

## **CLIPPING GUIDELINES FOR DONKEY OWNERS**

Unless donkeys are doing a lot of work or being prepared for the show ring they should not be fully clipped out at any time of the year. The natural coat of a donkey is needed for many reasons, assisting with body temperature regulation, protection from the weather and flies being just a few of them.

The exception to this rule is the old donkey that perhaps, as a result of hormonal disturbance, may have grown an excessively hairy coat, which a Veterinary Surgeon may advise requires clipping in summer and winter.

It is common for horses in work to be clipped out through the winter months but in our experience the necessity to clip a donkey is more likely to occur during late spring and through the summer months. A donkey should never be clipped for the sake of it, but some reasons for partial clipping may include the following:

Some donkeys can grow unusually heavy or thick coats through the winter and be slow to moult during the spring. The hair on a donkey's belly may remain long and become easily matted. This is a sensitive area on a donkey so choosing to clip away the hair may be a more comfortable option.

Some donkeys may suffer from skin conditions which benefit from excessive coat being clipped away. It may also be necessary to clip an area of the donkey's coat in order to keep a wound clean and free from hair and other debris. In both of these situations advice from a Veterinary Surgeon must be sought in the first instance.

Through particularly hot summer months if a donkey has not fully shed its winter coat it may sweat in certain areas like the neck, behind the elbows and between the hind legs. This is another situation where a partial clip may be considered.

If for one of the above reasons and after some serious thought the decision is made to clip your donkey then the following information should help make the job of clipping easier and safer for the both of you.

### **Preparation**

Before you start to clip, ensure that you have everything that you will need to hand: - clippers, two or three sets of blades, clipper oil, a small brush (to clear the clipper head and vent during clipping), an extension cable and paper towel (for cleaning the clippers and blades). Your donkey must be thoroughly groomed, clean and dry. The area that you are going to clip in should be clear of obstacles (feed bowls, yard toys etc.) and dry. Have an assistant ready to help as and when required.

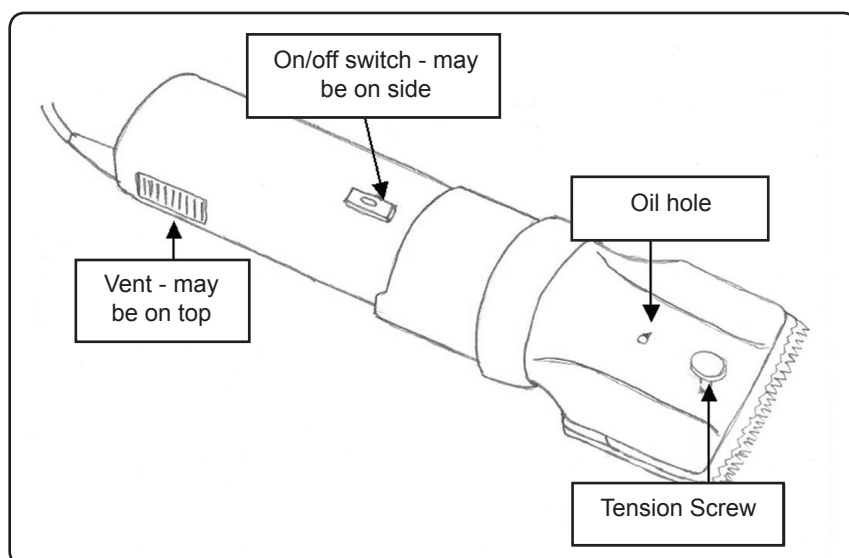
### **Using the Clippers**

Always use clipper oil and not WD40, 3-in-one oil etc. These oils are not of the correct consistency and can result in the clippers not running efficiently and therefore become more prone to breaking down. Using incorrect oil can also cause your clippers to overheat. Not only will using the correct oil increase the working life of the clippers and blades (if used correctly) but clipper oil also contains an anti-bacterial ingredient that may help to lessen the risk of any skin problems being passed from one animal to another.

Avoid cables lying on the ground. If possible tie extension leads up on a beam – the less cable on the ground the less to fall over! Whilst clipping, keep the clipper lead over your shoulder. Do not allow your donkey to stand on the cable. Make sure that you use a circuit breaker for safety.

