

THE TRUTH ABOUT **DONKEYS, HORSES AND LUNGWORM**

Dispelling the myth.

 18 April 2024  [Read on The Donkey Sanctuary website](#)

Some equestrian owners believe donkeys and horses cannot live together due to the lungworm parasite *Dictyocaulus arnfieldi*. Here at The Donkey Sanctuary we believe that despite the risk from lungworm, donkeys, horses and ponies can live together quite safely, provided a regular de-worming programme as advised by your vet is followed.

When we hold our training days, it is common to hear people state that donkeys and horses can't live together because of the risks of lungworm. But the fact is they can.

TOP **LUNGWORM FACTS**

1. Donkeys are assumed to be the natural host of this parasite.
2. Donkeys tolerate even a large infestation of lungworms without apparent signs; while it can cause severe coughing in horses and ponies that contract the parasite.
3. Lungworm larvae can live on pasture for a considerable length of time, so good pasture management can help reduce infection.
4. Faecal sampling is the best way to diagnose lungworm in donkeys.
5. Donkeys, horses and ponies can live together quite safely, provided a de-worming programme as advised by your vet is followed.

We are also keen to clear up misconceptions about parasite infection levels in donkeys in the UK and have recently presented the results of a study assessing parasite infection levels in donkeys to vets and parasitologists.

It is often quoted that a large percentage (up to 70%) of the UK's donkeys are infected with lungworm. Our study to determine levels of parasite infection in donkeys new to The Donkey Sanctuary, over a four year period, showed that only 4% were infected with lungworm.

REFERENCES

- *Donkeys Parasites in the UK; Infection Levels, Treatment Intervals and Anthelmintic Use*. Proceedings of the Worldwide Association for the Advancement of Veterinary Parasitology, Calgary, 2009.
- *The Complete Book of The Donkey*, 2009.
- *The Professional Handbook of the Donkey* - 4th Edition, 2008.

MORE INFORMATION

We are not able to offer medical advice but our veterinary team offer a free peer-to-peer service for vets to discuss veterinary care and treatments based on individual cases.