

DONKEY SANCTUARY BONAIRE **NEWSLETTER**

June 2025



The first half of the year has come to an end and it has brought many positive things for the donkeys. I'm happy to say this is thanks to your unwavering support!

Dear all, please keep supporting us in any way you can – the donkeys truly deserve it!

The Bonairean government is still falling short, and we continue to care for the donkeys day and night with love and dedication.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts. We move forward into the second half of 2025 with hope and determination.

My special thanks and a donkey hug



*Liefs,
Marina & Ed*

If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!
Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire · donkeysanctuary.com · info@donkeysanctuary.com · +599 95 607 607

BABY NEWS

Yaffa and Milan

Last year, Yaffa and her daughter Sas arrived at our sanctuary. As is often the case, our sweet Yaffa turned out to be pregnant again. She kept us waiting for a while, but on December 12, 2024, she finally gave birth to a beautiful — and big — little boy. We've named him Milan!



Yaffa & baby Milan



Yaffa & Milan now



Feya & Elsom

Feya and Elsom

You may have read in the June 2024 newsletter that mother Sava, along with her daughter Elif and big sister Feya, were taken in at the sanctuary. These three beautiful ladies are doing incredibly well — but it turned out that Feya was pregnant too! On December 26, 2024, she gave birth to a little boy, and we named him Elsom.

BABY NEWS

Leidy and Kona

In the last newsletter from December 2024, we shared the story of Leidy, who had been bitten by a dog on the street and was left with a nasty wound. Thanks to the excellent care from our volunteers and interns, the wound has healed beautifully. That newsletter also included the story of Kona, whose leg got caught in a goat trap set by poachers in the wild — her foal, Eros, stayed by her side the whole time. We brought both of them to the sanctuary.

And now it turns out that both Leidy and Kona are pregnant! For Leidy, this will be her first foal — and also her last, as she will stay with us permanently. Kona, on the other hand, is already an experienced mother. We're eagerly awaiting the births, so be sure to keep an eye on our Facebook page to see when the new babies arrive!



Castration

We would like to clearly state once again that all stallions at our sanctuary are castrated — because we do not breed, as that does not help the situation in any way. Of course, we're always happy when a healthy, adorable foal is born, but this only happens when a pregnant mare arrives from the street, or when a mare and her foal are brought in together because one or both need care.

We never separate a mother from her foal.

NEW DONKEYS

Kemba

On January 7, 2025, we received a call from a very concerned lady who had spotted a donkey mother lying in the Washikemba area, with a tiny foal standing next to her. We responded immediately, and what we found was heartbreaking. The mother donkey had terrible bite wounds from dogs and was completely covered in maggots from head to tail — she was literally being eaten alive. Her foal had wandered a bit further away, but was still nearby.

Margot and the woman who called went to look for the foal and found her quickly. Suuz and Marina stayed with the mother donkey. Marina tried to call the vet, but the poor reception made it difficult. Suuz sat with the mother donkey, talking to her and assuring her that we would take good care of her baby. Suuz already sensed that the mother was dying. Just after we had picked up the foal, the mother donkey took her final breath — as if she knew her little one was now in safe hands.

We brought the foal with us in the pickup truck and gave her a bottle as soon as we arrived at the sanctuary — she was so incredibly thirsty. Just two days old, and she had already gone through so much. The next day, we gave her the name Kemba. At first, Kemba was fed every two hours to help her regain her strength.

She drank her bottle well, but after a few days, Kemba suddenly became ill. Off to the vet we went — and it turned out she had joint infections due to a lack of her mother's first milk. She had a fever, was lethargic, and her joints were swollen and filled with pus. That meant she spent the weekend at Suuz's home for round-the-clock care. Thankfully, by Monday she returned as a different foal. Sadly, the infection kept coming back, and we had to monitor her closely.

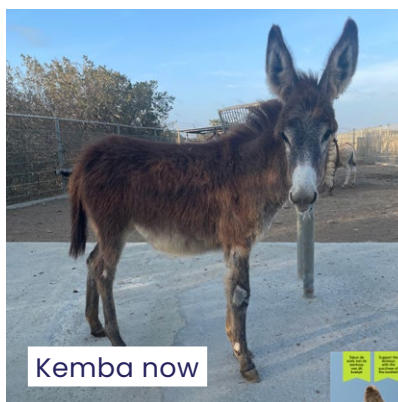
But with lots of love and attention, Kemba fully recovered. She now lives in the mother pasture with her friends — a happy, sometimes cheeky, but incredibly sweet foal! She still gets milk every three hours, now from a little bowl, so that she too can grow into a big, healthy donkey.



