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NEWS

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SIGHT-SAVING APPEAL

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WELCOME

to the latest issue of SPANA News.

It is an extra special issue for me because it is my first as Chief Executive of SPANA.

I am delighted to have joined the charity and I want to say a heartfelt 'thank you' for your continued kindness and dedication to working animals. Whether you have made a donation, remembered SPANA in your Will or bought a special Gift of Health and Happiness, you are helping to relieve the pain and suffering of sick and injured working animals worldwide.



In this issue, our **special appeal** on page four highlights the plight of working animals with debilitating eye conditions. Every year, SPANA vets treat thousands of donkeys and horses suffering from eye problems. Sadly, even the most minor infections can easily develop into chronic problems and sometimes blindness, which is why our centres and mobile clinics need to remain well stocked with sight-saving medication. With your help, our dedicated teams can continue to protect the sight of working animals in need.

On page six, Dr Mathilde Merridale-Punter, our Veterinary Programmes Advisor, explains why SPANA's network of mobile clinics are a lifeline for working animals across the world. Thanks to your support, these vital clinics are providing free veterinary treatment to working animals in hard-to-reach locations and training their owners in humane care.

As the global coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic continues to have a devastating impact on working animals across the world, on page 10 we focus on those animals working in the tourism industry.

From Tunisia to Indonesia, thousands of donkeys, horses and camels give rides to holidaymakers or transport their goods and belongings, but the collapse of tourism has meant these animals and their owners have been without work for more than a year. This has sadly led to increased instances of malnutrition and abandonment. However, thanks to you, we have been taking emergency action to help them.

Your commitment to working animals across the world gives me so much hope for the future. I am honoured and thrilled to be working for such an important cause. You can find out a bit more about me on page three, opposite. And please do get in touch, as we love to hear from you.

Thank you for all your support.

Linda Edwards
Chief Executive, SPANA

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SPANANA IN THE NEWS

New CEO takes the reins

Linda Edwards has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of SPANA.

Linda joins from the international development charity United Purpose, where she was Interim Chief Executive. Her previous roles include Chief Executive of Build Africa and Executive Director of Operations at The Donkey Sanctuary.

She has lived and worked overseas extensively, from Africa, Asia and Australasia to Central America, Europe and the Middle East. After serving as Marie Stopes International's Country Director in Malawi, she moved to Australia to cover the organisation's work across the Asia-Pacific region.

Linda said: *'It's a privilege to have been appointed as SPANA's new Chief Executive. Just like you, I care deeply about working animals and the communities that they support. There are more than 200 million working animals around the world whose vital role is*

often sadly overlooked. Without SPANA, many working animals wouldn't receive veterinary care in their entire lifetime. And it's only made possible thanks to the compassion and generosity of our kind supporters. Your unwavering dedication to animal welfare is truly appreciated and incredibly heart-warming.

'I want to ensure that SPANA will be there for working animals when they need us. To do this, I want SPANA to continue to grow. We currently work in 28 of the world's poorest countries, but there's so much more that we need to do, from providing essential veterinary treatment to more working animals, to passing on our skills and knowledge to veterinary professionals, animal owners and future generations.

'As the charity approaches its centenary in 2023, I am looking forward to working with an incredible group of colleagues, ensuring that SPANA can continue to advance the welfare of working animals in many of the world's most poverty-stricken communities.'

Reaching more working animals in South Africa



SPANANA's South African project has been expanded to provide free veterinary treatment to even more working animals.

We are now operating in seven townships in South Africa, working with local partner organisation Highveld Horse Care Unit. The project runs mobile clinics that provide emergency veterinary treatments, farriery and harness repair. The team also run community training sessions to teach owners basic farriery skills and hoof care.

Dr Ben Sturgeon, Director of Veterinary Services at SPANA, said: *'This project is making a considerable difference to the lives of working animals in South Africa's poorest communities and is a vital lifeline during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Its expansion will improve the welfare of many more working animals in need of SPANA's help.'*

SAVE WORKING ANIMALS FROM THE AGONY OF SIGHT LOSS

Obel the carthorse arrived at one of our mobile clinics with a painfully swollen eye. His condition was so severe that he was losing vision in the affected eye. Sadly, many animals like Obel are at risk of eye problems and sight loss due to the harsh climates and hazardous environments in which they live and work. Without treatment, even minor infections can quickly develop into debilitating diseases or worse, blindness. Thousands of working animals are suffering from preventable ocular conditions. But thankfully, sight-saving treatment is possible. With your donation, you can help prevent suffering and sight loss today.

