

TCI to ship away wild animals

By Vivian Tyson
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The feral animal problem now being experienced on the islands of Grand Turk, Salt Cay and South Caicos should soon be a thing of the past, as Government has chiseled a plan to have the majority of those animals shipped to neighbouring Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic for agricultural purposes.

The announcement was made by Minister of Health and Human Services Hon. Dr. Lillian Boyce, during a media conference last week. Minister Boyce said a policy to remove the animals was reached during cabinet meeting earlier in the week. She said sending the animals to those countries will be an act of goodwill, since the Turks and Caicos Government would not charge those countries for animals, as they would be assisting the TCI in easing the almost unbearable problem.

"I know that the people of Grand Turk would be pleased to hear that Government has approved a policy on the removal and the proposal of the removal of animals from Grand Turk, Salt Cay and South Caicos. We are proposing to transport some of our animals to Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, to be used as farm animals," Minister Boyce said.

In recent years, the Turks and

Caicos Islands has been faced with a serious animal overpopulation problem, of namely cattle, donkeys and horses. The animals, in searching for food, often invade residences, where they wreak havoc. The animals have also become traffic hazards, wandering onto the street and causing traffic accidents. They pose even greater danger at nights when they just walk out onto the roadways, especially in poorly-lit areas.

"We have already started the negotiating with those countries, who are pleased to take some of our animals. We will not benefit monetarily, because we feel kind of blessed that some people are taking the animals. They are a health hazard in Grand Turk. We have had many road accidents, caused by animals trying to cross the road, and people are living today with paralysis and so forth because of accidents such as those," Minister Boyce explained.

Minister Boyce said the tendering for the contract to remove the animals was approved and the process should start soon. She said Government would retain some of the animals, since it plans to kick-start its agricultural sector soon, noting that Belongers interested in acquiring some could write to Government.

"We have approved the tendering of the contracts for the removal of the animals from the islands, and people in

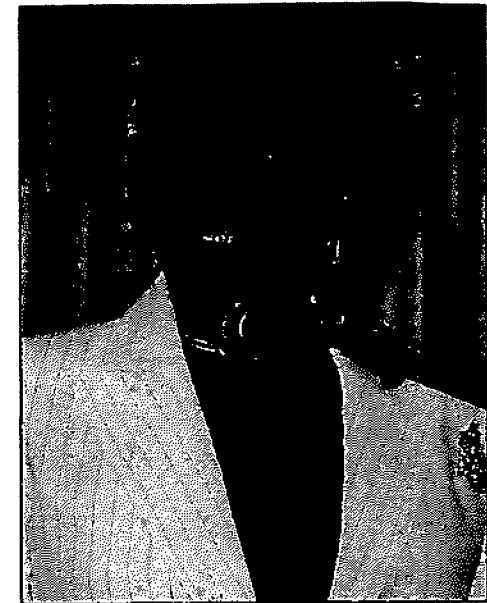
Grand Turk and throughout the Turks and Caicos now have a chance to also send in their proposals. However, we would like to keep some of our animals," she said.

She said while Government would want to keep all the animals, their rapid procreation and environmental threat, coupled with the financial costs associated was hampering government's effort to do so.

"It would be a good idea for Government to keep some of our animals, and we are going to keep some of them. However, we have too many of them, and it is very costly to feed the animals at this time. Government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars bringing in containers of food monthly, to feed the animals of the Turks and Caicos. So we just want to remove some of them, we are going to keep a good number. And yes, we are hoping that we can use them in farming," Minister Boyce further noted.

She noted that persons from the three islands often complain of problems associated with the overpopulation of the animals. As a result of the numerous complaints from citizens regarding their nuisances, the Animal Management Unit, which is managed by the Environmental Health Department, was established in 2005.

"The Animal Management Unit was established in the environmental



Minister of Health and Human Services
Hon. Dr. Lillian Boyce

Health Department in 2005. It was formed in responses to numerous public appeals for the department to (remedy) the many problems presented by the overpopulation of roaming large animals – horses, donkeys and cows. And of course, we have a wild dog problem in Providenciales and through-out the Turks and Caicos. And so, to end, Government plans to do something about this problem," Minister Boyce said.

Minister Boyce also called on the residents of Grand Turk, Salt Cay and South Caicos to control their animals, to prevent them from becoming nuisances to other residents and motorists.