



The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Fighting Poverty – Feeding Families

Registered Charity No: 1096814

Winter 2023



The end of a year is always a time for reflection. This year has been so busy that we have been constantly running to catch up with ourselves and not much time to reflect on our failures and achievements.

We are accustomed to challenges, but this year has thrown so many at us that we have been totally overwhelmed by it and we are down but not quite out.

The first part of the year was clouded by the illness of Emily and Eva our two vet nurse volunteers who work so incredibly hard and are in the front line when it comes to dealing with day to day running of the hospital at Makasutu. Thankfully they both recovered well and after a summer at home on leave, they returned full of energy and ready to go again but the workload remains daunting. Thankfully they have recently been joined by Rosie Ginns, a vet, who is with us for a few months.

We have had everything thrown at us from diseases, staff shortages, feed shortages, drug shortages, tetanus, tick borne disease, trypanosomiasis, rabies, Parvo Virus, Distemper, an epidemic of maggots. Together with ever increasing costs of everything from fuel to feed, this has seriously affected our budgeting and we need your help more than ever .

It is gratifying that more and more people are reporting cases in need of help to us from all species now, but we are so full that we simply cannot take on any more and it is heart breaking that we are in a position that we have to turn animals away as we simply cannot give the animals in our care the attention they need. Thankfully there are now 2 other small charities operating in The Gambia, and we are able to share the load by working together. We are very grateful to them for their help.

We would love to expand our work but are constrained by the ever-increasing costs and frustrated by new rules on veterinary medicines in the UK which make it very hard to source some of the drugs we need. Recently we have had to curtail our plans for neutering due to a shortage of the drugs required for anaesthetic.

The frustrations of the work have been many this year but the support we receive from you together with your kind words, keep us going. To see the animals recovering and going home fit and well brings its rewards. Let's hope that 2024 will be less challenging.

The world is in such a dreadful state that our troubles are miniscule in comparison to what many others are enduring, and it makes us truly thankful that, with your help and support, we are still able to make a difference despite the obstacles.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and may 2024 bring peace love and kindness to you and yours.



*Merry
Christmas*
& **HAPPY NEW YEAR**



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Letter from the Director, Heather Armstrong.

Hello

My motto is “no problems, only solutions” and we have well and truly found lots of solutions this year! It has been a tough one.

I must first apologise that many of you may not have received a timely note of thanks for donations. There simply have not been enough hours in the day. The charity is becoming very busy and the administration work is growing daily. Every day I receive calls asking for the Fundraising Department or the Finance Department or the Advertising Department or the person dealing with Social Media or volunteering or accounts and it is all just Bea and I. We also pack shipments, deliver them to the shippers, collect dog food and veterinary donation and sort and pack it all, attend and organise fundraising events and monitor what goes on in The Gambia. After a day on the road, there is an evening of answering messages and emails.

We have been joined by Anna Haines who works one day a week on the fundraising side which is a great help but we still need more help so that every donation is acknowledged and thanked promptly. If there is anyone in the Ockley, Surrey area who would like to volunteer some time, we would love to hear from you.

Despite the doom and gloom of challenges met, we are still here and still helping animals 24 hours a day. We have a great team and the best supporters any charity could ask for so we have a lot to be thankful for. More and more people are reporting animals in need of help to us and are refusing to stand by and watch an animal suffering. This is wonderful but we still wonder how many thousands of people walk by and do nothing in so many of the cases we see, before a good Samaritan comes along. Why don't we make 2024 a year of action where no one walks past any animal or human in need? We could so quickly make the world a better place.

My sincere thanks to everyone who has helped us this year, in whatever way. We deeply appreciate your help and support and together we will improve lives of all species of animals in The Gambia.

Please continue to support us, we need you more than ever before.

With all good wishes for Christmas and the New Year!

Heather



Feed shortage....

We have had feed shortages and thanks to your generosity and the kindness of Blue Chip and Dodson and Horrell, we were able to ship feed out to enable us to get over the worst of it and provide the animals with at least some fibre. I am pleased to say that as I write, the hay is flooding in to our barns. Each year we have to judge how much we shall need for the year ahead as the hay merchants quickly buy it up and export it to Senegal. Last year our huge case load out numbered our estimates and as there was a country wide hay shortage, we were in a desperate situation along with many others.



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Meet the team!

