

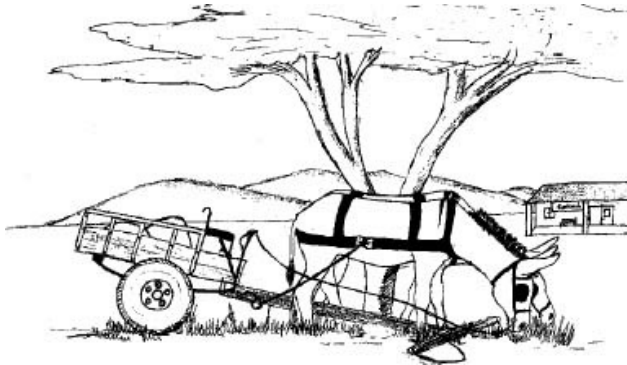


National Department of Agriculture
National Council of SPCAs



Care and use of working donkeys

Compiled by Morgane James



1999

**Compiled by Directorate Communication, National Department of Agriculture
in cooperation with National Council of SPCAs**

**Printed and published by National Department of Agriculture
and obtainable from Resource Centre, Directorate Communication,
Private Bag X144, Pretoria 0001, South Africa**

ISBN 1-86871-061-0



CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[General safety and care](#)

[Feed and water](#)

[Resting periods](#)

[Grooming and care](#)

[Hooves](#)

[Tethering](#)

[Hobbles](#)

[Pregnant donkeys](#)

[Donkeys and young foals](#)

[Donkeys "in season"](#)

[Harnessing](#)

[Carts](#)

[Working pairs or teams](#)

[Packs](#)

[Harnessing for ploughing or field work](#)

[Acknowledgements](#)

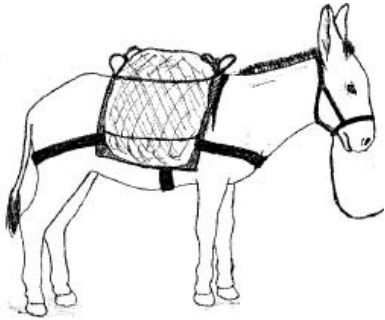
Introduction

The lives of countless numbers of people, especially in rural or disadvantaged areas, are improved and enriched through the use of donkeys. Because of their size and calm temperament they are safely used by all family members for a variety of tasks such as ploughing, transporting water and firewood, and for riding.

For donkey owners to benefit optimally from these animals, the donkeys have to perform to the best of their abilities. To be able to work hard and well donkeys need to be in good health and condition. They should also be handled with consideration and need good harnessing that is correctly fitted. An injured, thin, whipped or overloaded donkey will not work as hard and for as long as a donkey that is well cared for and handled kindly.

This booklet is intended to assist donkey owners or donkey users to care for their donkeys and to set a minimum

standard which, if followed, should ensure that the donkeys used for traction purposes are healthy, productive and well cared for.



General safety and care

- **If donkeys are hired out, make sure the person hiring them knows how to handle them, harness them and won't whip, ill-treat or work the donkeys too hard.**
- **Children should not use donkeys in built-up areas or in traffic, as they may not be able to cope in the event of an emergency.**
- **Cart drivers must know the traffic and road laws and where donkeys may not be driven. If a donkey cart is stopped in town or traffic, make sure someone is left with the donkeys so that they don't become a traffic hazard.**

Donkeys should never be beaten. Whips should be used only to make a noise and encourage the donkeys. Whips should not be used on donkeys except when absolutely necessary, and then only once, lightly on the hindquarters. If a donkey isn't working well, make sure that it is not tired, overloaded or sick. A good owner will be able to use his/her voice to control well-trained and cared for donkeys.

Feed and water

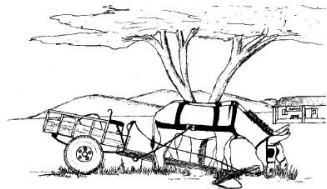
Working animals require more and better feed than animals that are not working. This is especially important when there is little or poor grazing.

- **A working donkey weighing about 150 kg needs 15 to 20 l of water per day. It is best to give half in the morning and the rest in the evening.**
- **A working donkey weighing about 150 kg should take in about 5 kg of roughage (grass type feed) per day. They should therefore be allowed to graze in the morning and evening for a total of at least 5 hours every day.**
- **Where grazing is poor, or there is not enough time for grazing, a donkey that weighs 150 kg must be given supplementary feed—about 3 to 4 kg of roughage**
- **(± quarter of a bale of cut grass such as lucerne or teff) or 1 to 1,5 kg of concentrate food (horse cubes) every day.**

- **Any change in feeding must be done slowly over a period of time, otherwise the donkey may become sick.**

Resting periods

Resting periods are important for all working animals. It gives them time to cool down, their muscles can rest and they get a chance to graze and to drink.



