

Buying a Donkey Needn't be Difficult

If you've decided on a standard or large standard donkey, finding a suitable individual shouldn't be too hard. A "wanted to buy" ad in your area shopper or a trip to an all breed horse sale might easily do the trick. The Bureau of Land Management will gladly furnish you with a burro in this size range for a very modest fee if you're willing to tame a wild one. (ADMS can send you a book telling you exactly how to go about this taming and training process). You can also write to the American Donkey and Mule Society for addresses of donkey breeders in your area. If you seek the less common breeds, the Miniatures, the Mammoths or Spotted asses, a letter to the ADMS or the organization registering your chosen breed will usually bring results. Prices will vary depending on the breed of donkey you select and the part of the country you hail from. You can pick up a BLM wild burro for \$75 in Arizona, pay \$1500 or more for a mammoth jack stock foal in the Midwest. Bargains are available. BLM wild burros often boast excellent conformation and leg; many have become donkey show winners in halter and performance classes. Many champion donkeys have also been "discovered" at country horse auctions and purchased for well under \$200. You can find a fine quality brayer to fit any need and any pocketbook if you look long and carefully enough.

Donkey Care

If you know horses you already know how to care for a donkey. Treat him like a small, quiet natured horse and things will go smoothly. However, there are a few special concerns about donkey care that are worth noting. Donkeys do not require a lot of feed and certainly not a lot of high energy, heating feed if they are in good condition to start with. Go light on concentrates and legume hay. Despite what those good 'ol boys will tell you, donkeys can and do founder if overfed and donkey youngstock is prone to the same leg problems that plague horse youngsters who are overfed on grain. Overweight donkeys tend to develop very unsightly "sausage roll" crests which tend to fall over and detract from a donkey's good looks. Feed your longears according to his size needs and the use you put him to. Donkey feet are incredibly tough yet pliable and will not under normal domestic circumstances wear down or chip off like horse's hooves do. You will have to keep your don's feet properly trimmed, or he may develop "Sultan's slipper" feet. Donkeys need to be wormed and have the same injections as horses and if lung worms are a problem in your area, be sure to work all donkeys will for this with the Ivermectin wormers as they are particularly susceptible to lung worms.

If you decide to breed your donk remember jennets have a longer gestation period than mares do. The normal span is 12 months, but donkeys have been known to carry their foals 13 months and still have a normal baby. BE SURE not to breed your jennet unless you have an assured home for the foal.

There is so much to learn about donkeys and their kin, and so much to do with them, and so much pure enjoyment of them as individual "people with longears", that donkey owners never seem to get tired of their loveable longears. So if you are an equine fan, try a donkey, you won't regret it!