

# Donkey Society of Australia

## Western Australian Branch

### **Catching your donkey**

Have a small area into which the donkey can be enticed or driven. Depending on the degree of difficulty, you may be able to get him into this area every day for his lesson, or if not, he may need to be kept enclosed for the duration of this training. All except the most nervous donkey will probably be able to be caught after one lesson but as many donkeys are only caught when there is something unpleasant about to happen such as feet trimmed, teeth filed, or veterinary attention, you might be working against a lot of negative conditioning. If the donkey is really uncooperative you might need to leave on a halter (with a 6-12 inch rope with a knot on the end) for the duration of training. This gives you something to take hold of more easily than getting close enough to grasp the halter.

Start by taking the halter everywhere with you so that he doesn't associate the sight of it with the need to escape. Then use it to rub his neck and back in the direction of the hair. Put your arm over his neck and rub the other side of his face with it, which will get him accustomed to the position you will be in when you finally put it on, all the time telling him how wonderful and intelligent he is. Finally, hold the nose band of the halter in front of him and feed him his treats through it. Once you have achieved this, you put the halter on without doing it up, exclaiming what a good donkey he is and giving him a treat, then remove it and repeat so that it is a wonderful game with happy voices and lots of rewards. If he is the difficult one who is wearing his halter all the time, then proceed as above but use another, larger halter to go over the permanent one until you are satisfied you can always get it on, then take both off.

Apart from when this controlled training is needed, you should never leave your donkey in the paddock with his halter on. Many people do because they have doubts about their ability to catch their donkey but you have trained yours to love having his halter on. Don't think the job is done now however, and only catch him when needed for something nasty. Make sure you put the halter on every day for a while and even when well trained continue to put it on occasionally for no reason. It is also a good idea to put it on in the paddock as well as in an enclosed area, as many donkeys will say, 'I know you can catch me in the yard, but no one can catch me in my paddock.'