***Donkeys unhitched while
not working***

Once an animal starts to sweat excessively or breathe very heavily, this is an indication that the animal is being worked too hard and is getting hot and tired. The driver must slow down, and allow the animals time to recover. When it is hot, the load is heavy or the road is difficult, the animals will require more frequent resting periods.

- **Donkeys that are worked at a slow walking pace and pulling no more than double their own body weight should be rested for 1 hour after working for 4 hours.**
- **The donkeys should be unhitched from the disselboom and klein disselboom during waiting periods. They will not be able to move away from the cart, because they will still be harnessed, but they will be able to rest without the weight of the cart on them.**
- **While waiting, the donkeys and cart should be parked on level ground under trees or in the shade and the animals should be allowed to graze whenever possible.**

Grooming and care

- **Grooming the animals by brushing them with a brush or even a sack is a very useful way of getting rid of parasites such as ticks. It also removes dirt, grass seeds and burrs which, if caught between the skin and the harnessing, can cause injuries and infection. This can also hurt or irritate the animal causing it to do less work or to become difficult to handle.**
- **Every day an inspection of the mane, especially near the ears, must be carried out, because this is a common place where seeds and burrs are caught, while the donkey has its head down grazing. If the bridle is put on top of these burrs or seeds, injuries and infections may occur.**
- **While harnessing the donkey check for any discharge from the eyes. This could be a result of infection, injury or bad harnessing and if so the animal must be treated and the problem rectified. If, though, it is just because of dust or wind, the face and eyes should be gently washed with a clean cloth and warm, clean water. If you leave this discharge it will encourage flies, which will bother the donkey, and could even lead to infection and blindness.**

Protection against flies



A simple attachment of very soft strands of rope or pieces of cloth to the head band on the halter will help to keep flies away from the eyes. Make sure pieces are long enough and hang neatly down, with no sharp pieces or edges that could irritate the donkey's eyes

- **While grooming the animal, check for injuries and harness rubbing, especially on the chest, at the base of the mane, on the neck, back and around the eyes and mouth.**
- **If injuries are noticed they must be treated. Contact your local veterinarian, SPCA, or animal health technician if you require advice or assistance. Remember, before giving any treatment, to properly wash your hands, cloths and any other equipment used, in a clean bowl with hot (preferably boiling) water.**
- **It is very important not only to treat the injury but to find the cause of the injury. Inspect the harnessing that is attached where the injury occurs to find the cause of the injury. This harnessing must be repaired or replaced before it can be used again.**

Hooves

Donkeys don't wear shoes like horses. Therefore, wherever possible they should be worked on soft surfaces, because working for long distances or constantly on hard ground, especially tarred roads, can wear down and

damage their hooves and can cause lameness. The donkey will then not be able to work.

- **At least once a day, after the donkey has finished working, each hoof should be picked up and inspected for stones, thorns or injuries. A blunt instrument can be used to gently scrape away any stones or dirt. Regular daily inspection will ensure that any problems can be dealt with immediately and may prevent infection and lameness.**
- **During dry periods the hooves may start to crack and splinter. A good hoof oil rubbed into the hooves once or twice a week will help to prevent these problems. If no hoof oil is available then old cooking oil can be used, although it is not as good as proper hoof oil. Too much oil, however, will make the hooves soft and cause them to wear down very fast.**

Tethering

- **Wherever donkeys have to be tied or tethered this should be done in an area where they can graze, preferably with access to shade. Water should also be provided in a bucket that is secured or cannot be tipped over.**
- **Ropes should preferably be attached to a halter.**
- **A slip knot, or any knot that can tighten when the donkey pulls away should never be used on any animal, as it can cut off blood circulation and choke or even strangle the animal, especially if the donkey gets a fright or is chased.**
- **Thin ropes, especially nylon ropes, should not be used on donkeys, as they can cut into the flesh easily, and cause serious injuries.**

Hobbles

- **Donkeys should never have their legs tied together with wire or thin rope because it can cause serious injuries. They should only be hobbled if absolutely necessary.**
- **Hobbles should be made of thick bands of soft but strong material, allowing the donkey to walk comfortably without running. The hobble rope therefore should not be too short. The hobbles must not be fixed onto the**

legs too tightly.

