

Winter 2021



NEWS

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WELCOME

to the latest issue of SPANA News.

On behalf of working animals and our dedicated teams across the world, I would like to start by saying a huge 'thank you' for supporting SPANA. Working animals have needed our help more than ever over the last 18 months. As vets, safely reaching and protecting as many of these animals as possible has been our top priority, and it's only made possible thanks to kind people like you.



In Melbourne, Victoria, where I'm currently based, we've experienced several strict lockdowns over the last year. Though light at the end of the tunnel seems in sight, the ongoing COVID-19 crisis has seen an appalling worldwide toll in human lives lost. And, in many ways, it has also proved to be the greatest threat to working animals that SPANA has faced in our 98-year history. But your continued support is, literally, lifesaving. Thanks to you, our vet teams have been there for working animals from the very outset of this crisis – and our support for starving, injured and abandoned animals remains just as high today.

The life of every animal we are able to treat is precious. On page eight, you can read about a few of the thousands of animals we've recently been able to help through vital veterinary care, thanks to your support.

Our **special appeal** on page four focuses on the serious issue of lameness, which has worsened as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Many different injuries can lead to agonising lameness, often leaving animals unable to walk or even stand. Please, if you can, support our appeal and help SPANA vets to ease the unimaginable pain of lameness and prevent animals from suffering.

On page 10, our Director of Veterinary Services, Dr Ben Sturgeon, talks about the major challenges that veterinary professionals have faced over the last 18 months. SPANA vet teams adapted quickly to meet rising demand for our services, and have made an extraordinary difference in alleviating animal suffering.

I hope you find the articles in this issue interesting and that the impact the charity is making, thanks to your generosity, is clear. Thank you for being a committed friend to SPANA – and to working animals across the world.

Dr Mathilde Merridale-Punter
Veterinary Programmes Advisor, SPANA

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SPANANA IN THE NEWS

Celebrating the successes of 2020

Our work has been more important than ever during the global pandemic. It is only thanks to our incredible supporters that we have been able to prevent terrible suffering and save the lives of animals across the world.

Thanks to your support, our veterinary work continued in every country where we work last year. We provided 283,552 working animals with veterinary treatment, trained 47,400 owners in animal care, and taught 50,888 children about animal welfare.

We also launched special emergency projects that provided lifesaving veterinary care, feed and shelter to animals who, without this intervention, wouldn't have survived this crisis. This was only made possible thanks to the generosity of our supporters in Australia and around the world. **Read our 2020/21 Annual Review at www.spana.org/publications**



Dancing for donkeys

In Tanzania, community education groups are using dance to capture the attention of audiences and spread donkey welfare awareness in rural areas. The groups also sing in a local language, Gogo, to ensure the message reaches a large number of people.

These innovative approaches to promoting animal care are in partnership with local organisation, TAWESO. The wide-ranging project also includes veterinary treatment, training for donkey owners, humane education and clubs for schoolchildren, and the production and distribution of safe and comfortable equipment for donkeys.



Massive strides for animal welfare in Uganda

A SPANA project in Uganda, one of our newest countries to work in, is being expanded in 2021, following a very successful first year. The project combines SPANA's veterinary work, education for schoolchildren and training for animal owners and vets.

Last year, more than 2,800 working donkeys received veterinary treatment through this project, while training was delivered to 46 veterinary professionals, along with schoolteachers and 439 owners, who were instructed in humane care and animal handling. Animal welfare clubs have been established in eight schools with more planned this year.

The project is being carried out in six districts of Uganda, working with local partner organisation AWPO. This year, we plan to increase veterinary care as well as expand our training and education programmes.

The team is also using radio to broadcast animal welfare advice for owners. The local radio station has more than one million listeners and there is huge interest in the shows, which have regular phone-ins.

Dr Ben Sturgeon, Director of Veterinary Services at SPANA, said: *'Through our joint approach of "Treat, Train, Teach", we are already seeing excellent progress for animal welfare in Uganda through this project, which is helping to cultivate lifelong respect and compassion for working animals.'*

HELP SAVE ANIMALS FROM THE AGONY OF LAMENESS

Every day, thousands of working animals endure the unbearable pain of lameness. Sadly, it is one of the most common conditions affecting the wellbeing of working animals today, exacerbated by the ongoing economic impact of the pandemic. Life for these animals has become much more arduous in the past 18 months, as they work harder to support their communities. Imagine working many hours each day, carrying a heavy load, on an injury that causes agony with each step. With your support, we can save working animals from the agony of lameness today.

