



LANG-OOR NUUS

Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary

Newsletter #77 May to July 2026

Hello to you all, welcome to our latest newsletter with many exciting updates. Happy reading!

The donkey skins trade – together we can make a difference!

Many people are unaware that the trade in donkey skins for export to the East is a significant factor in the global economy. A product called ejiao, believed to have medicinal and health benefits according to Traditional Chinese Medicine, is extracted from the skins. With the emergence of a growing upper and middle class of economically active consumers, the marketing of ejiao products has become more aggressive and the demand has dramatically increased.



China had numerous donkey farms but the need for donkey skins soon outstripped the supply, and skins had to be sourced elsewhere. Agents turned to Africa to find plentiful donkeys, cheaply and easily available.

The health and condition of the animal does not influence the value of the skin, leading to bad practices. Apart from appalling conditions at “registered” donkey abattoirs, the underground trade involves unspeakable cruelty to these animals. The impact on communities that depend on their donkeys for transport and agricultural activities is immense. Donkey-dependent communities find their animals stolen and brutally slaughtered for their skins. As the skin is the only item of interest, carcasses are dumped and left to rot, creating environmental and human health hazards.



In February 2024, the member states of the African Union (AU) proposed a moratorium on the skins trade from Africa. It is now up to each member country to accept and legally enforce this ban. South Africa has not taken any action after this decision by the AU and maintains a legal export trade quota of 10,500 donkey skins per year.

Concerted action is needed to make the government aware of the impact of this trade, both legal and illegal. A well-drawn-up petition is available at: <https://c.org/9ywRpyHmrd> and we encourage our supporters to add their voice.

Thank you for potentially saving many donkeys. You are also supporting all the struggling communities that rely on their patient and loyal animal helpers.

Diniel Valentine – our newly-appointed Visitor Centre Co-ordinator



Diniel joined the Sanctuary as a Visitor Guide in April 2025 and was appointed the Visitor Centre Co-ordinator from 24 April this year. We asked Diniel about his vision for his new position.

“As VC Co-ordinator, my vision is to make every visitor feel welcome. In today's busy world, people need a place where they can slow down, reconnect with nature and simply breathe again. That's exactly what Eseltjiesrus offers. Come along with your family and friends and of course the children. Donkeys absolutely love children.

Here at the Sanctuary, meet the donkeys and hear their incredible stories. While here you can enjoy the best chicken pies, cheese cake, milkshakes, coffee and more in the Coffee Shop. Then pop into our Gift Shop for all things donkey. The Bookshop is well stocked with used books at bargain prices with all proceeds going towards the care of our donkeys. Adam's walk offers a peaceful escape around the dam with benches along the way where you can sit and think, while listening to the birdsong.

My goal is to create an environment where people feel so welcome at the Sanctuary that they struggle to leave. I want every visitor to leave the Sanctuary inspired. I look forward to welcoming you here.”

Promoting the welfare and status of donkeys through a culture of caring

Donkey News

The summer seemed to last much longer than usual with extreme heat, but thankfully the cold and rain is now upon us. The donkeys adapt quite well to the heat, but are not big fans of wet weather. For the cold they grow thick woolly coats, and we provide the shelter for rainy days.



We have stocked up with enough hay to see us through the winter and up until the suppliers start harvesting. Staff are removing the last of the bales and cleaning up the shelter in the Olive paddock, just in time for the donkeys to have more space for the winter.

The donkeys' hooves are looking great as they've had two visits from the farrier, one in February and one in May. The testing of the manure samples showed relatively low worm egg count; our donkeys were all recently dewormed. The dentist will check on the donkeys soon.

The health and welfare of the donkeys is always our top priority. Feeding, grooming, caring for them and spending time with them is what the Sanctuary is all about.



Our beloved KitKat passed away during the night of 17 May. He showed signs of colic and we called in the vet. He was treated for his symptoms and looked a little more comfortable. He even ate some grass. KitKat was 17 years old and came to the Sanctuary in 2011. He was one of the five donkeys rescued from a petting farm near Paarl. KitKat was the youngest at less than a year old. The little herd temporarily occupied a "field of dreams" in Franschoek, under the care of a group of volunteers, until KitKat and Ziggy came to Eseltjesrus. It is a huge loss, as KitKat was loved by his many fans, adopters and the Sanctuary staff. His kind sweet nature will be missed but never forgotten.