Ensure that the tension screw is set correctly. The correct tensioning of clipper blades is essential for effective clipping and increases the life of the blades. Depending on the make of the clippers tensioning them correctly will be slightly different so always refer to the manufacturer's instructions. If the tension screw is too tight the blades will get hot very quickly. If too loose the clippers will not clip the hair but rather chew at it which can cause discomfort to your donkey.

Once you are clipping, every 10 minutes or so, brush any loose hair from the clipper head and vent (see diagram). This will help to prevent the clippers and blades from getting hot. Donkey hair is different in texture to horse hair and often seems more “fluffy”; consequently, it can block the air vents easily and clog the clipper head, particularly if the clippers are oiled too much. If necessary, spray a small amount of oil into the oil hole on top of the clipper head, and while the clippers are running, lightly spray a small amount in the sides and cutting edge of the blades. Avoid letting oil run onto the tension screw as this



can cause the screw to loosen and undo. Use your hand to check if the blades are hot. There are several reasons why this can happen – see “Troubleshooting” list.

Always take the blades off and thoroughly clean the clippers after use (unplug the clippers from the power supply first). Using a small paint brush (1/4” is best), to remove the loose hair from the outside and inside of the clipper head and the vent – usually located at the cable end of the unit. Wipe with a clean rag or paper towel to remove any small pieces of hair, dirt and excess oil.

Never split a pair of blades. The blades grind together and “bed in” to each other. If sets are then mixed up the blades will not work together properly.

Do not wash blades in water – they will rust. After using blades they should simply be brushed off then wiped over with a clean rag or paper towel. If they are not to be used for a while then spray lightly with oil, put back in the plastic wallet or wrapped in paper (newspaper is ideal) and placed in the tin provided.

When the blades will no longer cut the coat, remove them and clean them with paper towel before placing them in their tin ready to be sent for sharpening. It is a good idea to get your clippers serviced once a year and this should be done well before you want to start clipping. They should also be checked annually for electrical safety.

### Preparation of your Donkey

Ensure the donkey is dry and that the coat is well groomed. It may be necessary to cut clumps of matted hair with scissors first. Check the skin for any cuts or lumps that could be caught by the blades. The better the coat is groomed the longer the blades will last and clipping will take less time.

In some cases the donkey may need to be sedated by a Vet. If you are already aware that your donkey can be nervous or difficult, but it is necessary to clip it then speak to your Vet. If you have started to clip and you realise that your donkey is not happy about the procedure, do not continue. Release your donkey and then ring your Vet to ask their advice. It is better to leave the donkey for a day or two before having him sedated rather than cause the donkey any unnecessary distress.

**Bib and Belly**  
Useful on very long coats prone to matted bellies & neck.

**Chaser**  
Can be higher. For donkeys prone to matted elbows.

**Trace**  
For donkeys in work or prone to matting between hindlegs.

## Clipping your Donkey

Generally A2 (medium) blades are used. On older donkeys, it can be useful to use A6 or A7 blades as these are coarser and will leave more hair on the donkey. Only clip off what is necessary. It is better to clip more off later if required unless, of course, the donkey has to be sedated. For example, it may only be necessary to clip off the hair under the belly and the underside of the neck.

Make sure you have enough rugs to prevent the donkey from getting cold, especially if you are doing a full clip. Even in the summer, days can be chilly, particularly for an older donkey that has had a thick coat removed. If you are doing a full clip, it may be necessary to put a rug over the donkey's back while you clip the rest of him. If the donkey has never been clipped before, switch the clippers on while standing a distance away and watch his reaction. If he seems unperturbed then approach him towards the shoulder area. If he is happy with this then gently place the clippers onto the palm of your hand, and place the back of your hand onto the donkey's shoulder. This will help him to become accustomed to the vibrations of the clippers. If he is happy at this point then take your hand away and place the clippers directly onto his shoulder. Run them backwards down the coat so that he can feel the vibration without you cutting any hair. If he is OK with this and remains calm and relaxed then you can start clipping! Some donkeys that show a little nervousness are often much better being held by someone than being tied up. Others can be distracted with the offer of a titbit.

