



# CLIPPING YOUR DONKEY

Essential care advice.

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The Donkey Sanctuary has put together essential care advice on the clipping of your donkeys.

The natural coat of a donkey is needed for many reasons such as assisting with body temperature regulation, as well as protection from the weather and flies – as such, they should not be fully clipped out at any time of year.

The exception to this rule is the elderly donkey that perhaps as a result of hormonal disturbance may have grown an excessively hairy coat, which a veterinary surgeon may advise requires clipping in summer and winter.

It is common for horses in work to be clipped out through the winter months but in our experience the necessity to clip a donkey is more likely to occur during late spring and through the summer months.

## WHEN SHOULD I **CLIP MY DONKEY?**

Never clip your donkey just for the sake of it.

- Donkeys need their natural coat for many reasons. It helps control their body temperature and gives protection from the weather and flies.
- Donkeys are most likely to need clipping during late spring and through the summer months.
- Do not fully clip your donkey unless they are in heavy work or being prepared for the show-ring.

- Elderly donkeys with a long coat due to hormonal imbalance are the exception. Your vet may advise clipping in summer and winter if this is the case. See our [Endocrine disorders in donkeys](#) resource for more information.

## YOU MAY NEED TO PARTIALLY CLIP YOUR DONKEY IF THEY:

- Grow an unusually heavy or thick coat through the winter and are slow to moult during the spring
- Have long hair on their belly, which can become matted and uncomfortable
- Suffer from skin conditions (such as a lice infestation)
- Have a wound that you need to keep clean and free from hair or other debris
- Have not shed their winter coat through particularly hot summer months, causing them to sweat.



Ask your vet for advice if your donkey has lice or a wound and you think clipping is necessary.

## HOW DO I GET MY DONKEY **USED TO CLIPPING?**

If your donkey has never been clipped before, make them comfortable with the sound and feel of the clippers. Take your time with each step and do not move on unless your donkey is calm and relaxed.

- Stand away from your donkey and switch on the clippers. Watch your donkey's reaction.
- If your donkey does not seem bothered by the noise, approach towards the shoulder area.
- Gently place the clippers onto the palm of your hand. Put the back of your hand onto your donkey's shoulder. This will introduce your donkey to the vibration of the clippers.
- Take your hand away and put the clippers directly onto your donkey's shoulder. Run them backwards down the coat so that your donkey can feel the vibration without you cutting any hair.
- If your donkey stays calm and relaxed, you can start clipping.

## HOW DO I **PREPARE FOR CLIPPING?**

Make sure to check all your equipment is in good working order before clipping your donkey. When clipping your donkey you will need clippers, two or three sets of blades, clipper oil and a small brush (to clear the clipper

head and vent during clipping), an extension cable, paper towel or rags (for cleaning the clippers and blades).

- Check the tension screw on your clippers is set correctly. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions.
- It is generally best to use A2 (medium) blades. If you have an older donkey, try A6 or A7 blades. These are coarser and will leave more hair on your donkey.
- Make sure the area you are working in is well-lit, dry, quiet, and clear of obstacles.
- Avoid cables lying on the ground. Tie extension leads up on a beam if possible.
- Use a circuit breaker for safety.
- Wear suitable clothing (such as steel toecaps and overalls). Tie long hair back.
- Make sure you have enough rugs to prevent your donkey getting cold, especially if you are doing a full clip.
- Have an assistant ready to help.
- Allow yourself plenty of time.
- Make sure your donkey is dry and well-groomed. A well-groomed coat will make the clipper blades last longer and will take less time to clip.
- Cut-off clumps of matted hair with round-ended scissors.
- Check your donkey's skin for any cuts or lumps that the blades could catch.
- Speak to your vet if your donkey is nervous or difficult. Your donkey may need sedating.

## HOW DO I CLIP MY DONKEY?

When clipping your donkey, keep the clipper cable over your shoulder and **do not let your donkey stand on it**. Make sure you only clip what is necessary. You may only need to clip the underside of the belly and neck.

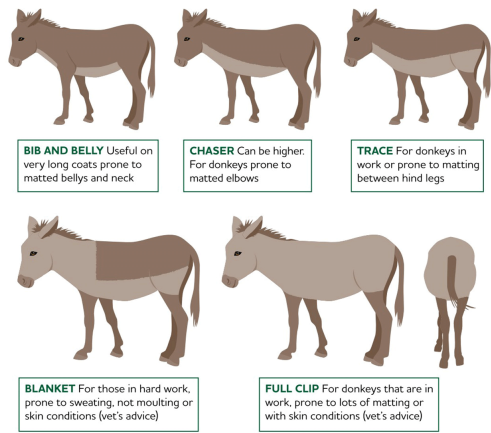
If your donkey is nervous, as your assistant to hold them, or your assistant can try distracting your donkey with treat. See our [donkey treats](#) resource for more information on suitable treats.

