

Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue's Care and Feeding Guide

3rd Edition Sept. 2015



Written by
Mark & Amy Meyers

Congratulations on the addition of your new donkeys. We have compiled this guide to help ease your transition into the world of long ears.

The information contained in this guide is easy to find, easy to understand, and most importantly easy to implement.

Once you have read this guide, keep it around for future reference. If you have any questions about the contents of this guide or if you have a question about something that is not covered please feel free to contact us.

The staff of Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue is always here to help.

on the web
via email
by phone
by fax

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The information contained in this guide should be used for reference only. It is important to have your Veterinarian help you to establish a medical program specifically for your area.

Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue is a professional animal rescue organization funded entirely by private donations. All gifts are tax deductible under IRS 501(c)(3) Tax ID #77-0562800

PVDR's Care and Feeding Guide Contents.

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This booklet is also available in PDF on our website
www.donkeyrescue.org => Resources => Forms

One of the most important responsibilities of a donkey owner is to ensure a healthy diet. Many owners feed the wrong types of feeds and overindulge their donkeys with treats. Obesity from an incorrect diet will result in a shortened life span of your donkey, sometimes as much as half. Improper diet can also result in founder and laminitis which are debilitating hoof ailments.

To understand the dietary needs of your donkey, you must first consider the donkey's origins. The common ass is a direct descendant of the African Ass. These donkeys evolved in the arid deserts of Africa and are accustomed to dry, sparse vegetation. Donkeys are browsers by nature and are used to looking for edibles as they slowly wander along. This instinct to constantly look for food will result in problems if the donkeys are in an area with too much fresh grass.

The first mistake a new donkey owner will make is to ask the local feed store for a feed recommendation. In all of our years in donkey rescue, we have never found a feed store operator that knew the nutritional requirements of a donkey. Usually they will instruct you to feed the donkey as you would a horse. This advice is not only wrong, but could be lethal.

Grass hay is the number one feed choice for donkeys. It is usually available in all areas of the country in one form or another. The benefit of grass hay, over other types of hay, is the low protein levels. To be beneficial to a donkey, the protein level must be below 10%. In a typical alfalfa hay, the protein levels can easily exceed 25%.

Types of grass hay include:

Bermuda

Coastal Bermuda

Orchard

Timothy

Brome



Donkeys require approximately 2% of their body weight in hay spread over 2-3 feedings per day. For an average 500 pound donkey this could be 5 pounds in the morning with an additional 5 pounds in the evening. Cool, clean, ice free water must be made available to your donkeys at all times. Never feed a donkey if you are unable to provide water!

Donkeys are extremely stoic animals and will not usually show pain. Always ensure that your donkey is eating everyday. A donkey "off his feed" is a sure sign of a serious health problem. Call your veterinarian immediately if you notice a sharp drop in appetite.

Older donkeys, those over 20, may benefit from the addition of an equine senior feed. This will help boost their system and also provide vitamins and minerals necessary for older animals. Always follow the "feed to body weight" instructions on the product. Continue to feed some grass hay for digestive purposes.

Treats are not necessary for a donkey's health and their overuse can result in unacceptable behavior. If your donkeys are always expecting a treat, they may start to bite and get agitated if treats are not forthcoming. Spoil your donkeys with love, not treats. If you insist on an occasional treat, give carrots cut into 2" lengths. Many horse and people snacks are too rich for donkeys and can have serious health complications.

In addition to feed and water, donkeys require salt and minerals. The most convenient way to provide these is in the form of a salt block. Available at most feed stores, these blocks are made from salt with many other trace minerals included. The blocks are left in the donkey's pen, usually near the water, and the donkey will lick the salt as needed.

Remember:

NEVER FEED ALFALFA OR HIGH PROTEIN FEEDS!

Parasite management is a crucial part of your donkey's health. Parasites can be internal or external and come in many forms. Donkeys can contract parasites and their larva through contact with feed, dirt, birds, squirrels and a host of other sources. All animals are susceptible to parasites and it is the responsibility of the owner to maintain a proper parasite program.

The most common method for the prevention of parasites is to use a de-worming agent available at most feed stores. The products used for de-worming come in many forms and most are acceptable for use in a donkey. Always read and follow the directions. If you are unsure about the proper program for your area, please contact your Veterinarian.

