

THE PROBLEM

- Global donkey population is ~ 43.5 million. The donkey population in China alone has decreased from ~11 million a few years ago to ~5.4 million in 2016 (FAOSTAT, 2016). Heavy marketing for ejiao, a traditional Chinese medicine made using donkey skins, is contributing to increased demand for donkey skin outside China and increased global trade and poaching of donkeys to fill the need.
- Donkeys are poorly suited to intensive breeding practices due to long gestation periods, low fecundity, low success rates of artificial insemination and high propensity to abortion and mortality caused by stress. Although the ejiao industry in China is investing heavily in breeding donkeys, this is not currently meeting the demand.
- National demand for ejiao in China would require ~ 2.5 to 4.5 million donkey skins/year, yet they are only able to get 1 million/year thus, threat of unsustainable utilization and skyrocketing prices for donkeys is high as demand has outstripped supply.



WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

- Loss of donkeys due to poaching and poor sale pricing leads to compromised livelihoods, water access, agricultural power, etc. (i.e. Sustainable Development Goals) since they underpin survival of many dependent communities especially in Latin America, Africa and Asia.
- Rampant trade in legal and illegal donkey skin fuels the threat of disease spread and compromised animal welfare due to inappropriate sourcing, handling, transportation and slaughter.
- The illegal killing of donkeys for their skins is contributing to grave environmental pollution from abandoned carcasses and this is compounded by inappropriate waste disposal at the legal slaughter houses as only the skin is of value to the traders.
- Rising demand risks outstripping supply. Districts in West Africa are reporting localized 'extinctions'.



HOW CAN THIS PROBLEM BE ADDRESSED?

- Trade in donkey skins should be halted until the impact of the trade can be assessed and shown to be both humane for donkeys and sustainable for the communities that depend on them.
- Governments and local authorities should support affected communities, by preventing the decimation of donkeys through protection from legal and illegal trade.
- Consumers of ejiao should be made informed about the source and impact of the product.
- Alternatives should be promoted that do not have negative effects on animal welfare, human development or public health. Examples include herbal alternatives and donkey skin/collagen grown *in vitro*.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Support campaigns geared towards halting the immediate impacts of the trade in donkey skins.
- Create awareness of the impact of ejiao and of the better alternatives.
- Support welfare organizations and local authorities who are working to keep donkeys safe.



Resources

FAOSTAT, 2016. World equid aggregate live population estimates for 2016. Available at <http://faostat.fao.org/beta/en/#data/QA> [Accessed 14 December 2017]

Mulugeta, G., 2017. Global donkey skin and meat trade as a major risk for human and animal health. Available from The Donkey Sanctuary.

The Donkey Sanctuary, 2017. Under the skin report. Available at <https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/under-the-skin/full-report> [Accessed 21 December 2017]