

# Pack 104, Item 7

Type: Script

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**Good donkey care reaps multiple benefits**

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**Notes to broadcaster**

Donkeys have long served farmers as unnoticed helpers, but have been neglected and mistreated in Kenya and elsewhere. But some Kenyan farmers have recently discovered the value of taking care of donkeys.

Donkeys are hardy animals and have many uses, including carrying heavy loads over long distances and carrying children. In some parts of the world, donkeys are kept as pets. An average donkey weighing approximately 120 kilos can carry up to 50 kilos on its back and can pull up to twice its bodyweight on level ground.

This script shows how small-scale farmers in rural areas can spend less to get their products to the market using donkeys, plus get farm manure, and perhaps make money from selling donkeys.

This script is based on actual interviews. You could use this script as inspiration to research and write a script on a similar topic in your area. Or you might choose to produce this script on your station, using voice actors to represent the speakers. If so, please make sure to tell your audience at the beginning of the program that the voices are those of actors, not the original people involved in the interviews.

You could also use this script as research material or as inspiration for creating your own programming on the benefits of owning donkeys and how to care for donkeys.

Talk to donkey owners, veterinarians, and other experts. You might ask them:

* What is the history of using donkeys on the farm in this area?
* What is the general attitude towards donkeys working on the farm? Has that attitude changed in recent years?
* How do farmers care for their donkeys in this area?
* Do donkeys have any special advantages over other animals in this area?

Apart from speaking directly to donkey owners and other experts, you could use these questions as the basis for a phone-in or text-in program.

Estimated running time: 15minutes, with intro and outro music.

Sig tune up then under

**Host:** Hello and welcome to another edition of *Farmer to farmer*. Did you know that, if you are a small-scale farmer living far from the market in an area where there are no proper roads, a donkey can save you money and time? If you want to find out more about the value of donkeys, stay tuned.

Sig tune up and out under

**Host:** For a long time, donkeys were neglected and abused animals. They were not well-fed, and they were kept in very poor conditions, but expected to carry heavy loads all day.

Some farmers in Kenya have recently discovered that, if well cared for, donkeys can be used in many ways on the farm. I visited a few of these farmers in Naivasha, a town northwest of Nairobi, Kenya’s capital.

**SFX:** Sound of a donkey braying

**Host:** We are at Mary Wanjiru’s compound. Mary is a small-scale farmer who is well into her 70s and has been keeping donkeys for the last 30 years. What kind of farmer are you, Mary?

**Mary Wanjiru:** I have cows; I also grow potatoes, beans, and maize.

**Host:** Let’s talk about your donkeys. How many do you have?

**Mary Wanjiru:** I have four donkeys. They are my favourite animals (laughing).

**Host:** Why do you say that?

**Mary Wanjiru:** These donkeys have helped me, especially now in my old age. When I was younger, it was men who owned and used animals like donkeys. Women were only allowed to milk the cows. We were not allowed to go to the animal market to trade. In our culture, women carried loads on their backs and cultivated the farm using their hands. That was a mark of a hard-working woman. It is just recently that women were allowed to own and use donkeys.

I cannot carry heavy loads on my back anymore; my back is bad from carrying heavy loads in my younger days. So today, the donkeys carry my produce from the farm to the market. They also carry water from the river to the compound. Even when it rains very heavily and no car or ambulance can access the road to my house, it is the donkey that carries me to the hospital.

**Host:** It seems like the donkeys give you very good service. How do keep them strong and healthy?

**Mary Wanjiru:** I have learnt a lot since I started keeping donkeys. Some twenty years ago, we did not feed the donkeys well. I used to tie them out of my compound and only remember them when I wanted to carry very heavy loads. We believed that donkeys should not mix with other animals. I did not care for them much until about ten years ago when I learnt that, when donkeys are treated well, they will serve you well.

**Host:** Where did you learn that?

**Mary Wanjiru:** From **Kenya Network for Dissemination of Agricultural Technologies, or** KENDAT. KENDAT is an NGO that helps small-scale farmers improve their livelihoods through access to information, technology, and markets. KENDAT is supported by an organization called the Brooke East Africa.

KENDAT told us that we need to treat the donkeys the same way we treat our cows: to feed them well, keep them in a nice dry area, make sure that they are disease-free, and not abuse them by beating them. When I learnt that and practiced what they taught us, I saw a change in my donkeys and in the service they give me.