Here at Peaceful Valley, we worm our donkeys every three months. Donkeys are very susceptible to lung worms and therefore must be treated every six months with an Ivermectrin based wormer. To ensure that we are prepared for all types of parasites, and in case they develop an immunity to a specific product, we rotate our worming products as follows:

January Ivermectrin Based

April Anthelmintic Based

July Ivermectrin Based

October Strongicide Based

These types of products are dispensed in a paste form from a large syringe into the mouth. A typical worming is based on weight and a tube will usually treat 1200 pounds or two adult donkeys. Use the weight scale on the plunger for younger, lighter donkeys.

If you have recently acquired an older donkey that has never been wormed, it is crucial not to overdose them. Start with a mild wormer and give one half of the recommended dosage. A massive die off of internal parasites can kill the donkey as well.

Your donkeys will also require annual vaccines to maintain their health. The vaccine requirements vary by region and only a qualified veterinarian can provide the necessary information. The most common components of vaccines are for the prevention of:

Tetanus

Sleeping Sickness Influenza

Rhino Virus

In addition to the above vaccines, Peaceful Valley strongly recommends that you have your donkeys vaccinated against the West Nile Virus in May of each year with a booster given in August for seasonal protection.

If you have acquired donkeys that have not been previously immunized, it is important that you begin their vaccination process with an initial dose of both types of vaccines followed by a second booster dose 4-6 weeks later. After this initial treatment, subsequent vaccines are given every six or 12 months as directed.

Many donkey owners do not feel comfortable giving shots and should allow a licensed veterinarian to perform the vaccination process. This is also a great time to have the Vet check the overall health of your donkey including teeth, coat, weight and hooves. If you are interested in learning how to give the vaccinations yourself, please visit our YouTube channel for instructional videos at:

www.donkeyrescue.tv

Another often neglected area of health is your donkey's teeth. Typically donkeys will not need their teeth floated, or filed, as often as do horses. If you notice chewed clumps of hay in the feeding trough or water bucket, call your Veterinarian and have your donkeys teeth checked immediately.

Remember: VACCINATE and DE-WORM REGULARLY

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B R E E D I N G

There is no valid reason for any donkey owner to keep a whole jack or to breed donkeys in general. With so many donkeys losing their desert habitat and so many others waiting for adoptive homes, it is simply irresponsible to breed more. If you are interested in acquiring a certain type of donkey or you would like a baby, please contact us for a list of qualified, responsible breeders.

A jack can be castrated safely at any age as long as both testicles have descended. Peaceful Valley has successfully gelded male donkeys from as young as 4 months of age to as old as 34 years old. If performed properly, the procedure is safe and effective.