Obel's story

Obel provides invaluable support to his owner, Mengiste, and helps him earn a small income to support his struggling family. Every day, the eight-year-old horse tirelessly travels with Mengiste from rural Angolela to the bustling town of Debre Birhan, Ethiopia. As a 'gharry' or taxi horse, Obel hauls groups of people and their goods to and from the market for six hours a day along busy, dusty and uneven roads.

In these conditions, it is easy for debris to enter a horse's sensitive eyes. If it doesn't leave the eye naturally, this can cause infection or other serious conditions. When Mengiste noticed Obel's left eye was looking painfully inflamed, he became deeply concerned. Despite Mengiste's efforts to rinse Obel's weeping eye with water, the condition only seemed to worsen.



Obel was treated for a painful corneal ulcer and his owner was given ointment to continue Obel's treatment

Obel's vision blurred as his sore eye continued to weep. He was in agony, disoriented and risked stumbling or harming himself as he listlessly pulled his cart over cobblestone roads. Over the course of a few days, he began frantically turning his neck, rubbing his face against his body to try to soothe his swollen eye. The persistent pain was causing Obel severe distress.

Seeing the poor horse's rapid deterioration, Mengiste became worried that Obel would suffer from

debilitating sight loss. If his horse couldn't work, Mengiste could no longer afford to keep him. Thankfully, a friend told Mengiste where he could find help. As soon as the SPANA mobile clinic arrived in the remote community of Debre Birhan, Obel and his owner were at the front of the queue waiting to be seen. When our dedicated vets met Obel, he could barely keep his eye open in the intense sunlight.

Our vets carefully examined his eye, applying fluorescein, a special, harmless dye, to check for



'Thank you, SPANA. I was so worried about Obel. I knew that without treatment my horse may lose his eye.' - Mengiste

Extreme climates and dangerous working environments put working animals at high risk of painful eye problems. Without treatment, animals can be left blind and alone, unable to work.



damage to the eye's surface. They diagnosed that Obel was suffering from a severe corneal ulcer, likely caused by dust, debris or ill-fitting equipment. Corneal ulcers are abrasions to the surface of the eye, which cause excruciating pain. If left untreated, the ulcer would lead to scarring, chronic inflammation, ruptures and eventual sight loss. In tremendous discomfort, Obel squinted to shield his irritated eye, which only caused further damage and worsened the infection.

The team knew they needed to act fast to save Obel's sight. After flushing his eye with saline, they gave the brave horse anti-inflammatory medication and antibiotic ointment to treat the infection. The relief seemed almost immediate, as Obel became visibly calmer. Mengiste was advised to correct the position of Obel's blinders to prevent rubbing against his skin. They were sent home with a course of anti-inflammatories, and Mengiste was also shown how to

gently apply the antibiotic ointment twice daily until Obel was no longer at risk of losing his sight.

Sadly, cases like this are far from unusual. In Ethiopia, ocular conditions are among the most common that our vets treat. This means our stocks of sight-saving medication need constant replenishing – especially in mobile clinics, where our vets must carry absolutely everything they need, as they can't afford to run out in remote locations. We need your support to stop minor eye infections developing into chronic problems, disease and life-changing blindness.

That's why your support makes a crucial impact – without our dedicated teams, there would be no hope for animals like Obel.

Please, if you can, donate today and help prevent the needless sight loss and pain of working animals around the world.

Thank you.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please donate today to help prevent vulnerable working animals like Obel from going blind.

\$36 could pay for fluorescein and anaesthetic to help SPANA vets assess three working animals suffering with eye conditions.

\$110 could buy painkillers, antibiotic ointment and other vital medicines to treat five working animals who are at risk of losing their sight.

\$275 could help fund our mobile clinics so they can reach more working animals like Obel and save their sight.