- **The only recommended method of hobbling a donkey is by securing the two front legs together and leaving the hind legs free to protect itself in case of attack.**
- **Tying the head and front leg together, or tying one front leg up is not acceptable.**



Correct method of hobbling a donkey using the two front feet

Pregnant donkeys

- **Animals that are heavily pregnant (in the last 4 months of pregnancy) must not be worked, as this may cause abortion, or the foal may be born too soon and may not be strong enough to survive.**
- **If it is absolutely necessary to work an animal in the early stages of pregnancy then it must only be for light work and for short periods. Make sure that the animal is rested frequently.**
- **It is recommended that pregnant animals are not worked at all.**

Donkeys and young foals

- **A donkey that is feeding a young foal (under 3 months old) should not be worked, but should be kept with the foal (ideally until the foal is 6 months old).**
- **A donkey that is feeding a young foal needs large quantities of clean water and food to be able to produce milk for the foal so that it can develop well and become strong.**
- **A young foal ideally should drink from its mother at least once every 2 hours.**
- **A foal under 3 months of age should not be separated from its mother. Once the foal is 3 months old, and it is absolutely necessary to work the mother, make sure that the foal is kept in a clean area and has shelter to protect it from hail, rain or excessive sun.**
- **Foals must always be kept in a safe area away from animals that may attack them, such as dogs.**
- **Until foals are trained to walk on a halter, they must not be allowed to run with their mothers while working in**

built-up or dangerous areas, especially on tar roads. The foal can cause a traffic accident, or be attacked by dogs.

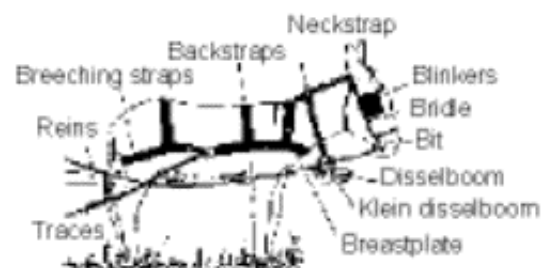
- **Foals and mothers should always have water available.**
- **Although basic training can be undertaken on a foal (like walking on a halter and being handled), they should not be used for working until they are at least 3 or 4 years old. Long-term damage to their bones, development and health can occur if they are used for working from a too early age.**

Donkeys "in season"

- **Ideally donkeys "in season" (females on heat) should not be worked with other animals, because they can cause fighting between the males, and make them difficult and even dangerous to handle. This can also lead to road accidents.**
- **To prevent fighting and injuries, donkeys "in season" should not be kept in the same kraal or pen as male donkeys.**

Harnessing

The best material for harnessing is leather, but rubber or canvas can also be used. Whatever material is used though, must fit well and not injure the animal. Padding may be necessary to prevent injuries.



Typical donkey harnessing and common names

All harnessing, when not on the animals, should be hung on a hook in a clean, dry place. If harnessing is left out in the sun and rain, it will not last as long and will become hard and dry and cause injuries to the animals.

Leather harnessing should be rubbed with oil often, to keep it soft and protect it, especially against rain. Hard or cracked leather should never be used on animals. Rubber or canvas harnessing should be washed or brushed regularly to clean it.

Ideally every working donkey should have its own breastplate, bridle and bit. If however, this is not possible, then every time the harnessing is put onto the donkey it must be checked and adjusted if necessary to ensure that it fits well and will not hurt the donkey in any way.

Harnesses should not be repaired with wire, or any other material that can cause injury to the animals. All joints should ideally be made on the outside of the harness, away from the skin of the animal.

Breastplates and backstraps

- **Breastplates and backstraps should be about 60 mm wide. If they are too thin there is more chance of them cutting into the animal.**
- **If there are any sores or injuries on the donkey where the breastplate and backstraps fit, it may be because the breastplate or backstraps have not been put on the donkey correctly, and the straps may have to be adjusted to make them shorter or longer.**
- **Clean, soft sheepskin or foam rubber sponge (wrapped in soft cloth), can be used on the breastplate or backstraps as padding. Make sure it is fastened properly, with all joints on the outside away from the skin of the animal.**

Bridles and blinkers

- **Bridles should be at least 20 mm wide.**

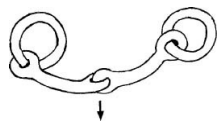
- **Make sure that the cheek-straps (the strap around the head, joining onto the bits) are not too tight, otherwise serious injuries can be caused to the mouth of the donkey.**
- **Blinkers should be made of a firm, solid material like leather. Make sure they cover the eye area well, but they must in no way touch the eye.**

Chains and ropes

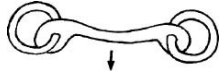
- **Any chains that come into contact with the donkey should be covered to prevent injury or rubbing. The chain can be threaded through soft hose pipe, or have soft material securely and neatly tied around it.**
- **Ropes, particularly thin ropes, are not suitable to use as part of the breastplate, bridle or as hobbles, as they often cut into the donkey's skin and cause injuries.**

