

Voluntary
Initiative on
responsible
ownership and
care of equidae



Current members and observers

Member States

- Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Ireland and Spain

Business and professional organisations

- Copa-Cogeca, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE), International Society for Applied Ethology (ISAE), European Horse Network (ECN)

Civil society organisations

- Animal's Angels, Eurogroup for Animals, World Horse Welfare, The Donkey Sanctuary.

Academia/independent expert

- Joe Collins (Chair, Ireland), Michela Minero (University of Milano, Italy)



Work of the Voluntary Initiative

Previous work

- Three sets of documents developed by the subgroup and acknowledged by the EU Platform so far:
 - Horse Guide
 - 7 factsheets based on the Horse Guide
 - Donkey Guide
- ✓ Available – together with the translated versions (10+ languages) – online on EU Platform's website

Latest work

- Donkey factsheets
- Guides on working equids in tourism activities

Buone pratiche per il rispetto del benessere animale nella custodia, cura, addestramento e uso dei cavalli



Konie powinny mieć **swobodny dostęp do wody** i nie powinny pozostawać bez wody dłużej niż 4 godziny.

Jak zapewnić prawidłowe warunki?

- Konie wolą pić wodę z **otwartej powierzchni**, ale łatwo uczą się korzystania z poideł.
- Sprzęt używany do pojenia powinien być utrzymany w czystości i ustawiony tak, aby minimalizować **zanieczyszczenie**.
- Kontrola systemów pojenia powinna mieć miejsce **codziennie**, a przepływ wody należy uregulować na poziomie ok. 8 litrów/minutę w celu umożliwienia odpowiedniego picia.
- Gdy temperatura spada poniżej zera musimy podjąć dodatkowe środki, np. zapewniając sprzęt do podgrzewania wody lub regularnie donosząc niezamrożoną wodę.
- W przypadku biegalni, padoków i pastwisk powinno się zadbać o zapewnienie **wystarczającej przestrzeni przy wodopoju**, dzięki czemu unikniemy konkurencji i agresji

wśród koni.



Konie wolą pić wodę z otwartej powierzchni. Zdjęcie poideła znajduje się w Przewodniku.

Ile wody wypija koń?

Zwykłe konie wypijają od 5 do 10 % swojej masy ciała dziennie. Ilość wody, której potrzebują zależy od ich stopnia aktywności, temperatury otoczenia i zawartości wody w paszy. Klacze w trakcie laktacji, czy konie używane do wyczynowego sportu (np. wyścigów) mogą pić więcej.

Zdjęcia zamieszczone w broszurze służą zilustrowaniu niektórych z optymalnych warunków. Nie stanowią jednego prawidłowego rozwiązania.

Guia de boas práticas de bem-estar animal para criar, cuidar, treinar e utilizar burros e híbridos de burros



Donkey factsheets

- 8 factsheets in total:
 - Accommodation
 - End of life
 - Feed & water
 - Handling & training
 - Hoof care
 - Welfare assessment
 - Working & production donkeys
 - Transport
- Based on the Donkey Guide + new/updated information
- Been shared with the Platform members
- Asking for 'Acknowledgement' at this meeting – December 2022



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

Accommodation

Good housing provides a safe, comfortable environment with protection from adverse conditions.

What you need to know

- Construction materials should be safe, non-toxic, easy to clean, with no sharp edges that could cause injury and, preferably, fireproof.
- Floors and passageways should have a non-slip surface.
- Dust levels, relative air humidity, environmental temperature and noxious gas concentrations should be kept within appropriate limits using correct ventilation and insulation.
- Donkeys living in groups must have sufficient space to be able to escape from aggressive companions and access feed and water at all times.
- Group housing systems should include options to isolate ill, injured or new donkeys.

How to do it properly

- Housing should provide for donkeys' need to shelter from rain, sun and flies.
- Space and bedding should be adequate to provide a dry area for all donkeys to lie in natural positions and all rest at the same time.
- When designing accommodation, including stables and stable doors, ensure that each donkey has visibility, audibility and, ideally, contact with other donkeys.



Appropriate bedding is essential for donkeys and donkey hybrids



Contact between donkeys should be considered when designing accommodation

A contingency plan should be in place in case of fire or other critical situations and emergencies.

Photographs used in this factsheet to illustrate some situations should not be considered to illustrate the sole solution to situations described.

