



TRANSPORTING YOUR DONKEY

Recommendations to ensure optimal welfare standards during transportation.

 11 March 2024  [Read on The Donkey Sanctuary website](#)

Current UK legislation has strict transport guidelines relating to the movement of all commercial livestock. These restrictions do not yet apply to private animals but they may in the future. These recommendations are worth following in all situations to ensure optimal welfare standards are maintained.

Additionally, every equine owner, both here in the UK and Europe, must have a passport for their donkey, mule, horse and pony. If you are taking your donkeys abroad, please ensure you check with your vet with regard to health certificates.

TIPS FOR **BEFORE TRAVEL**

If you are loading/travelling donkeys for the first time or are not familiar with them then leave plenty of time for loading. Better still, if it is not an emergency, schedule a practice run beforehand. If this does not go smoothly then practise daily and maybe feed your donkeys in the trailer each time.

Make the box and entrance as inviting as possible. Park the trailer carefully to block the escape route from the sides and reduce the ramp height.

It is recommended to go for a short drive if the first journey planned is a long one. The driver must be competent at towing before driving with an animal on board.



It is worth noting that most stress occurs at loading and unloading. Plan both stages to minimise stress by having experienced helpers, ideally familiar with the donkeys

TRANSPORT **RECOMMENDATIONS**

YOUR VEHICLE

- All journeys made using the basic trailer towed behind a vehicle should not exceed a journey time of eight hours. If borrowing a trailer always thoroughly check floor, lights, ramp and catches for safety before travelling
- Ensure the vehicle is adequately fuelled before you travel.
- Check the towing capacity of the vehicle with the manufacturer. Ensure the trailer complies with the legal requirements for road use, for example, tyres, brake cables, registration plate and spare wheel
- A specially designed lorry is required for journeys exceeding eight hours, or those including a ferry or train journey. Sufficient space, ventilation, food and water must be provided
- A donkey uses a lot of energy to maintain its balance while travelling. Careful driving can greatly reduce stress to the donkeys. Attention must be paid to ensure slow acceleration, braking and cornering
- Choose the route most suited to ensure a smooth, continuous journey
- Plan the journey carefully to avoid traffic delays as the ventilation within the box normally depends on forward movement. Have a map in case you need to look up an alternative route

YOUR DONKEY

- Check your donkeys on board at the start of the journey for signs of distress
- As donkeys can bond extremely strongly to other donkeys as well as other animals, it is very important to ensure any bonded companion animals travel as well. Failure to do so could result in extreme stress to the animals involved
- Some donkeys will not eat while travelling but the option must be available
- The donkeys should be checked and offered water every four hours

- Rugs and bandages – generally we do not bandage our donkeys’ legs for travelling or apply tail bandages unless the donkeys sit on their tails. Overheating can be dangerous to donkeys and it is rarely necessary to fit a rug. However, take rugs with you just in case
- If you should have to tie your donkeys up, ensure that their lead ropes are tied to a breakable piece of string attached to the rings
- Ensure the donkeys have adequate ventilation at all times
- Always ensure that the donkeys are fit to travel.

ENVIRONMENT

- Avoid travelling during the heat of the day during the summer
- Bedding within a trailer or horsebox should be sufficient to absorb urine and faeces for the entire journey unless frequently cleaned out. It is ideal to have rubber matting and minimal bedding for comfort and support, ideally dust extracted bedding such as shavings. A reduction in amount of bedding improves the air quality within the box
- It is best to take a supply of damp hay or haylage if the journey is a long one, or involves a rest stop
- Hay should ideally be fed from the floor to reduce the risk of entrapment in haynets
- Ensure you leave the box clean after use and ready for the next journey
- Do not carry spare filled haynets on the outside of the vehicle/trailer as the hay or haylage will absorb pollutants from vehicle emissions

GENERAL ADVICE

- Carry a mobile phone, fully charged and with relevant telephone numbers on it, for example, vet, relative, destination contact, breakdown recovery, etc
- If possible, take someone who is used to the donkeys with you
- Carry drinking water and buckets (in the towing vehicle not the trailer)
- Take the donkeys’ passports with you in case you are stopped by the police or need to call a vet
- Take at least one spare head collar and lead rope
- Carry a torch and first aid kit for personnel use and a fluorescent waist coat

- Be prepared for minor injuries. Carry a first aid kit, a list of contents for a first aid kit and information on the treatment of wounds can be found on our **Treating your donkey's wounds** guide

CRUCIAL ADVICE

Seek veterinary advice if in doubt and **never** travel if any of the following apply:

- ✗ Unwell
- ✗ Reduced appetite
- ✗ Nasal discharge or respiratory disease
- ✗ Lameness
- ✗ Heavily pregnant
- ✗ Newly born foal (less than one week)
- ✗ A suckling foal, without its mother.



If you are in any doubt with regard to travelling your donkeys, please contact your vet for advice.

DONKEY **PASSPORTS**

Every equine owner, both here in the UK and Europe, must have a passport for their donkey, mule, horse and pony.

The passport describes the donkey, for example by breed, colour, species, lists all vaccinations and notes if any medicine has been given that would affect its food chain status.

The passport names the registered owner, but is a document that belongs to your donkey. It records the identity of your donkey and must be kept with your donkey at all times, travel with them and be passed to any new owner.

The passport also records your donkey's microchip number. This is a unique identifier which can help identify your donkey and help reunite you should they become lost or stolen. Ensuring any registered contact details are up to date will mean that owners can be easily identified and contacted in an emergency. This may be vital in rescue situations and may support equine welfare charities in their efforts to promote good welfare.

The use of microchipping became compulsory on 1 July 2009, with long periods given for owners to organise microchipping and register this on their passport. These periods depended on location and ended on:

- England: 1 October 2020
- Scotland: 28 March 2021
- Wales: 12th February 2021.

If your donkey does not have a passport, or is not microchipped then you are liable for prosecution and a fine.

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.