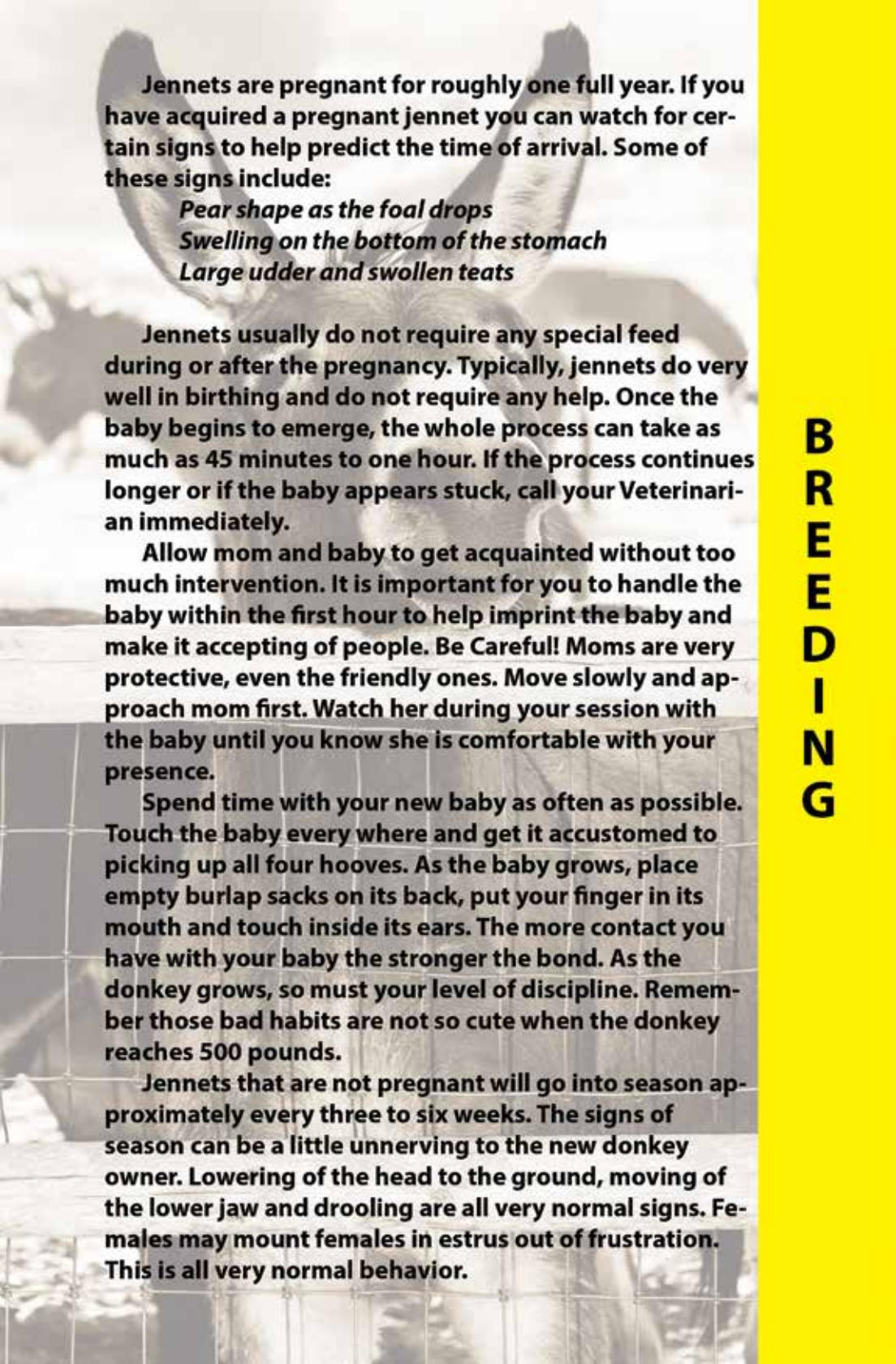
The key to a successful castration is the ligation, or tying off, of the blood vessels. Unlike horses who do not bleed profusely, donkeys can bleed to death if the emasculator is used without ligation. Crimping of the blood vessels alone is not sufficient and can result in death from loss of blood.

A castrated donkey is healthy, happy and will live a life free from frustration. Of all the attacks on humans that Peaceful Valley has responded to, they have all been by uncastrated jacks. In every case, the owner said that their donkey had always been sweet and harmless and they did not know what came over them. An uncastrated jack is unpredictable and can seriously injure a person.

In a recent rescue, Kenny was an uncastrated, 3 year old jack that was bottle fed and raised in the house. Once he hit sexual maturity, he viewed people as equals and considered anyone a potential rival or sexual partner. Kenny attacked a man and his grandchild and seriously injured the man as he tried to protect the child. It took several months of work before Kenny was safe around people.

Remember: CASTRATE YOUR DONKEYS!





Jennets are pregnant for roughly one full year. If you have acquired a pregnant jennet you can watch for certain signs to help predict the time of arrival. Some of these signs include:

Pear shape as the foal drops

Swelling on the bottom of the stomach

Large udder and swollen teats

Jennets usually do not require any special feed during or after the pregnancy. Typically, jennets do very well in birthing and do not require any help. Once the baby begins to emerge, the whole process can take as much as 45 minutes to one hour. If the process continues longer or if the baby appears stuck, call your Veterinarian immediately.

Allow mom and baby to get acquainted without too much intervention. It is important for you to handle the baby within the first hour to help imprint the baby and make it accepting of people. Be Careful! Moms are very protective, even the friendly ones. Move slowly and approach mom first. Watch her during your session with the baby until you know she is comfortable with your presence.