Dembo Jammeh is the head of our Equine team and **Musa Jallow** is our Dog Manager. Both Dembo and Musa came to us as apprentices and have worked their way up through the ranks. Musa came to us in January 2015 and Dembo has been with us for six years

Dembo originally worked as a Ranger taking care of the ex President's wild animal collection which included hyenas, crocodiles, zebra and antelope. When his employer went into exile he joined us as an apprentice and proved to be so good with animals that we offered him a job on completion of his training. His favourite animals are horses but he has come to love all species. He was not aware how lovely and sweet animals were until had close experience with them and came to understand the importance of their care and welfare. His ambition is to pass on his knowledge of their needs to the farmers and to be a voice for the voiceless.

Musa nearly left us before he started as it was quite a shock for an urban lad to be in the bush! Fortunately his mother persuaded him to give it a chance and by the time he had become familiar with the animals in his care he was smitten. He began by caring for an old horse called Jeremy Ugly and Jeremy taught him a lot about animals. Musa has a natural understanding of animals and is particularly good with dogs, He can regularly be seen walking 30 or 40 at a time off lead using only a soft whistle to keep them under control. His pack worship the ground he treads on. Recently his younger brother Samba has come to join us and he shares the same empathy with animals as Musa. They both become very fond of their charges and they are excellent at rehabilitating the broken souls.

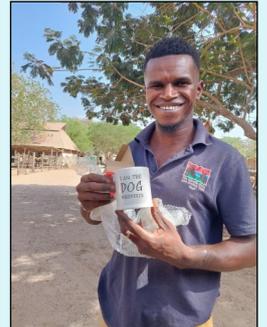
Eva Röben, a Dutch Veterinary nurse, came to join us for a couple of months earlier this year but extended her stay considerably. After a summer away from us, she decided to return for more. She has endless energy and we are delighted to have her back.

Rosie Ginns We are very pleased to welcome vet Rosie Ginns who has volunteered with us twice before. She obviously enjoyed her visits as she is coming back for a longer spell of volunteering this time. She has come to visit for four months in a voluntary position. She has already had a baptism of fire with all sorts of unusual cases coming her way. We hope she will not be totally overwhelmed.

Sheriff Jallow has been our chief driver for many years now. He is kind, gentle, reliable and he is an excellent driver. He is good with both people and animals. He continues a long tradition as his father worked with our Director's father with wildlife for his entire life. Sheriff is as good with animals as his father was and the dedication seems to run in the family. He has a good sense of humour and is very much a part of the GHDT family.



Dembo Jammeh



Musa Jallow



Eva Röben



Rosie Ginns



Sherriff Jallow

Imported dogs.

A worrying development in The Gambia is that people are importing/breeding/puppy farming a great many purebred dogs. Some are considered dangerous breeds for guarding and should only be in experienced hands. Purebred dogs generally need more food than Gambian dogs and are less disease tolerant. There have also been some fatalities with dogs turning on and attacking people. We have had many brought to us severely underweight or with behavioural problems. These are bright intelligent breeds that need exercise and enrichment in order to thrive. People are paying a great deal of money for these dogs but are not willing to pay veterinary fees or provide for all of their needs. Sadly some of the bull breeds that have been brought to us have become so dangerous that we have had to euthanise them. Others have had their spirits completely broken and are "shut down" We urge anyone in The Gambia to consider carefully before you invest large quantities of hard earned money in these breeds without thoroughly researching what you are letting yourself in for. Many are inbred, diseased, (mainly parvo virus) and many are unsuitable for living in a hot climate such as Huskies. Long coats are not groomed and become matted and full of parasites. Please only take these dogs if you are prepared to care for them properly.

Gambian dogs are highly underrated, We recently sent one, a dog called Koa, to a home in Scotland and he has been superbly trained and can do everything a purebred dog can do and much, much more. Please check out our website to see a video of him completing tasks. His guarding abilities have not yet been put to the test but I am very confident that if anyone tried to hurt his family, he would defend them with everything he has.



Aisha

Aisha came to us as a very sick little camel who was covered in ring worm. She grew into a HUGE camel and was very friendly and sociable and a much loved member of the GHDT family. She recently was found to be having problems breathing and despite treatment and help from overseas experts, she collapsed and died 24 hours later. She seemed to have an obstruction in her nostril. We are awaiting post mortem results. She will be sadly missed, she was big and beautiful and very intelligent and she was much loved.