Picking up Kemba



A bottle
for Kemba



Kemba now



*Kemba is getting
her very own book!*

More information later

NEW DONKEYS

Mamaloe and Milou

On March 21, 2025, we received a report about a mother donkey with an injured leg and a tiny foal, spotted near the entrance of Washington Park. We went to the location immediately.

We were able to bring both mother and foal to the sanctuary, where the vet examined and treated the mother. It turns out she has a crooked back leg due to a collision, but despite this, she manages quite well and is perfectly capable of caring for her foal.

The mother has been named Mamaloe, and her daughter is now called Milou.



Mamaloe & Milou

Fayley + (new girl)

We regularly receive reports about young donkeys, usually between 6 and 10 months old, that are found alone. At this age, they are able to find food for themselves but are not equipped to handle the many dangers of life on the streets — including traffic, people, and stallions.

On May 4, we got a report about a young female donkey who couldn't stand properly. And indeed, that was the case. She had likely been hit by a car and suffered a bruised leg. Because she couldn't keep up with the herd, she had been left behind. Fortunately, a concerned man called us after noticing that the young donkey had been standing alone in the same spot all day.

Fayley, as we've now named her, is about 10 months old and is safe with us at the sanctuary. We're caring for her leg daily and slowly seeing her recover.

Then, on May 12, we got another report — this time about a donkey stuck in the mud at Goto Lake. Genaro, Cliff, and Natasja drove to Rincon and returned with a completely distressed little donkey. We are giving her intensive care and hope she will recover fully. She doesn't have a name yet, as we're still being a little cautious.



Fayley



Girl from Goto

NEW PRODUCTS IN OUR SHOP

Books



Kemba escapes

Sylvia Peters visited the donkey sanctuary and thought I want to do something for the donkeys here. She wrote a very fun children's book starring Kemba as the main character — an exciting story with fun games included as well! The book is bilingual, making it perfect for all our visitors. Starting mid-June, it will be available in our shop and exclusively sold by us.



Frenkie van eiland naar weiland

We're also selling the donated dutch children's book "Frenkie van eiland naar weiland" by Monique Westenberg — a lovely gift for kids!

Dreamcatchers



For the past few months, we've regularly had handmade dreamcatchers for sale, created by Joyce Bos using our very own flamingo feathers.

Our flamingos regularly shed feathers, which we collect and send to Joyce. She cleans and grooms them beautifully, incorporates them into the dreamcatchers, and donates them back to the sanctuary to be sold in our shop.

If you'd like a unique dreamcatcher made with real flamingo feathers, be sure to stop by our shop soon — because once they're gone, they're gone!

NEW PRODUCTS IN OUR SHOP

Hand-Drawn Donkeys

Ilonka and Ralph visited the sanctuary in November 2024. A few days later, they returned with a beautiful drawing made by Ilonka of one of our donkeys, which they donated to us. Suuz regularly provides new photos of the donkeys, and Ilonka turns them into stunning pencil drawings – even adding the name of the donkey featured in the artwork.

Since then, Ilonka has often sent new, beautiful drawings with people traveling from the Netherlands on holiday. She donates these artworks entirely, helping to raise money for the donkeys! The collection of pencil-drawn donkeys is always changing and truly unique. Be sure to stop by if you'd like a beautiful piece of art featuring one of our donkeys.



Handmade art

We're still selling our unique hand-painted wooden pieces featuring the phrase "Donkey Crossing," as well as playful artworks of donkey behinds and other fun texts.

The wood comes from pallets used to transport our animal feed. After being cut and sanded, the pieces are passed on to our talented artist Lydia. Lydia has been painting for us for quite some time and always transforms each piece into a beautiful little work of art – whether it's with witty sayings, lovely flowers, or charming animals.



NEW PRODUCTS IN OUR SHOP



T-shirts

The Masha Donkey T-Shirts are finally available in adult sizes — and in various colors too!

We also have t-shirts with the phrase “*Life is better with donkeys*” — a message that really needs no explanation, because let’s be honest, life truly is better with donkeys!

Did you know that Marina folds and packages each of these t-shirts herself, carefully placing them in plastic bags so they look neat and tidy on the shop shelves?

