



EUROPEAN  
FEDERATION  
OF CITY FARMS

# Newsletter

## 1. 2024

### WORKING TOGETHER FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

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The EFCF is a member of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

## EFCF Events in 2024

EFCF AGM 2024 in France. 26-28 April  
Youth Exchange 2024 in Germany. 12–18 August  
EFCF conference 2024 in Norway. 26-30 September

Keep a close eye on <https://cityfarms.org/events>

## Mental health on 4H-farms

by Bodil Åström, 4H Sweden

4H Sweden has the opportunity to work on an exciting project in 2024-2025. With the support of the Swedish heritage foundation "Allmänna Arvsfonden" our organization is going to focus on the important topic of young people's mental health. The project is called "Mental health on 4H-farms" (Psykisk hälsa på 4H-gården) and aims on developing even safer spaces for teenagers with mental health issues as well as increasing our employees' competence regarding difficult conversations and social situations.

Many of our members have experience of mental health issues or neuropsychiatric disorders whereas our staff might find it difficult to address questions or problems regarding these topics. While educating our employees the next two years, 10 of our 4H farms are going to start health groups as a pilot study where young people can join to talk about everything that's relevant for themselves.

This could be topics like mental health, feelings, identity, relationship and sexuality. Our farm animals are going to play a big part in these groups as well. We know that animals are non-judgemental and can get people to open up quickly. To take care of them can contribute to a feeling of meaningfulness and to pet their fur can increase the hormone oxytocin in human's body. So, while not using our animals as therapists we have great use for their unique abilities and effects on humans' well-being.



With 4H being an organization from youth for youth we are going to include our members in the projects' development process. A project steering group is going to discuss material for the health groups which will lead to a final material in 2025. Our aspiration within 4H Sweden is to become even more able and qualified regarding mental health and being able to establish a safe space on our farms while in the bigger context our organization is hoping to contribute to an increase of young peoples' experienced wellbeing. [www.4h.se/](http://www.4h.se/)

## Donkey sanctuary in Belgium

by Pauline Wolters, EFCF board member

In Belgium, just across the border with Maastricht, Netherlands lies the donkey sanctuary Oasis des Anes. It was founded by a team of volunteers in January 2005 with the purpose of protecting and preserving the donkey. The sanctuary is meant for donkeys in distress (neglect, abuse, confiscation, etc.). Many of them suffered from wounds, diseases, malnutrition, problems with their hooves and legs, etc. Very often they also had mental and behavioural problems which the sanctuary also tries to solve.

There is an adoption scheme. When the donkey has regained its health, it can be adopted, but the sanctuary will at all times, remain the owner. Some donkeys stay in the sanctuary permanently. The donkeys will only be put up for adoption when they are in good health, vaccinated, wormed, micro chipped, trimmed hooves, castrated (in case of stallions) and rehabilitated. Every first Sunday afternoon of the month, the sanctuary is open to visitors.

<https://www.loasidesanes.be/accueilEN.html>





## School gardens on the isle of Ustica (IT)

by Marta Lo Sicco, *Il Giardino di Giancarlo*

In the last few months “Il Giardino di Giancarlo” restarted the collaboration with Ustica’s school for a new project promoted by Slow Food, called “Orti a scuola”. We’ll work during the next months of the school year to grow garden vegetables in the school garden: children will discover ancient local seeds



varieties, the best associations for vegetables and the importance of the soil for the planet.

Children will grow some varieties of aromatic plants, too. From the experience of growing a vegetable garden to the discovery of biodiversity: it’s our idea for the vegetable school garden, an experience that includes all the school subjects from the planning of the spaces, made by children, to the harvesting!

[www.ilgiardinodigiancarlo.it](http://www.ilgiardinodigiancarlo.it)



## Inventory of unwanted and dumped animals in the Netherlands

How many animals are handed over to city farms or simply ‘thrown over the fence’ every year? To answer this question, ‘Kinderboerderijen Actief’ has been keeping track of data together with 36 city farms since last year. This inventory will continue in 2024.

Dumped animals are left behind outside opening hours or unnoticed during opening hours on or near the city farm grounds. Released, in a box or cage at the entrance. When this is the case, staff will take primary care of the animal before it will go to a local shelter. The figures show that animals are dumped throughout the year, but there are peak months when it occurs more often. The inventory shows that none of the dumped animals will stay at the city farm. Dumping an animal is officially a crime in the Netherlands and

although dumped animals are in fact the responsibility of the city where they were found, city farms will take primary care of the animal.



In case of rehoming animals city farms receive requests in many ways whether an animal could be given a place at the farm. Requests by telephone, during a visit or by email. The easy accessibility and the image as a location where animals are well cared for will certainly contribute to the requests that are made. Only few city farms will adopt these unwanted animals. Top 3 of dumped as well as adoptable animals:

1. rabbit, 2. chicken, 3. guinea pig.