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

VETS ON THE ROAD



At SPANA, our mission is to improve the welfare of working animals in the world's poorest communities. Most communities don't have access to veterinary care, or they face long and difficult journeys to get their animals the help they need. That's why, since the charity was founded almost 100 years ago, we have worked where they work. Through our network of mobile veterinary clinics, we're able to deliver free, lifesaving treatment to working animals who need our help – even in the most remote of locations.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic and restrictions on movement, last year we operated 36 mobile clinics across 20 countries. Our clinics are stocked with essential supplies, including antibiotics, antiseptic, vaccinations and bandages, so that our vets are ready to treat anything – from eye conditions to life-threatening diseases. And they don't just treat. Our vets also train owners in animal welfare and distribute much-needed humane equipment, such as soft harness padding.

In some countries, our mobile clinics cover vast distances. For example, in Zimbabwe and Botswana, our vets can travel up to 400 kilometres a day and will camp overnight so that they can reach even more



Dr Mathilde Merridale-Punter, SPANA's Melbourne-based Veterinary Services Advisor, on why our mobile clinics are a lifeline for working animals across the world

working animals. In other countries, our clinics make regular visits to specific areas, such as to check up on the donkeys who work on the rubbish dumps of Bamako in Mali, or to keep watch on the tourist camels in the Palmeraie area of Marrakech in Morocco.

Mobile clinics have always been a crucial part of our work, and they simply wouldn't be able to operate without your help. Thanks to your generous support, we continue to introduce more. Last year we ran mobile clinics in more parts of South Africa, helping working animals in the townships around Johannesburg (see page three). We also reached more working animals in Ethiopia in 2021. In collaboration with the Ethiopian government's Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries, mobile clinics were added in four rural working districts – Wolmera, Basona Worena, Shashamane and Sheno. Further expansion is planned, so watch this space!

By expanding our mobile clinics, more working animals will have access to vital veterinary treatment, which will improve the welfare conditions of horses, donkeys, mules and camels in these hard-to-reach communities. None of this would be possible without your help. On behalf of all our vet teams overseas, thank you.



PROFILE MALI

SPANA has been providing essential free veterinary care to working animals in Mali since 1996.

SPANA OPERATIONS

Daily life for many families in Mali is dependent on working animals. In this hot, vast country, donkeys and horses work day in, day out – transporting goods, acting as taxis or carrying out vital agricultural work. In Mali's capital, Bamako, donkeys are used to haul heavy cartloads of waste to the mountainous rubbish dumps that circle the city.

In Mali, we currently operate one SPANA centre, in Bamako, and three mobile veterinary clinics. The mobile clinics allow SPANA vets to make regular visits to treat working animals at the local rubbish dumps, as well as in remote locations like Ségou, more than 240 kilometres from Bamako. Last year, our team provided free veterinary treatment to more than 21,000 working animals in the country.



MALI AT A GLANCE

Population: 19.6 million
Area: 1,240,000 km²
Location: West Africa
Capital city: Bamako
Number of working equines: 1.7 million

PERSONAL PROFILE Q&A

Dr Amadou Doumbia, SPANA Mali Country Director



How has the global pandemic affected working animals in Mali?

The pandemic has had a major impact. Because of movement restrictions and social distancing, there have been fewer job opportunities, so the income of working animal owners has greatly decreased. Some owners could barely afford to support their families, or the maintenance and wellbeing of their animals, so they had to look for other work and some animals were abandoned.

What are the most common problems you encounter?

Sadly, we encounter a lot of harness wounds. Back wounds caused by ill-fitting saddle pads account for 50 per cent of our treatment. We distribute humane equipment and do a lot of community training to show owners how to fit harnessing correctly.

Describe your typical working day.

My day begins by checking, treating and feeding the animals staying at our centre with serious injuries or conditions. Then, I go out in our mobile clinic to help the donkeys working at the rubbish dumps. Cases requiring hospitalisation are taken back to the centre for treatment. Once a month, we travel more than three hours to Ségou where animals desperately need help.

What is the most rewarding part of your role?

What I love most about my role is providing assistance to suffering working animals in order to bring them relief. I also enjoy talking to children who visit our centre and answering their questions about animals, so that they can be encouraged to become good animal owners.

YOUR SUPPORT GOES A LONG WAY

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

MAURITANIA

Demba the donkey works on a small farm helping his owner, Mbareck, support his wife and children. When Demba started having difficulty breathing, Mbareck brought him to the SPANA centre in Boghé, Mauritania.

Demba was suffering from heavy discharge from his nose and eyes and was also refusing to eat. SPANA vets diagnosed Demba with a respiratory syndrome. They cleaned Demba's eyes and nose then administered antibiotics to treat his infection, an anti-inflammatory injection to help relieve his symptoms, and vitamins to improve his diet. Demba was also encouraged to eat some nutritious feed to help build up his strength.

