

FINAL REPORT
HORSE PATROL TEAM
JANUARY-DECEMBER 2021



ORGANIZATION DETAILS

Name of organisation:	Mount Kenya Trust (MKT)
Address:	P.O. Box 690 – 10400, Nanyuki, Kenya.
Website:	https://mountkenyatrust.org/
Principle Investigator:	Susie Weeks – Executive Director sweeks@mountkenyatrust.org +254 722 436641
Co-investigator	Charlene Wandera - Monitoring and Evaluation Officer cwandera@mountkenyatrust.org +254726228333

PROJECT DETAILS

Project title:	MOUNT KENYA HORSE PATROL TEAM	
Location:	Mount Kenya National Park And Forest Reserve	
Project Status:	Underway since 2012. IEF has supported the project since 2014	
Project period:	From: 01/01/2021	31/12/2021
Reporting period:	From: 01/07/2021	31/12/2021
Project completion date:	31/12/2021	

1. Project Abstract

The Mount Kenya Trust (MKT) works with local people, government agencies and development partners for the conservation of the unique natural resources of Africa's second-highest mountain. MKT was established in 1999, due to growing concern for the forested expanse surrounding Africa's second-highest mountain. Extensive poaching of wildlife, logging of indigenous tree species, overgrazing and large-scale growing of marijuana were destroying the region.

The Trust has a multitude of projects to protect elephants and the Horse Patrol Team (HPT) is one of the many interlocking projects that are built to protect the habitat and safe zones for these endangered mammals. The HPT is one of the few mounted community ranger teams in Kenya. The team attracts much interest from national and international media along with equestrians, attracted to the HPT's unique work to further enhance conservation efforts. The uniqueness of the team has also brought increased attention to the region as a whole and to the members of the team in particular.

The anti-poaching HPT was set up to enhance the capacity of law enforcement personnel to decrease the level of poaching (especially elephants) and other illegal activities mainly but not limited to the Northwestern section of Mount Kenya. Successful conservation of elephants should focus not simply on the animals alone but on the larger biodiversity goals in Kenya. Two factors have a large effect in determining the future of elephants; poaching or hunting and competition for or conversion of land by people.

The Trust deploys four community ranger teams to work closely with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Kenya Forest Service (KFS), the government's wildlife agencies, to reduce poaching and forest destruction on the mountain. They face harsh terrain, high altitudes and challenging weather conditions on a daily basis to protect Mt Kenya's ecosystem. They man their bases year-round and carry out long patrols to support KWS and KFS in combating illegal extraction of wildlife, timber and charcoal from the forest and moorland.

The ranger teams remove traps and snares set for poaching and bushmeat, making arrests and apprehending those illegally in the forest logging hardwood or clear-cutting to grow marijuana. They are regularly involved in firefighting with the KWS, KFS and local communities – fires that can wipe out vast tracts of the forest if not controlled. Despite risking their lives when encountering poachers or injured wildlife, none of our men is armed. They sometimes request to be supported by armed KWS rangers.

2. Project Narrative

a. Describe the specific actions taken to achieve objects listed in the project proposal

<u>Objective</u>	<u>Action taken</u>
To decrease the prevalence of illegal activity, in particular, elephant and bushmeat poaching in the northern areas of Mt Kenya National Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting routine and camping patrols • Destroying snares and/ or traps • Arresting poachers/ loggers
To work collaboratively with the Kenya Wildlife Service to extend the area of surveillance into Meru and Sirimon which have seen a marked increase in habitat and wildlife destruction in high altitude zones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting joint patrols • Conducting camping patrols in hotspot areas
To increase awareness and conservation education within the communities living in and around Mt Kenya Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sensitization
To improve the links with wildlife NGOs to reduce response times for illegal incidents, improve intelligence gathering and information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging Community Forest Association scouts • Working closely with the local judicial team

b. Describe any activities that differ from the original proposal and explain the reason for the change

None

c. Describe the conservation outcomes for elephants, other wildlife, habitat and human communities

A new study shows a stable elephant population on Mount Kenya but increasing threats since 2016. Due to thick forests, direct elephant counting on the mountain is tricky. The most commonly used indirect method to do this is by using dung transects. Two elephant population surveys have been carried out on the mountain by Dr Hilde Vanleeuwe from the Wildlife Conservation Society. The same survey design was applied in 2016, then four years later, in early 2020.

