



Animal Rescue Organisation

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OPEN LETTER TO THE NORTH WEST PROVINCE

FOR THE URGENT ATTENTION OF

NORTH WEST PREMIER SUPRA MAHUMAPELO,

HON. MEC FOR READ, MANKETSI TLHAPE

HON MEC FOR FINANCE, ENTERPRISE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (FEED) Ms WENDY NELSON

Dear MEC Tlhape,

I refer to your Media Statement of 21 February 2017 regarding the proposed Donkey Production and Trade deal as attached.

I am writing on behalf of the Animal Rescue Organisation (003-967-NPO), its members and the wider South African public as supporters, to record an official written objection with the North West Premier Supra Mahumapelo, Hon MEC for Finance, Enterprise & Economic Development (FEED), Ms Wendy Nelson as well as yourself as Hon MEC for READ (Rural, Environment & Agricultural Development) regarding the proposed production of donkey skins for export as per the signed MoU with China.

The concept of crowding thousands of gentle, sentient donkeys, into feedlots is causing widespread concern, outrage and objection from the wider South African public. Both a digital and original signed Petition objecting to the "donkeys-for-skins trade deal" is currently circulating across the national South African public with signatures already pouring in. While cattle and sheep are raised in the unfortunate feedlot system, for meat & related by-products to the South African population, it would be a travesty on the ethical & moral fibre of South Africans to allow the humble donkey to be farmed in a similar barbaric manner without objection, when there must be many appropriate alternatives to raising income for the Province. Please can you confirm where else in the world donkey skins are being sought as per your press release; as far as is currently known, China is the only market requesting skins.

Please note that other African countries, Niger and Burkino Faso have banned the trade.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/sep/13/africas-donkey-population-decimated-by-chinese-demand>

The South African Government's plan to farm donkeys for their skins, will not stop the theft of donkeys across South Africa ~ we thank you for condemning the theft and illegal slaughter of stolen donkeys, but it is already out of control and likely to get a lot worse.

The animal welfare sector in South Africa is already severally challenged; it is underfunded and understaffed. South Africa has a shocking animal welfare record, and cannot cope with any more systems which allow for the welfare of animals to be compromised ~ feedlots by their very nature, are intrinsically cruel concepts; donkeys raised for skin & not body weight, will likely suffer overall body neglect through malnutrition and dehydration, which cannot be realistically policed. These animals will be born into a life of fear and misery, only to be slaughtered for their skins. Surely the South African Government can create moral methods of economic development?

In this regard, we appeal to the SA Government to seriously reconsider the proposed donkey production plan and to actively seek out, research and investigate alternative & appropriate market systems which will develop indigent communities, while allowing for sustainable income and growth within the North West Province and other regions.

I trust this matter will receive due attention, and we look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely

THE ANIMAL RESCUE ORGANISATION