Jojo

Many of you will remember our lovely dog Annie, who sadly died of Trypanosomiasis earlier this year. Annie had lived in Sambel Kunda as a stray dog. Some of the stray packs had been killing sheep and the villagers quite understandably felt they should be culled. Annie sought refuge on our yard and two days later gave birth to 6 puppies. When they were old enough, for their safety, we moved Annie and the pups to Makasutu. Good homes were found for four of them, but two of them, Jojo and Creamy, seemed rather timid, though they were wonderful with the disabled children who came riding and they were excellent at calming the autistic children. Creamy was always beside the children in wheelchairs. We decided to keep them as therapy dogs. Jojo was very close to her mother who gave her confidence and protected her as the dog numbers grew. She was absolutely shattered when her mother died and became really nervous and timid without her. Shortly after Annie's death, a Golden Retriever came to stay with us whilst he prepared for shipment to UK. Jojo found comfort with Max and the two dogs became close. We felt it would be traumatic for Jojo to be separated from her new friend after all she had been



through and as we had promised Annie we would take the best care of her pup, both Jojo and Max came to UK to live with our Director. Her confidence is growing daily and as the only female in the pack, she makes it her business to clean up the boys and wash their feet after the recent muddy walks we are having. Their travel costs and Max's boarding were privately funded and no charity funds were used to get them to UK.



Matata

You will recall we admitted four horses with severe burns on Christmas day last year. Sadly one developed tetanus and died but two others have returned home to a delighted owner. Matata remains with us for now to make sure he is fully recovered from his trauma. He is a bright little chap and will soon be going to our Sambel yard enroute to returning home. He is very much a part of the yard and will be badly missed.



Distemper

It sometimes seems that the powers that be like to keep us on our toes. All last year we were dealing with Parvo virus in dogs, No sooner had Eva sent me a picture of the newly disinfected and EMPTY Parvo ward, then cases of Distemper started coming in. Vaccine for these diseases is available for dogs but it is expensive and many cannot afford it. We cannot afford it for the 140 odd dogs that we have in at the moment and new dogs are coming in constantly. We need to raise funds for vaccines or perhaps a vaccine manufacturer would like to make a donation? Distemper is an awful disease, the street dogs suffer a lingering and very nasty death. Those that do survive are frequently left with neurological symptoms.



The Maggot Epidemic.

During the rains we normally see an increase in flies and the poor dogs get their ears badly bitten by flies. We occasionally see maggot infested wounds. Maggots are normally regarded as beneficial as they eat all the necrotic tissue and keep wounds clean. This year for some unknown reason there has been a huge increase in a different kind of fly that produces flesh eating maggots that cause untold damage to the animals. We have seen it mainly in dogs who are literally eaten alive by these maggots. The farmers are also having a hard time as the sheep and goats and new born calves are being attacked at their navels soon after birth. We were overwhelmed with badly injured dogs and had to put out an appeal to borrow more dog crates to put the injured dogs in to. We had a total of 140 dogs in at one time and felt overwhelmed because we simply could not give them the standard of care they deserved. The staff became quite adept at dealing with the wounds and had a treatment protocol to follow. We published it on social media, but still found dogs coming in that had been treated with engine oil and other bizarre things. We reached a point where we sadly had to turn animals away so we held a workshop to train other paravets how to treat the cases so that people had a the option of treating their dogs closer to home.

We always prefer to use medication that is available in country and natural if possible. We use a lot of aloe vera, moringa, honey and neem for example. We approached Claudette from a company called Care for Natural, she had helped us with treating the burns horses and is an animal lover herself. We needed to find an affordable spray that was fly repellent plus a cream to put on the wounds and she developed a cream and is now working on a spray to keep the flies away that is made of natural local ingredients. If she can develop one, not only will it relieve the animals but it will also reduce the insect borne diseases. From which they suffer.



Vets with Horsepower Provide Motorbikes to help Animals.

In September we attended the British Equine Veterinary Association Congress and we were intrigued to be invited to a meeting with Vets with Horsepower where they kindly announced that they were giving us yet another wonderful grant. Recent price rises and events have made it clear that we must start economising even more. Our vehicles are not cheap on fuel and cost us a great deal to maintain. The traffic congestion around the cities means that it can take us hours to cover just a few miles. The obvious solution is to buy motorbikes so that our staff can reach cases more easily and cheaply. This will also mean that we won't have to admit so many animals as they will be able to go out to attend to cases more easily and cheaply. We shall, of course, provide them with training first in order to keep them safe. Our sincere thanks go to each and every member of the Vets with Horsepower.



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The Miles Dawson Dog Facility.

