



Newsletter January 2024

First of all, the sanctuary's board members, all volunteers and the donkeys wish you a Happy New Year.

We hope this coming year will see family expansion for our donkeys and lots of fun together.



New growth

Twenty-seven years ago, when we started our sanctuary with a small group of people, we did not have a clue which issues we would encounter. Our goal was to create a safe haven for the donkeys and save them from extinction. Our first goal was reached: more than 130 donkeys are now staying at the sanctuary in their natural habitat. They are getting fed and watered and are getting lots of cuddles and attention from the volunteers and the many visitors, who annually come to see them in their thousands.

But after a few years, several problems started cropping up, one of them, understandably, the problem of inbreeding. Every island has the same issues with this and the results are terrible. It hurts to see baby donkeys that don't have any cartilage inside their joints; we have had to put them to sleep. Other inbreeding symptoms are severe overbites or underbites. To prevent all the suffering resulting from inbreeding, we decided to castrate all Aruban donkey stallions. Even nowadays, when new stallions are caught, they are only allowed in the herd when they have been operated. This has been a good solution for the problem, but what about the immediate future? Are we actively making the Aruban donkey extinct this way?



We have thought and talked about this during many meetings for many years. There are still roaming donkeys on the island and the effects of the groups' inbreeding are clear to see. As board members, we knew that, whichever decision we would take, there would be pros and cons. But in the end it was unanimously decided that there have always been donkeys on the island and that they should continue to exist. Dr. Ricardo Contreras, who has been our veterinarian for 25 years, agreed.



So it was time for action: together with the donkey sanctuary Bonaire we looked for a solution. They offered us 'new blood' in the shape of four stallions. Six months ago they sailed to Aruba, which was a stressful enterprise. As the Bonaire sanctuary only shelters females, the four stallions had to be caught, then taken to the local shelter, where they got different feed. After that they were put in crates, taken to the harbor on a truck and finally they arrived at our shelter, where lots of our donkeys were curiously watching the newcomers.



Maybe we have underestimated the stress for these stallions, even though we had prepared every single detail meticulously. But who in the world has experience in shipping donkeys?

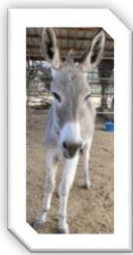


Unfortunately one of the newcomers, Rincon, died within a month. It was very sad, but probably the stress had been too much for him. The others, Zumba, Pluto and Curry were weakened as well, but



after a period of time spent acclitizing, they are now doing well. Zumba and Pluto have been put in separate areas with their own harems. Zumba has Governess, Diva,

Gypsy and Lady Taco to play with, while Pluto has Xena, Woods, Coco, Chula and 7UP. They have been on Aruba for a few months now and we have added a few castrated stallions as well. Be honest, who would not like this: plenty of room, great food and lots of attention. When they have been with us for some six months more, we shall look at the results. Echos will be made to see whether the ladies are pregnant. Exciting!



Curry will have to wait a while, but for him a nice playground has been built. Currently he is still with the elderly donkeys. He is the youngest of the three newcomers, around 2 to 2.5 years old. We have named them ourselves and their offspring's names will show their parentage. Zumba's offspring will be named after a dance, Pluto after a star or planet. Curry's offspring will get the names of spices.

A sad fairytale

At first our donkey Pearl was put together with newcomer Zumba, but Pearl had a surprise baby in her belly. We had not been sure whether she was pregnant when she came to us in September 2022. She was quite sturdy and heavy, but as her weight stayed the same and she did not grow fatter, we thought that it was false alarm. But to our surprise, the neighbors called on October 5 to tell us that there was a baby donkey beneath a tree.



We were so surprised and happy! We called the baby Mr. Pancake.

Unfortunately, the mother could not produce enough milk, so we tried to step in. It was a tough effort, as you can see from the troubled face from vet Contreras. At that time, mother Pearl gave no more milk and she kicked her baby away all the time. Mr. Pancake has stayed alive just two weeks – those were really sad days.





Necessary maintenance



Once a year there is a great party at the sanctuary: we deworm all the donkeys and they get a tetanus booster. We have figured out a trick to do this: we close the gate at the parking lot on the outside and open the gate on the inside. Are you still with us? Well, normally most donkeys come inside, except for the last 10 or 15. They are a bit obstinate or just scared of an injection. We treat about ten donkeys at a time. The circus starts at 4 pm and lasts until dark. This year our success rate was not stunning, and we were not able to treat every donkey in one go. Even worse: we still need to tackle two fields. Donkeys – volunteers: 1 – 0.

Houdini

Early in December we received a call about a donkey who was lying in a garden and who could not get up anymore. We tried to find the address, but that is not really simple on Aruba. You can seldom find street names and the house numbers are often without any logic to them. We could not find the donkey. A few days later, we received another call about a donkey, this time one who was lying in the street. We were lucky that we got a digital location, so we could find him easily. We recognized the donkey at once: it was Houdini! He is a familiar face, already 10 years a fugitive, still with his swollen heel. Houdini has not really lived up to his name. He is now recuperating in a stable which is escape-proof. Not only his heel is a problem, he also suffers from a blood disorder. When he is okay again, he will be castrated and then he may join the herd.



Great pictures



A great picture with a little story. When it is time to go home in the evenings, our cat Shrimp is always pretending to be a tiger in a tree.



Sunchi can often be found next to the board LMAO, which means 'Laugh My Ass Off'. As if we were getting a message...

Or a donkey is walking around with a yellow mop bucket around its neck. We found him and could relieve him of the bucket in an hour. It appeared that the bucket had changed color in the meantime!



Goodbye

But also a sad message in this newsletter: our elderly donkeys Bunny, Sgt Pepper and Maartje have died. We have tried to keep them alive for a long time, but against tumors, badly functioning kidneys and age-related complaints nothing can be done. They have had a humane end of their lives and we shall miss them....

Would you like to help us with a donation?

That is very easily done via the donation button on our website: www.arubandonkey.org

Or by bank:

Aruba: Aruba Bank 40.03.025 Swift code: ARUBAWAX
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IBAN NL50INGB0665468202 (Stichting Red Onze Ezel Aruba)

Hopi Danki!!