



LOCKED DOWN...



...BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

CARING THROUGH COVID-19

Greek Animal Welfare Fund

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UK Charity no. 233574 UK Company no. 881216

Over half a century of action for animals in Greece

Dear Friend,

How life has changed since the last edition of “Elpida”! Like everyone else, GAWF and Animal Action have had to find ways to stay safe and carry on, even as COVID-19 looms over us.

The good news is that we have adapted rapidly. Our staff in both London and Athens are working very effectively from home (thank heaven for Skype, Zoom, the internet, and the good old telephone!) and we are still able to reach animals that need us, even though we’re doing it in slightly different ways. There’s more about this in our main feature on the pandemic...

Thankfully, we have a long tradition of offering support to well-run, local welfare groups all over Greece, and while we can’t send our teams into the field to do hands-on work themselves, we have increased our support to these much-appreciated volunteer organisations that are there ‘on the ground’, with the animals they care for... every day.



We’ve been astonished and delighted to find how much you care about what we do. On our Facebook page, we appeal for donations from time to time – as we are doing again now through the separate donation form included with this edition – and we’ve been overwhelmed to find that even as you, our supporters, are understandably anxious about your own personal safety – and that of the people you love – you have not forgotten Greece and the animals that need you there and continue to donate to support GAWF.

One regular supporter recently contacted us to wonder why, despite the wonderful comments they make on social media, so many people seem to hesitate to give even a tiny amount when we appeal for donations? It has become so quick and easy to do, particularly online. Could it be that sending just a very small amount feels “simply not worth it”? Perhaps. If that’s the case, we’d like to pass on a little bit of Greek folk wisdom: “You can fill a bag one bean at a time” (In Greek it rhymes rather nicely). And it’s true. You really can! May we just say that we’re grateful for every single bean we get? And so are the animals we’re able to reach when all the little beans mount up – as they do. Please, never think, “I can’t really afford much so it’s just not worth it”. It absolutely is.

As we all wait to see how this scary situation will play itself out, and what will happen as foreign visitors begin to be allowed back into Greece, we’re going to continue to think creatively and find new ways to keep doing what you want us to do: make life better for the animals. Meanwhile, we wish you the best. Take care and stay safe!

And... THANK YOU... for everything you do to help.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul McGlone".

An old lady gets to choose!

When a local Athens Councillor contacted Seraphina, our Welfare Officer, to tell her about “Kanella” (it means Cinnamon), she listened carefully. Kanella is a street dog, well known in her Kipseli neighbourhood. Repeated attempts to persuade her to accept the restrictions of being an owned, adopted animal had failed. Kanella was just too set in her ways and clearly preferred to be free to patrol her patch and choose her resting spots. In the past she might have been rounded up and taken to live out her life caged in a ‘shelter’.



But it’s a mark of changing attitudes in Greece that none of the people involved wanted that kind of future for her. Since she was no trouble, all she really needed was a place of her own where she would be safe and comfortable. The same local people who had provided her with a cosy winter coat could continue to watch over her and raise any concerns.

So, we bought her a proper kennel, obtained the planning permission needed to locate it on the public footway, put a sign on it to say that Kanella is under the protection of the Council, and secured it to a lamppost with a stout chain.

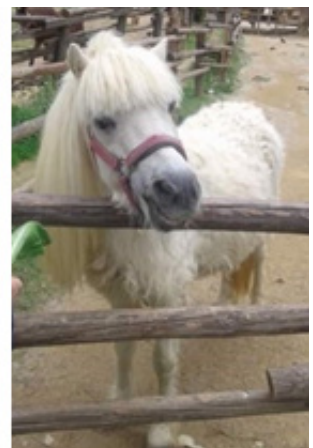
Hooray! Kanella can stay!



SOS Action Needed!

Groups and individuals bring us cases of animals in need all the time, and while we can’t always help, our Equine Team works hard to come up with solutions in a crisis.