Bits

- **Donkeys have sensitive mouths, unless they have been damaged and hardened by incorrect equipment or poor or rough handling.**
- **Because the donkey's mouth is very sensitive the driver should try at all times to be firm but gentle.**
- **Sharp jerking of the reins, and dragging of the reins, will just injure the donkey's mouth and eventually make it hard. The donkey will then become difficult and hard to handle.**
- **Only proper bits should be used in donkeys' mouths.**
- **Bits should be washed regularly (to remove food and spit) in clean, warm water, and dried.**
- **Check the bits regularly (by feeling them with your fingers as well as by looking at them), especially the joint areas, because when they wear down they can become very sharp and can cut the donkey's mouth and tongue. Bits that could cause injury must not be used and should be destroyed.**
- **There should be NO sharp edges on a bit.**
- **When fitted correctly the corners of the donkey's mouth should be just slightly pulled up by the bit.**



Two types of bit that are acceptable for use on donkeys (arrows show the 'front')



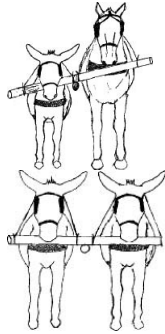
of the bit that should face out of the mouth)

Carts

- **Carts should always be as light as possible. Carts made from the bodies of old cars may not be acceptable because they may be too heavy.**
- **The disselboom and klein disselboom should be made of strong, but lightweight material. Heavy iron poles are not good, because they make the cart heavier than necessary and increase the load of the donkeys, especially the weight on the neck.**
- **Loaded carts should be well balanced, with most of the weight resting on the axle above the tyres and not on the disselboom, to prevent the weight being pushed onto the animals. Tyres must be properly inflated.**
- **All carts should have brakes fixed to them. Using the donkeys and harnessing as a brake system is not good, and can be dangerous, especially if breeching straps on the hindquarters of the donkeys are not used.**
- **Attaching reflective discs on the back of carts and on the donkeys' bridles is a recommended safety precaution and a legal requirement in many areas.**
- **For every 2 wheels on a cart it is recommended that there is a minimum of 2 donkeys (4-wheel carts require 4 donkeys, *minimum*).**
- **A donkey in good condition should pull no more than double its own body weight on a gravel or tarred road.**

Working pairs or teams

- **Animals working in teams should always be well matched (the same height at the shoulders).**
- **Make sure that all the harnesses, chains and ropes are attached evenly. If the animals are the same size then all the attachments should be about the same length.**
- **Aggressive animals should not be worked in such a way that they can bite, kick or injure other donkeys in the**

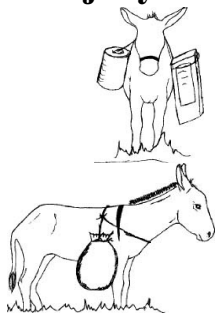
team.

*Badly-matched
animals*

*Well-matched
animals*

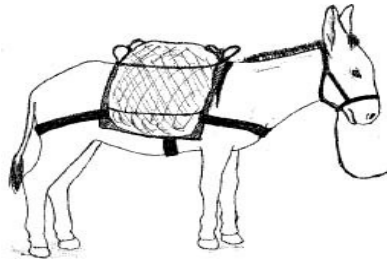
Packs

- **When donkeys are used to carry loads on their backs, suitable pack saddles or panniers should be used. It is not acceptable to tie heavy loads together with a piece of rope and throw them across the back of the animals. This can cause serious injuries and permanent damage to the animal, especially the spine. The animal may not be able to work well and can become difficult to handle. In addition the load may be damaged or lost and the animal can fall and injure or kill itself especially in mountainous areas.**
- **Pack saddles should always be padded. Raw wood should not be put straight onto the donkey's back as this may cause serious injuries.**
- **The weight of the load must be distributed evenly in both sides of the pack, over the ribs to prevent imbalance and injury to the donkey.**



*Donkeys carrying poorly-
fitted packs*

- **Donkeys should not be made to stand for long periods with the packs on their backs. If there is going to be a waiting period, the pack should be removed and where possible the donkey should be tied in the shade and allowed to graze and drink.**
- **A strong pack donkey in good condition should not carry more than a third of its body weight. A donkey in good condition weighing 150 kg, should carry a maximum of 50 kg. The more difficult the terrain and the longer the journey, the less the donkey should carry.**
- **Packs/saddles should be firmly secured on the animals, preferably by being attached to a chest strap, girth strap and breeching strap. This will stop the pack from moving or slipping as the animal walk (particularly on steep terrain).**

