

Transcript for **Hippo that loves in a house**

**Reporter:** It is one of the rules of Africa – if you see a hippo, head the other way – but this is Jessica and she breaks all the rules.

**Tony:** *(talks to the hippo)*

**Reporter:** Tonie Joubert, a game warden, found her washed up by flood water when she was just a day old. Seven years on, she's still here.

**Tony:** I don't know whether she sees me as a hippo or she sees herself as a human. All I know is that, er, there's a fantastic bond that I've never had with any other animal my whole life. I've raised elephants and buffalo and lions and that stuff but I've never had something this close, never ever.

**Reporter:** Jessica spends her days lazing in the sun ... and cooling down in the water with Tony and his wife on hand to deliver refreshments, weak sweet coffee, twice a day. Then there's the afternoon snack with the dogs and if Jessica is still hungry, she knows where to go. A short walk to the house, where a closed door doesn't stop her, even if the dog gets in the way. She's already broken a sofa and the bed inside, so everywhere but the kitchen's off limits. But the kitchen is her favourite place.

**Tony's wife:** Jessica sees herself as our child ... she sees herself as a human being, one of us, part of the family. That's what she is, that is what she is to us.

**Reporter:** And how do you see her?

**Tony's wife:** I see Jessica as my daughter, hundred per cent. I can't imagine my life without Jess.

**Reporter:** And Jessica seems happy to stick around. It's one thing to tame a hippo in captivity, but what makes Jessica so remarkable is that she's free to leave at any time. Further along this river there's a pod of wild hippos and Jessica likes to spend time with them but she always comes back here, probably because she knows she's onto a good thing. The hippo kills more humans in Africa than any other wild mammal but Jessica has never displayed any aggression. And after a long hard day of eating she likes a massage before she goes to bed. Hippos live into their forties and Jessica is expected to mate and breed so there could soon be another hefty pet here, curling up with the dogs, to go to sleep.

Emma Hurd, Sky News, Hoedspruit, South Africa.