Little Skyrian horses, Hermes and Angel, were about to be evicted from their home in a city garden and moved to a cramped city centre paddock. So, we acted fast to find them a better alternative on a rural farm. They now have a loving adoptive family... and much more space to play!



So, what did you do during the pandemic?

Every nation has had its own experience of the COVID-19 crisis. In Greece, the government acted hard and fast, “locking down” both private individuals and corporates to keep the number of infections low, since – following the economic crisis – it was crystal clear that the nation’s limited health service stood no chance of being able to cope with an avalanche of cases. There was a strict “We’re all staying at home” order which was vigorously enforced. As we write, in mid-May, the first phase of the strategy has been successful. Cases are low and the country is creeping cautiously towards easing restrictions.

The hard lockdown had an overnight impact on animals and particularly on stray cats and dogs. Even though local authorities soon launched poster campaigns urging people not to forget the street animals, with all hotels, tavernas and restaurants closed, an important source of food disappeared overnight. To make matters worse, restrictions on movement meant that all over the country volunteers could no longer leave home to feed animals they had been caring for. If they did, they faced eye-watering fines.

We acted fast, with a letter to the Greek Government urgently calling for special permission to be granted immediately to anyone who needed to leave their neighbourhood to look after an animal. Thankfully, the Government responded and arranged a permit scheme which, though not perfect, eased the food crisis considerably. To help the many expat volunteers that don’t speak Greek, we translated the necessary document and put it out on our social media. To some, this was a lifesaver.



The Greek Government went on to make a special package of funding available to 245 municipalities. This was to be used solely for the care of stray animals. Local welfare groups that saw the announcement we publicised were overjoyed, expecting some financial support to filter through to them. But in the event, many were disappointed. The funds have not found their way to struggling shelters.

Many municipalities have used them to buy cat and dog food and install their own feeders instead, which, while welcome, has meant that an opportunity for closer cooperation and mutual support between the volunteers and local government has, in many cases, been lost and the volunteers are still desperate for funding.

They started reaching out to us for help. As our field teams were unable to leave their homes, we quickly adjusted our operation and response. Although our resources are limited, we supplied medications that will prevent diseases...intestinal parasites as well as leishmaniasis and tick-borne ehrlichiosis, which is costly to treat and can be fatal. Volunteer organisations on the mainland and Naxos island benefitted from this cooperation.

Street dog "Coffee", seen here with volunteer, Alex, from "Ghost Dogs of Aspropyrgos", took her medicine and also got some diagnostic blood tests done when one of our supporters in the UK donated the cost of the lab work!



Our Equine Team professionals, barred from travelling to islands that are still effectively cut off for non-residents, nevertheless managed to travel to the northern towns of Kilikis and Serres for an outreach visit. They also continue to provide advice and monitor developments in the many difficult cases that come to our attention, even organising rescue missions for individual animals in distress.

In another truly alarming development, we started hearing reports of people abandoning their pets in fear. Rumours had started circulating that COVID-19 could be passed on to humans by cats and dogs. We moved fast to counter this misinformation, using our social media.

While all this has been going on, we have been responding to individual cases of animals in need and you can hear some of their stories in these pages.