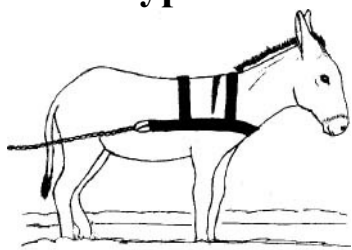


A donkey carrying a pack, showing the type of equipment used

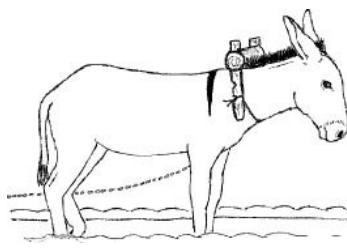
- **A soft blanket should be put on the donkey's back underneath the pack saddle, to prevent sores that may be caused by the saddle.**
- **When trained pack donkeys are used in rural areas, away from traffic, it is not necessary for the donkeys to wear blinkers. In mountainous areas, in particular, it is safer for the donkeys not to wear blinkers. They can then see all around them and choose a safe path.**
- **It is recommended that pack donkeys are trained to walk on a halter so that they can be led and tethered where necessary.**

Harnessing for ploughing or field work

- When donkeys are trained and used for work in the fields, it is advisable to use the same harnessing used for cart pulling, namely breastplates. Neck yokes (those designed for use on oxen) are not suitable for use on donkeys and can cause severe and long-term injuries. The donkeys will work better and more effectively if breastplates are used.
- When ploughing or undertaking other field work, it is not advisable to use donkeys and oxen together. Oxen are much stronger than donkeys, and often the donkeys will not be able to keep up. Donkeys and oxen walk at a different pace.
- Two donkeys can be used, abreast (next to each other) or in tandem (behind one another) for very light field work. Ploughing or heavy work should be done with 6 or more well-trained donkeys, in good condition.
- Field work should preferably be undertaken during the cooler parts of the day, and the animals rested in the shade during the heat of the day.
- Donkeys should be rested for 30 minutes after every 2 hours worked.
- For this type of work donkeys should not be worked for more than 4 hours per day.



Correct harnessing: donkey ploughing with the use of the breastplate



Incorrect harnessing: donkey ploughing with a yoke designed for use with oxen

Acknowledgements

D. J. HANEKOM, Institute for Agricultural Engineering, Agricultural Research Council.

P. A. JONES, Donkey Power Teaching and Consultancy, Zimbabwe.

A. B. D. JOUBERT, Department of Agronomy, Animal Traction Centre, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Fort Hare.

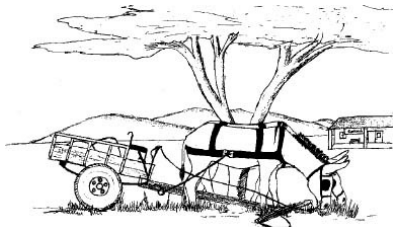
R. C. KRECEK, Department of Veterinary Tropical Diseases, Faculty of Veterinary Science, University of Pretoria.

C.M.E. McCrindle, Production Animal Medicine, Medical University of Southern Africa.

R. A. PEARSON, Draught Animal Research and Tropical Animal Production, University of Edinburgh.

J. REDMOND, National Donkey Protection Unit, Zimbabwe.

South African Network of Animal Traction (SANAT).



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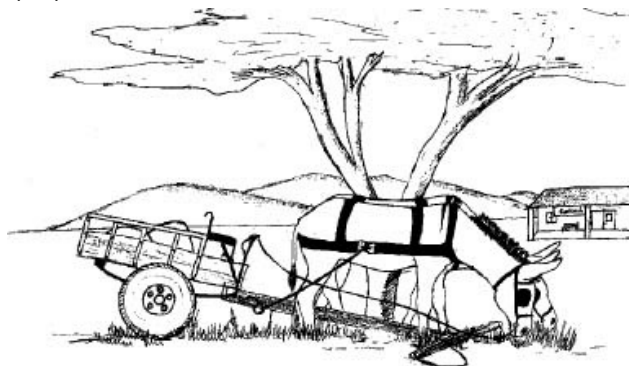


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CONTENTS

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[Hooves](#) ❖

[Tethering](#) ❖

[Hobbles](#) ❖

[Pregnant donkeys](#) ❖

[Donkeys and young foals](#) ❖

[Donkeys "in season"](#) ❖

[Harnessing](#)

[Carts](#)

[Working pairs or teams](#)

[Packs](#)

[Harnessing for ploughing or field work](#)

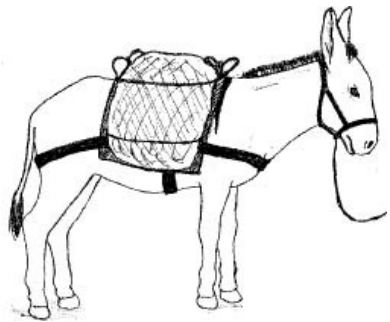
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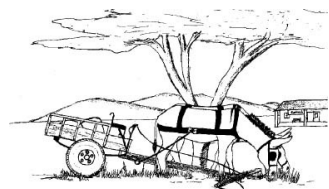
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Hooves

Donkeys don't wear shoes like horses. Therefore, wherever possible they should be worked on soft surfaces, because working for long distances or constantly on hard ground, especially tarred roads, can wear down and damage their hooves and can cause lameness. The donkey will then not be able to work.

