

# Tips on Caring for Miniature Donkeys

By Rhetta McAlister

## Feeding

Grass is the primary feed your donkey requires. When your grass loses its nutrients, after the first frost, you will need to supplement with hay. Coastal Bermuda hay is best; alfalfa is too rich and fattening. Donkeys do well on a daily handful of horse/mule feed. Watch them carefully and keep their weight correct. Once overweight, they look and feel bad and it is difficult to trim them down. It is not a good idea to feed your donkey out of your hand; it encourages nipping. It is very important that donkeys have an iodized salt and mineral block at all times.



## Training

It is a good idea to put a halter on a new foal the first week after birth. Foals are very receptive to learning. Put your hand on their chest and say "back" as you push them back a step or two and apply pressure to their halter. You can push your foal, by the lead line, a step to the right or to the left. Hold the lead line and go with the foal as she follows her dam.



Very young foals can be successfully introduced to obstacles, so they will have very little fear. They can be taught to cross bridges, walk over logs, etc.

## Safety

It is unusual for a donkey to kick at a person, but they will kick at each other while they are eating. Therefore, while they are eating is not the time for little children to play with them.



## Care

You should have a blacksmith look at your donkey's hooves several times a year. If they start growing long, they will need to be filed down. Leaving long hooves unattended can damage the bone structure in your donkey's legs.

Donkeys are very social. They need a friend and should not be left alone (this can lead to depression!) A donkey friend is best, but they also do well with llamas, goats, and calves.

Donkeys require a shed for shade in the summer and for protection in the winter against the rain and the north wind.

After two years of age, a donkey can easily be taught to carry a child up to 100 pounds. A heavier weight would hurt the donkey's back and legs. To allow for healthy bone development, a donkey should not be ridden or pull a buggy until after two years of age.