Your donkey may need to have its companion in sight, as bonded donkeys can become stressed if separated.

Stop clipping if your donkey becomes distressed. Release your donkey and continue another day. You may need to restart the process of getting them used to the clippers, or speak to your vet

## TOP TIPS FOR CLIPPING YOUR DONKEY

- Always clip against the natural direction of the hair. Whenever the lie of the hair changes, adjust the direction of the clippers.
- Keep the clipper blade surface flat against the skin with just enough pressure to keep the blades flat on your donkey.
- Be careful when clipping areas with loose skin (such as the chest and stifle). Use your free hand to gently stretch the skin flat. Have your assistant lift the front leg up and forwards to make it easier to clip your donkey's 'armpits'.
- On the front leg, start the clip just below the elbow and clip up to where the front of the leg joins the chest.
- On the hind leg, start about a hand's breadth above the hock and clip up to the stifle.
- Clipping a slanting line at the top of your donkey's legs will trim around the elbow and make it easier to keep the area between the hind legs clean. Clipping at an angle will also stop your donkey looking like they are wearing leg warmers. **Do not clip your donkey's legs unless advised to do so by your vet.**
- If you need to clip your donkey's head, ask your assistant to hold the head up so you can clip under the jaw.
- Never undo the headcollar noseband with your donkey tied up. If your donkey pulls back, the headcollar may pull tight around their throat. Instead, undo the lead rope and have an assistant help you.
- Be very careful clipping around eyes. Always put your hand over the eye to avoid injury.
- Do not clip your donkey's whiskers. These are important for feel, especially for blind or partially-sighted donkeys.
- Hold the edges of your donkey's ear gently together. Trim along the edges from top to bottom using a pair of round-ended scissors. It is rarely necessary to clip the whole ear.
- If you are doing a full clip, put a rug over your donkey's back while you clip the rest of their body. Clip an upside down "V" at the top of the tail.
- Depending on your donkey's needs, you can vary the clip (such as trimming the jaw line, taking the chaser clip up to between the ears).



## AFTER CLIPPING:

When you have finished clipping your donkey, use a body brush to remove loose hair. Remove the clipped hair so your donkey cannot eat it and avoid putting hair on your muckheap as it takes a long time to break down.

If necessary, make sure to cover your donkey with an appropriate weight rug for the weather. Some donkeys, particularly those with pale skin, may be more sensitive once clipped, so it's important to protect your donkey from the sun and flies. See our [insect protection for donkeys](#) resource for more information.

## HOW DO I CARE FOR MY CLIPPERS AND BLADES?

### YOU SHOULD:

- Regularly brush loose hair from the clipper head and vent. This will help stop the clippers and blades getting hot and burning the donkey.
- Use your hand to check if the blades are hot. There are several reasons why this can happen.
- If necessary, spray a small amount of oil into the oil hole on top of the clipper head. With the clippers running, lightly spray a small amount in the sides and cutting edges of the blades.
- **Always use clipper oil.** Other oils can be the wrong consistency, may make your clippers overheat, may make your clippers less efficient, increase the risk of you clippers breaking down and do not contain the antibacterial ingredients to reduce the risk of disease spread.
- Take the blades off and thoroughly clean your clippers after use.

- Use a small paint brush (0.6 cm or  $\frac{1}{4}$ " is best) to remove loose hair from the outside and inside of the clipper head and vent.
- Wipe with a clean rag or paper towel to remove any small pieces of hair, dirt, or excess oil.
- Brush the blades off and wipe with a clean rag or paper towel. If you will not be using them for a while, spray lightly with oil, wrap in paper (newspaper is ideal) and store in the container provided.
- Remove blades when they will no longer cut the coat. Clean them with paper towel and send them for sharpening.
- Get your clippers serviced and checked for electrical safety annually. Do this well before you need them. Pay attention to the on/off switch (may be on the side), oil hole, tension screw and vent (may be on top).

## YOU SHOULD NOT:

- Let the oil run onto the tension screw as this can cause the screw to loosen.
- Use any oil other than clipper oil.
- Split a pair of blades. The blades grind together and 'bed in' to each other. If sets are mixed, the blades will not work together properly
- Wash blades in water, this will make them rust.

## 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.