Spend time with your new baby as often as possible. Touch the baby every where and get it accustomed to picking up all four hooves. As the baby grows, place empty burlap sacks on its back, put your finger in its mouth and touch inside its ears. The more contact you have with your baby the stronger the bond. As the donkey grows, so must your level of discipline. Remember those bad habits are not so cute when the donkey reaches 500 pounds.

Jennets that are not pregnant will go into season approximately every three to six weeks. The signs of season can be a little unnerving to the new donkey owner. Lowering of the head to the ground, moving of the lower jaw and drooling are all very normal signs. Females may mount females in estrus out of frustration. This is all very normal behavior.

Hoof neglect is a serious problem in our country and the reason is simple:

Most donkey's owners are afraid of getting kicked.

A donkey will not willingly pick up his hooves for trimming unless he has been made to feel comfortable. Many owners will not work with their donkeys for fear of getting kicked. Most farriers (horse-shoers) will not work on a donkey that will not stand for trimming because of fear of injury. This leaves the donkey with neglected hooves and serious issues.

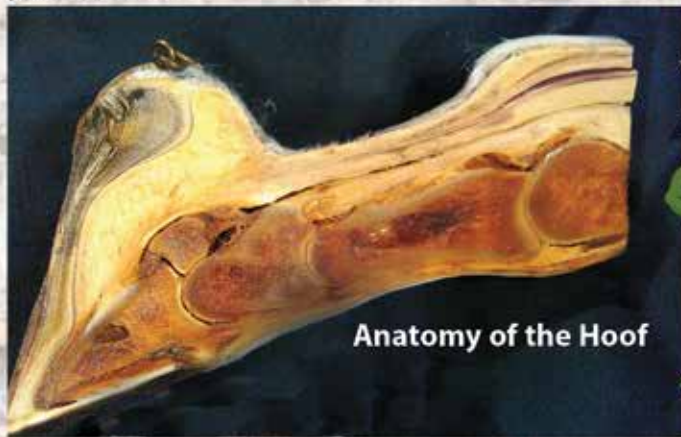


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Successful hoof care starts with you, the donkey owner. As you spend time with your donkey, stroke down their legs as you speak softly to them. Lengthen your stroke each time until you can touch the hoof. This process may take days or even weeks but it is time well spent. Once your donkey is comfortable with having their legs touched, gently squeeze the tendon on the back of the lower leg. This will signal the donkey to raise the hoof. If the donkey complies, hold the hoof for a moment and give it back, praising the donkey the entire time. Repeat this process until all four hooves can be raised.

A hoof pick is a great first tool to use on your donkey. Once he is accepting of picking up his hooves, take your hoof pick and clean out any dirt, manure and rocks that may have accumulated. This is a very good practice and will ensure good hoof health. It is always a good idea to be on hand when your farrier is trimming your donkey. Rough handling can reverse many hours of your work. Be on hand to comfort the donkey and instruct the farrier on a gentle approach.

Wild burros maintain their hooves by constantly moving along the rough desert terrain. Domestic donkeys are usually limited on their space and their hooves must be trimmed. Many factors can have an impact on hoof growth including: diet, weather, exercise and age. Keep a watchful eye on the growth of your donkey's hooves and try to establish a regular schedule with your farrier.



Anatomy of the Hoof



F A C T S

In the United States the average lifespan of a domestic donkey is over 40 years. In many cases, a donkey can live well into their fifties provided they have received proper care and feeding.

Donkeys make great hiking companions. Packing with donkeys is a great way to explore the outdoors and build your relationship with your donkey. A good rule-of-thumb when loading a donkey is to not exceed 20% of the donkey's body weight in dead weight (saddle, bags, equipment) or 30% of the donkey's body weight in live weight (saddle and person).

Baby donkeys generally have a shaggy coat until they are two years old. A baby donkey (foal) learns to explore the world using its front lip as a finger. Allowing the baby to feel you helps to build your relationship, correct the bites as they occur with a light slap and a stern "NO". A donkey's age is determined by growth patterns of their teeth.

