

# Donkeys

Don't be fooled by the cute complexion, donkeys require a lot of management and attention! There is a tendency to treat donkeys as if they are small horses, but donkeys are different! Donkeys are not like horses; they differ physically, mentally and emotionally.

**Social Animals:** Donkeys are natural browsers and require a diet of high-fibre plant material. They are very sociable and should never be kept alone.

**Health Monitoring:** Regular health checks, including dental and hoof care, are crucial. Donkeys can be prone to hoof problems and should have their hooves trimmed every 8 weeks.



**Veterinary Care:** Donkeys appear very resilient and can mask signs of pain and distress very well. They require a holistic approach to veterinary care, understanding their physiological differences compared to horses or ponies. Ensure that good preventative care plans are in place including vaccinations and dental examinations. Donkeys should be vaccinated for influenza and tetanus yearly, and regular dental checks are important to ensure good oral hygiene. A donkey that is "dull" should always be examined by a vet as an emergency.

**Foot Care:** Donkeys' hooves are smaller, more upright and tougher than those of horses. Hoof problems are common and it is essential that they receive proper care to minimise any occurrence. Feet should be trimmed every 8 weeks by a farrier that has some experience with trimming donkeys. Donkeys are prone to thrush, seedy toe and laminitis.

**Feeding:** Donkeys are metabolically stable and can survive on poor diets. However, they should not be overfed, as this can lead to health issues like laminitis. As with horses, forage should be the foundation of the diet with vitamin / mineral / protein needs being provided in addition with a balancer.

**Parasites:** The parasites that effect donkeys are comparable to those that effect horses however there are a few exceptions. Donkeys are asymptomatic carriers of lung worm (*Dictyocaulus arnfieldii*), which can cause respiratory disease / coughing in horses and ponies. It is therefore important to worm both donkeys and horses with ivermectin when they are cograzed. Discuss with your vet when best to do this.



For more detailed information and resources, consider watching the webinars and YouTube videos provided by the Donkey Breed Society and The Donkey Sanctuary. These resources offer valuable insights into donkey care and health management or ask your veterinary surgeon for further information.