



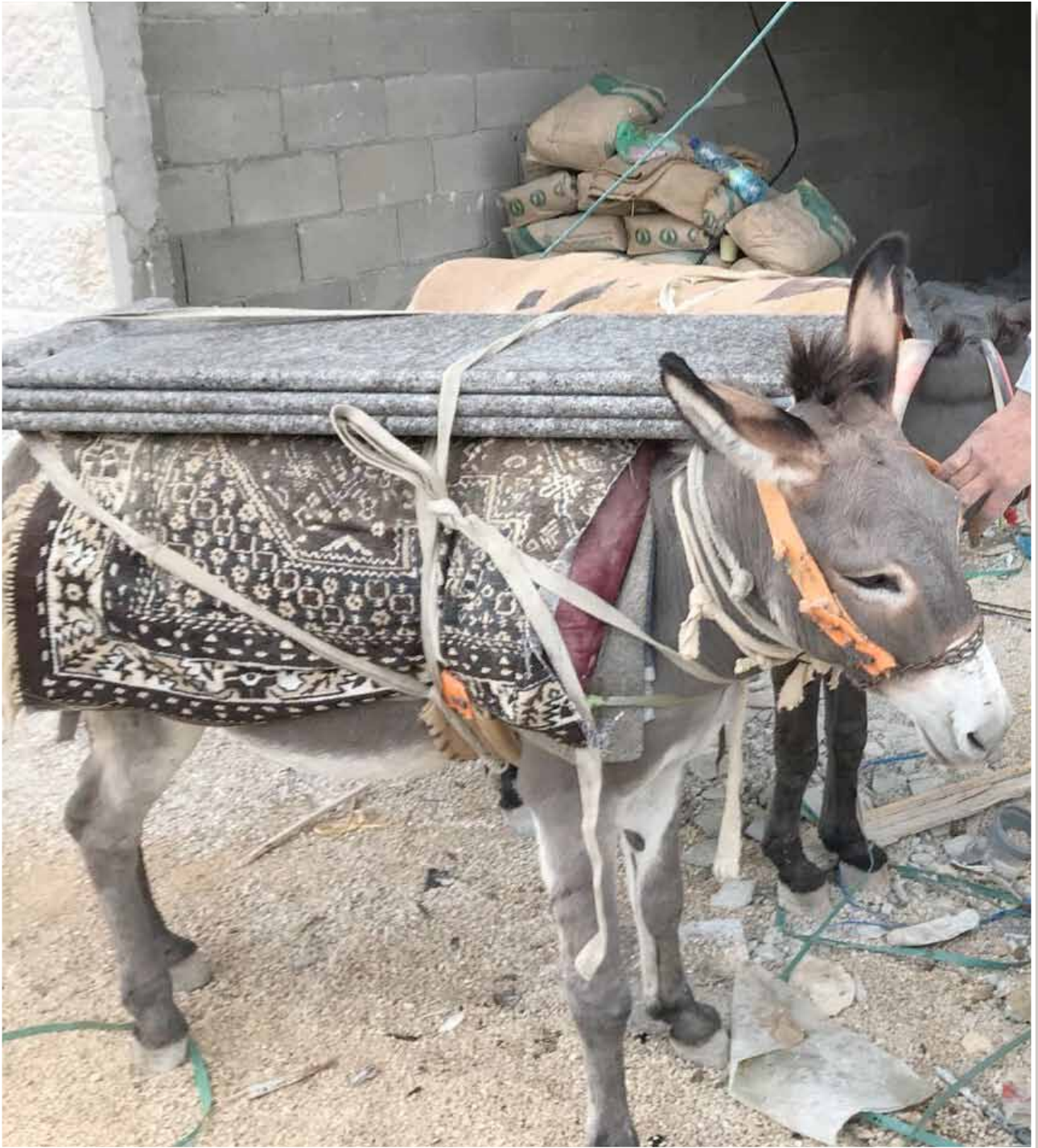
Safe Haven  
for Donkeys

# Easing the burden

Changing lives for  
working donkeys and horses  
in the Middle East







# Every animal deserves a Safe Haven

Over 7 million equids – donkeys, mules and horses – are used as working animals in the Middle East and North Africa today. A ubiquitous part of the region's working life for centuries, these animals are still at the heart of most construction and transport work, carrying what seem to be impossibly heavy loads or providing non-mechanical traction, often in treacherous environments.

