

# Helping out in The Gambia

PAUL Smith of Westmorland Veterinary Group, Kirkby Lonsdale, and Louise Cornish, formerly of Clyde Veterinary Group but now a lecturer in equine practice at the Royal (Dick), recently spent two weeks providing veterinary treatment to horses and donkeys in the West African village of Sambel Kunda, the base of the Gambia Horse & Donkey Trust (GHDT) charity. Five days were spent providing CPD to the veterinary teams that are based there permanently and to government paravets.

Says Paul: "Louise and I volunteered for the overseas programme following an excellent presentation given by a member from the farm side of XLVets, who run a successful voluntary scheme. Although ours is on a much smaller scale, it's great to know that we were able to make a difference.

"There are very few vets in the Gambia, with the majority either being based at the coast or working for the government in the agricultural sector or in administrative jobs, and responsibility for animal welfare falls on the livestock assistants or paravets. The hope is that by training these assistants in basic veterinary medicine/first aid, they will be better able to serve the wider equine population, reaching much further than the charity itself can currently do, and being more sustainable in the longer term."

The trip was also a bit of a fact-finding mission to see what XLEquine, as a whole, can offer the charity and to see if we can forge a long-standing link and relationship with them, he says. "One aim is to develop a series of training modules that can be developed as a series over the next three to five years, with vets from the XLEquine practices visiting twice yearly. We are also fundraising for the trust and gathering unwanted tack and equipment that the livestock assistants so desperately need such as stethoscopes, thermometers, dental kit, etc.," he adds.

● *The photo shows Paul and Louise at work.*

