**DSC Animal Admissions Process**

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*This document is for reference by those who are interested in learning more about The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada (DSC)’s Animal Admissions Process; specifically, for owners\* who are considering rehoming options for their donkey\*\*. It aims to outline how the DSC can help and what our expectations and requirements are throughout the course of any potential relinquishment.*

*While we do not have an application process that must be passed to be admitted, it is important to note that the DSC has a maximum operating capacity that can be reached at any given time. This means that we assess admission requests based on priority and that a request to take a donkey for a date in the far future (including Estate plans for pets) cannot necessarily be guaranteed.*

*\* Please note that for legal reasons, we can only process admission requests directly from owners. NO third-party requests can be fulfilled without express and written consent of any and all legal title owners of the donkey.If you are concerned about the welfare of a donkey in your community, please contact 1-833-936-4625*

*\*\*For the sake of being concise, any mentions of the word ‘donkey’ throughout this document refer to donkey(s) and/or mule(s), depending on the relevance to each individual owners’ situation.*

While we all hope to be able to keep our four-legged loved ones for forever, The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada (DSC) understands that some aspects of life are inevitably beyond our control and may force us to make alternative plans. We also understand that your donkey(s) are a part of your family and rehoming them is a difficult decision to make, especially considering the systemic mistreatment that donkeys have historically experienced.

***What can I expect from the DSC if I decide to relinquish my donkeys?***

With over 25 years of experience helping to rehabilitate these misunderstood creatures, the DSC has developed a set of practical knowledge and skills that are as unique as the donkeys themselves. We currently care for a group of approximately 100 animals but our talented and attentive team, as well as the structure of our care program and facilities allows us to cater to the needs of each individual. Our goal is to make sure that our residents are safe, healthy, and ultimately, happy.

***Admittance to the DSC guarantees:***
- Peace, freedom and protection
- The best possible care and medical attention
- The right of life regardless of age or condition
- A dignified, peaceful death, induced only in the event of extreme suffering and the loss of quality of life

***We work to uphold the Five Freedoms:***
- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain
- Freedom to express normal behaviour
- Freedom from fear and distress

**Transfer of Title Paperwork**

If you have decided to relinquish your donkey(s) to the DSC, there is only one piece of paperwork that you will need to sign—the Transfer of Title. This is our version of a bill of sale**\*** and acts a formal transfer of ownership of the animals from you, the owner**\*\***, to the DSC.

As part of this document, you will be asked to give the DSC permissions to access any prior health records that you might have for the donkey(s) (ie. such as through a veterinary clinic). We understand that this request might not be applicable to all, and this is okay if that is the case! If records do exist, it simply aids us in determining what treatments/procedures the donkey may need upon arrival and if there are any previous health conditions that we should be aware of.

You are not required to sign the transfer of title document until the day of pickup but to help ensure you understand the terms of relinquishment prior to scheduling any pickups, we will send this to you in advance to review it and discuss any questions you may have. Once signed, a photocopy of the transfer of title document will be sent to you for your records.

***\*NOTE****: There is NO monetary cost associated with relinquishment to the DSC*

***\*\*NOTE****: Relinquishment can only be carried out if ALL true and rightful owner(s) of the animals in question are in agreement with the decision to relinquish, as shown by signing the transfer of title document.*

**The Pickup Process**

***Our team***

No need to worry about getting your donkeys to us, the DSC is responsible for the transportation of the donkey(s) and we will come to you! We use a truck and 18” straight-load, step-up trailer rig and have all the supplies we need including halters and lead ropes.

Our Pickup Team generally consists of two DSC staff. At least one of these members will be one of our trainers, who are experienced in evaluating and shaping donkey behavior. This is important to our process as we recognize that trailering can be a new experience for many donkeys, and we want to create the safest and least stressful experience possible for all.

***Choosing a date***

Determining a date for pickup is largely dependent on our staff availability as well as your location. When our Pickup Team is not on the road, they are working on our farm to care for our other donkeys and mules. So, depending on the season, especially for trips over 150km from the DSC, we may need more time to plan. We will also take weather conditions into consideration to maintain the safety your donkey as well as our team.