- **At least once a day, after the donkey has finished working, each hoof should be picked up and inspected for stones, thorns or injuries. A blunt instrument can be used to gently scrape away any stones or dirt. Regular daily inspection will ensure that any problems can be dealt with immediately and may prevent infection and lameness.**
- **During dry periods the hooves may start to crack and splinter. A good hoof oil rubbed into the hooves once or twice a week will help to prevent these problems. If no hoof oil is available then old cooking oil can be used, although it is not as good as proper hoof oil. Too much oil, however, will make the hooves soft and cause them to wear down very fast.**

Tethering

- **Wherever donkeys have to be tied or tethered this should be done in an area where they can graze, preferably with access to shade. Water should also be provided in a bucket that is secured or cannot be tipped over.**

- **Ropes should preferably be attached to a halter.**
- **A slip knot, or any knot that can tighten when the donkey pulls away should never be used on any animal, as it can cut off blood circulation and choke or even strangle the animal, especially if the donkey gets a fright or is chased.**
- **Thin ropes, especially nylon ropes, should not be used on donkeys, as they can cut into the flesh easily, and cause serious injuries.**

Hobbles

- **Donkeys should never have their legs tied together with wire or thin rope because it can cause serious injuries. They should only be hobbled if absolutely necessary.**
- **Hobbles should be made of thick bands of soft but strong material, allowing the donkey to walk comfortably without running. The hobble rope therefore should not be too short. The hobbles must not be fixed onto the legs too tightly.**
- **The only recommended method of hobbling a donkey is by securing the two front legs together and leaving the hind legs free to protect itself in case of attack.**
- **Tying the head and front leg together, or tying one front leg up is not acceptable.**



Correct method of hobbling a donkey using the two front feet

Pregnant donkeys

- **Animals that are heavily pregnant (in the last 4 months of pregnancy) must not be worked, as this may cause abortion, or the foal may be born too soon and may not be strong enough to survive.**
- **If it is absolutely necessary to work an animal in the early stages of pregnancy then it must only be for light work and for short periods. Make sure that the animal is rested frequently.**
- **It is recommended that pregnant animals are not worked at all.**

Donkeys and young foals

- **A donkey that is feeding a young foal (under 3 months old) should not be worked, but should be kept with the foal (ideally until the foal is 6 months old).**
- **A donkey that is feeding a young foal needs large quantities of clean water and food to be able to produce milk for the foal so that it can develop well and become strong.**
- **◆A young foal ideally should drink from its mother at least once every 2 hours.**
- **A foal under 3 months of age should not be separated from its mother. Once the foal is 3 months old, and it is absolutely necessary to work the mother, make sure that the foal is kept in a clean area and has shelter to protect it from hail, rain or excessive sun.**
- **Foals must always be kept in a safe area away from animals that may attack them, such as dogs.**
- **Until foals are trained to walk on a halter, they must not be allowed to run with their mothers while working in built-up or dangerous areas, especially on tar roads. The foal can cause a traffic accident, or be attacked by dogs.**
- **Foals and mothers should always have water available.**
- **Although basic training can be undertaken on a foal (like walking on a halter and being handled), they should not be used for working until they are at least 3 or 4 years old. Long-term damage to their bones, development and health can occur if they are used for working from a too early age.**

Donkeys "in season"

- **Ideally donkeys "in season" (females on heat) should not be worked with other animals, because they can cause fighting between the males, and make them difficult and even dangerous to handle. This can also lead to road accidents.**
- **To prevent fighting and injuries, donkeys "in season" should not be kept in the same kraal or pen as male donkeys.**

Harnessing

The best material for harnessing is leather, but rubber or canvas can also be used. Whatever material is used though, must fit well and not injure the animal. Padding may be necessary to prevent injuries.

Typical donkey harnessing and common names

All harnessing, when not on the animals, should be hung on a hook in a clean, dry place. If harnessing is left out in the sun and rain, it will not last as long and will become hard and dry and cause injuries to the animals.

Leather harnessing should be rubbed with oil often, to keep it soft and protect it, especially against rain. Hard or cracked leather should never be used on animals. Rubber or canvas harnessing should be washed or brushed regularly to clean it.