Due to many owners' lack of knowledge, understanding and access to resources such as rural farriers and vets, their hard-working animals all too often endure horrific – but entirely preventable – conditions. It is common to see them suffering:

- injuries from ill-fitting harnesses
- severe lameness from overgrown or neglected hooves
- poor bodily condition from inappropriate food or neglected teeth
- exhaustion from overwork
- abandonment when they are unable to do the work required of them.

## So what can be done?

Safe Haven for Donkeys is committed to changing this situation and improving the welfare of working equids by:

- providing veterinary and farriery treatments
- helping owners, handlers and professionals in specific equine care to develop the skills to prevent injuries from occurring in the first place
- caring for and finding homes for unwanted or abandoned donkeys, mules and horses.

### Where we work

Our practical work takes place in Israel and Palestine, but our administrative base, trustees, chief executive officer and key admin staff are based in the UK. Most of our funding comes from UK supporters. We work not just with donkeys, but with all working equines, including horses. The following pages outline the difficulties they face and what we are doing to ease their burden.





## Safe Haven to the rescue

Working in Israel and Palestine, Safe Haven for Donkeys has a clear mission to change the lives of working donkeys for the better. You can see our vision, mission and values in detail on pages 8 and 9.

At our sanctuary in Israel we look after 250 donkeys that have been abandoned, rescued or handed over by their owners. From here we rehome donkeys, usually as companion animals, though we also support their use in managing land in environmentally and welfare-friendly ways.

We raise funds to support our activities and are working on developing a strong social media presence to increase engagement.

We are also currently developing the sanctuary as a tourist attraction and educational facility.

Our community projects on the West Bank are targeted at embedding practical knowledge and promoting compassion, in order to change the way donkeys are treated.

Safe Haven is a charity, which has been operating since 2000.



## How we make a difference

Communities in Israel and Palestine depend on donkeys for a wide range of tasks, from transporting goods to market to providing traction on construction sites, standing in for mechanical lifts and cranes, which are just not available. Unsurprisingly, they often suffer from overwork or injury.

### On-the-spot help

We have a dedicated veterinary team in Palestine, which treats animals while they are working.

- We treat long-standing wounds caused by ill-fitting and unsuitable harnesses. Sometimes these wounds are so severe the donkeys' bones are visible, yet they still have to work.
- Our team will often give the animals they come into contact with a complete health check, which fills the void left by the lack of vets (particularly vital in carrying out dentition work) and farriers in rural areas. The animals' feet and teeth especially are checked and treated.
- The lifespans of working donkeys in these conditions are much shorter than for companion animals. They are often abandoned when they can no longer work. We respond to reports of sick or abandoned donkeys and remove them from immediate danger.





## A place of safety

We transfer many animals that are in danger to our sanctuary in Israel, though crossing borders with animals can be difficult, due to disease risk.

Here they are cared for by our sanctuary team, a dedicated group of volunteers and staff who help them recover from the trauma they have experienced.

Donkeys form extremely close bonds with other donkeys, and separating bonded animals can often cause serious illness leading to death. We carefully assess and monitor each donkey that arrives at the sanctuary, so we can prevent or treat any such issues. Most will eventually form new bonds with other donkeys in the sanctuary. When they are fit enough, we will find loving homes for the newly bonded donkeys.

Donkeys are very intelligent and inquisitive animals. They love lots of interaction with bonded partners, humans and their surroundings. Whilst the sanctuary provides for many of their immediate needs, a home will often provide a greater level of environmental enrichment. Rehoming also allows us to free up space for other animals in desperate need of our care.



## What we want to do

We know we have a mountain to climb in order to bring about sustainable change for working donkeys in Palestine and other parts of the Middle East. With the conflict seen in recent times, the construction industry is under huge pressure to rebuild areas that have been devastated by war. Providing shelter for communities that have been left homeless is therefore a priority.

Given this political and environmental backdrop, the use of donkeys and other equids in the Middle East is a matter of economic necessity. It would be unrealistic and naïve for any welfare charity to think this will change in the short term. The reality is that donkeys, mules and other equines are a valuable resource in this respect and will be for many years.

We are therefore committed to making a sustainable change to the welfare of working equines, especially in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East.