The project for this year was building the dog facility with funds raised in memory of Miles Dawson who was the son of one of our Trustees and our Veterinary adviser. He tragically died in an accident last year. The facility consists of four paddocks, one is for training and shows, the others are so that the many rehabilitated dogs can live kennel free lives whilst awaiting adoption. There is a house in each paddock half of which is for dog accommodation and the other half is for staff accommodation so the dogs can maintain their close contact with people. In true GHDT style situations change so fast that not everything goes as planned.

We were already struggling with dog numbers when, towards the end of the rains, there was an out break of epidemic proportions of incidents of wounds being infected with flesh eating maggots. We saw many dogs but have also seen donkeys and sheep and cattle with life threatening wounds caused by these maggots. Our dog numbers grew and then we started to see some dogs with unusual symptoms and realised that we were also dealing with a Distemper outbreak. We had to put the infected dogs in "isolation" in the paddocks and reserve the hospital for the severe maggot wounds. When all returns to normal we hope that the dogs will be happy in the lovely shady paddocks whilst they await adoption.



Lack of space prevents us from thanking people individually but we appreciate each and every donation made to us and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. The following people and organisations have been particularly helpful to us and we would like to give them our thanks.

The Aqualia Foundation, Vets with Horsepower, The Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, Marjorie Coots Animal Charity Trust. The British Equine Veterinary Association Trust, Dr. Kebba Daffeh, Alice Noakes Memorial Charitable Trust, John Slattery at Breath Easy, Blue Chip, Dodson and Horrel, Animal Support Angels, Animal Friend Insurance, Walker597 Trust, Tina Banks of Alfs, Helen Clarke, Sue Ashton, Sue Mann, Stella Fuller, Vet partners, Sue Stage and Adrienne Magnier at Zarasyl.

FUNDRAISING

Just a few ways you can raise funds for us:

Thank you

GIFT AID

Many of you are kindly making you donations directly to our bank account by BACS. If you haven't already done so, could you possibly fill in a Gift Aid form for us so that if you are a taxpayer we can claim Gift Aid. It adds 25% to your donation with no additional cost to you.

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

*Are you looking for an unusual
last minute Christmas gift?*

*We have many meaningful gifts that you
can buy from our website and here are a
few more that may tempt you.*



Cost of vaccines DHLP £17

Dallas Keith Equine Flexi bucket £29

Salt licks from £5.00

Rabies vaccine £6



VACANCIES

Because we try to ensure we always have volunteers on a rolling basis, with hand over from one to another, we are once again on the hunt for some new long-term volunteers! Are you someone who is looking for a new challenge, not afraid of some seriously hard work and able to work well as part of a team and in the face of adversity? If so, you could be just who we are looking for. We are currently on the hunt for 2 new people:

Are you a qualified vet or vet nurse who works well under pressure, is a good people-person, works well as part of a team but also able to use your own initiative and think outside the box? This role is not for the faint-hearted and you will be faced with some of the most interesting veterinary cases you have ever seen but it is also highly rewarding. We require you to have a real passion for animals, always be willing to go above and beyond for the animals in your care, bucket loads of patience, a willingness to share your knowledge and a huge sense of adventure. Duties include, but are not limited to, oversee the busy veterinary hospital including horses, donkeys, cats, dogs and some exotic animals, lead and motivate the staff team, provide hospitality for visiting volunteers, basic accounting and book keeping, record keeping and maintain good standards of animal care. Huge amounts of empathy and compassion are essential, as is a great sense of humour and the ability to work well with people from different cultures. **Centre Manager** Our team has grown considerably in recent years and as a result we are desperately seeking a long-term manager. You will be based at our main centre in Makasutu and will be responsible for the overall management of operations. A primary purpose of this role is to train a Gambian to become a competent manager of our operations. This role includes, but is not limited to, managing staff and volunteers and maintaining accurate staff records, record keeping of all animal hospital admissions, managing our small fleet of support vehicles and ensuring they are safe and outings recorded, writing of procedures and protocols, managing maintenance of site and buildings, budgeting and accounting, providing hospitality for all visitors and volunteers. Being an animal lover is absolutely essential, as is the ability to work under pressure and to think outside of the box. Our ideal candidate will love a challenge and be flexible and hard working. Flights, board and accommodation are provided for the successful applicants and monthly pocket money is provided. For full job descriptions and person specifications, please contact us at ghdtooffice@gmail.com. If you would like to apply please email us a copy of your CV as well as a covering letter detailing why you think you would be suited to the role. We can't wait to hear from you!

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