

CHAPTER 23

The work of the Society for the Protection of Animal Rights in Egypt (SPARE)

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Introducing SPARE

Firstly I would like to introduce our organisation. We are SPARE (Society for the Protection of Animal Rights in Egypt), a non-profit non-governmental organisation dedicated to alleviate the suffering and misery of animals in Egypt. SPARE is a purely Egyptian organisation.

The organisation was founded by Mr Raouf Mishriki. Realising that his wife Amina Abaza was suffering enormously from the horrific condition of the animals in Egypt, he encouraged her to form SPARE and to open a shelter.

In March 2001 Raouf found the land and built a shelter to treat and house all the abused animals that his wife was finding and bringing home.

Raouf and Amina paid from their own pocket \$US 100,000 to build the shelter.

In Egypt there are several other animal welfare organisations, but the problem is that they do not cover all of Egypt, or even a fraction of the areas where they are needed. Some of these organisations are specialised in equine care, but due to lack of spaces and shelters they have to euthanise the animal.

The only donkey shelter in Egypt is the one run by SPARE, 19 donkeys have been rescued, and here they live in peace after a life of ill-treatment and starvation.

Donkeys in Egypt

Donkeys have been and still represent a basic means of support for many families.

The work of a donkey in Egypt ranges from - In some very poor areas on the outskirts of some villages all over Egypt. The only form of transportation, they are also used for pulling carts and carriages as means of small business that many families live on. Thus there is a picture of very widespread usage of donkeys in rural areas.

In Egypt, any organisation working for donkeys' welfare faces the problem of not having accurate and scientific data on the number of donkeys, particularly in slum areas.

In these slum areas, the donkeys are used for particular purposes, such as garbage collection, brick manufacturing, fruit and vegetable markets.

Thus the type of abuses or injuries may change considerably from one area to the other, from rural to urban, farming areas to industrial ones, etc.

Problems the veterinarians face

1. The most obvious and recurring problems are with donkeys pulling carts.

Almost all of them have unsuitable harnesses, badly designed carts, with very bad wheels that make the donkey triple his efforts while pulling the cart.

2. Working donkeys in Egypt suffer from very aggressive treatment, starvation or malnutrition, exhaustion, dehydration, illness and painful injuries (which are most of the time left until complications makes the wound difficult to treat). The locals always come to the vet when it is too late. The working donkeys in Egypt are most of the times beaten and suffer from the wounds caused by the beating.

3. The third problem is the lack of governmental veterinary clinics, this is a major problem for the poor owners who can hardly find their own medical treatment. That is why the services of the mobile clinics provides an essential need.

4. SPARE is covering some of the very poor areas on the outskirts of Giza area. We receive daily from 18 to 30 cases.

The cases are variable from day to another, but the medical team is amazed by the new types of abuses and injuries inflicted to the donkeys.

The team is also very concerned by the lack of basic information of the owners about handling their donkey.

5. One of our frequent problems as veterinarians is that many of the donkey owners never say the truth about the case of their animal, sometimes they pretend that he doesn't eat, when we give him food in SPARE he eats like a horse. This is one of the veterinarian's major problems because it makes it very difficult to diagnose the case, and the vet has to double his efforts to give the right diagnosis.

The owners never say what causes the wound, or when his donkey was wounded. They will say "only yesterday", but the vet will know immediately that the wound has been there for at least a week.

6. The donkey owners in Egypt, despite the treatment is for free, don't come for 3 days or 5 days as we ask them to do, they only come for one or two antibiotic shots and don't come to finish the treatment. Sometimes we have to give them incentives to make them finish the donkey's treatment.

7. The last and more complicated problem is that the mobile clinic, the free treatment of donkeys and horses (their medicine cost us thousands of dollars), also the SPARE'S donkey sanctuary are a huge financial burden the food for the donkeys of the sanctuary are also very expensive.

SPARE is working in an environment where animal welfare concepts are not highly recognised. Most people in Egypt don't give donations to animal welfare organisations.

The mobile clinic is offering free veterinary care and give advices to all the donkey owners. Our mobile clinic goes twice a week to the poorest area of Guizeh and every time treats from 30 to 40 cases of very abused donkeys who work for at least 10 hours, with no food and not enough water. Egyptian peasants think it is wrong to give water to donkeys during their work.

SPARE also gives financial compensation to the families who rely on their animals for a living. When we keep the donkey in our facility, we give the donkey owner some money to live with, during the absence of the donkey, since it is their only means of living

8. SPARE has treated 4,014 equids during the past year.

Our mobile clinic has been donated by two wonderful American ladies, Mrs Margarete Gebhart and Mrs Jeanne Hart. We thank them for their generosity.

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