To be continued. <http://kinderboerderijenactief.nl/>

## Network meeting 4H farms Norway at Langedrag Nature Park

by Irene Pande, *Norske 4H*

Members of the 4H-gard network <https://4hgard.no> gathered mid February to learn about grants, funding, and collaboration. We also learned how to make charcoal pins and felt wool for a big 4H sign. The conference was in beautiful surroundings 1,000 meters above sea level at one of our newest 4H farms, Langedrag Nature Park.

Langedrag mountain farm, camp school and nature park have as a vision, and have been built with one desire to be a dissemination arena where they take children, young people and adults on experiences close to animals and nature. Experiences should create wonder, knowledge and understanding that build up under deeper respect for the ecological interaction, the lawfulness of nature and all living life.

We all got to experience how animals and nature take center stage at Langedrag this weekend. The participants were able to hand-feed moose, reindeer and arctic foxes. We got to take part in feeding the lynx and hear about the lynx’s history at Langedrag.





The highlight for many was a visit to the wolf farm and close contact with the wolf pup Nare. Nare is now nine months old, he was found with an ugly wound when the puppies were to be chipped in May 2023. Nare was brought into the house and grew up with the family on the farm. The family dog got the job as a foster mother. Tuva Thorson told about Nare's story while he wandered freely around and greeted the participants. It was a fascinating and powerful experience when the wolf came over and gave you a kiss on the cheek.



<https://en.langedrag.no>

## Dogs at work

by Willem Labeeuw and Pauline Wolters, EFCF board members

### An assistance dog at Bokkeslot city farm

Since the death of dog Jora in 2020, Bokkeslot city farm has been missing a dog. It is not obvious to find a dog that gets along well with our animals, children and free visitors. Until 'Kwispelhelden association' came our way. Free translation for kwispelheld is 'Wagging heroe' 'Kwispelhelden' trains dogs to become assistance dogs for children with autism and social-emotional problems.



Each dog is trained according to the needs of the family. We immediately saw a link to our operation.

After all, as Bokkeslot city farm, we host a lot of care guests. These are young people in time-out, young people with mental vulnerability, people with disabilities,.... We find that the animals bring them a certain peace of mind. However, when class groups visit, the farm is very busy. Sometimes too busy for our care guests. An assistance dog would be the ideal solution to give our care guests the peace of mind they need by going on walks with them. We also work together with a therapist who gives training to children using our animals. A trained assistance dog would certainly be an added value. With the help of 'Kwispelhelden' we chose a pup that would be suitable to be trained as an assistance dog. The non-profit organization is willing to guide us and train puppy Marcel specifically according to the needs of our children's farm. [www.bokkeslot.be](http://www.bokkeslot.be)

### A dog as teacher in the classroom

Education about pets is very important. Future and current owners should know all the ins and outs of pets when they decide to keep them or already have them.

The Centre for environmental education in Maastricht offers a lesson at school about pets for 10 – 12 year old children. The children learn about the ancestors of dogs, rabbits and guinea-pigs, the most common pets



and their natural behaviors in the wild. In this way they understand the manners and needs of the current versions of these animal species. Marie, a 7 year old Golden Doodle (King Poodle/Golden Retriever mix) shows how she wants to meet people and how a wolf uses its nose. After the introduction the children carry out a number of assignments in groups. In a representation of a pet shop, they can choose requirements for a particular pet. And at the same time will learn that the pet shop may also have lesser goods, like any other shop. It feels good to hear them arguing about a particular item. They can brush the dog, learn how to pick up dog dirt, choose the right housing for rabbits, discover what breed is used for police work, hunting etc. The whole lesson takes 90 minutes. Marie has the necessary obedience certificates and is a real workaholic. She also loves to be around children.

[www.cnme.nl](http://www.cnme.nl)



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## A butcher's shop on-site

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by Pauline Wolters, EFCF board member

Many city farms run a shop and many city farm shops sell meat, coming from their own livestock or from local farmers. Many visitors appreciate this and are very happy to buy the products. They want to know the origin of the meat and for them sustainability, quality and animal welfare are very important.

Not many city farms will have their own butcher on-site. This is the case on Daalhoeve city farm in Maastricht. It is located in the court yard and allows visitors to have a look through the big window at the processing of veal, pork etc. In this way children (and not only the children) will learn where their chops and burgers come from and that these do not grow on trees or are produced in a factory.

The meat comes from livestock in water collection and nature areas in the east of the country. The farm has a



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## Clever ideas

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Toilet seat as chicken coop door. [www.scheferhof.de](http://www.scheferhof.de)



small restaurant and terrace and offers menus at reasonable prices. The meat is also sold to a few local restaurants. <https://daalhoeve.nl/vleespakketten>







[www.gaiazoo.nl](http://www.gaiazoo.nl)



Automatic hatch with a timer on chicken coop to protect the chickens against foxes, martens etc.  
[www.natuurhulpcentrum.be](http://www.natuurhulpcentrum.be)

Many city farms ask visitors to bring spent bulbs to the farm for a flower explosion in the next year.



Memorial tree. The leaves show the names of those who have left a legacy to the centre.  
[www.natuurhulpcentrum.be](http://www.natuurhulpcentrum.be)