Handmade Bags

Twice a year, Denise travels from the United States to Bonaire, always bringing a suitcase full of handmade bags and other beautiful items to donate to the sanctuary. Each bag is handcrafted and unique — no print or color is the same, which is exactly what makes them so special! They come in cheerful colors and eye-catching prints, often featuring a happy donkey — so there’s something for everyone! At the moment, the bags are sold out, but Denise will be back in August with another suitcase full of goodies!



Beach Towels

These beautiful limited edition beach towels, sponsored by Rosa Underwear, are now available in our shop! Each towel comes in a convenient storage pouch and is compact and lightweight — perfect for taking along in your suitcase.

Thanks to everyone who creates and donates these items. Because of your generosity, we often have fun and unique products to sell — helping us raise money for the donkeys.

CHANGES IN THE CARE PASTURE

New Paving

In the previous newsletter, we mentioned one of our wishes: a new paving floor in the care pasture. This would ensure that our donkeys in need have dry feet once the rainy season begins. The cost to make this happen was over €40,000!

On March 26, 2025, the team from Artes Piedras BV finally began the excavation work, and the big project could get underway. The donkeys in the care pasture had to stay behind temporary fencing — otherwise, the workers wouldn't be able to do their job with all those curious donkeys wandering around. After more than three weeks, the new paving was complete, and the donkeys were allowed to explore their upgraded space. Since we were already making improvements, we also gave the stables a fresh coat of paint — paint never lasts long here on Bonaire with all the salt and sun!



A special
thank you to
everyone who
donated to help
make this new
floor a reality!

Palapa Floor Makeover

Last year, the roof of our palapa was replaced, but now it was time to give the floor a makeover. John and Dominique from Thijssens Stukadoorsbedrijf restored the floor beautifully, so we can once again welcome schoolchildren and visitors under the palapa.





Make the donkeys happy with a bale of hay

Maybe you remember — sitting in the back of the pickup truck with a bale of hay, handing it out and making lots of donkeys happy. Sadly, this stopped six years ago due to the situation in Venezuela. But now, we finally have hay bales again — this time from the Netherlands — and you can once again make the donkeys happy by sitting in the back of the pickup with a bale of hay. The donkeys will love it, and feeding them this way is a real joy for you too!

STOP feeding donkeys on the street



Taxis and Tour Guides

We are increasingly seeing and hearing that donkeys are being fed on the streets, mainly by taxi drivers and tour guides trying to show them to tourists. What tourists often don't realize is that this behavior is one of the main reasons donkeys get hit by cars — they start approaching roads and vehicles, leading to dangerous situations and accidents.

Tourists

We also often hear from tourists that they bring food in their cars specifically to feed donkeys along the way. This is usually out of good intentions and a lack of awareness, which is why we want to emphasize once again: the donkeys are perfectly capable of finding food and water on their own. When fed too often, they become dependent and even lazy about foraging — which puts them at risk. If a donkey does run into trouble or for some reason can no longer care for itself, it will be brought to our sanctuary.

COLLISIONS

Sadly, traffic collisions have already claimed the lives of 15 donkeys on the streets this year.

Carnival weekend — a time that should be a joyful celebration for everyone — was anything but that for the donkeys. No less than 5 donkeys were hit by cars during that weekend alone.

One donkey even had the misfortune of being struck by a police car, which, for reasons unknown, was speeding down the road.

When will things finally change?

When will donkeys no longer have to fear for their lives just for being on the street?





Royal Honor

At last, on April 25, 2025, Marina Melis received her royal decoration in recognition of her 32 years of dedication to animal welfare and nature conservation..

For 32 years, Marina and her husband Ed have worked tirelessly to give all of Bonaire's donkeys a safe and protected life. She also provides education to schools and tourists. At her sanctuary, where she cares for sick, injured, and orphaned donkeys, Marina — together with her staff and volunteers — looks after 831 donkeys every single day.

The donkeys are given food, clean drinking water, medical care, and plenty of space and freedom. Orphaned foals are lovingly raised by bottle.

Marina is also available 24/7 through her emergency number. When a report comes in, she and her team go out to help the animal. Sick or injured donkeys are taken in at the sanctuary, and if necessary, a vet is called immediately.

Over the years, a lot has been achieved. Hundreds of donkeys have been rescued from horrific conditions on the streets and given a safe life in the sanctuary. Sadly, some were too ill or injured to be saved. In those cases, the sanctuary covers all costs for humane euthanasia by a vet — to end their suffering with dignity.