Donkeys are very protective by nature and are often used as guard animals for sheep, goats and cows during calving. This does not mean that all donkeys are suitable for this function. Young donkeys are often too aggressive and may hurt or even kill small animals.

Donkeys are very adept at handling hot temperatures. Their long ears act as sails, catching the desert breeze and cooling the blood as it passes through them. In extreme conditions donkeys can survive without water for days without ill effect, second only to the camel.

Donkeys have no natural predators in the United States. In fact, they can fend off and even kill most predators found in this country.



Got a question? info@pvdr.org

Donkeys that are fed improperly usually live less than half of a normal life expectancy.

Donkeys are viewed as a stubborn animal. In almost every language on the planet the term “jackass” is used as a slur. What is generally viewed as stubbornness is the donkey’s instinct to protect itself. If a donkey does not feel safe, or trust the person that is handling them, they simply will not cooperate. Any rational creature would react the same way.

Wild burros captured through the BLM’s program are often times hard to manage. This is a result of the harsh treatment and stress during the helicopter round ups. The greatest tool in gentling these burros is time. Go outside and sit quietly with your burros. Allow them to get acquainted with you, go slow and be patient.

Donkeys can run in excess of 30 MPH and jump over five feet high.

A donkey’s bray is sound generated on the inhale and exhale. Donkeys will usually only bray before feeding times, if they sense danger or if they are lonely. Donkeys are happier in pairs.

Donkeys come in three distinct sizes:

Miniature	36” or less
Standard	36” to 56”
Mammoth	56” or above

Peaceful Valley is the largest donkey rescue in the world with operations spanning the entire United States and into the Caribbean. As a donkey owner, we encourage you to get involved with our work as we strive to improve the Plight of the American Donkey.

Want to learn more? www.donkeyrescue.org

Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue

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PVDR Gift Shop: www.donkeyrescue.com

Donkey Adoption Application: www.donkeyadoption.org

Satellite Adoption Centers: www.pvdrlocations.org



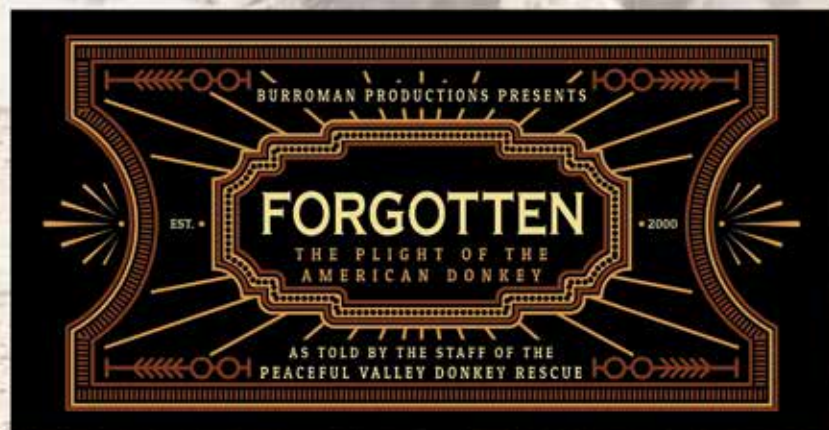
DonkeyAdoption



DonkeyRescue



DonkeyRescueTV



Be sure and pick up your copy of
Forgotten: The Plight of the American Donkey
DVD and Companion Book Available at
www.donkeyrescue.com

Ass: Common name of *Equus Asinus*. Replaced with "Donkey" in the late 18th Century

Bray: Distinctive "Hee-Haw" sound of the donkey

Burro: Used to define wild, free roaming donkeys

Castrate: (geld) To remove the testicles

Donkey: Usually referring to domestic stock

Flehman: Flipping up of the upper lip in order to gather scent in the mouth

Foal: Baby donkey

Founder: Deterioration of the bone within the hoof, usually caused by high protein feeds.

Hinny: Hybrid cross between a male horse and female donkey

Jack: Male donkey

Jennet: (or jenny) Female donkey

John: Male Mule

Molly: Female Mule

Mule: Hybrid cross between a male donkey and a female horse

Parasite: Internal and external worms that can cause serious health problems if left untreated.

Withers: Highest part of the shoulder, used to determine height of the donkey

T E R M S



\$5.99 USD

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