Mbareck was advised that Demba would need complete rest until he had fully recovered. The vets also asked Mbareck to bring Demba back for a check-up and further treatment two days later.

Mbareck said: 'My donkey was very weak, so I am glad that SPANA vets were able to help him. Thank you for your work.'



Demba



Molla

MALI

Molla the donkey works tirelessly for his owner, Sabré. Every morning, the four-year-old donkey pulls carts laden with refuse between the city of Bamako and the vast Badalabougou dump. Molla is at constant risk of injury from hazardous materials and debris, including sharp scraps of metal and shards of glass.

One morning, Sabré noticed that Molla was struggling and was clearly in pain. He was walking much more slowly than usual and had developed a limp on his left front leg. Extremely worried, Sabré took his donkey straight to the SPANA centre for help.

At the centre, SPANA vets carefully examined Molla and diagnosed him with muscle trauma, most likely caused by the strain of pulling his cart. Molla was admitted to the centre for two weeks where he received a daily anti-inflammatory injection to relieve his pain and reduce any tenderness, as well as nutritious feed. Thankfully, Molla responded well to treatment and recovered quickly.

Sabré said: 'My donkey is very important to me and I would not have been able to afford vet treatment for him. Thank you, SPANA, for all your help.'

TANZANIA

Jaga does many jobs for his owner, Baba. The seven-year-old donkey works long hours hauling heavy cartloads of bricks, timber and mining materials in Mukombe, Tanzania.

Over time, Jaga's homemade harness had begun to rub painfully against his sensitive skin, causing an agonising open wound to develop on his back. Luckily, a friend told Baba about SPANA's mobile clinic that was visiting Mukombe, so he took Jaga along as soon as he could.

SPANA vets carefully washed Jaga's wound with an antiseptic solution to ensure all dirt, dust and other debris had been removed. They then dressed the wound with a large, padded bandage. They also showed Baba how to fit Jaga's harnessing properly and gave him soft padding to make Jaga comfortable and avoid any further injuries once his wounds had recovered. The vets checked up on Jaga regularly over the next two months until the wound had fully healed.

Baba said: 'Thank you, SPANA. I would not be able to work without my donkey, so I am very thankful for your help and advice.'



Jaga



Gobi

INDIA

Gobi the camel usually gives rides to tourists in the city of Pushkar, India, 145km south-west of Jaipur. But due to the pandemic and the collapse of the tourist industry, Gobi has been carrying out a variety of manual jobs to support his owner Happu and his family.

After Gobi lost his usually healthy appetite and began scratching himself frequently, Happu became increasingly worried about his camel's health. Gobi had also developed some small sores where his saddle was rubbing into his delicate skin.

Happu took Gobi to the SPANA mobile clinic in Pushkar for a full check-up and treatment as soon as he possibly could. At the clinic, SPANA vets diagnosed Gobi as suffering from harness wounds and external parasites. They carefully cleaned and covered each of his sores with an antiseptic solution, and administered an antibiotic injection as several were already infected. Gobi was then treated with an anti-parasite spray and given nourishing feed. The vets showed Happu how to secure and fasten Gobi's saddle correctly, using new, comfortable padding.

Happu said: 'I was very worried about my camel. This is the first time I have brought him to a SPANA mobile clinic. It is a blessing that there is no charge for this treatment at such a difficult time.'

- TREAT
- TRAIN
- TEACH



WISH YOU WERE HERE

The impact of the global pandemic on working animals in tourism has been devastating. Find out how, thanks to you, SPANA has been taking action to help them.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on animals and people worldwide. One of the most seriously affected sectors is tourism. Due to global lockdowns and restrictions on movement and travel, many animals working in the tourist industry have been out of work for more than a year.

The slump in tourism was sudden and dramatic. According to a United Nations report, in 2020 the number of tourists arriving in countries where SPANA works plummeted – down by as much as 79 per cent in Tunisia and 74 per cent in Indonesia, for example.

Almost overnight, working animals found themselves in a dire situation. No tourists has meant no income, meaning animal owners have struggled to feed their families and their animals. Horses, donkeys and camels who are usually strong and healthy have been suffering from malnutrition. Some owners have had no choice but to let their animals loose to forage for their own food, putting them at risk of dangers ranging from colic to

road accidents. Animals have also been sold or even abandoned by desperate owners in some cases.