Of course, this is only a brief summary of everything Marina has done and achieved over the years. But I believe everyone reading this newsletter knows exactly why Marina has truly earned this royal honor after so many years of fighting for the donkeys.

I hope it brings with it many messages of appreciation — not only for Marina but also for the donkeys she has dedicated her life to.



WISH LIST

Annual sponsorship

Are you interested in becoming an annual sponsor and having your own nameplate on our Wall of Fame? Don't hesitate to email us at donkeypalapa@gmail.com for more information.



Hay feeders

As new donkeys are regularly moved from the care pasture to the large park, we're always in need of new hay feeders – so that every donkey has a place to eat comfortably. For information about the cost, send us an email at donkeypalapa@gmail.com. Who knows – you might soon have a hay feeder in the park with your name or your company's name on it!

New hay truck

Every day, we drive through the park with our truck to fill all 76 hay feeders in the large park. As the truck often stops throughout the park and is heavily used, a new hay truck is also high on our wishlist for the coming year.



Upcoming holiday?

Are you visiting Bonaire and planning to stop by the sanctuary? Would you like to bring something from the Netherlands to help the donkeys?

We always need and frequently use the following items:

- Crepe tape (vet wrap)
- Gauze pads

Or simply send us an email to ask if there's anything urgently needed: donkeypalapa@gmail.com



Make the donkeys happy, Donate!

INGB Bank (Netherlands)

IBAN: NL 82 INGB 0003921224

t.a.v. M.M. Melis – Inzake Donkeys Help

Bic: INGBNL2A

Maduro & Curiels Bank (Bonaire)

10878904 Stichting Donkeys Help

Bic/swift: MCBKBQBN

Pay Pal

hulpvoorezels@gmail.com

Geef Gratis

www.geef.nl/nl/doneer?charity=6211



Adopteer een ezel!

Voor \$175 per jaar kunt u ons helpen door een ezel te adopteren, u kiest de ezel (of de ezel kiest u!) dan kunnen de papieren ingevuld worden en ontvangt u uiteindelijk een certificaat, een mooie foto en een adoptie pasje van de gekozen ezel! Ook ontvangt u 2 keer per jaar de nieuwsbrief, en na dat jaar hopen we natuurlijk dat u "uw kind" nog een jaartje wilt adopteren maar u bent niks verplicht.



Once again, we'd like to thank all our sponsors, donors, and visitors for your support, donations, and visits to our donkeys!

We hope you enjoyed reading our newsletter once again.

Want to read more news?

You receive our newsletter twice a year — but of course, there's always much more happening at the donkey sanctuary!

Would you like to stay more regularly updated on the daily life and stories of the donkeys on Bonaire? Then follow us on Facebook: @DonkeySanctuary

Help the donkeys!

Caring for more than 800 donkeys at our sanctuary — and providing emergency medical help to those in need — requires funding. Stichting Donkeys Help is a non-profit organization that relies entirely on donations, gifts, and the incredible work of volunteers and interns.

By visiting us, you're already supporting the donkeys — 100% of your entrance fee goes directly toward their care. All other income, like drinks and souvenir sales, also goes entirely to benefit our hundreds of sweet donkeys.

You can also adopt a donkey! You'll receive a fun adoption certificate and a photo of the donkey you've chosen. You're welcome to visit your adopted donkey as often as you like — without paying an entrance fee. With each adoption, we're able to provide a donkey with a full year of water, food, and medical care.

Of course, any donation is greatly appreciated — or maybe your company would like to sponsor us or donate materials?

Are you interested in volunteering or doing an internship as part of an animal care study? Then please get in touch with us!

Any help for the donkeys is more than welcome!

We are incredibly proud of our sponsor, Dutch Farm.
Thanks to your support, our donkeys stay healthy and happy.
A heartfelt thank you for your generosity!

DutchFarm
INTERNATIONAL



For donations in US dollars:

Maduro & Curiel's Bank Bonaire
Account number: 10878904 in the name of Stichting Donkeys Help
Swift: MCBKBQBN

For donations in Euros:

ING Bank Nederland
IBAN: NL 82 INGB 0003921224
t.n.v. Mevrouw M.M. Melis –
inzake Donkeys Help
Swift: INGBNL2A

Donkey Sanctuary Bonaire

P.O. Box # 331,
Bonaire

If you would like to report a donkey in distress on Bonaire we are available via telephone 24 hours a day!
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