The rest of the herd are doing well. The golden oldies get special feed and attention and are monitored closely, as we know their health can change suddenly. The donkeys have had lots of new visitors and adopters, all much appreciated. With so much interaction, even some of the shy donkeys are getting in on the action.



Thank you to everyone supporting EDS, giving us the means to offer our donkeys a forever home.

A visit to Cape Town

Stan and Diniel went to Cape Town to meet with Megan White at Cart Horse Protection Association (CHPA) to get an inside look at their operation and how they care for the cart horses in Cape Town. They also discussed the courses offered, which some of our staff will attend online, and explored ways for possible collaboration with this organisation. An Inspector took them into the field to get a perspective on how the business works, where the horses live and how they are treated and cared for. CHPA staff do amazing work and they continue to care for the welfare of equines often under horrendous and challenging conditions.



State of Animal Welfare Address

Stan and Diniel attended the State of Animal Welfare Address in Cape Town, hosted by Four Paws South Africa. Four Paws is a Global Animal Welfare Organisation with offices in more than 15 countries. The address, discussions and networking was led by professionals in the animal welfare field. It was an enlightening meeting with so many people who had one thing in common – "Animal Welfare".



Woolies MyDifference

The MySchool programme, in its current form, will no longer be active after June 2026. Please could existing MySchool and WRewards customers join MyDifference on the Woolworths App and select Eseltjesrus Donkey Sanctuary as their cause to keep supporting us. Here's what to do:

1. Download the Woolworths App on your phone. (use QR code below)
2. Tap My Causes.
3. Please choose Eseltjesrus Donkey Sanctuary to keep making a difference.

Although these contributions may seem small, together, they make a significant impact. Thank you for your support.



Our annual Book Fair

This was held at the Oos-Kerk in Robertson from 7 to 9 May and raised over R60,000 for our work. We are grateful for those of you who made the trip to support us and for the staff and local volunteers who made the event happen. Remember we have many more books tucked away in our Book Store at the Sanctuary, so do pop in for a visit. We also have something exciting, still in the planning stage, for later this year so watch this space for further updates.



Donkey adoptions as birthday gifts

We received this letter from a recent adopter about their family's adoption gift for Oupa: "It is that time of the year again. Oupa's birthday! Oupa loves gifts – but at 82, he already has everything a man can dream of. Our family faced their annual puzzle. Socks? Plenty. Books? All read. Gadgets? Oupa is an engineer and builds his own, so no gadgets. Chocolates? Standard issue with every birthday. Whatever we give him has to be unusual ... or at least entertaining.

After a lecture by Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary staff to the University of Pretoria's Faculty of Veterinary Science at Onderstepoort, a Veterinary student and one of Oupa's granddaughters got inspired and came up with a bright idea. So we decided to surprise him with something unexpected: we could adopt a donkey from Eseltjiesrus on Oupa's behalf. But which donkey to choose? There are so many cute ones available! Lulu won the vote easily. It was not just because of her stunning looks, we might add. Lulu is a generic nickname for all cute things in our family. Our very own and super handsome Boxer, named Lennox, was lovingly called Lulu. Lulu is also associated with a family business venture. The list goes on and on. Needless to say, we just had to add beautiful, dare we say lucky Lulu, to our list.

On Oupa's birthday we showed him a picture of Lulu on the adoption certificate. "A donkey?" Oupa asked, looking around nervously. "What am I supposed to do with a donkey? Who is going to feed her? Do I need to build a stable?" We all giggled, albeit a bit nervous ourselves, reassuring him that Lulu is happily living at Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary in McGregor. No feeding schedules, no surprise deliveries of donkeys. Oupa even studied her photo and declared: "She looks like trouble and I'm sure she steals carrots!"

Oupa loves to travel and we encouraged him to plan a visit to Lulu's home. He is, as I am writing this story, on his way to the Western Cape. Maybe, just maybe, he'll drop in for a delicious lunch and visit Eseltjiesrus. A gift he doesn't need will hopefully become a story he'll never forget – and a cute donkey named Lulu found a special place, not just in Oupa's heart, but in our family too.