**Host:** Explain some of the changes you have seen.

**Mary Wanjiru:** The donkey is very obedient and ready to work. I have made a lot of money over the years selling foals, or young donkeys. My donkeys also act as a guard to my goats and sheep. Since donkeys do not like intruders in their space, they will voice a warning to the other animals which alerts them to danger—and they will kick the intruder. I have also noticed that the donkey warns me when there is a stranger in the compound.

**Host:** How has the donkey helped in your farming?

**Mary Wanjiru:** Our market is very far. As you have seen, we are far from the nearest town and the road is really bad. Some years ago, we couldn’t get to the market with all the products we wanted to sell, and sometimes the products would be rotten by the time we got there. Now, I just put all my products on the cart and have the donkey pull it. I am able to get to the market on time, sell my produce, and come back home in good time.

When my children were younger, the donkeys helped me take them through school. The income from donkeys helped me pay for school fees and other school expenses. I have fed and brought up my children because the donkey helped me get products from the farm to the market. And now that I am old, it is still the donkey that helps me around the compound.

**Host:** How about your children; do they appreciate the donkey?

**Mary Wanjiru:** Yes, they do. This is one of my sons, Dancun Kihongi. He is the chair of the donkey owners group in this village. He has been taught by Kendat how to treat donkeys with minor illnesses. The other children all own donkeys, too. This one is a grownup, so he can speak for himself (laughing)!

**Host:** Thank you very much, Mary Wanjiru, I will talk with your son Dancun now. Dancun, tell me why you started the donkey group in your village.

**DANCUN KIHONGI:** We realized that many of us owned donkeys, but that we did not know much about taking care of them, especially when they were sick. So we decided to start this group and have the Kendat officers show us how to take care of our animals. KENDAT encourages farmers to be in groups so they can receive training and other benefits.

**Host:** How many donkeys do you have?

**DANCUN KIHONGI:** I have six now and I have keeping donkeys for seven years.

**Host:** And how do the donkeys help you?

**DANCUN KIHONGI:** They help in cultivating the farm by pulling the plough. I like the donkey because it is stronger than a cow and will work for longer hours. I also use them to carry water and feed for my cows, and carry produce to the market. From the money I have made in the market, I am able to buy feed for my cows. This helps me to pay school fees and buy food for my family.

**Host:** How do you take care of your donkey so that it serves you this well?

**DANCUN KIHONGI:** I feed it well, give it plenty of water, and I have made a shelter so that it rests well. Because of that, my donkeys are rarely sick.

As you can see over there by the shed, three of my donkeys are now expecting. When they give birth, I will sell the foals, and one foal sells for about 60 dollars. A grown donkey sells for 100 dollars. That money will help me buy necessities for my house and expand my farming business.

**Host:** Tell me more about the donkey keepers group; how many are you?

**DANCUN KIHONGI:** We are 30 people in the group and we meet once or twice a month.

**Host:** What benefits do you receive as a group?

**DANCUN KIHONGI:** We can request training from Kendat and they bring us donkey specialists. They also give us medicine for the donkeys. The group is a forum to share the challenges we face in taking care of the donkeys. And if someone wants to sell a donkey, this is where it is shared, and we find a buyer among us.

The group has really helped owners in the village to take care of their donkeys and ensure that others also take care of donkeys. It helps now that women are able to own, care for, and use donkeys. Women are very active in the groups. And since they are the ones who work around the home, this has helped to change the way donkeys are treated. The women also teach their children how to care for the donkeys.

I have also benefited a lot personally from the trainings from KENDAT; I now know how to trim hooves and take care of small health problems in donkeys.

**Host:** Also with me is Kibet George, a veterinary officer with Kendat. After a short break, he will tell us how to care for a donkey, but first let’s have some music.

Music for one minute

**Host:** You are listening to *Farmer to farmer*, and today we are learning about the value of donkeys for farmers, and how to care for donkeys.

I visited a village in Naivasha, Kenya and met two donkey owners, Mary and Dancun. They shared the benefits of taking care of a donkey. We will now hear from the donkey doctor, Kibet George, whose work mainly involves offering treatment to donkeys, and training donkey owners as well as local animal health service providers in the area.