Based on the mentioned elephant surveys in 2016 and 2020, the elephant population on Mount Kenya remains stable with one of the highest densities of the population in the country. It is estimated to be between 1,419 - 2,558 elephants for the survey area. This is a non-significant reduction from the previous survey, conducted in 2016. The estimated percentage of the population of Mount Kenya and the Aberdares is 5% of the total population

Currently, the greatest threat to elephants in the region is human-elephant conflict. The teams recorded 2 elephant carcasses that died as a result of electrocution in March 2021. In April 2021, four incidents of elephant carcasses were recorded by MKT. The conclusion was that two of the carcasses were as a result of poaching due to the missing tusks. The suspected cause of death for the other two carcasses was anthrax infection which was ruled out after the samples were tested leaving the cause of death as unknown. Later on in the year, the teams recorded 4 other elephant carcasses whose cause of death was unknown. The retrieval of 161 snares, 11 of them being cable snares indicates that elephants and other wildlife are still being targeted. Only through regular patrols

and community engagement and sensitization can we reduce these incidences.

By protecting the habitat and protected areas, along with tackling human-elephant conflict, the bushmeat trade and hunting, elephants can continue to roam freely in the wild. The presence of the team in the area enhances the capacity of law enforcement personnel to decrease the level of poaching (especially elephants) and other illegal activities. The data collected using SMART provides outputs on wildlife and security issues for protected area managers thus allowing improvements in anti-poaching efforts, overall law enforcement and ranger effectiveness through the features it provides. SMART also links into Earth Ranger, an easy-to-use online software tool, which will use real time data to assess ranger patrols and findings. This will combine historical and real time data available within the protected area – wildlife, rangers, spatial information and other threats

People from the nearby communities benefit as the rangers employed are from the surrounding communities. The project has supported a total of 7 rangers by paying for their salaries. The Trust also has a range of complementary projects implemented within the affected communities from environmental education to involvement of the communities in forest restoration where they get to cultivate in between the spacing of the planted trees as a maintenance method.

d. Describe how your goals were met and explain any goals that were not met.

The Mount Kenya Trust (MKT) anti-poaching Horse Patrol Team was set up to enhance the capacity of law enforcement personnel to decrease the level of poaching (especially elephants) and other illegal activities mainly but not limited to the North western section of Mount Kenya. Along with law enforcement, the goals/ objectives are to:

1. Decrease the prevalence of illegal activity, in particular elephant and bushmeat poaching in the northern areas of Mt Kenya National Reserve
2. Work collaboratively with the Kenya Wildlife Service to extend the area of surveillance into Meru and Sirimon
3. Increase awareness and conservation education within the communities living in and around Mt Kenya Park
4. Improve the links with wildlife NGO to reduce response times for illegal incidents, improve intelligence gathering and information sharing

In order to meet these goals:

- The team conducted both routine and camping patrols. These were either foot, vehicle or horse patrols. At times, these were as a result of intelligence reports on illegal activities.
- From the patrols done, some were conducted jointly with either KWS rangers, KFS rangers or CFA (Community Forest Association) scouts.
- The team recorded the number of patrol hours, distance covered, and illegal activities found using the Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool (SMART).
- The team sensitized the community members that they encountered within the forest during the patrols, mostly before verbally warning them.

e. List major findings and accomplishments to date

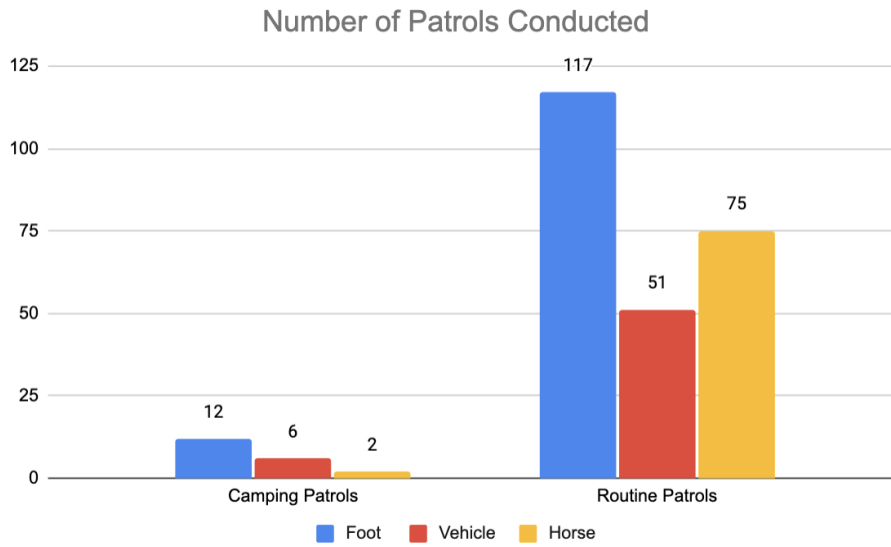


Figure 1. The number of foot, vehicle and horse patrols from January to December 2021 by the HPT.

