

# Donkey Society of Western Australia Inc

## To lift your donkeys feet

This is very important as donkeys must have their feet attended to by a farrier at regular intervals. How often depends on the type of soil the donkey is on and the use to which it is put, but most donkeys need a minimum of four visits a year. Start with the front feet. If the donkey is very nervous about having his feet touched, start by running your hand down as far as the knee and praising him if he doesn't flinch. If he is the sort of donkey who likes being brushed, then brushing him as low as you can is a great help. Eventually you will be able to stroke him all the way down his front legs. Every time he doesn't accept your hand start again. This is where your growly voice can take a rest; until you can lift all his feet you will only need your delighted voice and your calming, steady voice.

Once you can run your hands all the way down his legs, pick one up by leaning against his shoulder to make him take his weight on the other leg. Then pick the leg up so the hoof is just off the ground, but don't lift it more than an inch or so off the ground. Put it down again and give lots of praise and treats. Make sure when picking up the foot that you don't put your hand around the fetlock (ankle). You can put your hand on the front of the fetlock, but to enclose it makes the donkey panic as having your feet trapped is one of the most dangerous things that can happen to an equine. Once you can lift the foot a little, start playing with it; making little circles, tapping the toe on the ground, swinging it backwards and forwards with praise and treats for every movement. Eventually you will be able to pick the hoof up to the height that will be required when the farrier comes. Start by giving a treat for each foot lifted, then only after two have been dealt with, then not until all four have been done.

The back feet are more of a problem if your donkey is untrained. Again the brushing and stroking method is used, but if kicking is a problem you will need to start by stroking his legs with a whip or a soft broom or using some other method that will keep you clear of danger. You might need your growly 'NO!' for every time he kicks, but remember he is just very nervous and needs reassurance more than anything. The best way is if you can have him in a crush where you can put your hand through to stroke him without the danger of being kicked. If you have a donkey which is unhappy to the extent of being dangerous, you will probably need the help of a knowledgeable person as confidence is half the battle, and if you don't even know how to hold the foot your donkey will be restless to start with. Most donkeys are reasonably easy to train, but better still, before buying your donkey ask the present owner to demonstrate that they can pick up and clean out all feet. At least then you know that your donkey does know what it is all about. When you have trained your donkey to have his feet picked up, you must then do so at least once a week to keep him fully trained and relaxed. If you don't, you will find there is no farrier in your district who will take him on.