**Host:** You work with the donkey owners in Naivasha. How useful is the donkey to them?

**KIBET GEORGE:** They mainly use it as a means of cheap transport from the farm to the market. In some cases, donkeys also provide security by informing homeowners when there is an intruder in the compound by braying—much like a dog does.

As a draft animal or to pull a plough, donkeys seem to be stronger than a horse or a cow of the same size. Donkeys also eat much less than a horse or cow of the same weight, and do well on much rougher grazing and poorer quality forage. So they are also ideal in dry areas. During famines in the vast dry areas in Africa, donkeys are also used to carry relief food to remote, otherwise inaccessible locations. Donkeys also provide manure and are a companion to other animals. They seem to have a calming effect, especially on horses, though horses are not common on Kenyan farms.

**Host:** How have you seen the lives of the farmers change from using donkeys?

**KIBET GEORGE:** Farmers have scaled up their farming. They are now able to cultivate a larger piece of land in a short time. Using donkeys for transport has really helped farmers. Some farmers have tried using pickups to transport their produce, but it was too expensive and they went back to donkeys.

**Host:** What advice do you give farmers to ensure they are taking good care of their donkeys?

**KIBET GEORGE:** First is feeding. Donkeys need adequate and balanced feed in a clean environment, and plenty of water. They mostly feed on grasses and occasionally concentrates like dairy meal, especially if the donkey is working. Salt is also important.

Donkeys also need to be de-wormed. They need comfortable housing away from too much sun or rain with soft straw bedding because donkeys like rolling on the floor. It is also important to vaccinate the donkey against rabies, tetanus, and anthrax.

**Host:** How about the loads they carry?

**KIBET GEORGE:** A donkey should not be overloaded. A donkey should be able to walk well with its load. If it is walking with its legs apart, the load is probably too heavy for it. As long as the load is correctly placed on the back of the animal and a proper loading system is used, a donkey can easily carry between a quarter and 40 per cent of its own weight. So a donkey of around 190 kilos can normally carry between 50 and 75 kilos. If pulling a cart, it should be a maximum of twice its body weight.

**Host:** We have seen owners whipping donkeys. Is that recommended?

**KIBET GEORGE:** No, whipping is strongly discouraged because it causes injuries and wounds which can lead to diseases like tetanus. Instead of whipping, train the donkeys with verbal commands. If you are consistent with your commands, the donkey will eventually learn and obey the commands.

**Host:** What changes have you seen in the way owners are now treating their donkeys?

**KIBET GEORGE:** Nowadays, they call us immediately when they see that a donkey is sick. Some years back, they would wait for us to come—and if we did not come, they would let the animal work until it died. Sometimes now, they even ask us to come and euthanize or humanely put down the animal if it is too weak to live.

Donkey owners are now treating donkeys the way they would treat a cow—by giving them proper food and water and even letting them stay together with the other animals in the same housing.

**Host:** That was Kibet George, a veterinary officer who treats donkeys in Kenya. In our program today, we have been learning about caring for donkeys, and about the benefits of donkeys for small-scale farmers.

Earlier, we heard from two farmers who are also donkey owners on how useful donkeys are if well cared for. We have learnt that, besides providing a cheap means of transport from the farm to the market, donkeys also provide manure and can be used as guards for goats and sheep.

However, to get the most out of a donkey, a farmer has to take very good care of it by providing adequate food and water, comfortable housing, and vaccination against rabies, tetanus, and anthrax. If well taken care of, a donkey will serve on the farm for 30 years.

## Acknowledgements

Contributed by: Ms. Winnie Onyimbo, Trans World Radio, Kenya

Reviewed by: Fatuma Matemu, Communications and Fundraising Officer, The Brooke East Africa.

**Sources of information**

Interviews with:

Mary Wanjiru and Dancun Kihongi, donkey owners and farmers in Naivasha, Kenya

Kibet George, veterinary officer at Kendat

Interviews conducted on February 4, 2016

Further information at:

Brooke Action for Working Horses and Donkeys website: [www.thebrooke.org](http://www.thebrooke.org)

Kenya Network for Dissemination of Agricultural Technologies (KENDAT) website: <http://www.kendat.org>

Low-Down Donkey Outfit Miniature Donkeys, undated. *Donkey care and information.* <http://www.lowdowndonkey.com/Donkey%20Care.htm>

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