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Hoof Care

Donkey hooves are anatomically different to those of other equidae and require specific care.

What you need to know

- Donkeys have a more upright hoof pastern axis compared to horses.
- Donkey hooves also have a different microstructure, which means the horn absorbs and holds more moisture. If left untrimmed, they tend to curl rather than crack.
- If kept in wet, dirty conditions, donkey hooves are prone to thrush, white line disease and abscessation.

How to do it properly

- Donkeys should have free access to a dry, hard-surfaced area to maintain hoof health.
- Only trained professionals with experience of the foot anatomy of donkeys should trim their hooves.
- Most donkeys work well without shoes. Shoes are only needed where donkeys are walking regularly on hard ground or wearing hooves excessively.
- Donkeys' hooves should be trimmed every 6 to 8 weeks.
- Severely overgrown or malformed hooves should be treated by experienced farriers under veterinary supervision with radiographs taken to guide trimming.



Donkeys' hooves (on left) are naturally 5 to 10° more upright than horses' (on right)



A fully-trimmed hoof beside a partially trimmed, overgrown hoof

Changes in behavior can be a sign of pain and require urgent veterinary attention. As donkeys often mask pain, signs may be subtle and easily overlooked. Foot pain can cause lameness, weight shifting, shortened strides and reluctance to pick up a foot.

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Handling and training

Young foals should learn to be led by a head-collar, be touched all over the body, to have their feet lifted and remain calm during foot trimming.

What you need to know

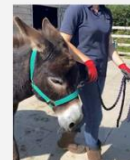
- Donkeys may display fear reactions if not familiar with human contact and restraint. Reactions may be subtle and easily missed by trainers.
- Inappropriate training methods may have a negative impact on donkey welfare, and may lead to aggression or conflict behaviour that could endanger handlers.

How to do it properly

- Donkeys can be trained to remain calm by gradual and gentle introduction to objects and situations that may frighten them.
- The best training results are achieved when donkeys are given a reward (e.g. a feed treat) immediately when they respond correctly.
- Any stimulus used to encourage the animal (e.g. gentle hand pressure) should be removed immediately when the animal responds as the handler wishes.
- The company of a bonded companion is beneficial when a donkey has to be loaded for transport or habituated to a novel situation.
- A complex task should be broken down into smaller steps, taught and learned in sequence, to achieve the end result.
- Avoid using inconsistent or conflicting signals to donkeys during training.



Keep hoof near to the ground



Lead donkey as shown, remembering not to wrap lead rope around your hand

Donkeys should be gently handled and trained from a young age. Methods involving cruelty or punishment must not be employed.

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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.

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Transporting donkeys by road

Any transport can be a stressful event and may put donkey welfare at risk. Training the donkey before loading can improve the entire transport experience – for everyone!

How to do it properly

- Plan the journey carefully to avoid delays during travel and ensure a safe arrival.
- Train the donkey to load before planned travel and allow adequate time for loading.
- During loading:

 - Take advantage of natural gregarious and bonding behavior;
 - Manage lighting to avoid shadows within the vehicle;
 - Cover the ramp to reduce noise, light reflections or unpleasant vibrations if necessary.
 - Use side-gates if available
 - Avoid travel during hottest and coldest hours of the day/night.
 - Use bedding inside the trailer to absorb urine and faeces and reduce slipping.
 - Pay attention to ventilation and space requirements.
 - Provide high-fibre feed during the journey and offer water regularly depending on journey time.
 - Drive smoothly. Avoid sudden acceleration, deceleration and sharp cornering.
 - Ensure vehicles and drivers comply with legal requirements and thoroughly check all equipment before travel.



This picture illustrates poor practices

- Don't**
- Transport unfit donkeys
 - Pull donkeys into vehicles
 - Load from light into shadow
 - Leave ramp un-bedded
 - Use ramp with steep incline
 - Travel by choice in the full heat of the day

Practical Guidelines to Assess Fitness for Transport of Equidae

Always ensure that donkeys are fit for transport. Transporting an unfit animal compromises its welfare and is prohibited under European legislation. Read the **Practical Guidelines to Assess Fitness for Transport of Equidae**.

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Working and production donkeys

Donkeys/mules are used for a number of practical purposes including: tourism, transport of goods, garbage management and production of milk and meat. Persons without appropriate experience should seek advice from a trusted source prior to taking responsibility for working equids' welfare.

