

KEEPING DONKEYS WITH OTHER ANIMALS

Guidelines for owners with pets or other livestock.

 1 March 2020 [Read on The Donkey Sanctuary website](#)

Donkeys may exhibit a high level of territorial behaviours. A donkeys' territorial instinct is so strong that in many countries they are used to guard herds of sheep and goats against dogs, foxes, coyotes and wolves. This territorial nature sometimes results in donkeys chasing and attacking livestock or small animals, such as cattle, sheep, goats, poultry, cats and dogs.

Due to the risk of injury The Donkey Sanctuary advises donkey owners to keep donkeys separately from other species.

FIGHT OR FLIGHT BEHAVIOUR

Although donkeys display both 'fight' and 'flight' behaviours, they usually live in small groups, running away is often not the best defence when they feel threatened. As a result, donkeys have strong fight responses that can lead to conflict with other species. This includes other equines as well as pets and livestock; although some donkeys will bond with horses and ponies they prefer the company of other donkeys.

Domesticated donkeys prefer to form pair bonds with other donkeys. Occasionally a donkey will bond with other species, sharing accommodation and living together safely without incident but owners need to be aware that they cannot rely on this. Donkeys are very strong and can cause injury, or even death, to other animals if they do attack them, and therefore it is safest to avoid any incidents that could put animals at risk.

GUIDELINES FOR OWNERS WITH PETS OR OTHER LIVESTOCK

It is possible to control interaction and to put safety features in place to reduce any risks to other animals from donkeys.

Do not take your pets into the donkey's housing area, but let them wait safely outside when you spend time with your donkeys.

Make sure that the fencing around the stabling or pasture will keep other animals out, but will also allow any pets or poultry to escape if the donkeys do attack them.

An easy exit route can be provided around the perimeter by arranging for a low, unfenced area underneath the donkey fencing, separated by a bar or fence rail. This space should provide enough space for a dog, cat or chicken to escape, but not be large enough for a donkey to get under.

It is also important to consider the management of donkeys that are kept with other animals. An example is the specific dietary requirements of the donkey that may cause issues at feeding times and may lead to the donkey becoming overweight and suffering associated conditions.



Under normal circumstances, The Donkey Sanctuary will not home donkeys to Guardian homes where the intention is to keep them in direct contact with animals other than donkeys.

It is wise to be take precautions and prevent any incidents. If you do want to introduce your donkey to pets or other species a professional behaviourist, your vet.

MORE INFORMATION

Our skilled and experienced team of welfare advisers are on hand to give advice and appropriate support during office hours. If you're having problems caring for your donkeys or mules, [contact our welfare team](#) or telephone 01395 578222 and ask to be put through to the welfare department.