

BUYING A DONKEY

Before proceeding to buy a donkey ensure you have carefully considered the requirements for keeping donkeys and identified the most suitable breed, age, sex and level of handling for your situation. A sensible, informed choice of donkey at this stage will ensure years of happy donkey ownership. Make a list of questions, in advance, to ask the seller about the physical and behavioural traits of the donkeys they are selling.

Checklist

- Never buy “unseen” through the Internet or advertisements in papers, magazines etc.
- Always take another person with you to act as a witness, preferably an experienced donkey owner or consult your local Donkey Sanctuary Welfare Officer.
- If you are buying a pedigree or miniature donkey, which could be extremely expensive (prices in excess of £3,000), you may be well advised to seek the services of a Vet to check your prospective purchase.
- Get something in writing from the vendor that confirms the donkey is what they say it is.
- Reputable dealers will agree in writing to take a donkey back if it has a physical or behavioral problem and either refund the purchase price or offer an exchange. Don't let the dealer take the donkey back to sell it on your behalf. You, and not the dealer, could be sued by the next owner if you fail to disclose a problem.
- If there's a problem, act straight away. The longer you leave it, the more you risk losing your right to a full refund, although you will still be able to claim damages.
- Passports - it is an offence to sell, buy, export, slaughter for human consumption and use for the purposes of competition or breeding any equine which does not have a passport. It should remain with the animal for its lifetime.
- The Donkey Sanctuary is always happy to provide help and advice if you are considering buying a donkey.

Buying from a dealer

- The Sale of Goods Act applies only if you buy an equine from a person classified as a 'dealer'. Buying from a dealer can offer the best protection.
- If you find your donkey has a problem, making him unsuitable for the purpose you bought him, you are entitled to your money back – even if the dealer denies knowledge.
- The Act implies certain conditions of sale – your 'statutory rights'.

These are:

- The donkey must be of 'reasonable' or 'satisfactory' quality – for instance, free of defects such as lameness – unless you have prior knowledge and accept the condition.
- The donkey must be fit for the purpose for which it was generally sold, or any purpose made known at the time of the agreement.
- He must be 'as described'. If your new eight-year-old turns out to be over 18, it is a breach of trading standards.
- If one or all of these criteria are not met, you may be entitled to a full refund or the difference in value between the donkey you thought you were buying and the one you got.

Buying privately

- Buying privately is a different matter. The law 'caveat emptor' (let the buyer beware) exists. If the donkey has a problem, you must be able to prove the seller knew, or ought to have known, about it in order for you to get a refund, and suing for breach of contract can be difficult, lengthy and costly.