



## GUIDE TO BUYING A DONKEY

### CONSIDERATIONS BEFORE BUYING:

**With donkeys often living into their 30s, buying a donkey is a long-term commitment and a sensible informed choice of donkey at this early stage will ensure years of happy donkey ownership. By ensuring you find a donkey that meets your requirements, and that you are able to fully meet the donkey's needs, you have the best chance of avoiding the problems and difficulties that can come with buying an unsuitable donkey.**

Before proceeding to buy a donkey, ensure you have carefully considered the requirements for keeping donkeys and identified the most suitable breed, age, sex and level of handling for your situation – not just at present, but also for 5 or 10 years' time. The Donkey Sanctuary recommends that donkeys live with other suitable donkeys. It is important to bear in mind that separating bonded pairs can be detrimental to the donkeys' health, so you should ensure that you will have two donkeys to keep each other company.

**BE PREPARED TO WALK  
AWAY FROM DONKEYS  
THAT ARE NOT SUITABLE  
FOR YOU AND YOUR  
LEVEL OF EXPERIENCE.**

More information on the care of donkeys can be found in The Donkey Sanctuary's 'donkey care handbook', the sanctuary website or on the sanctuary's donkey care training courses and DVDs.

### CHECKLIST - THE BEST WAY TO AVOID PROBLEMS WHEN BUYING A DONKEY IS TO ENSURE YOU FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

- Always meet the donkey at least once before you commit to buy. Never buy 'unseen' through the internet, social media or advertisements in papers, magazines, and animals 'offered free to a good home' etc.
- Before you visit a donkey, make sure you have a very clear, written down idea of what will best suit you, your environment and what you have to offer the animal. This helps stop unsuitable emotional purchases.
- Always take another person with you to act as a witness – preferably an experienced donkey owner – or consult your local donkey welfare advisor.
- When you meet the donkey make sure you at least catch them both in the stable and in a larger area, lead them around, groom them and pick up all four of their feet.
- Make a list of questions in advance to ask the seller about the physical and behaviour traits of the donkeys they are selling. Ask lots of questions about the history and behaviour of the animal, what training and handling they have received and health problems they have experienced.
- If you have any doubts about the behaviour of the animal, ask to see the seller handle them and be prepared to visit them again another day before making a final decision.

- Don't let emotions cloud your judgment – this is why we recommend taking another experienced person with you. This is a long-term commitment and you want to give the right donkey the right home.
- Be prepared to walk away from donkeys that are not suitable for you and your level of experience. It is important you can give a long-term home to a donkey whose company you can safely enjoy.
- If you are buying a pedigree or miniature donkey, which could be extremely expensive, consider seeking the services of a vet to check your prospective purchase.
- Get confirmation in writing from the vendor that confirms the donkey is what they say it is.

Passports - it is an offence to sell, buy, export, slaughter for human consumption or use for the purposes of competition/breeding any equine that does not have a passport. Passports should be exchanged at the same time as change of ownership, and new ownership details updated within 30 days. Current regulations also state that equines born on and after the 1st October 2018 must be microchipped before a passport is issued. The passport should remain with the animal for its lifetime. Check that the passport offered belongs to the animal you are looking to purchase by checking that the description matches your prospective donkey.

### **BUYING FROM A DEALER:**

The Consumer Rights Act 2015 applies only if you buy an equine from a person classified as a 'dealer'. Buying from a dealer can offer the best protection.

If you find your donkey has a problem, making him unsuitable for the purpose you bought him, you are entitled to your money back – even if the dealer denies knowledge.

Reputable dealers will agree in writing to take a donkey back if it has a physical or behavioural problem and either refund the purchase price or offer an exchange. Don't let the dealer take the donkey back to sell it on your behalf. You, and not the dealer, could be sued by the next owner if you fail to disclose a problem. If there's a problem, act straight away. The longer you leave it, the more you risk losing your right to a full refund, although you'll still be able to claim damages.

### **THE CONSUMER RIGHTS ACT 2015 IMPLIES CERTAIN CONDITIONS OF SALE – YOUR 'STATUTORY RIGHTS'. THESE ARE:**

- The donkey must be of 'reasonable' or 'satisfactory' quality – for instance, free of defects such as lameness – unless you have prior knowledge and accept the condition.
- The donkey must be fit for the purpose for which it was generally sold, or any purpose made known at the time of the agreement.
- The donkey must be 'as described'. If your new 6 month old turns out to be an early-weaned 4 month old, as well as being a welfare concern, it is a breach of trading standards.

If one or all of these criteria are not met, you may be entitled to a full refund or the difference in value between the donkey you thought you were buying and the one you got.

Avoid buying 'unseen' even from a dealer. This means you will need to travel to the dealer's yard and view the donkeys available for sale in person. This may involve more travelling but you will more than likely come home with a donkey that you have chosen and is suited to your needs.

Buying unseen may result in purchasing an animal that has been incorrectly described and then delivered to you; at which point it is often hard to refuse the purchase.

## **BUYING PRIVATELY:**

Buying privately is a different matter. The law 'caveat emptor' (let the buyer beware) exists. If the donkey has a problem, you must be able to prove the seller knew, or ought to have known, about it in order for you to get a refund. Suing for breach of contract can be difficult, lengthy and costly.

It is very important to follow the checklist above to minimise the risk of buying an unsuitable donkey.

## **BUYING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA:**

In recent years sites such as Facebook have become a popular way to buy, sell, exchange or rehome animals. Be very cautious using any of these media and ensure that you visit the location and view the animal before you make any arrangements to purchase. Always ensure that the seller has the correct documentation.

If after reading this guide you feel unsure about buying a donkey, please contact us to find out about the Donkey Guardian rehoming scheme that we offer where you will be supported every step of the way. For further advice or information on owning or rehoming donkeys please do not hesitate to contact the welfare department on **01395 578222** or by email **welfare@thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk**.