

## Donkeys

Here at Wright & Morten we pride ourselves in being the responsible for not one but two donkey sanctuary's- Manchester and Buxton. Both donkey sanctuary's are unique in that, Buxton is home to old and retired donkeys who can spend the rest of their days grazing on the Derbyshire moors, whereas Manchester is home to younger donkeys that participate in special educational activities for children and adults, and those that are also awaiting adoption to go into foster homes. Due to this large and ever-changing population, we see a variety of veterinary related donkey issues which we can utilise when treating our population of privately owned donkeys. The partnership between ourselves and The Donkey Sanctuary also gives us accessibility to resources and research undertaken by The Donkey Sanctuary Devon's own vets helping us diagnose disease more quickly in these stoic and tricky animals.

### ***Donkey Quick Facts***

- Donkeys can live for 50 years
- Donkeys hate to live alone - another donkey or a goat will keep them happy
- Donkeys are extremely strong for their size!
- In many countries donkeys are used to guard livestock
- They love a ginger biscuit

Donkeys are just small horses aren't they? WRONG! A donkey is a much more complex and stubborn being which is why donkeys, through no fault of the owner, can quickly become severely poorly. A donkey acting even slightly out of character is a cause for concern, not to mention if they refuse a ginger biscuit! Our main cause for concern with donkeys is a condition called hyperlipaemia, this is where excess fat cells enter the bloodstream and if not treated promptly can lead to death.

*These types of equines are designed to live in harsh environments where vegetation may be sparse and of poor quality, necessitating walking for up to 16 hours a day in search of food. As a result they tend to put on weight and gain excess fat reserves when living on relatively lush pasture and with limited exercise. Unfortunately when these animals stop eating for any reason hyperlipaemia may develop - The Donkey Sanctuary*

The main cause of hyperlipaemia is stress. Stressors can be varied, including:

- Pain
- Loss of a companion
- Transport
- Diet change
- Change in social hierarchy
- Illness - Colic and Choke, both of which can have related dental problems, and liver issues

The signs of hyperlipaemia can unfortunately be well hidden in some donkeys. A dull donkey is always a concern, as is a donkey that will not eat. If you ever suspect your donkey is not quite right always ring for advice.

### **Donkey care**

Although not to be seen as small horses, donkeys need very similar care.

**Teeth** - Donkeys also need regular dental care. Many dental issues can go unnoticed in a donkey again due to their stoic nature. Regular annual dental check ups are recommended to make sure your donkeys teeth are in good condition

**Feet** - Donkeys also need regular farriery. The donkey was built for dry harsh terrain which would allow to naturally wear down their hooves, in the lush British countryside its not as easy. Frequency of farrier

visits would depend on hoof growth, usually every 6-10 weeks. Daily inspecting of white line for impacted stones, and cleaning of the feet are necessary.

**Worming** - Donkeys also need regular worming. We would always recommend worm egg counts before giving any wormer. There are also types of wormer, mostly those that include drugs for tapeworms (praziquantel), that donkeys cannot have so always check when you buy! Another thing to remember is that donkeys can harbour a worm known as *D. Arnfieldi* a.k.a the lungworm. This worm will cause no harm to the donkey but when passed to horses can cause exercise intolerance and breathing issues. If grazing horses and donkeys together always make sure you are using appropriate wormers for both.

**Feeding** - Having developed for desert living, donkeys can survive on a lot less calories than we think! Feeding hay and haylage is like having takeaway every night! Donkeys do amazing well on straw, low calorie and can help keep sharp teeth at bay. Due to their desert ancestors donkeys are also keen browsers, they'll chew on wood and will try and eat bushes and brambles, make sure any paddock is clear of poisonous plants! Always remember to add a small amount of balancer to your donkeys diet to make sure all their vitamin and mineral needs are met

**Toys** - Donkeys are incredibly intelligent animals and will get very bored and destructive if not kept entertained. Balls, wellies, turnips, lots of things will keep them entertained!