

TRANSPORT NOTES FOR DONKEY OWNERS

Current UK legislation has strict transport guidelines relating to the movement of all commercial livestock. These restrictions do not yet apply to private animals but they may in the future. These recommendations are worth following in all situations to ensure optimal welfare standards are maintained. If you are travelling abroad please ensure you check with your vet with regard to health certificates.

Tips

If you are loading/travelling donkeys for the first time or are not familiar with them then leave plenty of time for loading. Better still, if it is not an emergency, schedule a practice run beforehand. If this does not go smoothly then practise daily and maybe feed the donkey in the trailer each time. Make the box and entrance as inviting as possible. Park the trailer carefully to block the escape route from the sides and reduce the ramp height. It is recommended to go for a short drive if the first journey planned is a long one. The driver must be competent at towing before driving with an animal on board.

Transport Recommendations

All journeys made using the basic trailer towed behind a vehicle should not exceed a journey time of 8 hours. If borrowing a trailer always thoroughly check floor, lights, ramp and catches for safety. Check the towing capacity of the vehicle with the manufacturer. Ensure the trailer complies with the legal requirements for road use e.g. tyres, brake cables, registration plate and spare wheel.

- A specially designed lorry is required for journeys exceeding 8 hours, or those including a ferry, train or plane journey. Sufficient space, ventilation, food and water must be provided.
- Bedding within a trailer or horsebox should be sufficient to absorb urine and faeces for the entire journey unless frequently cleaned out. It is ideal to have rubber matting and minimal bedding for comfort and support, ideally dust extracted bedding such as cardboard, newspaper or shavings. A reduction in amount of bedding improves the air quality within the box.
- A lot of energy is used in maintaining balance whilst travelling. Careful driving can greatly reduce the stress to the donkey(s). Attention must be paid to ensure slow acceleration, braking and cornering.
- Choose the route most suited to ensure a smooth, continuous journey.
- Plan the journey carefully to avoid traffic delays as the ventilation within the box depends on forward movement. Have a map in case you need to look up an alternative route.
- Avoid travelling during the heat of the day during the summer.
- Ensure you leave the box clean after use and ready for the next journey.
- Do not carry spare filled haynets on the outside of the vehicle/trailer as the hay or haylage will absorb pollutants from vehicle emissions.
- Carry a mobile phone, fully charged and with relevant telephone numbers on it i.e. vet, relative, destination contact, breakdown recovery etc.
- If possible, take someone who is used to the donkeys with you.
- Carry drinking water and buckets, (in the towing vehicle not the trailer).
- Take the donkeys' passports with you in case you are stopped by the police or need to call a vet.
- Take at least one spare head collar and lead rope.
- Carry a torch and first aid kit for animals and personnel.
- Ensure adequate fuel.

Your donkey

It is worth noting that most stress occurs at loading and unloading. Plan both stages to minimise stress by having experienced helpers, ideally familiar with the donkey.

- It is best to take a full net of damp hay or haylage if the journey is a long one, or involves a rest stop. Some individuals will not eat whilst travelling but the option must be available.
- As donkeys can bond extremely strongly to other donkeys as well as other animals, it is very important to ensure any bonded companion animals travel as well. Failure to do so could result in extreme stress to the animals involved.
- Check the animals on board at the start of the journey for signs of distress. Avoid unnecessary breaks in the journey as stopping and starting can cause stress.
- We find that donkeys travel better loose as they find their own position of comfort. If we have more than a pair of donkeys to travel then we use side to side partitions rather than lengthways so that the donkeys can be confined as a pair to the front section of the trailer or lorry, and if necessary a second pair can be put on the back section. When observed they all stand with their rumps towards the engine and lean against each other.
- Rugs and bandages: generally we do not bandage our donkeys' legs for travelling or apply tail bandages unless the donkey "sits" on its tail. Overheating can be dangerous to the donkey and it is rarely necessary to fit a rug. However, take one with you just in case.
- If you should have to tie your donkey up then please ensure that the lead rope is tied to a breakable piece of string attached to the ring.
- Ensure the donkeys have adequate ventilation at all times.
- Always ensure that the donkeys are fit to travel.

Seek veterinary advice if in doubt and never travel if the following apply:

- Unwell
- Reduced appetite
- Nasal discharge or respiratory disease
- Lameness
- Heavily pregnant
- Newly born foal (less than 1 week)
- A suckling foal, without its mother

Safety

Be prepared for minor injuries. Carry a first aid box containing the following recommended items:

- Cotton wool (for foot poultices only)
- Cotton wool or gauze pads for wound cleaning
- Animalintex poultice
- Vetwrap bandages (at least 4)
- Elastoplast bandage
- Antiseptic-iodine or Hibiscrub

- Antiseptic ointment
- A pair of scissors
- Latex gloves
- Thermometer
- Drenching syringe for glucose solution

Remember:

Long journeys will involve a temporary reduction of feed and water intake, which has to be compensated for during the 24 hours following arrival.

Travelling can prove stressful to the respiratory system so symptoms of breathing problems may be exacerbated.

For your longer journeys it is advisable to take a list of contact numbers for travel, weather information and local veterinary practices just in case of emergency. Ensure you carry an up to date map.

The stress of travel may exacerbate minor or pre-existing conditions.

If you are in any doubt with regard to travelling your donkeys then please ring us here at The Donkey Sanctuary for further advice.