



**THE CLINICAL EXAMINATION:  
PARAMETERS AND IMPORTANT POINTS**

Examination	Parameter	Units	Average	Range	Important points
Demeanour and behaviour <i>Observation</i> <i>History</i>	<b>A DULL DONKEY IS VERY LIKELY TO BE SERIOUSLY ILL. TREAT AS AN EMERGENCY.</b>				Very subtle changes in behaviour may indicate severe disease. A dull donkey usually indicates stress or pain (e.g. colic, hyperlipaemia, laminitis, dental disease, liver disease). Observe mobility; signs of lameness or increased recumbency.
Body condition appetite <i>Body score</i> <i>Skin</i>	<b>Weight</b> Important for medication See Appendices 2 and 3 for weight estimator and body scoring chart.	Kg	180	90-400	Watch for “sham” eating (pretending to eat) The thick hair coat can hide skin conditions and mask a poor body score: use a donkey specific body score chart. Palpate and check for skin conditions, lumps, parasites etc. 180 is average for a UK donkey.
Temperature	Adult donkey  Young donkey	°C °F  °C °F	37.1 98.8  37.6 99.6	36.5-37.8 97.2-100  36.2-38.9 97-102	Newborn foal - 37.5-38.5°C, 99.5-101.3°F
Cardiac auscultation and pulse rate	Adult donkey  Young donkey Newborn foal	Beats per minute	44  60	36-52  40-80 80-120	>52 indicates stress or pain. >70 could indicate severe pain or hypovolaemic shock without pain. Pulse quality may be less affected by dehydration and fluid loss in the donkey.
Respiratory tract auscultation and respiratory rate	Adult donkey Young donkey  Newborn foal After 12 hours	Breaths per minute	20 28	12-28 16-48  60-80 30-40	Consider the use of a re-breathing bag to accentuate subtle lung sounds, especially in obese donkeys where fat deposits muffle sounds. The donkey has an insensitive cough reflex. The respiratory rate decreases in the newborn foal after 12 hours.
Mucous membranes colour <i>Texture e.g. moist/tacky</i> <i>Capillary refill time</i>	Capillary refill time	Seconds	1.5	1-2.5	Capillary refill time may remain close to normal despite fluid loss or dehydration.
Abdominal auscultation	Auscultation of borborygmi				Both mixing and propulsive contractions should be auscultated and sounds should be present in all 4 quarters of the abdomen, where size allows delineation.
Examination of the oral cavity	An essential part of any clinical examination in the donkey.				The use of an oral speculum is essential as the narrow mandibular arcade makes visualisation more challenging.
Ocular examination					Note the different location of the nasal opening of the nasolacrimal duct in the donkey.
Rectal examination					Can be safely performed in most donkeys with care and lubrication. A spasmolytic can be used.
Peritoneal tap					A peritoneal tap can be difficult because of adipose deposits along ventral body wall (be aware that fat may be up to 14cm in depth in obese donkeys).
Ultrasound					Subcutaneous fat may obscure detail from ultrasound imaging.
Blood sample <i>Haematology, biochemistry and screen for hyperlipaemia</i>	Triglycerides  See appendix 4 for other parameters.	mmol/l	1.4	0.6-2.8	>2.8 mmol/l indicates mild hyperlipaemia. >8 mmol/l indicates moderate disease with increased mortality rates. >15mmol/l indicates severe disease with significantly increased mortality rates.