Ideally every working donkey should have its own breastplate, bridle and bit. If however, this is not possible, then every time the harnessing is put onto the donkey it must be checked and adjusted if necessary to ensure that it fits well and will not hurt the donkey in any way.

Harnesses should not be repaired with wire, or any other material that can cause injury to the animals. All joints should ideally be made on the outside of the harness, away from the skin of the animal.

Breastplates and backstraps

- **Breastplates and backstraps should be about 60 mm wide. If they are too thin there is more chance of them cutting into the animal.**
- **If there are any sores or injuries on the donkey where the breastplate and backstraps fit, it may be because the breastplate or backstraps have not been put on the donkey correctly, and the straps may have to be adjusted to make them shorter or longer.**
- **Clean, soft sheepskin or foam rubber sponge (wrapped in soft cloth), can be used on the breastplate or**

backstraps as padding. Make sure it is fastened properly, with all joints on the outside away from the skin of the animal.

Bridles and blinkers

- **Bridles should be at least 20 mm wide.**
- **Make sure that the cheek-straps (the strap around the head, joining onto the bits) are not too tight, otherwise serious injuries can be caused to the mouth of the donkey.**
- **Blinkers should be made of a firm, solid material like leather. Make sure they cover the eye area well, but they must in no way touch the eye.**

Chains and ropes

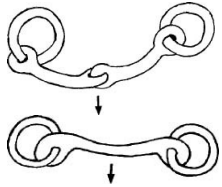
- **Any chains that come into contact with the donkey should be covered to prevent injury or rubbing. The chain can be threaded through soft hose pipe, or have soft material securely and neatly tied around it.**
- **Ropes, particularly thin ropes, are not suitable to use as part of the breastplate, bridle or as hobbles, as they often cut into the donkey's skin and cause injuries.**

Bits

- **Donkeys have sensitive mouths, unless they have been damaged and hardened by incorrect equipment or poor or rough handling.**
- **Because the donkey's mouth is very sensitive the driver should try at all times to be firm but gentle.**
- **Sharp jerking of the reins, and dragging of the reins, will just injure the donkey's mouth and eventually make it hard. The donkey will then become difficult and hard to handle.**
- **Only proper bits should be used in donkeys' mouths.**
- **Bits should be washed regularly (to remove food and spit) in clean, warm water, and dried.**
- **Check the bits regularly (by feeling them with your fingers as well as by looking at them), especially the joint areas, because when they wear down they can become very sharp and can cut the donkey's mouth and tongue.**

Bits that could cause injury must not be used and should be destroyed.

- **There should be NO sharp edges on a bit.**
- **When fitted correctly the corners of the donkey's mouth should be just slightly pulled up by the bit.**



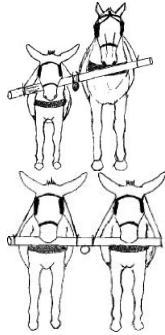
Two types of bit that are acceptable for use on donkeys (arrows show the 'front' of the bit that should face out of the mouth)

Carts

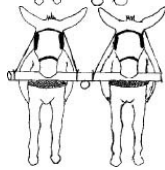
- **Carts should always be as light as possible. Carts made from the bodies of old cars may not be acceptable because they may be too heavy.**
- **The disselboom and klein disselboom should be made of strong, but lightweight material. Heavy iron poles are not good, because they make the cart heavier than necessary and increase the load of the donkeys, especially the weight on the neck.**
- **Loaded carts should be well balanced, with most of the weight resting on the axle above the tyres and not on the disselboom, to prevent the weight being pushed onto the animals. Tyres must be properly inflated.**
- **All carts should have brakes fixed to them. Using the donkeys and harnessing as a brake system is not good, and can be dangerous, especially if breeching straps on the hindquarters of the donkeys are not used.**
- **Attaching reflective discs on the back of carts and on the donkeys' bridles is a recommended safety precaution and a legal requirement in many areas.**
- **For every 2 wheels on a cart it is recommended that there is a minimum of 2 donkeys (4-wheel carts require 4 donkeys, *minimum*).**
- **A donkey in good condition should pull no more than double its own body weight on a gravel or tarred road.**

Working pairs or teams

- **Animals working in teams should always be well matched (the same height at the shoulders).**
- **Make sure that all the harnesses, chains and ropes are attached evenly. If the animals are the same size then all the attachments should be about the same length.**
- **Aggressive animals should not be worked in such a way that they can bite, kick or injure other donkeys in the team.**