Kotial's story

Before the pandemic, Kotial's life was tough. Omar relied on his 17-year-old carthorse to transport building materials around the desert town of Boghé, Mauritania, in the searing heat. When COVID-19 forced construction sites to close, Omar and Kotial switched to transporting water barrels, providing a lifeline to the local community.

Although Omar was grateful to have found work, he and Kotial were required to deliver large quantities of water due to increased demand. What's more, people living locally – most of whom had lost their source of income – were unable to pay the full price. As a result, Omar struggled to afford the food his hardworking horse desperately needed.

Kotial had become so malnourished that she barely had enough strength to carry

the large barrels home. One day the mare began to slow down further, as she struggled to put weight on her leg. She walked unsteadily and showed clear signs of discomfort each time she stumbled. Kotial was in a great deal of pain and needed help.

Kotial's owner was beside himself with worry, as he knew that the gruelling daily work was becoming increasingly hard for her. Fortunately, SPANA's Boghé centre has remained open throughout the pandemic, so Omar came to us for help.

Upon examining Kotial, the SPANA team soon found the source of her pain – a metal nail had become lodged in the sensitive middle part of her hoof. If Kotial continued to work in this state much longer, chronic lameness would have led to permanent damage.

After evaluation, our vets treated Kotial with a much-needed course of antibiotics and painkillers. They gently removed the nail, cleaned the wound, then trimmed and bandaged the unbalanced hoof. Immediately,



Our skilled vets found the source of Kotial's pain and gave her the necessary treatment and aftercare to ease her suffering



Our teams have seen an influx of animals suffering with crippling lameness. Emaciated animals are at greater risk as they become weak and more prone to injury.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please donate today to help protect vulnerable working animals like Kotial from lameness.

\$36 Food supplies

This gift could feed an overworked starving animal for two weeks, helping them recover from a severe lack of nutrients.

\$110 Essential medication

This gift could help treat three working animals like Kotial who are suffering from lameness, by paying for essential medication such as anti-inflammatories and other supportive treatments including bandaging, antibiotics and vaccinations.

\$275 Tool kit

This gift could pay towards a tool kit that includes items like a hoof rasp, hoof knives and shoeing tools to ensure that working animals' hooves can be properly cared for on a regular basis.

the vets saw an improvement in Kotial, who started to walk more comfortably than she had been in weeks.

Concerned with how thin Kotial was, our team gave her an anti-parasite injection and took her into the stables where she received expert care for five days. When Kotial was well enough to be discharged, her owner was given advice on hoof care, cart balance and safe levels of loading and work. The team also provided Omar with enough feed to help Kotial on the road to recovery.

Fortunately, Kotial was brought in before she had to endure the misery of infection or the hopelessness of incurable bone damage. But for every horse like Kotial, there are thousands more who are tormented with crippling lameness and desperately need your support.

As the pandemic continues, animals like Kotial are more vulnerable than ever. What was once a preventable

problem has now become a bigger challenge due to local government restrictions on movement and rising malnutrition. If left untreated, lameness can become so severe that animals are permanently debilitated and unable to work – and in the worst cases, left to face a harrowing death.

SPANAs vets are on the ground treating helpless working animals suffering from lameness. With your support, our trained vets and farrier technicians can provide vital hoof treatment, easing the suffering of donkeys, horses and mules worldwide. We can also provide emergency feed and medicine for animals like Kotial that are overworked and malnourished.

In most instances, we are these poor animals' only hope of receiving veterinary care, and we can't do this without you. **Please, if you can, donate today and help save working animals from agonising lameness. Thank you.**

To make a donation, please use the donation form enclosed, call 1300 149 080 or visit our appeal page at www.spana.org/lameness



Kotial was in agony and could barely walk; she urgently needed expert care



CARING FOR CAMELS

Working camels remain integral to daily life in many parts of India and continue to be vital to some of the poorest communities, who depend on them to earn a small income.



