

FEEDING THE DONKEY WITH RESPIRATORY CONDITIONS (BAD BREATHERS)



**THE DONKEY
SANCTUARY**

Respiratory disease in donkeys can be multifactorial, however most long term conditions are related to allergens in the environment. Airborne allergens include dust, dust mites, mould spores and pollen. These particles irritate the airways and can cause an initial cough or sneeze reaction. In some animals symptoms can spiral into mucous secretion, inflammation and muscular constriction, restricting the space within the airways; resulting in longer term coughing and wheezing. Following your vet's diagnosis of a chronic allergic respiratory disorder, minimising the donkey's exposure to these particles in the stable environment (especially feed and bedding) can have a significant impact on disease progression.

DUST-FREE MANAGEMENT

- The aim is to minimise exposure to dust (and other particles) in the stable environment
- This may be more 'low dust' rather than 'dust-free' in reality!
- Straw is normally recommended as the feeding and bedding material of choice for donkeys but for bad breathers straw is often the worst offender
- Bed on dust extracted wood shavings
- Avoid deep litter bedding systems
- Use rubber matting if possible under the shavings to allow less bedding to be used
- Clean down all surfaces regularly to avoid the build-up of dust on windowsills etc.
- Discuss any concerns with your vet
- If sharing a space with other donkeys and horses they will need to be managed on a similar regime to avoid cross contamination



SUITABLE FEEDS

Traditionally, horses on dust-free management are fed soaked or steamed hay. However, for donkeys this is not recommended as we have found they become very reluctant to eat any soaked forage whatsoever. High fibre haylage such as Horsehage is an alternative to soaked hay, being naturally dust-free.

Short chopped chaff products such as Mollichaff Donkey, Mollichaff Hoofkind or Happy Hoof are also good alternatives to feeding straw as they are usually based on chopped straw with a few additions to increase palatability. The above products can be fed at the rate of approx 2-3 kg per donkey per day to satisfy appetite.

TopChop Zero is another chaff product which may be very useful for bad breathers as this can be fed on a truly ad lib basis without the risk of putting on weight as it is extremely low in calories. This means that your donkey can have free access to the chaff day and night, feeding around the clock in a more natural manner.

Underweight bad breathers can have additional bucket feeds of soaked high fibre nuts such as Spiller's High Fibre Cubes or Saracen's Donkey Diet. Speedi Beet or Fibre Beet are useful if weight gain is required. Always soak beet products according to manufacturer's recommendations.



All donkeys with respiratory illness will benefit from the nutritional support of a balancer; we suggest TopSpec Donkey Forage Balancer for those who are ideal or overweight, and TopSpec Comprehensive for those who are underweight. Both are fed at 100g per 100kg bodyweight per day, e.g. a 150kg donkey will need 150g of balancer per day.

Always introduce changes to the diet gradually and observe your donkey to ensure that it is eating. Try to avoid feeding your donkeys more than 1 kg of food at time, small frequent meals are best. Always ensure that donkeys have access to fresh clean water and an equine specific mineral lick if not being fed a vitamin and mineral supplement/balancer. Continually assess your donkey's body condition and make changes to their diet accordingly. If you need further advice or information please do not hesitate to contact us on 01395 578222 or by email nutrition@thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk

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The Donkey Sanctuary was founded by Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE in 1969.

The Donkey Sanctuary (registered charity number 264818) and its sole corporate trustee, The Donkey Sanctuary Trustee Limited (Company number 07328588) both have their registered office at Slade House Farm, Sidmouth, EX10 0NU.

Incorporating: The Elisabeth Svendsen Trust for Children and Donkeys (EST); The International Donkey Protection Trust (IDPT).

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