We want to work with communities to share our knowledge of husbandry, harnessing and ways to prevent sickness and injury in the first place. By embedding and growing this vital knowledge within communities, we believe we can significantly reduce the welfare issues so commonly seen in working equids. While equine welfare is our primary concern, we also recognise that we will be helping communities to rebuild their homes and provide for their families.





## Our vision

Wherever we are, we will create an environment where the welfare of working and companion donkeys in the Middle East is a priority and their contribution to communities in which they work is highly valued.

## Our mission

We will not go into a community only to treat equine injuries that have been sustained through hard labour but will also seek to be proactive in helping prevent such injuries, through:

- training – we will share our knowledge of husbandry, harnessing and critical veterinary and farriery interventions with owners and other stakeholders
- veterinary care – we will provide veterinary and farriery care where there is an urgent need to prevent further suffering
- rehoming and sanctuary – where donkeys are abandoned or unwanted, we will find new loving homes for them where possible. In some circumstances, we will provide sanctuary, although this will hopefully be a temporary measure while the donkey recuperates
- advocacy – we will elevate the status of donkeys within political and social arenas through focused information and campaigns to raise awareness of their welfare needs and their value to humankind
- partnerships – we will work with trusted partner organisations to reach as many donkeys as we can with the resources available
- animal assisted interactions (AAIs) – we will share our understanding of the power donkeys have to help humans overcome physical and psychological conditions
- quality of life – we will not shirk from difficult decisions when an animal's quality of life is compromised.



# Our values

## Compassion

We intervene when it is clear a donkey's welfare is, or is likely to be, at risk

## Transparency

We always take the right action for the donkey

## Responsiveness

We act at the right time

## Inclusivity

We work in partnership with all stakeholders

## Professionalism

We are recognised as the donkey experts, using evidence-based methods



## Our goals

By the end of 2022 we will:

- increase the number of animals rehomed from the sanctuary
- find more new homes for donkeys without bringing them into sanctuary
- maintain a smaller donkey herd in our sanctuary
- work in more countries within the Middle East and, with our partners, deliver community projects focused on working donkeys, mules and horses
- deliver more training courses each year for owners and professionals
- launch Arabic and Hebrew websites to deliver educational resources
- start an Animal Assisted Interaction (AAI) programme
- have regularly published the progress made towards achieving our goals.

## Our outcomes

As a result, we will see:

- more donkeys in loving homes experiencing better care and more environmental enrichment
- owners feeling a sense of achievement and personal benefit from the experience of caring for our donkeys
- donkeys that need sanctuary enjoying tailored care programmes to help them recover quickly from their trauma before moving to new homes
- improved welfare for thousands of working donkeys through direct intervention and knowledge-sharing with owners and professionals
- an elevated reputation for donkeys through our AAI programme and more respect for them within their communities.





## How we will do this

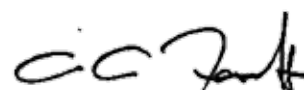
- Everything we do is guided by the highest welfare principles. Using the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) Standards for Working Equines as the basis for our work, we will identify communities where basic animal welfare standards are not being met. Taking an initial baseline measure of animal welfare will be a critical factor in understanding the impact we have achieved. Using a suitably recognised equine welfare assessment model, we will assess what welfare issues are affecting working animals in the chosen area. This will help us to better understand the resources we need to deploy and for how long. We will engage with local universities to help us scope and measure the results of our work. We envisage that the resources needed will include veterinary, farriery and educational expertise.
- During and after the delivery of the project, we will measure the impact we have achieved in improving the welfare of working equids. Because the skills will be embedded within the community – owners, local vets, farriers and other animal technicians – the change will be lasting. Periodic checks and contact will help us to monitor this beyond the life of the initial project.
- Highlighting the impact of our work in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will help us to move into new communities to further our goal to improve animal welfare.
- We will also engage with local animal welfare charities, veterinary and technical skills schools to ensure working equine health and welfare are featured within their curricula.

## Let's do this

We know the scale of the task we have ahead of us, but we have the expertise and the will to make a difference to these animals and to the communities they serve, day in, day out. This strategy document sets out our plans and within just a few years we will be able to highlight the dramatic changes we have made to the long-term welfare of donkeys, horses and mules working in the Middle East.



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