Dr Sami Mzabi, Country Director for SPANA in Tunisia, said: *'The dramatic fall in tourism in Tunisia is a catastrophe. It is a big problem because many destitute animal owners are unable to feed their animals. We have treated many animals suffering from malnutrition, or who have been abandoned.'*

That's why SPANA acted quickly, from the outset of the crisis, to help as many working animals as possible and ensure they received the food and treatment they needed at such a difficult and unprecedented time.

For example, in Tunisia, we have been carrying out an emergency feeding programme for the carriage horses in Tozeur, a tourist city on the edge of the Sahara. The programme has been extremely well received by owners desperate to ensure their horses remain in good health.

On the Gili Islands in Indonesia, horses are used to pull taxi carts for people and their luggage. Local laws forbid the use of motorised vehicles, so the horses are used to transport absolutely everything, including building materials, supplies for hotels and restaurants, drinks

and goods for shops, and machinery for infrastructure. They are also used to collect up to 20 tonnes of rubbish a day. But the island all but closed when the pandemic hit, leaving working animals hungry and alone.

A SPANA project with the Gili Eco Trust was launched to distribute much-needed supplies of nutritious feed. In the first two days of the project alone, 215 bags (41 tonnes) of rice bran reached 86 horses in need.

In eastern India, an emergency feeding project in partnership with Action for Protection of Wild Animals (APOWA) has been operating in the Puri district of Odisha state. Last year, 71 bags of feed were distributed to working horses and camels. Meanwhile, in Morocco, we continue to help the calèche horses and tourist camels in Marrakech, along with working mules in the Atlas Mountains, through emergency feeding and the provision of vital veterinary care.

The tourist sector will take time to recover, which is why, thanks to your kindness and generosity, we will continue to help working animals in tourism and make sure they receive the feed and essential veterinary treatment they so desperately need. Thank you for your support.



Thanks to you...

A huge thank you to everyone that has already donated towards our recent Christmas appeal. Thanks to your generosity, suffering working animals in Morocco and around the world can receive the lifesaving treatment they so urgently need. Thank you for your support.



Helping tourist camels in India

The number of tourists arriving in India dropped 54 per cent during 2020 due to the pandemic. One of the many working animals affected was Moti, a nine-year-old camel from a small village near Pushkar in north east India. Before the pandemic, Moti supported his owner, 71-year-old Mogru, by giving rides to tourists. They have been out of work since then.

Because there is no work for Moti, he has been kept at home. He has been getting less exercise and had become listless. Mogru started to worry about Moti's health – especially as he was struggling to afford good feed for him.

Moti was taken along to SPANA's mobile clinic for a general health check. SPANA vets carefully examined Moti all over, including checking that his hooves, teeth and eyes were in good condition. They diagnosed Moti as suffering from malnutrition and external parasites. He was treated with an anti-parasite spray and was prescribed a vitamin supplement.

Mogru said: *'Before the pandemic, I had three camels, Moti and two others. One is still at home, but I had to sell the other because there is no business because of coronavirus. In Pushkar, we use camels to ferry tourists who come here. But now my camels are sat at home. We are very happy with SPANA. They give us free medicines, which because of the pandemic we would not be able to afford at our own cost from a private vet. Thank you.'*



'I have the comfort of knowing that SPANA is there for those hardworking animals and to help relieve any pain and discomfort they may endure.'

**SPANA supporter
Patricia Blythe**

LET YOUR LOVE LIVE ON

For people who care about the suffering of working animals, it is often a great comfort to know they can go on helping for many years to come. A gift to SPANA in your Will, of any size, will mean your love and compassion for these animals will live on.

Gifts in Wills come in all sizes – large, small or somewhere in the middle – and we are hugely grateful for every single one. Added together, gifts like these fund over half of everything we do worldwide to relieve the suffering of working animals. Even a small gift can make a big difference to animals working in desperately poor countries like Mali. Much of Mali's population live in extreme poverty and most animal owners simply don't have any money to pay the veterinary fees. SPANA's free treatments are literally a lifeline for the animals and their owners alike.



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 SPANA in your Will or you intend to do so when the time is right, please do let us know. We would love the chance to say thank you for your kindness.



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