



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

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.

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