

Feeding the Donkey with Kidney Disease

Donkeys with kidney disease require specialist feeding which is different to the approach that would be used for a horse with similar problems.

Below are tips on feeding these animals safely whilst avoiding other problems such as colic and laminitis:

DO'S

- Do provide a very low protein diet (< 8 %)
- Do provide a diet low in dietary calcium/phosphorous (< 1%)
- Provide a good quality hay if the donkey's teeth allow it, if not provide short-chopped hay replacers, this should form the vast majority of the donkey's diet
- These animals should be maintained on forage, if they require more energy dense diets oil should be used as a supplement to increase energy intake
- When using oil, provide soya oil as this is easily digestible by equids
- Consider providing B vitamin supplementation, Brewers Yeast may be an affordable source if owners do not want to pay for more expensive veterinary formulations
- Encourage owners to feed 'little and often' to ensure the kidneys are not overloaded if providing supplementary feeds
- Encourage owners to have 'tempters' available for encouraging inappetent animals to eat – things to try include: apples / carrots, apple sauce, apple juice, peppermint cordial, dried mint leaf (available from most horse feed merchants), fenugreek (again from feed merchants) and molasses (small quantities only)

DON'TS

- Don't feed high protein haylage
- Avoid high protein alfalfa chops
- Avoid clover rich pastures, beet pulp and bran
- Don't feed 'senior' or 'conditioning' feeds even if the donkey is underweight, these feeds are too high in proteins, starch and sugars
- Avoid the donkey becoming overweight or gradually reduce weight if this is already a problem
- Avoid all cereal-based feeds
- Ask owners to avoid feeding excessive treats, encourage the feeding of 'safe' treats such as apples, carrots and high fibre nuts

POSSIBLE DIETS

Good quality forage should be available at all times; depending upon the body condition of the donkey this should be composed of variable ratios of hay and straw, depending on the time of year, with restricted grazing. For those donkeys that have poor dentition and struggle with long fibres try providing short chopped hay replacers that are not alfalfa rich. Products that we have successfully fed to donkeys with kidney disease are:

- Happy Hoof as a 'bucket feed' and / or complete hay replacer
- Saracens Donkey Diet – excellent as a basic diet, good for safe weight gain
- Soya Oil – feed up to 100 ml per day, introduce gradually