Dr Abhinav Swami - who leads a veterinary project in India, funded by SPANA's Australian supporters - on overcoming the challenges of the past year



Since 2015, SPANA has been working in partnership with my organisation, Help in Suffering, to provide free veterinary treatment to camels in Jaipur and the surrounding areas. The team cares for animals at our veterinary centre and through two mobile clinics. The mobile clinics make regular visits to local brick kilns and neighbouring villages, where camels and their owners work side by side in blazing heat and very hard conditions.

We treat a wide range of common conditions, such as mange, wounds and stomach issues. We also undertake emergency procedures,

distribute humane equipment, including replacing harmful traditional nose pegs, and fit reflectors on carts to prevent road accidents.

In 2019, we cared for 7,872 working camels, and we are very grateful to SPANA supporters in Australia, who make this work possible.

2020 was a very different year. The pandemic affected India badly, with tourism grinding to a halt and many people losing their jobs. Camel owners often live in extreme poverty and, unable to work during lockdown, many had no choice but to let their animals go or sell them at very low prices.

At first, the team was only able to respond to emergency cases. But, after the lockdown, the situation slowly returned to normal. Masks and social distancing were a very new thing, and it took time for some owners to understand why these measures were necessary. In time, we could return to our routine work each day, travelling to different areas in the mobile clinics and treating animals at the hospital.

Our community training programme is currently on hold, as the government is limiting how many people can gather in one place, but we hope to restart this work soon.

Animals have undoubtedly suffered due to the crisis. And during lockdown, large numbers of camels faced starvation, abandonment and disease. It is a tragic situation. But, we are pleased that, thanks to the support of SPANA donors in Australia, we have been able to save the lives of many animals and have also protected their health throughout this critical time.

Through good times and bad, we will continue to be there for the working animals of Rajasthan. Our work is all made possible thanks to the kindness of SPANA's Australian supporters, and we are so grateful for your ongoing help.

SPANA has worked in Mauritania since 2001, helping the country's working animals in extreme conditions

SPANA OPERATIONS

Working animals have a vital role throughout Mauritania. In this Saharan country, there are severe shortages of water, and donkeys are relied upon to deliver water to households. This even includes the capital, Nouakchott, where there is limited piped water supply. Day-to-day life in the city, and in many rural areas, literally depends on these animals.

We have three SPANA centres in the country – one in Nouakchott, one in the town of Rosso, and a new centre that opened in Boghé in 2019. In addition, we run three mobile veterinary clinics that reach animals in more remote locations. Last year, our small but dedicated team provided veterinary treatments to more than 151,000 working animals.

MAURITANIA

Alongside the work of the veterinary team, our education programme reaches children in a number of schools and in a designated classroom at the SPANA centre in Nouakchott. The programme promotes caring behaviour towards animals.



MAURITANIA AT A GLANCE

Population: 4.5 million
Area: 1,030,000 km²
Location: West Africa
Capital city: Nouakchott
Estimated number of working equines and camels: 1.9 million

PERSONAL PROFILE Q&A **Bebaha Hmeiditt, SPANA Mauritania Country Director**



What are the main problems facing working animals in Mauritania?

Mauritania is a very poor country and working animals continue to be the main means of transport in urban and rural areas. However, the extreme poverty of many

owners means animals often do not receive the care or food they need. They face many problems, such as lameness, malnutrition, infections, wounds, parasites, road accidents and poor farriery. This is why SPANA's services are absolutely necessary.

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected working animals?

Following a year of drought in 2019, Mauritania and the country's working animals have been hit hard by the pandemic. A lack of work for owners and animals – due to curfews restricting travel and low agricultural activity – has made it very difficult for many owners to pay for food for their families and their animals. SPANA has been distributing emergency feed to animals across

Mauritania and providing essential veterinary care.

Little by little, the situation in Mauritania is slowly improving, but there is still a great deal of suffering and our team is extremely busy.

What are you most proud about?

In 20 years of working with SPANA, my greatest pride has always been to see injured and malnourished animals arrive, and for them to come out healed and well. Their owners are often destitute and they are grateful and relieved to receive this help.

Our greatest achievement is to have persuaded the state, through the Ministry of National Education, to allow us to deliver humane education classes in schools, along with the training of teachers. SPANA has helped drive a change in attitudes among young people and this programme is shaping their respectful behaviour towards animals for the long term.

What are your plans for the coming year?

