

Beitbridge Hay Distribution Pilot Project: Impact Assessment Survey

Executive Summary - August 2021



WorldHorseWelfare



VAWZ
Veterinarians For Animal Welfare Zimbabwe

Executive Summary

Veterinarians for Animal Welfare Zimbabwe (VAWZ) was established in 2010 after the Department of Livestock and Veterinary Services (DLVS) and the World Animal Welfare Organisation (OIE) identified a need for veterinarians to play a more active role in animal welfare in the country. VAWZ aims to improve the welfare of all animals in Zimbabwe and to allow them to live their lives free of fear and pain. The organisation currently supports DLVS by implementing several projects across the country.

World Horse Welfare is a UK-based charity that has been improving the health and welfare of working horses and donkeys around the world since 1927, through education, campaigning and hands-on care. Internationally, World Horse Welfare is committed to improving thousands of working horses and donkeys' lives and their owners' livelihoods. In addition to the UK, the organisation currently works in 16 countries.

The Beitbridge District Donkey Welfare Project

Since January 2018, World Horse Welfare has supported VAWZ to establish a permanent Beitbridge Donkey Welfare project in the district and to expand the identification and treatment of health and welfare problems; providing training to government extension agents in donkey health and welfare; raising awareness among owners of improved donkey husbandry and working practices; reducing instances of road traffic accidents involving donkeys and improving donkey harnessing used by owners.

The hay distribution pilot project

With the onset of the Coronavirus pandemic in Zimbabwe and the resulting stringent lockdown in March 2020, supply chains, especially for perishable produce from rural to urban areas were largely disrupted and continued to operate below normal levels for most of the rest of the year. This had a significant impact on the livelihoods of many farmers and traders in the Beitbridge District, who relied on these outlets for generating an income. Seeking to respond to this situation and to ease the plight of donkey owners within the district, VAWZ decided to initiate an emergency feed distribution project focusing on donkeys in one ward. The pilot project aimed to distribute veld hay to donkey owners during the peak of the dry season (September to December) to assess the feasibility and impact of this intervention on donkey well being as well as their ability to continue to contribute to rural livelihood activities.

A total of 187 households from Lutumba Ward 5 participated in the hay distribution pilot. A total of 3,691 bales were distributed to these farmers between September and December 2020. Each owner received an average of 19.7 bales (approximately 5 bales per month). Distributions took place four times during this period. The hay was sourced from a supplier in Shangani, north of Bulawayo, approximately 412km from Beitbridge.

The hay benefited an estimated total of 5,909 animals, including 972 donkeys, 1,066 cattle, 3,553 goats and 318 sheep.

Impact Assessment Survey

An impact assessment survey of the hay distribution pilot was conducted in March and April 2021, after the completion of the hay distribution activities in December 2020. All interviews were conducted face to face but were socially distanced due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. 82 respondents were interviewed regarding their household and farming practices as well as the role, health and welfare practices regarding their donkeys and the impact of the hay they received.

All respondents were participants in the hay distribution pilot project and were randomly selected from the list of 187 registered donkey owners. 73% (60) of respondents were male and 27% (22) were female. 62% (50) of respondents were also participants in the PROGRESS project.

Summary of survey results:

Household characteristics

- Respondents from 82 households were interviewed. The average household size is 6.1, accounting for a total of 573 people

Agriculture and livestock

- Respondents owned an average of 5 donkeys, 8 cattle, 9 sheep and 20 goats
- Main crops cultivated: sorghum, maize and watermelons

Contribution of donkeys to rural livelihoods

- The survey confirmed the significant and varied role donkeys play in rural livelihoods in the Beitbridge District and they contribute to both on and off-farm livelihood activities
- Their main household uses include ploughing (95%), transporting goods (89%) and transporting people (55%)
- 31% of respondents reported using donkeys for various income-generating activities, such as transporting building sand and poles, collecting and distributing firewood for sale and renting donkeys for ploughing
- Thus donkey deaths have a significant negative impact on households, in particular reducing mobility and increasing the workload of household members
- The main benefits of the distributed hay at the household level included reducing donkey poverty deaths, reducing feed costs of maintaining donkeys as well as other livestock and being able to plough in time
- Female household members also benefited from the hay distribution in several ways: helping to reduce labour, for example, donkeys help to perform arduous tasks such as transporting water, firewood and other goods and are used for providing transport for income-generating activities. Providing hay regularly meant that the donkeys were less likely to stray in search of scarce grazing and thus were easier to catch when needed. This freed up more time for women to use on other activities. The reduced costs spent on feeding the donkeys also saved income for other household expenses

Water access

- 91% of households had access to a water source at or within 1km of their homestead
- 35% of households only provide water for their donkeys every two or three days

Livestock nutrition

- Natural grazing is the main source of nutrition for most types of livestock. It is the only source of nutrition for 44% of sheep and goats, 11% of donkeys and 6% of cattle.
- 29% of respondents reported growing fodder crops (bana grass, lucerne, beans and lablab). 80% of these respondents are participants in the PROGRESS project
- Although 50% of respondents reported giving their donkeys little fodder crops or crop residue, 29% sometimes supplemented their donkeys' diet in this way
- 40% of respondents reported that cattle are most likely to be fed crop residue and fodder crops
- 78% of respondents reported purchasing concentrates for their livestock
- 54% of respondents reported providing their cattle with concentrates regularly

- 68% of respondents reported occasionally providing their donkeys with concentrates

Use of hay

- 12 respondents (15%) reported purchasing hay for their donkeys – to supplement their diet and to increase or maintain body condition
- The main reasons for not buying hay include that it is too expensive, not easily accessible and that it is too bulky to transport
- Most people provide additional feed to their donkeys between September and December, the greatest proportion of respondents (88%) provide additional feed to their donkeys in October and November
- 95% of respondents reported providing distributed hay to a total of 427 donkeys. 40% of respondents also fed it to their cattle and 16% fed it to their goats
- 93% of respondents reported providing hay to all their donkeys regardless of age, condition, size, type or level of activity. One respondent reported giving hay only to his working donkeys
- 53% of respondents provided hay to their donkeys daily and 35% provided it 3 – 4 times/ week
- The main reasons respondents gave for providing hay to their donkeys were: a lack of natural grazing, hunger and because they needed their donkeys to work (the main ploughing season & heaviest period of workload for donkeys coincides with the dry season when the least grazing is available before the start of the rains)
- The many benefits for donkeys receiving hay included having more energy and being able to work harder.

Livestock poverty deaths

- 89% of respondents reported suffering livestock poverty deaths during the 2019/20 dry season vs 20% in the 2020/21 dry season.
- The most common reasons for donkey deaths included lack of grazing (starvation) and disease

Overall the survey respondents were extremely positive about the hay distribution pilot and put the hay to good use by feeding their donkeys as well as other livestock. The pilot project was carried out at the most critical time of year when donkey workloads are high and access to natural grazing is scarce and continues to deteriorate towards the end of the dry season. Thus, the benefit to donkey health and welfare was maximised and enabled them to continue to make a significant contribution to both on and off-farm livelihood activities. Donkeys play a significant role in draught and transportation in rural areas, ensuring households have access to income-generating opportunities, markets, goods and services.

Thus, providing donkeys with adequate care, feed and nutrition is an important investment in household livelihood security. Ongoing support for their health and nutrition needs to be actively considered as part of any community development programme.

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