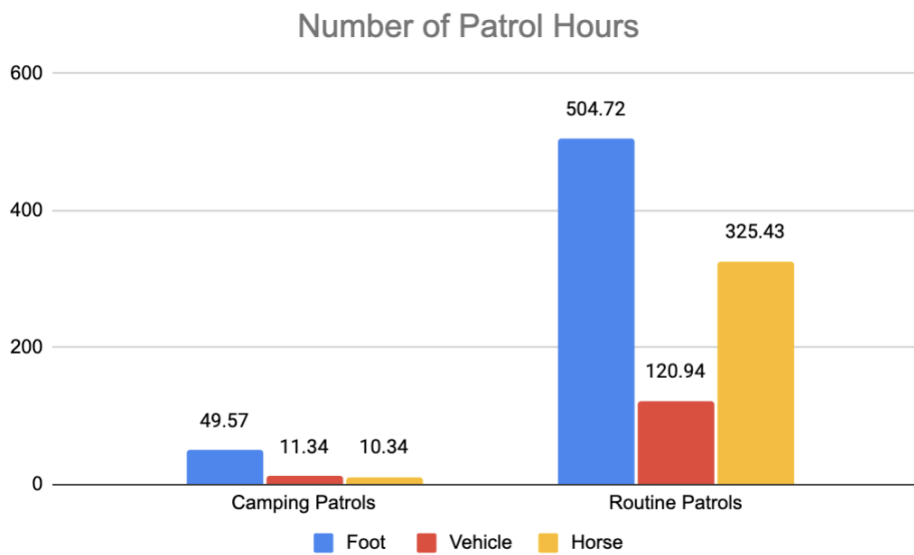


Figure 2. The number of hours patrolled by the HPT on foot, vehicle and horseback from January to December 2021.

21	4	81	5	18	76	5	23
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Table 3: Illegal logging activities observed by HPT from January to December 2021

Most of the charcoal kilns were already harvested and they were found within Sirimon area, a charcoal-burning hotspot.

Domestic Animals Recorded

#Cow	#Sheep	#Dogs	#Goats	#Donkeys
1,867	1,692	25	341	100

Table 4: Number of domestic animals observed by HPT from January to December 2021

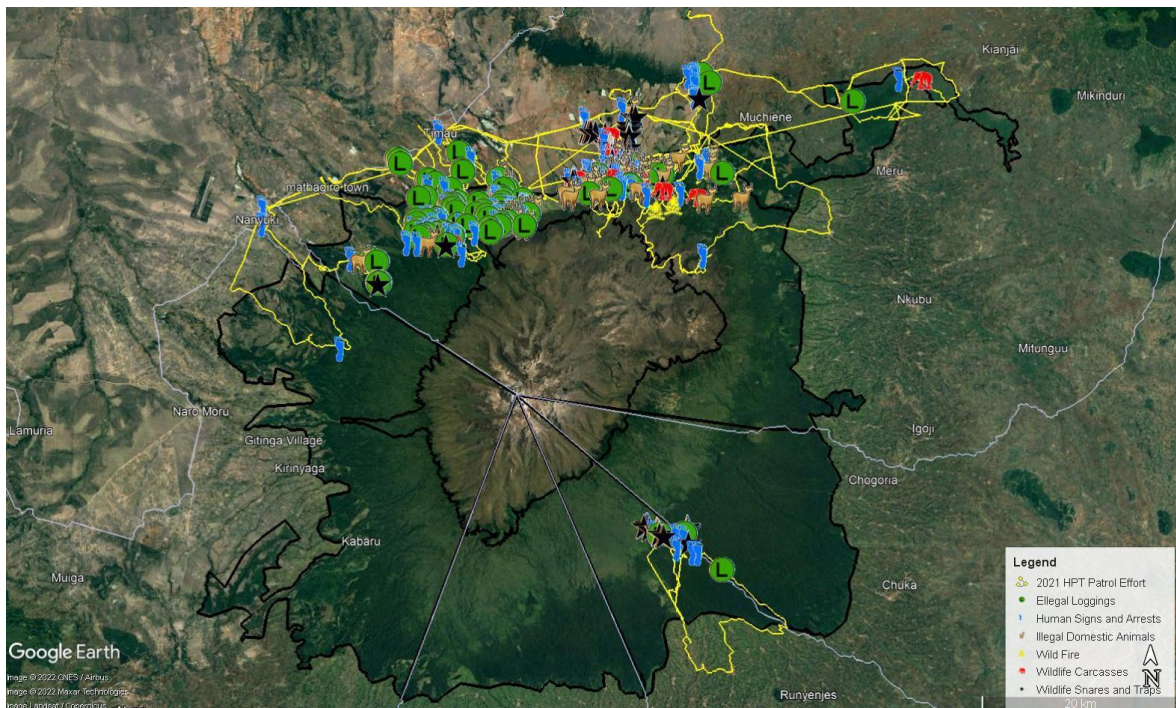
Generally, goats are not allowed in the park/ reserve as they are browsers and more destructive. Some of the other domestic animals were found grazing illegally as the owners did not have permits. The owners were verbally warned for grazing without permits and the animals evicted. The number of domestic animals observed was especially highest during the dry seasons as most of the pastoral communities took their livestock to graze inside the forest.