What you need to know

Tourism

- It is essential to ensure the welfare of donkeys used to transport passengers or luggage.
- Tourists can influence animal welfare standards through good decision-making.

Milk Production

- There are many donkey dairy farms in EU countries and no specific legislation in place. However, a guide to good practice is available.

How to do it properly

Tourism

- Ensure that working equids do not carry loads that are too heavy or for too long a period.
- Ensure animals have access to appropriate shade, food, water and rest. High quality, appropriate equipment must be used.

Milk Production

- Appropriately manage different animal categories – jacks, foals at foot, weaned foals, milking and dry jennies.
- Pay attention to the additional nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating jennies and their foals, and separation of foals from jennies to allow milking.



Passengers should be conscious of the welfare of taxi- and tourist-donkeys



Good management practices are essential to the care of dairy donkeys

Persons caring for working equids must have the necessary knowledge and willingness to ensure donkey welfare.

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Assessment of the welfare of donkeys

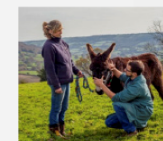
Welfare assessment is vital to identify welfare concerns in an individual donkey or group of donkeys and their cause.

Welfare assessment goals

- Monitor and assess changes in welfare status and changes in donkey welfare over time.
- Identify areas of concerns for animal welfare.
- Provide guidance on structural or management changes needed to improve welfare.

How to do it properly

- The correct application of welfare protocols requires that assessors be adequately trained.



Donkey welfare assessment protocols may be used as monitoring and evaluation tools

Donkey Welfare assessment should include:

Good feeling	Appropriate reactions	General Health
Good feeling	Absence of welfare goals	Behaviour
Good feeling	Comfort when resting	Lesions
Good feeling	Thermal stress	Practice-induced conditions
Good feeling	Ease of movement	Hooves and Limbs
Good health	Absence of disease	
Good health	Absence of any signs of welfare problems	
Good health	Expression of welfare behaviour	
Good health	Expression of social behaviour	
Appropriate behaviour	Good human-animal relationship	
Appropriate behaviour	Positive emotional state	

[The Animal Welfare Indicators (AWIN) Welfare assessment protocol for donkeys]

[Standardised Equine-Based Welfare Assessment Tool]

- Welfare assessments do not replace daily inspection.
- When disease or injury is suspected or identified, a clinical examination should be performed by a certified veterinarian.

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End-of-life decision making

Owners may face end-of-life decisions and should prioritise the animal's welfare to avoid unnecessary suffering.

How to do it properly

- Be prepared to act decisively and consult a veterinarian if a donkey has a chronic or incurable condition that compromises welfare or is non-responsive to treatment.
- Ensure that the method of killing is humane and causes the animal to irreversibly lose consciousness before death.
- If the donkeys' 'pair-bonded' to one or more other donkeys, ensure these animals remain together at time of killing and for a period afterwards – stress can be life-threatening for donkey companion(s).
- If considering transport for slaughter, the donkey must be fit for transport and the journey as short as possible.



Allow donkeys sufficient time to accept the loss of a pair-bonded companion



Hyperlipaemia is a common reason for euthanasia and also a frequent cause of death afterwards in bonded donkey companions

How to perform humane killing?

- Always consult a veterinarian about the methods available where the donkey resides and consider relevant legislation.
- Be aware of the need for accurate placement of a free bullet or captive bolt and the need for rapid exsanguination following the latter.
- Discuss chemical euthanasia using anaesthetic agents.
- Consider local regulations for disposal of carcasses.

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Guidelines for Working Equids in Tourism Activities- for the Owners/Keepers of Working Equids and those who license/regulate their activities.



Main welfare issues for working equids in tourism including:

- Insufficient training of handlers
- Inappropriate husbandry & professional care (e.g., hoof care, injuries, unfitness to work)
- Excessive loads
- Extreme weather conditions
- Environmental pollution

Recommendations include:

- Min/max. age and body condition
- Preventative health care e.g., hoof care
- Working hours and breaks
- Feeding and watering
- Weight loads
- Retirement and end-of-life





Next steps for VI on Equidae

- Review ToR in agreement with EC
- Donkey Factsheets:
 - Translations
 - Dissemination in the field
- Guidance re Working Equids in Tourism:
 - Dissemination
 - Develop visual material suitable for the users of tourism services – to be brought to a future Platform meeting for acknowledgement

Thank you

