

FEEDING THE LAMINITIC DONKEY



**THE DONKEY
SANCTUARY**

Donkeys with laminitis need specialist feeding which often requires major changes to feeding and other aspects of daily care. Managing donkeys with laminitis is a long term issue focused around maintaining a healthy weight and feeding appropriately to prevent recurrence/exacerbation of the condition. Laminitis is a complex health issue and successful management of such a painful, serious and long term condition is dependent upon many factors. Do not attempt to manage a laminitic donkey alone. Working with a knowledgeable veterinary surgeon and farrier is of utmost importance.



THINGS YOU SHOULD DO

- Feed forages with a low starch and sugar content, preferably under 10% sugar and starch.
- Have your 'farm produced' forage tested to check the energy and sugar content.
- Commercially produced high fibre 'laminitic safe' haylage can be a good option.
- Very low energy short chop products may be useful.
- Check your feeding and bedding straw for retained grain.
- Encourage owners to feed 'little and often' to ensure donkeys are trickle feeding as they would in the wild, if possible encourage ad lib feeding, straw is particularly useful for those with good teeth and should be freely available.
- A non-pasture run out area such as a dirt paddock, sand school or bark chipped area will allow the donkey precious exercise

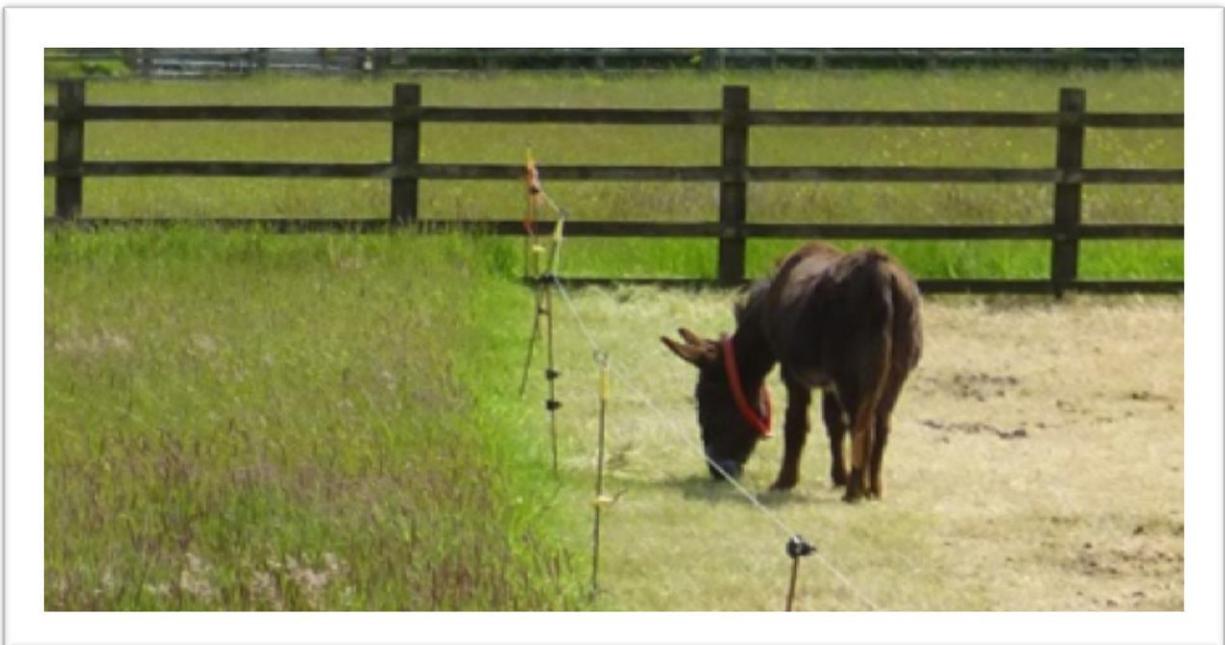


time without access to grazing once veterinary advice allows periods of exercise.

- Use an appropriate feed balancer to supplement vitamins/minerals if feeding a straw only diet.
- Feed an underweight laminitic donkey very carefully, aiming for high fibre, low sugar products, donkeys will gain weight easily on fibre based products, they do not require cereals.

THINGS YOU SHOULD AVOID

- Avoid all cereal based feeds, donkeys can be maintained and encouraged to gain weight on fibre based products without the need for inappropriate cereal feeds.
- Don't allow the donkey access to grazing whilst suffering an acute laminitic episode and for chronic cases always restrict grazing by area rather than time at grass, donkeys can eat the same amount in 8 hours of turnout as they can in 24 hours.
- Do not starve the donkey, this may put it at risk of life threatening hyperlipaemia.
- Don't allow the donkey to graze a frosty pasture on a sunny morning as the level of fructans in the grass may be very high at this time.
- Don't feed 'senior' or 'conditioning' feeds even if the donkey is underweight, these feeds are too high in proteins, fats, starch and sugars.
- Avoid the donkey becoming overweight and gradually reduce weight if this is already a problem (see 'Feeding and managing the overweight donkey' factsheet).
- Remember there is no 'safe' time to graze a laminitic donkey, fructan levels in grass can spike at any time of day or year with the right weather conditions.
- Avoid feeding sugary treats, encourage the feeding of 'safe' treats such as high fibre nuts, fresh mint leaves and small quantities of fruit.



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POSSIBLE DIETS

- For maintenance – Barley or wheat straw with small quantities of HorseHage High Fibre or Timothy Haylage or low NSC hay (hay can often have high levels of sugar and this may not be lost through soaking)
- For donkeys unable to manage any long fibre – use short chopped fibres designed as forage replacers, fed at 2-3kg per day to satisfy appetite - Mollichaff Donkey is ideal
- For weight gain - high fibre nuts (Spillers High Fibre Nuts and Saracens Donkey Diet) or Fibre Beet (British Horse Feeds' high calorie alfalfa-based product), feed in small amounts for very underweight animals
- For those on straw only diets - Top Spec Donkey Forage Balancer fed at 100g per 100kg bodyweight per day is an ideal supplement, providing vital vitamins and minerals. It is high in fibre but low in protein, sugar and starch as well as being low in calories so will not promote weight gain and can be used as an important part of a weight reduction programme when the rest of the diet is also calorie controlled.
- For those requiring weight loss TopChop Zero is a very low energy chopped straw product that can be fed adlib, and with the addition of Donkey Forage Balancer becomes a complete feed.



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.

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