Direct Encounters

People Arrested	People Observed only	People Unsuccessful Pursued	People Verbally Warned
14	30	18	34

Table 5: Action taken during direct encounters with people

Most of the arrests were carried out during operations in the Gatinka area, a hotspot area for charcoal burning. People were arrested mostly because of illegal logging, charcoal burning and poaching.



Map 1: HPT patrol findings from January to December 2021.

f. Describe any problems discovered or that occurred during this grant period

COVID-19 restrictions and disruptions

With more community members out of work or risking social-economic destitution due to COVID-19 restrictions or economic downturn, on the ground reports and patrols are finding more people inside the National Reserve and turning to illegal poaching or forest harvesting to make ends meet. This increases the risk of HEC as humans start to move into the elephant's safe habitat more frequently, along with other habitat destruction risks from cattle grazing, increased risk of forest fires and charcoal production

We quickly realised, however, that projects had to go ahead in many aspects. For example, reducing camping patrols was not an option (although previously planned) due to a large and widespread increase in illegal activities as described below. This includes an increase in snaring, and in particular, large mammal snaring. We are worried about this trend and our teams are doubling efforts to deter and arrest individuals found in the forest and deactivate and remove as many snares as possible.

Due to COVID-19, the courts are trying to avoid overcrowding in prisons. As a result, some offences are considered petty resulting in minor charges that the offenders can easily afford. Immediately they are released, they go back into the forest doing the same thing that they were initially arrested for and this demoralises the rangers.

Reduction in funding

The pandemic has affected the organisation with shifts to our operating dynamics and project future potentials. The largest impact has been reductions in funding from partners and supporters who depend on events or tourism for their sources of income. In particular, our 2021 10to4 Mountain Bike Challenge and title sponsor Tropic Air, AFEW Giraffe Centre in Nairobi and the Tusk Marathon have either reduced or halted funding. These are events or projects that depend on a large through fold of tourists or international donors that have been unable to travel to the country. Although we don't directly depend on tourism as an organisation, many of our supporters do along with Trusts or partners that depend on investments.

Increase in illegal threats since 2016

The most important results of the 2020 survey are that illegal threats increased by 51% since 2016. There may well be a link between the larger spread of elephants and the larger spread of illegal activities in 2020 (compared to 2016). Illegal logging multiplied 3.5-fold and livestock numbers increased by 75 per cent. Meat poaching was found to be more spread and in the same areas where logging increased. Elephant distribution was more spread than in the same season in 2016 which may indicate some competition for grazing with livestock. Livestock negatively affects the mountain's carrying capacity to sustain its wildlife grazers. The loss of 10 elephants in 2021 is alarming and has called for extra vigilance.