*Badly-matched
animals*



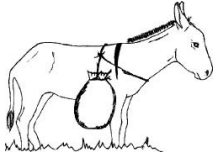
*Well-matched
animals*

Packs

- **When donkeys are used to carry loads on their backs, suitable pack saddles or panniers should be used. It is not acceptable to tie heavy loads together with a piece of rope and throw them across the back of the animals. This can cause serious injuries and permanent damage to the animal, especially the spine. The animal may not be able to work well and can become difficult to handle. In addition the load may be damaged or lost and the animal can fall and injure or kill itself especially in mountainous areas.**
- **Pack saddles should always be padded. Raw wood should not be put straight onto the donkey's back as this may cause serious injuries.**
- **The weight of the load must be distributed evenly in both sides of the pack, over the ribs to prevent imbalance and injury to the donkey.**

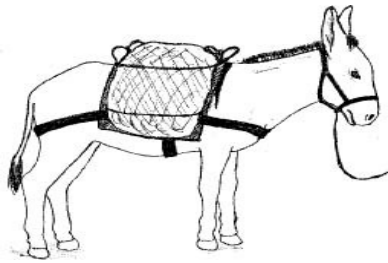


Donkeys carrying poorly-



fitted packs

- **Donkeys should not be made to stand for long periods with the packs on their backs. If there is going to be a waiting period, the pack should be removed and where possible the donkey should be tied in the shade and allowed to graze and drink.**
- **A strong pack donkey in good condition should not carry more than a third of its body weight. A donkey in good condition weighing 150 kg, should carry a maximum of 50 kg. The more difficult the terrain and the longer the journey, the less the donkey should carry.**
- **Packs/saddles should be firmly secured on the animals, preferably by being attached to a chest strap, girth strap and breeching strap. This will stop the pack from moving or slipping as the animal walk (particularly on steep terrain).**



A donkey carrying a pack, showing the type of equipment used

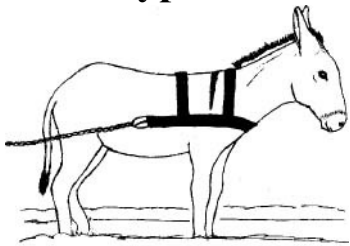
- **A soft blanket should be put on the donkey's back underneath the pack saddle, to prevent sores that may be caused by the saddle.**
- **When trained pack donkeys are used in rural areas, away from traffic, it is not necessary for the donkeys to**

wear blinkers. In mountainous areas, in particular, it is safer for the donkeys not to wear blinkers. They can then see all around them and choose a safe path.

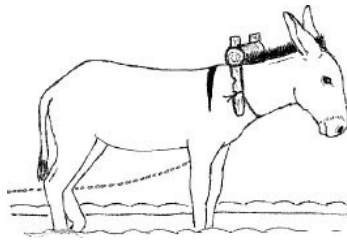
- It is recommended that pack donkeys are trained to walk on a halter so that they can be led and tethered where necessary.

Harnessing for ploughing or field work

- When donkeys are trained and used for work in the fields, it is advisable to use the same harnessing used for cart pulling, namely breastplates. Neck yokes (those designed for use on oxen) are not suitable for use on donkeys and can cause severe and long-term injuries. The donkeys will work better and more effectively if breastplates are used.
- When ploughing or undertaking other field work, it is not advisable to use donkeys and oxen together. Oxen are much stronger than donkeys, and often the donkeys will not be able to keep up. Donkeys and oxen walk at a different pace.
- Two donkeys can be used, abreast (next to each other) or in tandem (behind one another) for very light field work. Ploughing or heavy work should be done with 6 or more well-trained donkeys, in good condition.
- Field work should preferably be undertaken during the cooler parts of the day, and the animals rested in the shade during the heat of the day.
- Donkeys should be rested for 30 minutes after every 2 hours worked.
- For this type of work donkeys should not be worked for more than 4 hours per day.



Correct harnessing: donkey ploughing with the use of the breastplate



Incorrect harnessing: donkey ploughing with a yoke designed for use with oxen

Acknowledgements

D. J. HANEKOM, Institute for Agricultural Engineering, Agricultural Research Council.

P. A. JONES, Donkey Power Teaching and Consultancy, Zimbabwe.

A. B. D. JOUBERT, Department of Agronomy, Animal Traction Centre, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Fort Hare.

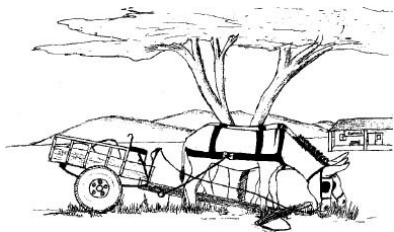
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C.M.E. McCrindle, Production Animal Medicine, Medical University of Southern Africa.

R. A. PEARSON, Draught Animal Research and Tropical Animal Production, University of Edinburgh.

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