



DONKEY SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

INCORPORATED
ABN 82 148 300 307

WHAT MAKES A DONKEY HAPPY?

WATER

Donkeys need fresh, clean water available at all times, and they dislike stale algae-coated or polluted water.

FOOD

Extensive pasture with rye, coarse native grass, paspalum and other less lush grass will keep a donkey happy, but this is not possible for all donkeys. One acre of land is the minimum for ease of handling (preferably divided so one area can have a rest) but even without grass available, a donkey will thrive with controlled, conscientious supplementary feeding. It is advisable to remove droppings because they spoil the pasture and encourage flies. Tidbits can be given in the form of carrots, or an apple a day, select vegetable kitchen scraps - *all in moderation*. It is better to feed tidbits in a bowl. This precaution will prevent your donkey from becoming a greedy little nuisance with his nose in every pocket and looking for food from every visitor. Take care with kitchen scraps.... Meat is poisonous.

Supplementary feeds include:-

- Good quality pasture hay. A regular ration of pasture hay is all the supplementary feeding required for many donkeys. Avoid mouldy hay, donkeys do not like it and generally will not eat it but if they do it can be harmful. Hay is also a good source of roughage which donkeys need.
- Oaten hay. Donkeys enjoy oaten hay, but it can be difficult to store as mice also enjoy it.
- Lucerne hay. This is a good hay for breeding donkeys, or those in hard work who are having trouble keeping weight on, but can make many donkeys overweight.
- Hard Feed – mix it yourself using Oaten chaff, Lucerne Chaff, Oats and Bran or buy a ready mixed horse feed. Hard feed is not required for most adult non-working and non-breeding donkeys and can make them obese, but it is useful for feeding young donkeys, old donkeys, in foal or lactating jennies and stud jacks.

- Mineral Licks should always be available, buy licks suitable for horses.

When feeding donkeys, you need to learn to judge your donkey's condition to know whether you are feeding enough (or too much). Donkeys should not be bony but they shouldn't have rolls of fat either. Read books, talk to other donkey owners, look at other donkeys, have someone look at your donkeys. You need to get your feeding correct or your donkey will not be happy or healthy.

SHELTER

Shelter can vary from a good belt of trees or thick hedge to an elaborate stable. Some owners rug their donkeys in the winter.

COMPANY

Donkeys are herd animals and need company. It is also NOT enough to buy a donkey, put him in paddock and only visit him once a week.

FREEDOM FROM PARASITES

Lice: Even the best donkeys get lice, this problem is most prevalent during spring and autumn. The best way to rid the donkey of them is to fully wash the donkey and then apply a flea or louse wash or powder, this may need to be applied at fortnightly intervals. Apply along the backbone, be liberal at the withers, down the shoulders and in the chest area. Brush in well. Remember if you are washing your donkey, you should choose a sunny day.

Worms: The average owner worms his donkey about every three months using granules or paste. Follow instructions on the packet and if worming a pregnant jenny, check the product is safe for her. If using granules, refrigerate the night before (the smell is less pronounced). Granules are mixed with the feed. Make it a routine to worm regularly even though it may not appear necessary.

CONTINUED:

THE GELDING MAKES THE BEST PET

Only on rare occasions, and as a result of a controlled breeding program, should donkey male foals be kept entire. Care must be exercised in the choice of a Veterinary Surgeon who is aware that the blood vessels should be crushed and tied off.

TREATMENT OF BODILY DISCOMFORT

Feet: Keep regularly trimmed. Inspect feet weekly (look for stones), apply foot dressing regularly. Most donkeys will need to have their feet trimmed about every two months but this does vary. If your donkey is old enough to be ridden, check his feet for stones before and after riding. Donkeys do not usually need to be shod.

Teeth: Donkeys teeth become sharp and can cause pain and discomfort. To keep your donkey comfortable and happy, it is a good idea to have an equine dentist check your donkey's teeth say, every third year. More frequent visits may be required if your donkey is young or old, having problems with eating or is worked regularly.

Roll Patch: Donkeys love rolling and will soon make their own 'Roll Patch'. It is natural for all animals to roll. It helps deter flies, assists with digestion, protects from skin complaints and improves muscle tone. Put up with the bare patch of pasture or provide a pile of sand.

EDUCATION

A trained donkey is much happier than an untrained one. All donkeys should be happy to be caught and haltered, lead and be used to having their feet handled. Do not ride your donkey until he is three years old. However, preparation can begin much earlier. Teach your donkey to go in and out of a float early in his life. Remember to always patiently encourage and the motto should be "push not pull". If you intend showing, riding or putting him in a cart, go and see other donkeys at work if you can. Books are available.

CARE OF THE WEANLING FOAL

The donkey foal is one of the most enchanting of all young animals. He needs the same basic care as the adult plus a little more. Remember he is still a baby and may be in new surroundings. Admittedly the innate good sense of the donkey will be to his advantage but there are some instances where he will need your protection. He will be lonely for the first few days and will probably bray, but this will not last. Establish a routine for feeding and he will feel more secure. Make the routine to suit your times but once decided, stay with it. Foals seem to have an "in-built clock" in their tummies. If you are too late with food he will let you know.

Give your new donkey plenty of time to get to know his other paddock friends before you put him in with them. Introduce him over the fence. Foals get on very well with all other members of the family once they get to know them.

Inspect his shed and paddock with an eye to what might be a hazard. Do NOT tie up and leave him unless you are watching. If you, as a new owner, wish to do something that is not part of his natural behaviour or environment, use your greater intellect to foresee any possible dangers.

The weanling foal will repay you a thousandfold for all the efforts you make for his creature comforts. Keep grooming, picking up his feet and teaching him to lead and tie up until he is old enough for more serious lessons.

The donkey is hardy animal. He is sensible, intelligent, affectionate and lovable. These things combine to make him a survivor.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Do love your donkey.

Do remember donkeys like a routine. Feed him at regular times.

Do keep his paddock free from manure.

Do look at as many donkeys as you can before you buy one.

Do realise the donkey is a very hardy animal provided his basic needs are met.

Don't spoil him. He needs discipline as well as love.

Don't worry if your weanling foal cries out for the first few days. This will stop. It is only Jacks that are really noisy for extended periods of time.

Don't put your Jenny in foal until she is at least three years of age. Don't ride your donkey until he is three years old.

Don't leave headstalls on donkeys unless under supervision.

Don't feed rhubarb leaves, yew, rhododendron, wheat or MEAT in any form to your donkey. These are extremely poisonous. Lawn clippings can also be dangerous as they will heat up and can cause colic, which may be fatal.

Do realise a donkey does not need elaborate fencing if it is a happy donkey, but an unhappy one will be able to get through what you thought was a safe fence. Try to avoid barbed wire. It is no more effective than plain wire but can cause nasty injuries.

Do acknowledge that if your donkey is about to become a mother you owe it to her to find out all you can about special care for pregnant Jennies. Consult your Vet, find out what happens during the birth process and what steps should or should not be taken. The gestation period is about 54 weeks for donkeys.

Do introduce your new donkey 'over the fence' to other donkeys or stock.

Don't wind the lead ropes around your hand when leading or handling.

Do remember he is a highly intelligent animal, educate him, and get him doing something interesting. A bored donkey is not a happy one.

Don't take your Jack out on the roads unless it is permissible with your local councils' by-laws.

Do join the Donkey Society of Victoria Inc.

Remember: 'If man interferes with nature he must be prepared to take a greater responsibility'.

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