3. Evaluation

<i>Project objectives</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<i>Output</i>
1. To decrease the prevalence of illegal activities, in particular, elephant and bushmeat poaching in the northern areas of Mount Kenya National Reserve	How many patrol days were conducted?	From January to December 2021, the team has conducted a total of 263 patrols: 243 routine patrols and 20 camping patrols
	How much distance was covered by patrols?	Through the patrols conducted between January – December 2021, the team has covered a total of 5,251.06 km.
	How many snares and/ or traps were found and removed?	The team found and destroyed 161 different types of snares. If left undiscovered, these snares would have caught and even killed unsuspecting wildlife roaming the area.
	How many poachers were caught/ arrests made?	Between January – December 2021, 14 people were successfully arrested while 18 people managed to escape.
2. To work collaboratively with the Kenya Wildlife Service to extend the area of surveillance into Meru and Sirimon which have seen a marked increase in habitat and wildlife destruction in high altitude zones	How many patrol days were conducted jointly?	All 20 camping patrols were joint patrols. Rangers from KWS and KFS also joined the team during some of their routine patrols.
	How much distance was covered by joint patrols	322.67Kms and 4,928.39Kms were covered during the camping and routine patrols respectively.

3. To increase awareness and conservation education within the communities living in and around Mt Kenya Park	How many humans were served and/or positively affected?	The project has supported a total of 7 rangers by paying for their salaries. The employed rangers come from the surrounding communities. Seeing how their own get to benefit from protecting and conserving the ecosystem incentivizes them to take better care of their environment and the resources that they have.
	How many education opportunities were offered?	During the routine and camping patrols, some of the people encountered in the forest were educated and given verbal warnings. During the riparian patrols, the team sensitised the community members that they met and adjacent farm owners on how to better manage the riparian habitat. The riparian patrols are conducted in conjunction with the respective Water Resources Users Associations (WRUAs) along the riparian areas of 4 rivers that flow from Mt. Kenya: Sirimon, Timau, Teleswani and Ontulili Rivers.
	How many kids/ adults were educated/ served?	34 people were verbally warned. More people were sensitised during patrols
4. To improve the links with wildlife NGO to reduce response times for illegal incidents, improve intelligence gathering and information sharing	Were there any joint patrols conducted with the different wildlife NGOs?	Joint patrols were conducted with KWS, KFS, WRUA and (CFA) Community Forest Association.
	Are there any initiatives taken to bring together the different stakeholders/ partners?	The Trust works with the judicial team to refresh the team on the relevant Acts and policies while teaching them how to effectively write up charge sheets against culprits to ensure that they incur the maximum penalty possible for the illegal activities carried out. The Trust also facilitates some of the judicial team building activities around the Mt. Kenya area. This is usually an opportunity to sensitise them on the issues being faced within the Mt. Kenya National Park and Forest Reserve

		<p>with an aim of reinforcing the outcome on rulings made against arrests for these illegal activities as they will have a better understanding of the impact and the effort that goes into protecting the ecosystem. The rangers are also part of the CUC (Court Users Committee) which ensures improvement and accountability of court services while strengthening and improving links with other actors in the justice sector.</p>
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4. Conclusion

Next step

The team will continue to conduct daily patrols either during their routine or camping patrols. Joint patrols with KWS and KFS will be carried out from the base with members from a number of the MKT teams or individual teams including the HPT. Patrols carried out with armed KWS rangers will be necessary until the area is more secure. Our aim will be to make as many arrests as possible to deter habitat and wildlife destruction. Illegal activities will be reported to the KWS and KFS senior staff on a monthly basis via our monthly reports.

During patrols, the team will record the number of patrol hours, distance covered and illegal activities found using the Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool. The SMART features will provide data outputs on wildlife and security issues for protected area managers. This will allow improvements in anti-poaching efforts, overall law enforcement and ranger effectiveness.

Human story

This report's human story is narrated by Edwin Kinyanjui. Edwin is currently the Trust's Education Officer. Before June 2021, he was the team head of the Joint Wildlife Protection Team. While he is no longer a ranger by title, he is still a ranger at heart and he occasionally joins the rangers on patrols. His narration is about the day they found a contraption set up for elephants while on patrol with the rangers.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MOUNT KENYA TRUST RANGER

On Saturday, we planned for our normal patrol in the forest. Often, we respond to intelligence information from local sources. On this day, however, we had no new intelligence so we decided to patrol an area where we suspected there might be illegal activities happening.

It was early in the morning when we set off. We drove our vehicle until the road ended, and then began patrolling on foot. After walking a short distance, we saw human and dog footprints coming from the forest. We followed them so that we could determine what sort of activity was taking place. Since it was the dry season, tracking the footprints was difficult. At one point, my teammates and I almost gave up after being unable to find any more tracks. Luckily, we spotted other signs of human activity, like machete cuts in the vegetation, which helped us to continue on the trail. It was particularly difficult at times when we reached dry, grassy fields, so we had to rely on our past tracing experience to continue onwards.