This year, we are planning to start a formal community training programme, alongside our veterinary and education work. This will involve mentoring owners in all aspects of animal care, so they can look after their animal's wellbeing and prevent avoidable problems.

YOUR SUPPORT GOES A LONG WAY

MAURITANIA

A painful eye injury brought eight-year-old donkey, Abou to the SPANA centre in Nouakchott, Mauritania for treatment.

Upon examination, the vet identified a scratch on the surface of Abou's eye, likely caused by a piece of debris or a foreign object, which had led to the inflammation on his face. They immediately rinsed the eye thoroughly and administered antibiotics to stop infection and anti-inflammatory medicine for the swelling. The team instructed Abou's owner, Ousmane, to let his donkey rest for several weeks to recover. They also advised him to avoid driving his cart too close to branches or other low hanging hazards to prevent future injuries.

Ousmane said: *'I always think of SPANA in times of need like these, and I really thank the vets for taking care of my animal.'*



Abou

MALI

Zarah the mare was extremely weak and unable to stand following the painful birth of her foal, named Issa. Our vet team in Mali came to nurse her back to health.

In recent years, war and civil unrest have forced people from the north of Mali into the capital city, Bamako. Until it is safe to return home, they have no choice but to live in makeshift camps where the conditions for people and animals are terrible. Thanks to your support, the SPANA team in Mali has been running clinics in the camps to treat these desperate animals. Our team were called to help Zarah, a carthorse who had recently given birth and was clearly in a great deal of pain.

The vets gave her anaesthetic and instructed her owner to let her rest and recover.

They also advised on proper nutrition for Issa while Zarah was too weak to feed him. With the right nutrition and ongoing care, both mother and foal are expected to make a full recovery.



Issa

Thank you from Mali... A huge thank you to everyone that has donated towards our recent tetanus appeal. Your gifts are helping us treat more animals in Mali, and around the world, who face this deadly disease.

Introducing just a few of the working animals we've recently helped, all made possible thanks to your kind support.

TUNISIA

Dora the mule was brought to the SPANA centre in Kasserine, Tunisia, suffering from severe stomach pain and swelling.

Her owner, Moulahi, who relies on Dora for ploughing, was alarmed to see his mule rolling on the ground in distress so he came to SPANA for urgent assistance. The team examined Dora and diagnosed the problem as colic, which can be deadly without treatment. The vets set to work removing the uncomfortable blockage in her gut and administered antibiotics, anti-inflammatories and medication to prevent stomach spasms. Dora rested while in the care of the expert team before returning home to Moulahi, who was advised on providing a more balanced diet for his mule.



Dora

ETHIOPIA

Dama the horse was struggling to breathe and was showing other worrying signs, such as coughing and diarrhoea. His owner, Alelign, came to the SPANA centre in Bishoftu, Ethiopia for help.

SPANA vets suspected Dama's symptoms could be due to a bacterial infection, combined with poor nutrition or the wrong feed. The team gave Dama medications to treat the bacterial infection as well as parasites. Alelign was advised on the most suitable feed to give Dama, and the team stressed the importance of sufficient rest, food and water for his animal. He said: *'Thanks to SPANA for your help. Our animals are very important to us and we have nowhere else to turn.'*



Dama

ZIMBABWE

When Ivos the donkey was involved in a road accident, his owner took him immediately to the SPANA team in Zimbabwe for treatment.

Ivos works every day, pulling cartloads of agricultural produce along dangerous roads. When a car collided with Ivos, it was clear he needed urgent veterinary attention.

Following a thorough examination and X-rays, the vets could see that Ivos had fractured a bone in his foot. They sedated Ivos and applied a splint bandage to protect the limb. They also administered pain relief and instructed complete rest for four weeks with some controlled exercise. The team checked in on Ivos while he recovered and were very pleased with his progress.



Ivos

- TREAT
- TRAIN
- TEACH

DIGGING DEEP FOR WORKING ANIMALS

No-one will need reminding, but the past year and a half has been an incredibly difficult time in most people's lives due to the impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic – and our thoughts are with all the families tragically affected.



Director of Veterinary Services, Dr Ben Sturgeon, on the most challenging year for veterinary professionals across the world.

For many vets and other animal health workers, it has been the hardest period encountered during their careers – both emotionally and professionally.

