

The  
**Donkey**  
Sanctuary



*The Donkey  
Sanctuary  
Code of  
practice  
for working  
donkeys*



Endorsed by BEVA

# *Code of practice for working donkeys*

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# CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE LICENSING OF WORKING DONKEYS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The compilation of this Code of Practice draws heavily on existing legislation by which Local Authorities, Licence Holders and Animal Welfare Organisations must abide. Our own recommendations have been added based on many years of experience having identified welfare issues pertaining to working donkeys that were not fully addressed by current legislation. These recommendations can be adopted as bye laws under the clauses found in the Riding Establishment Act 1964 Chapter 70 and subsequently updated in the Riding Establishment Act 1970 Chapter 32 as long as they are deemed reasonable.

## General Stipulations

- *The licensee must be over eighteen years of age and suitably qualified to work and care for donkeys. Any person left in charge of the animals in the owner's absence should not be under sixteen years of age. They must be capable of undertaking the duties of care and management of the donkeys including the letting out for hire and riding.* The local authority should establish that the operator owns sufficient donkeys to prevent overworking.
- *The terms and conditions of the licence should apply in full for a period of twelve months.* Ideally, the annual inspection of the donkeys taking place no later than by the end of May *when a full veterinary inspection of both donkeys and premises takes place.* Special attention should be paid to the following:
  1. *Working donkeys should be at least 4 years of age.*
  2. *Paramount consideration must be given to the condition of the donkeys that must be maintained in a good state of health* and capable of comfortably working a full day.
  3. *The donkeys' feet must be regularly trimmed to a good standard. Any shoes must be fitted by a qualified farrier and in good condition.*

4. *The Riding Establishment Act demands that a record of all donkeys aged three years or under be kept by the licence holder and produced on demand.*
5. *The Licence holder shall hold a insurance policy under the terms of the Riding Establishment Act.*
6. *The Licensee should take all reasonable precautions to prevent and control the spread of infections and contagious diseases among equines. First aid equipment must be maintained on the premises.*
7. *The Licence holders must ensure that appropriate steps have been taken for the protection of donkeys in case of fire.*
8. *As from 2005, donkeys are required by law to have a passport.* In addition to this, we highly recommend that some form of identification be adopted such as hoof branding, freeze branding or micro chipping. This makes identification simpler and prevents the unscrupulous operator from switching donkeys.

## **Pasture and Accommodation**

- *It is the duty of the Local Authority to inspect **ALL** premises and pastures (which should be free from poisonous plants) where the donkeys are likely to be kept throughout the year to establish their suitability in accordance with the Riding Establishment Act.*
- *Accommodation should be available at all times. It must be suitable in respect of construction, size, lighting, ventilation, drainage and cleanliness.*
- *When donkeys are maintained at grass, adequate pasture and shelter must be provided at all times. **NOTE:** Donkeys do not have a water resistant coat and natural shelter such as hedges and trees are not sufficient.*
- *It is essential that a suitable and qualified person visits at least once daily to ensure that the donkeys are in good health and are adequately supplied with food, drink and bedding.*

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*All passages in red italic print are statutory under current Acts of Parliament.  
Passages in normal print are recommendations from The Donkey Sanctuary.*

- Where donkeys are placed in private homes for the duration of the winter months or longer *the above conditions will still apply even though these premises may be outside the boundaries of the initial Licensing Authority*. It is recommended that at least one random visit should be made to the donkeys whilst in their winter quarters by the licensing officer of the Local Authority in which the premises lie.

## Enforcement

*It is the statutory duty of the Local Authority to exercise powers of entry and inspection for an officer from any Local Authority and/or a veterinary surgeon when:*

- 1. A donkey is in such condition that riding or driving would be likely to cause suffering.*
- 2. The tack exhibits defect(s) causing or likely to cause suffering.*
- 3. The licence holder fails to provide a sick or injured donkey medical care.*
- 4. The licence holder knowingly permits an unqualified person to have control over management of the establishment.*
- 5. The licence holder intentionally avoids inspection by concealing any donkey within the riding establishment.*

The operator **must** notify the Licensing Authority of any:

- Acquisition or disposal of licensed working donkeys.
- Change in location of grazing, shelter, and stables.

## Work

- It is encouraged that a maximum weight limit for riders should not exceed eight stone or 51Kgs.
- Water should be made available at regular intervals.
- No donkey should be taken to its place of work that is not in a presentable condition. All tack must be properly fitted and safe.
- The name and contact number of the licensee should be clearly displayed at its place of work.
- *Any donkey found to be ill or injured should be withdrawn from work, treated and rested until such time it is fully recovered and able to resume duties. If, however, the donkey requires veterinary treatment, the Licensing Authority must be advised and the donkey will not be allowed to return to work until declared fit by the attending vet and the Authority notified.*
- A donkey should work no more than 6 days a week, with 1 full day of rest.
- When the donkeys need to work intensively for long periods, licence holders should consider a break of at least an hour when tack is removed for an adequate rest.
- Proprietors should be encouraged to keep the areas where their donkeys are working in a clean and sanitary condition.
- *Mares that are heavily in foal or have foaled within the last three months are prohibited from work.* Moreover, the practice of exhibiting a young foal with its mother at a work place during the months following its birth should be strongly discouraged.

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The Donkey Sanctuary offers help and advice to Local Authorities and Licence Holders in many ways:

- By providing free bespoke training to Licensing Officers.
- By acting as consultants for Local Authorities when invited to do so.
- By offering free Training Days to Licence Holders.
- By monitoring the welfare of working donkeys throughout the United Kingdom both in summer and winter.
- By providing advice and support regarding personalised identification of all working donkeys.
- By offering to Local Authorities the free services of Donkey Sanctuary vets who are on the RCVS/BVA approved list of veterinary surgeons to inspect Riding Establishments.
- By offering Licence Holders free pathological analysis, second opinions, and direct referrals to The Donkey Sanctuary hospital.
- Offering relinquishment to The Donkey Sanctuary to retiring beach donkeys.
- By assisting Licence Holders to find capable and reliable winter homes for their donkeys.
- By encouraging the improvement in the standard of care of working donkeys by organising a National Competition for Britain's Best Working Donkeys.
- The Donkey Sanctuary runs a 24 hour help and advice line which can be contacted on 01395 578222. Your local Donkey Sanctuary Regional Welfare Officer's phone number can be obtained from our web site [www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk](http://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk)



A charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales No. 264818

**The Donkey Sanctuary** (a charity registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales No. 264818) was founded by Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE in 1969 and is now the largest sanctuary for donkeys in the world.

The aims and objects of the charity are the provision of care, protection and/or permanent security anywhere in the world for donkeys and mules which are in need of attention by reason of sickness, maltreatment, poor circumstances, ill-usage or other like causes, and the prevention of cruelty and suffering among donkeys and mules.

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