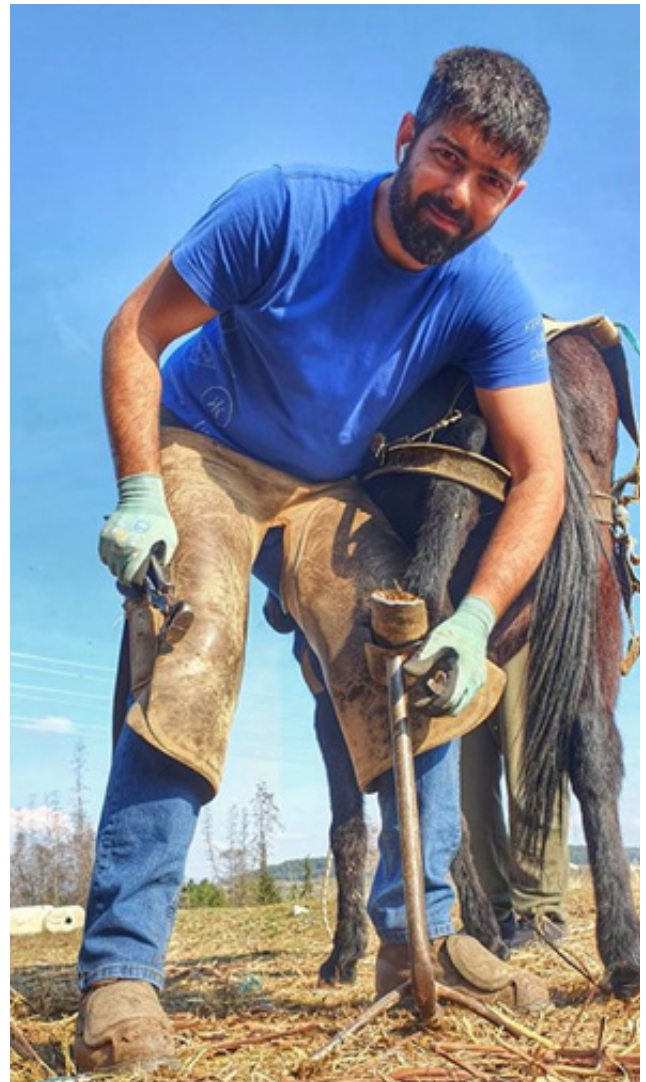
As the country was entering lockdown, the Equine Team managed to fit in a day's work in what for us was a new location ... the remote area around the northern towns of Kilkis and Serres. There are many working horses and mules here, so equine vet, Michael Gaganis, and our latest addition to the team, farrier, Tasos Skylas (right), took more time than they usually would with the owners and their animals, explaining to people that have had little or no previous contact with equine care professionals, the basics of trimming hooves, the causes of painful laminitis, the importance of correct feeding, the need to control parasites and more. Even so, they managed to treat 25 animals and gain the trust and respect of owners. We always aim to leave improved knowledge and skills behind us when we go home.

Towards the end of a very busy day, the inevitable happened... The team was called to visit a heavily pregnant mare said to be in trouble, and, as soon as he saw her, Michael was deeply concerned. He could tell his most urgent case had been saved to last. The mare's belly was unnaturally low, indicating serious weakness or a possible rupture in the muscle wall or tendons of her abdomen.



Michael showed the worried owner how to protect and support the mare using a wide band, and then advised that the expectant mother's movement should be restricted and that she should be moved to as quiet a place as possible to keep her calm until the birth was due.

Although she was potentially at risk, Michael's opinion was that a safe delivery of a healthy foal was still possible and that both mother and baby would likely survive. Thankfully, his assessment proved correct and a few days after our visit, the relieved and grateful owner got in touch to report that the mother and her little one were both doing well.



Sometimes things just fall into place nicely

When the Heikens family moved to Athens recently, they decided they'd like to adopt two kittens and they contacted us for help.

Now, where on earth could we possibly find a couple of kittens looking for a loving home? (It was a BIG ask). We had to search high and low because, as everyone knows, abandoned kittens are so rare in Greece – right?

Well, as fate would have it, we 'just happened' to know of a litter! Mum and her five new-borns had been dumped in a cardboard box next to a rubbish bin in central Athens. Officers of the local authority had taken them in and were caring for the family until the kittens were old enough to be weaned, which, by now, they were. So... on the one hand we had a kitten-seeking family and on the other some house-hunting cats.



WHAT TO DO? It was a tricky situation. Did we hesitate? Only long enough to ensure the Heikens family had the necessary knowledge and experience to look after the two little brothers properly. Then "Bo" and "Jinx", as they've now been named, were handed over to bring their new, human family all the fun and mayhem that only kittens know how to create. (And when 'dad' needs some IT support, they seem quite willing to offer that too).

