

CARING FOR DONKEYS OVER **CHRISTMAS**

What do donkeys need at Christmas? We answer a few of your questions here.

 3 May 2023 [Read on The Donkey Sanctuary website](#)

A donkey's coat is not waterproof, so while a donkey may stand outside while it's raining or even snowing, they would rarely choose to do so for long periods, so it is really important that they have access to appropriate shelter.



For more detailed information about winter care, see our factsheet: [Care of donkeys through winter](#).

WHAT MAKES **THE PERFECT SHELTER?**

While donkeys can withstand the cold much better than us, they still need somewhere cosy to relax in winter.

The perfect shelter has a sloping roof to reduce the chance of leaks, at least three sides to protect the donkeys from draughts, a concrete base and a completely waterproof exterior.

The inside of the shelter can then be filled with a thick layer of straw and bedding for the donkeys to snuggle up in on cold winter nights.

WHAT DO DONKEYS LIKE ON THE GROUND?

The floor of the shelters are covered with fresh, warm bedding and they always have an area of hardstanding outdoors to keep them off the wet, muddy or frosty ground.

We also keep stacks of non-poisonous bark chip to lay down in gateways and other muddy areas – they love rolling in it!

WILL DONKEYS NEED TO **WEAR A RUG?**

Young and healthy donkeys are unlikely to need a winter rug as their coats naturally thicken as we approach winter. Elderly or unwell donkeys may require a well-fitted donkey rug to keep warm.

For more information see our factsheet about [Donkey rugs](#).

DO THE DONKEYS NEED **GROOMING THROUGH THE WINTER?**

Absolutely! Grooming is an important part of a donkey's routine not just for health reasons, but many of them also benefit from the human interaction and bond it forms between donkey and groom.

However, we do not groom the donkeys if they are wet. This is because brushing will push water and dirt down onto the skin, causing them to become cold. No matter how wet they've got, though, we always clean their eyes and noses and pick out their feet as normal.

WHAT WILL OUR DONKEYS EAT OVER **CHRISTMAS?**

All our donkeys will still have access to grazing in their winter paddocks, but, thanks to your support, in the winter months we are able to add winter forage in the warmth of their barns to their diets.

We also follow the Christmas tradition established by our founder of giving each donkey a fresh carrot on Christmas morning.

WHAT DO DONKEYS DRINK IN THE WINTER?

Our donkeys always have access to clean, fresh drinking water. However, for some older donkeys, the winter weather makes the water too cold to drink. For these donkeys we gently heat the water before serving it up to make it easier to drink and to warm them up. Sometimes we even add some mint or soak their feed with the water.

Our team work extremely hard all year round to give our donkeys the best possible care, but none of it would be possible without your support.

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.