Always clip against the direction of the natural lie of the hair. Whenever the lie of the hair changes, adjust the direction of the clippers. Be very careful when clipping areas where there is loose skin i.e. the chest and stifle areas. Use your free hand to gently stretch the skin flat and have an assistant to lift the front leg up and forwards to make it easier to do "armpits". Keep the clipper blade surface flat against the skin with just enough pressure to keep the blades flat on the donkey.

If you need to clip the head, ask your assistant to hold the head up so that you can clip under the jaw. Be **VERY** careful clipping around eyes – put your hand over the eye to avoid injury. Always leave the whiskers on as the donkey uses these for feel. This is especially important for blind or partially sighted donkeys. **Never** undo the noseband of the head collar with the donkey tied up. If the donkey pulls back, the head collar may pull tight around his throat. Always undo the lead rope and have an assistant help you.

When clipping above the legs, the hair at the top of the leg should be slanted from front to back (viewed from the side). On the front legs this will clear the elbow area, and on the hind legs, the area between the legs will be easier to keep clean.

As a rough guide, start the clip on the front leg just below the elbow and clip up to where the front of the leg joins the chest. On the hind leg, start about a hand's breadth above the hock and clip up to the stifle. Clipping the legs at an angle will also prevent the donkey from appearing to be wearing leg warmers!!

If a full clip is required, clip an upside down "V" at the top of the tail. **NB The legs should not be clipped unless requested by your Vet.** Variations of the clips shown are not uncommon i.e. trimming the jaw line, taking the Chaser clip up to the poll just between the ears etc, depending on requirements.

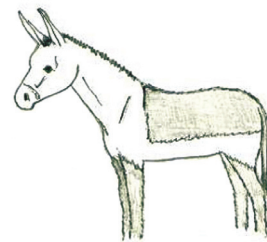
## Finishing Touches

Many donkeys do not like their ears being done, and it is rarely necessary to clip the whole ear. Only the edges may need to be done. Hold the edges of the ear gently together and trim along the edges from top to bottom using a pair of scissors (preferably round ended ones for safety).

When you have finished clipping the donkey, brush him off with a body brush to remove any loose hair. If necessary, rug up with the appropriate weight rug for the weather.

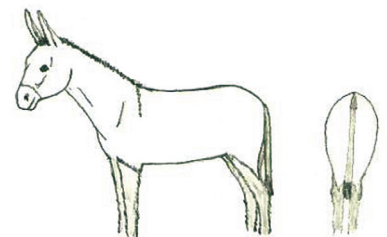
### Blanket

For donkeys that are in work, prone to lots of matting or with skin conditions (Vets advice).



### Full

For those in hard work, prone to sweating, not moulting or skin conditions (Vets advice).



## Trouble shooting

Problem	Possible Cause	Action required
<p><b>Clippers excessively noisy</b></p>	<p>Blades rattling. Tension screw not tight enough. Vent blocked. Clipper motor is dirty and blocked. Spacing bar on clipper head worn.</p>	<p>Ensure (correct) blades are fitted onto lugs. Tighten screw clockwise until noise drops slightly. Brush vent, remove and blow out loose hair. Clean clippers thoroughly. If still noisy send to be serviced. Send for repair.</p>
<p><b>Blades not clipping</b></p>	<p>Blades are blunt – test by clipping on a less dense area of coat. Tension screw is too loose. Tension screw is too tight. Blades are clogged with hair/oil. Clipper oil needed Donkey's coat is damp, dirty or matted.</p>	<p>Put on new set of blades. Clean the blunt ones and send for sharpening. Tighten until noise drops slightly. Loosen until noise increases slightly. Remove blades, clean blades and head. Spray very lightly with clipper oil. Wait until donkey dry. Groom thoroughly. Trim matted hair with scissors.</p>
<p><b>Clippers/blades running hot</b></p>	<p>New blades with protective grease on them. Too much oil on blades and inside clipper head. Tension screw too tight. Vent blocked. Clipper motor worn/dirty. Spacing bar on clipper head worn.</p>	<p>Remove blades and wipe with paper towel. Remove blades and wipe with paper towel. Wipe out clipper head. Loosen tension screw until noise picks up slightly. Remove loose hair. Take blades off, brush loose hair off and clean head. Send for repair. Send for repair.</p>