Sometimes – only sometimes, mind – our job is JUST TOO EASY!

Please, don't forget GAWF 🐾

This period has given us all time to reconsider our priorities: the people that we care about; the causes we cherish; how we can help. Remembering the *Greek Animal Welfare Fund* with a gift in your Will is a sure way to enable our work helping the stray, abandoned and abused animals of Greece – a cause you believe in – to continue.

Leaving a gift to GAWF in your Will, means you'll be a part of our future. Making a Will is straightforward, and the sum doesn't have to be large to have an impact. For clarity, please use our *Registered Charity Number 233574*.

To ensure that your Will is legally valid and to avoid costly mistakes, we recommend that you use a qualified solicitor. If you have included GAWF in your Will already, thank you! Please let us know so that we can update our records. Or, if you would like more information please contact us legacy@gawf.org.uk

Did you notice?

We've updated our logo, adding a hoof symbol. The hardworking members of our Equine team quite rightly complained that they were not represented, and we have moved to correct the omission! In addition to the training we offer to owners and the hands-on work our professionals deliver to the animals, we are lobbying the European Parliament to get the EU Equine Passport regulations implemented in Greece. These documents, that are supposed to be issued to every equid in the country, are a kind of "track and trace" mechanism that protects the animals from neglect, abuse and abandonment. It's a simple principle: If you can identify owners, you can hold them to account for their actions!



As times change and the number of equidae working on the land declines, there is less and less of a role for the typical working donkey whose image has for years been so closely associated with the charms of rural Greece. As farm machinery takes over, elderly animals in particular are vulnerable to neglect. Is it satisfying to engage with the bureaucrats and politicians? No. But doing it successfully in this case will mean that it's no longer so easy for cruelty to go unpunished.

And we think that's worth fighting for.

A retirement home for two old ladies

Tasia was a local 'character' on Hydra. We remembered her well from our team's outreach visits to the island. She used to bring refreshing drinks to us while we worked. When she died unexpectedly, her two donkeys urgently needed a new home. The situation was complicated by the medical needs of one of them ("Haido", left), who suffers the pain of chronic laminitis. In a rather complex team effort, we successfully arranged for them to go to the Hellenic Society for Equine Welfare (ESPI) outside Athens, where expert care is available whenever needed.



Please, could you help us to keep going with a donation – large or small – today?

*From the animals and everyone at GAWF... **Thank you for caring and for everything you do.***

When everyone has gone home,
we're still there for them



☒ **YES,** I want to help animals in Greece

- ☐ **£35** Covers the cost of sterilising a cat in Greece through our "Friendship Programme"
- ☐ **£50** Enables us to neuter a stray dog and add to its quality of life by making it 'adoption ready'
- ☐ **£100** Covers the cost of treating 2 working donkeys on an outreach visit

Other amount



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Name

Address

Postcode Telephone

May we contact you by email? Please fill in the address

Please send me an acknowledgement of my donation
☐ by email (this option would help the charity save money on postage fees) ☐ by post

☐ I would like to receive a free booklet about leaving a gift in my will to GAWF

Online <https://www.gawf.org.uk/donate/>

Call **020 7357 8500**
Calls charged at standard rate.
Phone line open 10:00 to 16:00 Monday to Friday

Complete this form
& send it to us in the free post envelope provided.

Text ELPIDA to 70085
to support us with a one off donation of £5
Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message and you'll be opting in to hear more about our work and fundraising via telephone and SMS.
If you'd like to give £5 but do not wish to receive such communications, text ELPIDANOINFO to 70085.

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Regular giving: Standing Order

Please pay the amount shown below **monthly** / **annually** (delete as applicable) starting on:

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Please pay to Lloyds TSB plc. Butler Place Branch, 1 Butler Place, London SW1H 0RP Sort code: 309897 to the credit of the Greek Animal Welfare Fund, Account No: 00747919, my donation of



The Greek Animal Welfare Fund is a registered Charity number 233574 for England and Wales

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