

COMMON SKIN CONDITIONS IN DONKEYS

Identifying and seeking veterinary help.

 18 October 2022 [Read on The Donkey Sanctuary website](#)

Donkeys are affected by a number of common skin conditions. Find out how to identify these conditions and when to seek veterinary help.

A healthy donkey should have a flat, clean coat with no signs of itching, bald areas, sores or abnormal lumps and bumps.

It is a good idea to get your donkey used to you routinely running your hands over all areas of the body, legs, head, and sheath or udder area. A donkey's coat can often hide developing problems.



Regularly grooming your donkey provides a chance to examine your donkey for any lumps and wounds or any skin complaints.

FLY WORRY

Fly worry can be particularly challenging in some environments and measures such as fly spray, fly rugs, fly fringes and good hygiene are all useful in minimising fly bother.

You should seek veterinary advice if the fly bother has caused open wounds or other issues such as conjunctivitis. These types of lesions need to be kept clean, ideally covered and may require further treatment

depending on the severity.



LICE

There are two types of lice we commonly see on donkeys: chewing lice, which eat the scurf and dead skin, and sucking lice, which feed on blood. Lice will more commonly be seen in the winter months and will often affect more vulnerable donkeys, such as older or unwell animals.

Signs of infestation are itching, hair loss and depression. At the sanctuary we use Equine Nit-Nat as our treatment of choice, but please speak to one of our Donkey Welfare Advisers and your vet for treatment options. See our resource for [Lice in donkeys](#) for more information.

RAIN SCALD AND MUD FEVER

These are conditions of the skin seen over periods of wet weather, usually in the winter. Rain scald is seen over the back and rump, and mud fever affects the lower limbs. They both cause hair loss and sometimes pus-filled lesions. The disease is caused by the bacteria dermatophilus.

You should consult a vet to develop a treatment plan, but measures will likely include good hygiene, dry shelter, clean hardstanding areas, clean rugs and antiseptic washes. In some cases antibiotics may be required.

RINGWORM

This is a fungal skin condition that appears as a circular flat hairless lesion. Ringworm is transmissible between animals and people, so you should exercise caution if there is suspicion of a case and you should inform your vet. Ringworm can take a long time to resolve.

Treatment options are available, which should be discussed with a vet. In the case of an outbreak, it is very important to be diligent about [biosecurity](#). Wear gloves when touching the affected donkey and be careful not to transmit to others.

SWEET ITCH

This is a hypersensitivity (allergic reaction) to culicoides midges. These midges are most active in the early morning and late evening. Affected donkeys will excessively rub themselves, particularly over their mane and tail.

If poorly controlled, donkeys can rub to the point of self-trauma, which in turn attracts flies. A donkey demonstrating this behaviour should be seen by a vet. It can be managed by using a fly rug, changing their turnout routine, avoiding areas with a high midge burden and in some cases using medical treatment.

SARCOIDS

These are common skin tumours we see in donkeys and other equines. These lesions can appear suddenly, are believed to be transmissible between donkeys and once a donkey has one they are likely to get more. The appearance of sarcoids can vary from flat to nodular.

Veterinary advice is needed to diagnose and treat; treatment is decided based on the location and type of sarcoid. Prompt treatment is required to prevent it spreading between donkeys, and to stop the disease progressing. We recommend checking your donkeys for sarcoids regularly. See our [Sarcoids in donkeys](#) resource for more information.

SUNBURN OR PHOTSENSITISATION

Donkeys with pink or pale coloured skin may suffer with sunburn in the warmer months. It can be prevented by using full-face fly masks and sun cream where tolerated.

Donkeys with underlying health conditions may be more sensitive to the sun, so donkeys with sunburn may require further investigation such as a blood test.

MORE **INFORMATION**

If you need clinical and dental veterinary advice contact our [veterinary team](#)