



The guide for good animal welfare practice for the keeping, care, training and use of donkeys and donkey hybrids - Factsheet

Water and Feed

Donkeys should:

- Have free access to water and never be without water for more than 4 hours.
- Be fed a diet high in fibre and low in soluble carbohydrates.

What you need to know

- Donkeys typically drink 5-10% of their body weight daily.
- Donkeys may be particular about drinking from unfamiliar, chilled or contaminated water sources, leading them to tolerate excessive dehydration while maintaining a normal appetite. This may predispose to health issues such as impaction colic.
- Feed requirements of donkeys differ to those of horses and ponies. The best diet is straw supplemented with hay, haylage, vitamins and minerals and/or grazing.

How to do it properly

- Maintain your donkeys' dental health. Diets should be adapted to dental status.
- Any feed changes should be gradual, over a period of at least 2 weeks.
- Feeding cereal grain-based feeds is not appropriate.
- Donkeys should be offered small quantities of feed several times throughout a 24-hour period to ensure sufficient chewing time. They should have access to roughage when housed, in paddocks or when turned out on areas without grass.



Donkeys drink best from an open source of tepid water



High-fibre feed is the basis of a good diet

Compared to horses, donkeys can be more tolerant of thirst, naturally adapted to maintain appetite when dehydrated and can rehydrate rapidly without adverse effects. These should not be mistaken for a reduced overall requirement for water.