Generally, Tuesdays and Fridays work best for our team, but we can certainly be flexible to your schedule and needs if necessary. Please do not hesitate to inform of us of any extenuating circumstances to your pickup timeline preference (ie. animal aggression, rapidly declining quality of life of people or animals, relocation closing dates etc.). We understand that some cases are emergencies and can certainly accommodate faster pickups for such situations.

***Planning for Pickup day***

Once a pickup is scheduled, you will be sent 3 confirmation reminders; one on the day prior, one on the day of, and one the hour before pickup is scheduled. In case delays pop up, we ask that you please keep your devices on you in case we need to communicate at other points along our route. If you are aware of any difficulties finding and/or accessing your property, it can be helpful to inform us prior to travel.

Donkeys are sensitive to stress, such as is sometimes experienced when moving homes, so we ask that you help us prepare all that we can in advance to help the process go smoothly for all. While the DSC has everything we need to care for your donkey back at the farm, we know that you may have specifics that you wish for us to take for them including toys, grooming supplies, halters and lead ropes. Most importantly, if your donkey is used to a regular supply of any specific supplements (ie. vitamins and minerals, grains, treats etc.), it would be helpful for you to provide this information to our staff (or even provide 5-7 days worth supply) so that we can ensure they have a stress-free transition. If you haven’t already, please also inform staff if your donkey is on any medications.

As another measure to help minimize potential stress, it would be helpful if you put your donkey in a confined space (ie. a stall, or small paddock) with a halter on prior to our arrival. It is okay if this is not possible or if you are aware your donkey may be difficult to handle, just let staff know in advance so that we can properly prepare and budget our time!

The transfer of title paperwork needs to be signed before loading process begins.

***Loading Process***

Upon arrival, our Pickup Team will first exit the vehicle to greet you and your donkey and discuss the plan for loading, including where to park our rig for the best point of access to your donkey. We understand that some donkeys can be very sensitive to trusting new people, so we will take a few minutes to get acquainted (as well as put on any halters/leadropes if necessary) before starting the loading process. Treats can be helpful here!

*How can I help?*

As their guardians we know that you may feel the need to help, and we certainly may ask for it at specific points of the load! Often though, too many hands can make the situation more complicated and/or dangerous so unless otherwise advised, we ask that you stand back and let the Pickup Team handle things from here.

Food is a wonderful motivator for teaching donkeys many different skills but we find it is typically a hinderance when it comes to activities involving movement, such as loading into a trailer. So, beyond its use to help initially introduce us to your donkey, we ask that you please keep all food items out of sight unless otherwise asked by the Pickup Team.

*How will you get my donkey on the trailer?*

Our trailer is a step-up trailer meaning that we do not use any ramps for loading. While it may sound like a more difficult feat for a donkey to jump up, rather than walk, onto a trailer we have found that ramps carry a greater risk of injury (ie. if they are scared, or we are loading in inclement weather that might make the ramp slippery).

In our experience, donkeys do best when they are allowed time to explore new things on their own terms and our normal process and recommendations for training a donkey to load onto a trailer often requires weeks of preparation. The reality of the time we have on pickup day though, means we may have to use alternative methods to get the job done but rest assured, we always utilize the LIMA approach (a training style that uses the least intrusive, minimally invasive strategies).

If you are relinquishing more than one donkey it is best to start loading the ‘leader’ or more confident donkey, first. We may ask for your assessment of their personality and the dynamics of their relationship to help us determine this!

To start the loading process, we want the donkey to approach the trailer and begin sniffing the ground and this may be an area we ask you to get involved, to help them feel comfortable in beginning their exploration! We start the process with the least amount of involvement from us as possible since applying pressure, either directly to their bodies or through the lead rope, too soon can damage the donkey’s trust in us and make things take longer. Donkeys typically take at least half an hour to load so don’t worry if they do not jump on right away. This is completely normal, and we are used to it!... “Slow and steady wins the race”.

From this point, we will start adding in small but calculated amounts of pressure to encourage focus on forward movement. Sometimes, these steps alone are enough for a donkey to jump on, or at least put their front feet on. If this is the case, we will continue to allow them to make progress in their own time. At some point throughout the loading process though, a donkey may decide to plant their feet so we may need to use additional methods to help them load including lifting their feet onto the trailer or using a nylon strap around their bum.

