has also increased a lot so we are only sending out things that are essential to our needs. We no longer send out leather goods preferring to use locally available synthetic webbing. So please, for the foreseeable future, only send 4.5" bits, pony headcollars, cottage craft girths, dog collars and dog equipment, plus bandages, dressings, etc. We need to seriously reduce our costs.



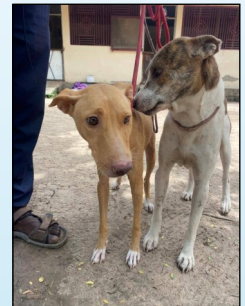
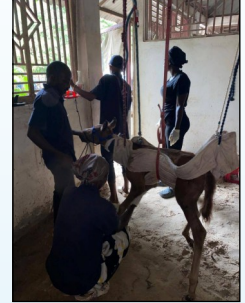
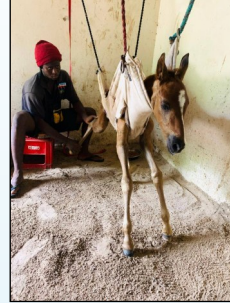
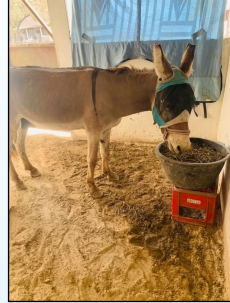
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## Tetanus

We are seeing many animals with Tetanus, which is sad because it is easily preventable with vaccines. Sadly though, the vaccines are expensive and it is hard for us to afford them, and even more difficult for Gambians. We have a good success rate with treating them if they come to us soon enough. There has been a lot of discussion on how far to proceed on this matter but for now, we feel that we must focus more on raising funds to try and vaccinate against Rabies as a priority. However, if anyone knows how we could acquire Tetanus vaccines at a reasonable price, or if any manufacturers felt generous, we would welcome them to protect our animals.



## Fundraising.

### GIFT AID

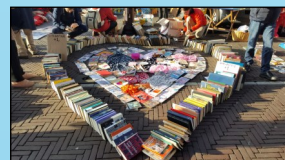
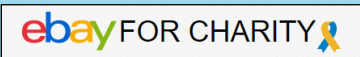
In these troubled times we are acutely aware that we could be gaining more from many of your donations. Donating through Gift Aid means charities can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you give. It will not cost you any extra. If you are a taxpayer, all you have to do is sign a Gift Aid form. We can even claim on donations you have paid in the past. We do not have Gift Aid forms for many of the people who pay by BACS for example and on our last claim, we could have claimed an extra £10,000 at no cost at all to you. If you have not signed a Gift Aid form, please consider doing so, because it will increase your donation considerably.

For more information on Gift Aid, please go to <https://www.gov.uk/donating-to-charity/gift-aid>.

*giftaid it*

### FUNDRAISING

Just a few ways you can raise funds for us:



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