Thank you Eseltjiesrus for providing the love, care and shelter to vulnerable donkeys like Lulu."



So, look no further for that next birthday present; you can choose your adopted gift donkey by using the QR code and we'll do the rest. You will receive: details of the donkey you decide to adopt; a photo; an adoption certificate; a twice-yearly report; and our quarterly newsletter.



Notice of Annual General Meeting

We warmly invite you to join our 19th AGM, which will be held by via Zoom (and email) on Wednesday 12 August 2026 at 6pm. Enjoy hearing and seeing what you have helped Eseltjiesrus to achieve this past year.

AGM Agenda

- Welcome
- Minutes of the 2025 AGM (currently available on our website)
- The Work of the Sanctuary
- Annual Financial Statements (available on our website from mid-July 2026)
- Appointment of auditors
- Election of the Board of Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary.
If you are interested in joining the Board of the Sanctuary please contact the Executive Manager admin@donkeysanctuary.co.za
- Any other business and closure

Meet some members of our team:

Chriswill Jordaan – joined the Sanctuary in June 2017 as a Donkey Care and Farm Assistant. In December 2017 he was also appointed as a Visitor Guide. He left guiding in March 2019 to work fully on donkey care and in April 2019 was appointed on a permanent basis. Chriswill has become an integral part of the EDS team. Over the years he has gained valuable experience in caring and showing the importance for the welfare of donkeys. He continues to help out with Visitor Guiding on an occasional basis when we are short staffed. He has received training in First Aid.



Randall Page – joined the Sanctuary in March 2018. He had previously worked for us on contract to fence the Olive and Otter fields. He was appointed as a Donkey Care and Farm Assistant and attained permanent appointment in October 2018. Randall brings to his work an extensive knowledge which enables him to also be involved in the maintenance work on the farm. Randall is a valuable team member, one of the hardest working and always ready to jump in and get things done. He shows care and empathy towards the donkeys. He has received training as a Fire Officer.



Tax certificates:

You should by now have received your tax certificate for your contributions to the Sanctuary in the past financial year. Any queries please contact adopt@donkeysanctuary.co.za

Bequests:

Bequests form the backbone of the long-term sustainability of the Sanctuary. Please consider leaving a lasting gift that will ease the suffering of these humble animals in years to come. A bequest may be for any portion of your estate.

Please contact us and we will send you a leaflet with guidelines about drawing up or adapting your will.

Do you knit or crochet?

We have patterns for the stuffed donkey toys that we sell in our shop.

If you can donate your time and materials, please contact us for patterns, or you may use your own.

We also welcome any donkey-themed items that can be sold in our shop.



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Visit our website to securely donate or adopt a donkey. Find out more about our donkeys and use it to contact us: www.donkeysanctuary.co.za

email: info@donkeysanctuary.co.za

phone: +27(0)23 625 1801

Facebook: www.facebook.com/eseltjiesrus-donkey-sanctuary

Instagram: www.instagram.com/eseltjiesrusdonkeysanctuary/

View David Kramer-Donkiehemel on YouTube

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Z-xA4s9RMc&list=RD9Z-xA4s9RMc&start_radio=1

EDS - A Meeting Place

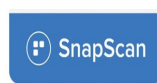
We offer a relaxed venue for Book Clubs, Rummikub groups, meetings and celebrations. We can provide refreshments to suit your group.

Please contact us at:

visitors@donkeysanctuary.co.za



We accept PayFast, Zapper & SnapScan
Along with EFT, card and cash payments.



You will hear from us again:

Our next newsletter will reach you during August 2026 and new donkey reports during September. We welcome visitors from Thursdays to Sundays, 10am to 4pm. Please let us know in advance if your group is more than 6 people. The Sanctuary is wheelchair friendly and dogs on leads are welcome. Entrance is by donation.

By EFT or Bank Deposit: Eseltjiesrus Donkey Sanctuary, Standard Bank, Savings account 288244419. Please use your name as reference and send proof of payment to adopt@donkeysanctuary.co.za.