*Do you use sedation to load a difficult donkey?*

While the DSC does often bring sedatives like dormosedan gel (oral sedative) on our trips in case of emergencies, we generally find these tactics are only useful for a handful of specific situations and do not help donkeys load as it causes them to plant their feet. In addition, a sedated donkey has a more difficult time finding their balance on the trailer ride and can produce an increased risk of stumbling and injuring themselves.

We will have a conversation in advance if we feel that sedatives could be beneficial but more often than not, this is not a tool we use.

***On the Trailer***

Once on the trailer, donkeys will be left lose (ie. lead ropes are not left on), for the same reasons we do not generally sedate them – it helps them to find their balance and prevent injury. For longer journeys, they may also have access to hay hanging from a slow feeder net. In this case we will make stops in our route to allow them access to water.

The nature of the work of our Pickup Team means it is important for us to be efficient in our travels. This means that your donkey(s) may have the company of other donkey(s) along their trip. Don’t worry though, our trailer has a divider and new animals are never mixed together on a pickup!

***Keeping you in the loop***

Should you be interested in knowing how your donkey(s) are settling in once they arrive at the DSC, we would be happy to send you an update. From this point on though, changes about your donkey’s health and placement are not generally sent out although you are welcome to inquire about them at any time.

**Life at the DSC**

***Arrival Process***

Once a new donkey arrives, they will head to our ‘Arrival Paddock’ where they spend approximately three weeks before they are introduced to their new family\*. This process is important for two fundamental reasons:

1. Decompression- Doing too many new things too quickly can easily produce dangerous levels of stress for a donkey. Just like cats and dogs, donkeys need a few weeks to adjust to new surroundings. This is called the ‘decompression period’. During this time, we get to know our new friends from a distance, which helps us evaluate what donkeys and locations they would fit in best with after their arrival process is completed!
2. Quarantine and Observation- With over 100 animals on the farm and our numerous public events, we must take every precaution to keep everyone safe. So, this period also allows us to assess a new donkey’s health to determine what, if any, procedures or treatments may need to be performed before they transition to their new herd. This includes castration for male donkeys if they are intact.

*\*NOTE: If a donkey arrives alone and is used to company, we may try to pair them with a DSC ‘mentor donkey’. However, sometimes several new arrivals come at once and, if deemed safe, they may all live together during this process. Often new arrivals find comfort in each other and may even remain close friends after their arrival process ends!*

***Starting Medical & Behavioral Care***

During their three weeks in the arrival paddock, a new donkey will generally receive minimal handling from our staff, volunteers, veterinarians, and farriers so as not to overwhelm them with too many new things at once. However, our staff will perform a brief evaluation (with the help of information you may have already given us about their needs) to determine if they need any immediate care or treatments.

Once they have completed their arrival process, a donkey will be health checked by our vets and farriers where they may receive a range of treatments such as a hoof trim, dental floating, vaccinations, deworming, delousing, x-rays etc..

Due to the nature of our work, there is no breeding at the DSC. The layout of our facilities and existence of public events means that males and females are housed in close proximity. For jacks (intact male donkeys), this is an uncomfortable and dangerous situation for himself and others so to keep everyone safe, all our males must be castrated.

This procedure takes place after the arrival process is complete and only if/when they are given a clean bill of health. After castration, the donkey will spend an additional minimum of 60 days away from our regular herds (but will still be given companionship if it is safe to do so) as this is the amount of time it generally takes for hormones to subside and healing to complete.

Finally, our trainer will also implement a Behavioral Shaping & Modification Program (training) for those donkeys who we identify to have specific fears in being handled. Our goal is for our donkeys to live a stress-free life, so any animal who is shy, nervous or inexperienced around vets and/or farriers will work with our trainer to increase their trust and confidence in us and their surroundings first, before treatment (as long as treatment is not urgent).