At one point, we found ourselves in a new and unknown location that none of us had been to before. We checked our GPS and discovered that we were 11 kilometres inside the forest! As we had completely lost the trail and it was getting late, we decided to take a break before retracing our footsteps to get out of the forest.

While my colleagues were taking a break, I decided to take one last look around for signs of human activity. After searching for about twenty minutes, I found a path with some barely visible footprints, and so I called out for my colleagues. They could not hear me because I was so far away, but, thankfully, there was cell service so I was able to call them. When they arrived, we agreed to try our best to follow the path since our mission for the day was not over yet.

We set off and my colleague who was in front of the group noticed a dry bamboo stick placed near a tree and stopped to check it out. At first, he wanted to grab onto it but I yelled at him to stop. Our rule is to always remain as quiet as possible because we never know what might be in our surroundings. I asked him to jump back from where he was, and he did so very quickly. I was trembling as I pointed up into the tree. We all saw a trap hanging from the tree designed to kill an elephant. We all ducked to a safer area behind another tree nearby so that if there was somebody monitoring the trap they would not be able to attack us from that direction.

After some time, I crawled towards the tree where the trap had been set and called out to my

colleagues. We looked around to make sure there were no other humans or wildlife in the vicinity. After determining that the scene was safe, I began to explain to my colleagues how that type of trap works. The trap consisted of a large piece of metal that had been sharpened at one end and embedded into a heavy log, which was then suspended from the tree. When an elephant triggers the trap, the log with the sharp metal is designed to fall directly onto the elephant. We cut the rope suspending the trap and it came down with a big thud. Everyone was amazed! With much difficulty, we removed the sharp metal from the log so we could easily carry it with us out of the forest. Luckily, we had a machete that made it easier to break off the nails that attached the metal to the log. We were extra cautious as we worked because poachers have been known to poison traps so that they are more lethal.

It was a bittersweet day. We were joyful that we were able to save an elephant from this deadly trap, but disappointed that we were unable to find the culprits. This was a good reminder of the importance of being alert at all times while on patrol since danger can come to you from all directions.

5. Financial snapshot

The financial snapshot below shows the project's status using the funds received from IEF. The total expenses for HPT in 2021 was \$59,036 for 2021. \$19,750 was covered by IEF. AFEW covered \$ 29,095 and MKT's unrestricted funding covered \$10,191.

Budget Item	Amount	Revisions based on what has been committed	Jan - May 2021 ACTUAL	July - Dec 2021 ACTUAL
	IEF (\$)			
Project Personnel				
Salaries	12,800	10,000	4,331	5,669
\$150 x 7 x 12				
Northern Sector Supervisor	-		-	
(\$450*12months)/3 Northern Teams				
Programme Officer	2,500	1,000	746	254
\$1000/month*12*0.20				
Medical	400	400	100	300
\$400/year				
WIBA Insurance	650	500	350	150
\$109/year*6				
Meals				
Rations	2,640	1,640	1,244	396
\$30/month x 7 x 12 = \$2520				
\$30/month Northern Sec Supervisor x 4 = \$120				
Horse Feed for 10 Ethiopian ponies	2,460	2,360	624	1,736
15 bales/month @ \$3/bale = \$45 x 12 = \$540				
Oats 480kg @ \$0.4/kg = \$192 x 6 = \$1152				
Barley 300kgs @ \$0.4/kg = \$120 x 6 = \$720				

Equipment				
Uniform and Team Equipment	850	850	109	46
\$100/year*7				
\$500/year misc (camera, USB, batteries)				
Horse equipment	400	400		
(Saddles & tack)				
Services				
Veterinary costs \$1000/year	-		1095	
Training	-			
\$600/year				
Transport costs for fuel and vehicle maintenance	1,500	1,500	750	750
480km@\$0.52/km x12				
Misc				
General housing & stable repairs	600	600	276	324
\$800/year				
Operational Costs - Admin, Accounting, Telephone, Reporting & Monitoring @ 10%	500	500	250	250
Total	25,300	19,750	9,875	9,875

6. Deliverables	
Images	Sent via Wetransfer
Video	Sent via Wetransfer
7. Acknowledgements	
Online resources	www.mountkenyatrust.org
	@mountkenyatrust on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter