

Making a difference in Egypt

Egypt Equine Aid (EEA) is a registered charity in Cairo, which was set up by Jill Barton and her husband Warren.

In 2013, they were about to embark on semi-retirement in their native Australia, but had decided to take a trip to Egypt, in part to help as volunteers for an existing equine charity.

Jill was struck by the plight of the thousands of working equines and the condition they were in and felt compelled to do more.

Many she recognised as clear descendants of the Australian Waler horses, first brought to Egypt during the First World War. Seeing the terrible state of so many of these animals, she decided to do something to help.

Six months later, EEA was founded. Stables and a villa were sourced in a rural area near Abu Sier and Jill moved there full time. Stables were prepared for abandoned equines and for in-patients of the future equine hospital, and a full-time vet and groom were employed.

Damaged through work

"Since we opened, there has been a flood of patients brought in for free veterinary care, and where possible rest and rehabilitation," says Jill. "Each day is different, with every horse having his own tragic story. Many arrive behind or in a horse drawn cart, or in the back of an open truck – with no luxury of a ramp to load them. Others, barely able to move, are limped along in-hand by their owners.

"Some of the horses have been in traffic accidents, others are diseased or have been



After being brought back to health, these equines are used as therapy horses

made ill by inappropriate first aid that uses filthy tools and rags, and infected needles. Most are seriously malnourished, and many have very poor hooves.

"Sadly, quite a majority are little more than foals, who have been damaged through working so hard at such a young age.

"The hospital has become like a little piece of heaven on earth for many of its patients, who often haven't even had a comfortable place to lie down and rest, in their whole life."

Therapy horses

Jill says the aim is to treat and house as many patients as possible, before their owners take

them away and back to work. The charity also runs clinics and demonstrations educating locals on farriery and dentistry.

"We hand out headcollars, saddlepads and fleece noseband covers to horse owners, along with humane bits to replace rusty, barbaric ones," reveals Jill.

"We travel to areas of the city where the suffering is greatest, for example near the pyramids, where horses are used by a massively declined tourist industry.

Another organisation has been born out of EEA's work. Set up in Cairo by Joanna Gray, four rescued EEA horses and one rescued donkey have become 'Team Equus' and have



Fleece noseband covers make life a little more comfortable



The charity needs donations of first aid products to treat wounds



Jill Barton set up charity EEA after witnessing horses suffering in Egypt

The plight of the working donkey

There are an estimated 43 million working donkeys in the world. They are often chosen over horses because of their greater power to weight ratio – a donkey can pull significantly more than a horse of the same size. Quite often, they are expected to carry at least double their own bodyweight.

The donkeys' working days are long and there is rarely a quiet place for them to rest and retreat in the shade.

Because they are overloaded, donkeys can easily fall down and injure themselves.

Broken legs and harness sores are typical of working donkeys, they are susceptible to disease and are often dehydrated owing to receiving inadequate levels of water. The donkeys also have meagre food rations and little or no shelter.

Hoof and dental problems are also common, due to a lack of veterinary care. Some owners remove the tips of donkeys' ears and slice their nostrils, as they believe it aids airflow and makes the donkey more productive.

WVS (Worldwide Veterinary Service) is one of the charities striving to provide veterinary care to donkeys and other working animals in the poorest communities worldwide.

The charity runs 'Working Donkey Health and Welfare' workshops in India, in order to improve the lives and wellbeing of the donkeys.

The workshops involve training and educating a local community's donkey owners, so they take better care of their



The WVS provides routine veterinary care to donkeys

animals, as well as providing essential veterinary care when it's needed.

"The working donkey camps are an ideal opportunity to train, develop and inspire a new generation of Indian vet students and new graduates, while supporting ongoing veterinary campaigns," says the WVS's Emma Harrison.

"We have also done work in India to try to reduce the number of accidents involving donkeys on rural roads.

"Having witnessed first hand the horrific circumstances of donkeys being hit by vehicles at night, the team wanted to come up with a solution that would help both the donkeys and motorists.

"The solution was fluorescent collars, which donkeys wear to make them more visible to drivers."

● Visit: www.wvs.org.uk

moved to a purpose built centre next to Behman Hospital.

They have become the first resident equine therapists in the Middle East, and are used to help human patients in their recovery from trauma, depression or addictions, under the watchful eye of specially trained Joanna.

How you can help

EEA is appealing for donations, both financial and of equipment, to help more equines.

They would welcome gifts of poultices, bandages, wound dressings, headcollars, tack, small bits, (4in-5in), farriery tools, summer sheets and fly rugs (size 5ft), saddlepads, fly masks, noseband covers, Hibiscrub and Manuka honey.

● Visit: www.egyptequineaid.org or follow the EEA on Facebook and Twitter



The charity has helped reduce the number of road traffic accidents involving donkeys