***The day-day***

After our new residents have completed their arrival process, our staff will use our knowledge of their personality and training needs to determine where they would best fit in on the farm. Most male donkeys go to our ‘Geldings Paddock’, most female donkeys go to our ‘Jenny’s Paddock’ and most miniatures get to live in their own special herd of boys and girls called, you guessed it, our ‘Mini’s Paddock’. However, there are some exceptions:

1. Bonded Pairs: Bonded pairs are always kept together. If we have a male/female bonded pair, they will often go to live in our ‘Jenny’s Paddock’ together (unless they are both miniatures in which case they will go to live in our ‘Mini’s Paddock’). We never put females in with our ‘Geldings Paddock’ as we find most of our bachelor’s style of play is not generally compatible with our ladies.
2. Special health/behavior needs: Some donkeys come to us with special needs that mean they are best managed in our ‘Barnyard Paddock’. This is a space for temporary rehabilitation (ie. short-term illnesses, injuries, weight issues or behavioral issues), in which, animals will go to join one of our other groups once we deem them ready. This space also acts as a long-term home for animals who have permanent physical or medical limitations that our staff need to keep a closer eye on.

Wherever they go, each donkey has 24/7 access to food, water, and shelter. As such sentient beings, a donkey’s mental wellbeing is equally as important to us as the physical, so our residents also have an enriching environment consisting of toys, regular grooming, walks and training. Above all else, your donkey will have endless friends to chose from, to live the rest of their days with!

*Can I visit my donkey(s)?*

If your donkey is a resident on the DSC main farm, you can certainly visit your donkey(s). We have many public events where you would be able to experience the atmosphere that your donkey lives in and even meet some of their friends! Due to the nature of our events though, we cannot guarantee that you will have one on one time with your donkey. Please keep checking back on our website/social media pages to check our hours, as public events are subject to change.

You can also apply to join the DSC as a volunteer, if you are interested in working more closely with your donkey and getting to know the friends they have made (both two- and four-legged alike)! You can contact the DSC Volunteer Coordinator at volunteer@thedonkeysanctuary.ca for more information on when we will be accepting and training new volunteers.

***Life on Foster Farms***

As you are considering this decision of relinquishment, it is important to note that the DSC does have a Foster Farm Program, which your donkey(s) could eventually become apart of if they are admitted to the DSC. In this program, select donkeys are chosen for the opportunity to live offsite with a family again. Generally, there are several placement criteria for selecting a donkey for foster.

* The donkey must be under the age of 25
* The donkey must be in healthy condition
* The donkey must be easy to handle (ie. any Behavioral Shaping & Modification Programs they were apart of at the DSC are complete)
* Donkeys are always sent out with their friends (bonded pairs are never separated at the DSC!)

Rest assured, that our foster farms have everything that it takes to love and care for donkeys just as we do back at the Sanctuary farm! People typically join the program because they have extensive experience and want to be apart of our mission to show the community the right way to treat donkeys. Our Foster Farm Program has a 5-step application process in which we evaluate an applicant’s skills, facilities, and passions to ensure those that we select will be able to care for our donkeys as if they were their own.

If your donkey(s) are eventually selected to live on foster, we understand that you may be interested in hearing about how they are doing. The DSC staff are happy to update you from time to time but unfortunately due to confidentiality contracts with our foster farms, we apologize that it is not typically possible to keep in touch with the farm directly.

Ultimately, our Foster Farm Program is an essential part to our mission as it helps to free up space at the Sanctuary farm for more incoming animals in need. More importantly though, the DSC recognizes that every donkey has a different personality and that some donkeys can really benefit from living in a smaller group and receiving a more individualistic style of love and care. In a sense, you can think of it as if your donkey has ‘graduated’ from the teachings and rehabilitation he/she may have received, and able to move on to bigger and better things!

**To Sum it up….**

Having a lifelong care plan for your donkey is important so that you can ensure the continuance of their health and wellbeing, no matter the circumstances that life may bring you. If you are not ready to relinquish and want to explore your other options, The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada is also happy to provide other resources and services that may either help you overcome barriers that are preventing you from keeping your donkey(s) or help you in the process of finding alternative homes, if you decide that you are not interested in relinquishment through the DSC.

We know this isn’t an easy decision to make but we hope learning more about our process has helped you to feel reassured that, as a DSC resident, your donkey will receive the highest quality care possible but most importantly— they will be loved in the way that we know you have always shown them.

We encourage you to take your time reading this information and to please feel free to ask us any questions that you may have along the way.