Our teams working in developing countries dedicate their lives to improving the welfare of working animals. And to see such a sharp increase in animal suffering as a result of the pandemic is heartbreaking.

The crisis has had a huge impact on working animals and the families who rely on them in the world's poorest communities. Lockdowns, restrictions on movement and marketplace closures have led to animal owners losing their incomes. As a result, vast numbers of animals have faced malnutrition and starvation, with desperate owners unable to afford food. Injuries and disease have also risen rapidly,

particularly affecting animals who are abandoned or scavenging for anything they can find to eat.

Initially, national lockdowns and regulations on social contact prevented many of the routine activities that our teams carry out every day, such as running mobile veterinary clinics and providing training for communities. The number of emergency cases, hospitalised animals and animal rescues rose dramatically however, with demand for our services continuing to remain very high today.

Our veterinary teams across the world have been responding to the situation as it evolves. From the beginning, we adapted our procedures before any government guidance or legislation was put in place, to ensure that animals, owners and staff were protected.

This included measures around social distancing, face masks, the disinfecting of clinics and equipment, personal sanitation, and changes to entry and movement in our centres.

In a worsening situation, in which animal suffering has escalated drastically, it has been more essential than ever for us to focus our resources in the right places. From the outset, a major shift took place from routine and preventative healthcare – measures to prevent disease and injury – to vital emergency work. This emergency intervention has included treatment for growing numbers of lameness cases and wounds (with emaciated animals being more susceptible) and rising



infection levels in malnourished and weak animals. The need for emergency surgery has also risen sharply, with more animals consuming plastic and other refuse as they forage in the streets and rubbish dumps. Road traffic accidents are becoming more common too, as animals roam further in search of grazing.

In addition to lifesaving veterinary care, SPANA teams across the world have led emergency feeding programmes since the start of the crisis. **Thanks to the generosity of our supporters**, we have been able to provide this lifeline for working animals who are starving and struggling to survive.

In Morocco alone, we carried out four separate emergency feeding programmes last year, distributing more than 274,000kg of feed to thousands of animals.

However, there have also been many obstacles and frustrations. The cycle of lockdowns, followed by the easing of restrictions, has limited what we've been able to achieve at times. A newly identified strain of the virus has seen Zimbabwe, Botswana and South Africa enter lockdown again, which has forced our teams to reduce their range of work after several months of busy activity.

As vets, providing the best care that we can to all animals in need is what drives us and what led us into the profession in the first place. On an emotional level, it has been extremely difficult. On the one hand we know how vitally important it is to act in a socially responsible way and follow national legislation, but on the other hand we know that, by doing so, we can't reach as many animals.

Many of the emergency cases we have been treating have been severe, often involving complex veterinary work and long periods of hospitalisation and care. It is immensely rewarding to save the lives of these animals, but it is also very challenging to see animals in such a bad condition who, only months before, were healthy and receiving preventative treatments.

The scale of the challenge globally is enormous, demand is unprecedented and no country in which we work is unaffected. But we are proud of the difference we have been able to make with your continued support – and our sincere guarantee is that every SPANA vet will give everything they can to prevent animals from suffering for as long as this crisis continues, and beyond. **On behalf of all SPANA vets and technicians, please accept my heartfelt thanks for all your support during this unprecedented time.**

WE WORK WHERE THEY WORK

Working animals are often found toiling in remote and inaccessible areas. Working hundreds of miles away from towns, they have no chance of reaching help if they are sick or injured. SPANA's response is to work where they work, providing our free veterinary care, children's education and community training where the need is greatest.

But we couldn't do it without you – your support makes everything we do possible. It is thanks to your kindness that our mobile clinics are right now providing care and relief to working animals in the remotest locations like the rugged Atlas Mountains in Morocco.

Despite the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic our work continues, and, just as importantly, we are committed to helping working animals far into the future. If you would like to join us in creating a kinder future for animals, perhaps you could consider including a bequest to SPANA in your Will? We promise that your bequest would be put to good use helping even more working animals in desperate need. **Thank you.**



If you would like to find out more about how to leave a bequest in your Will to help working animals, please use the tick box on the bottom of the enclosed donation form. If you have recently included a gift to SPANA in your Will please do let us know, as we'd love the chance to say thank you for your kindness!



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