

GUIDE TO RESPONSIBLY REHOMING YOUR DONKEYS

What to consider when thinking about rehoming your donkeys.

 8 April 2025  [Read on El Refugio del Burrito website](#)

Every day, we receive contact from people who, for various reasons, are forced to look for an adoptive home for their donkeys and other equines.

The main goal of this guide is to help you find a suitable adoptive home for your donkeys, based on animal welfare principles. The new home will be fully responsible for their care in every aspect, directly impacting their day-to-day life. That's why it's crucial to assess each potential adopter's viability beforehand.

We outline the key points to consider when rehoming your donkey, so that you can make the best possible decision.

WHERE TO FIND A POTENTIAL ADOPTER?

There are several ways you can find future adopters for your donkeys:

- **El Refugio del Burrito** - we receive adoption requests from individuals. Please [contact us](#) to check what options might be available in your area
- **Authorities, local councils, equine vets** - It's always a good idea to check with local professionals and organisations - they may be able to offer support, guidance, or contacts
- **Websites** - be sure to check the reliability of the site, look for references, and avoid potential scams
- **Social media groups** - there are more and more communities online where people looking to rehome animals can connect with potential adopters.

WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK TO ASSESS IF AN ADOPTER IS SUITABLE

Phone interview with the adopter

When evaluating a potential adopter, it's important to ensure they can provide the necessary care. Here are some key topics to cover:

Regulations and legal requirements

- Do they have an equine/donkey holding code (REGA)?
- What is the number and capacity?
- How many animals are currently registered?

Adopter's health and handling capacity

Donkeys can live up to 40 years, are heavy, strong, and need physical care.

- Are they aware of the daily time commitment needed for donkey care?
- What would their daily routine be?
- Who would look after the donkey if they're unavailable?

Intentions and experience of the adopter

- Why do they want a donkey?
- What activities do they plan to do with the donkey?
- Do they have previous experience with donkeys or other equines?
- Do they own other equines? How many? Gender, age, use, gelded or not?
- How far do they live from where the donkey will be kept?

Veterinary and hoof care

Donkeys need at least one general and dental check-up per year, plus routine treatments (vaccinations, deworming, etc).

- Do they have access to an equine vet?
- Do they have a farrier for hoof trimming every 6-10 weeks?

Maintenance Costs

- Are they aware of the yearly cost to keep donkeys (approx. €1,100-1,300 per pair)?
- Can they afford unexpected veterinary expenses?

Land, space and shelter

- Do they have a field or pasture for the donkey? Provide dimensions and features.
- Is the land securely and safely fenced?
- Are the facilities hazard-free and safely enclosed?
- Do they have a stable or suitable shelter? (Recommended bedding space: 4.7 m² per donkey, 9.4 m² for a mule).
- If not, could they build one?
- Will the donkey have free access to the pasture, or be taken daily? (Free access is recommended.)

Access to water and food

- Do they have clean water sources and access to proper food (grass, hay, etc.)?
- Do they have space for food storage and care tools?

Socialisation and emotional wellbeing

- Will the donkey have companionship from other donkeys or compatible animals?

Note: Donkeys are highly social animals and benefit greatly from same-species companionship.

Exercise and stimulation

- Do they have a plan to keep the donkey active and mentally stimulated?

Transport

- Do they have a means of transport for the donkey, or access to an equine transporter?

Controlled introduction to other equines

- Will the donkey live with other animals?
- If so, can they be kept separated initially for a gradual introduction?

REQUESTING PHOTOS AND VIDEO

- Photos of other animals on the property
- Photos of the stable or shelter (inside and out)
- Image of the stable or shelter entrance
- Photos of water and feeding areas
- Photos of food storage areas
- Photos of fencing around the field where the donkey will live
- Images of other areas where the donkey might stay and their fencing

VISITING THE ADOPTIVE HOME

If possible, visit the site in person to verify the conditions first hand before moving the donkeys.

ADOPTION CONTRACTS

We recommend signing a contract with the new adopter to clearly outline the terms and conditions of the donkey's care.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Owning equines comes with legal obligations that both owners and adopters must meet to avoid penalties:

- **Donkeys must be identified (microchip and passport)** before they are one year old
- **An Equine Holding Code (REGA)** is required to legally keep equines on a property

- **Transport document:** Donkeys are considered livestock, so moving them between homes requires a transport document from your local agricultural office (OCA)
- **Ownership transfer:** Don't forget to officially transfer ownership once the adoption is confirmed. Your vet can advise on how to do this properly.

If you have any doubts about regulations or paperwork, consult your equine vet or your OCA (Local Agricultural Office).

CHECKLIST BEFORE THE TRANSFER

Documents and items to send with the donkey

(Passport, medical history, care tools, food for the first days, etc.)

Fit for travel?

A full vet check is recommended before traveling. Travel can be stressful and potentially risky if the donkey's health is not optimal.

Help the donkey adapt to the new home

- Share details about the donkey's character and preferences with the new home—it'll help the donkey feel more secure
- Gradual introduction to other animals is highly recommended to avoid accidents. Start with separation, allowing time and space to adjust.

Hyperlipemia

The stress of the move and change of home may affect donkeys. The new owner should observe them closely for the first 10 days and monitor their appetite. At our sanctuary, we do a blood test one week after transport.

FOLLOW-UP

The adopter may have questions as they get to know the donkeys.