



# HOW MUCH DOES A DONKEY COST?

What does it cost to own a donkey? Before jumping into ownership it helps to know what you're getting into. We're breaking down the cost of owning a donkey from the initial purchase through yearly maintenance (for Arizona - the "yonder" states may vary considerably).

**Please note these prices are averages and based on a standard sized donkey (such as a BLM burro) weighing approximately 400-450lbs. These prices were compiled in August of 2023 using averages from the greater Phoenix area of Arizona.**

The greater Phoenix area has many hay growers nearby, feed stores, and large animal veterinarian clinics available. Feed prices will vary depending the size of forage bale (2-string, 3-string, round bale, etc), your location (even within Arizona prices between Yuma, Tucson, Phoenix, and Flagstaff will vary and different states moreso), and most importantly the time of year/cutting. In 2023 a 3-string bermuda bale, weighing between 80-100lbs cost \$27/bale in April/May but only \$22/bale in August. When it comes to donkey ownership it is better to factor in a higher product/service cost and build a cushion rather than to expect the low side and then be in a financial crisis.

Additionally, keep in mind that costs will vary for feed and tack based on size, however, farrier and vet care are the same regardless of size.

## Initial Costs

- Donkey \$125 BLM adoption, ungentled, \$500-\$1,000 auction/sale barn, \$1,000-1,800 breeder/trainer. Registered breeding quality, or specialty trained animals, such as driving donkeys, may cost \$3,000+
- Gelding surgery \$600+ most vets will also require vaccinations prior to doing the surgery, or on the day of surgery. Gelding is always **strongly** recommended unless you have a registered breeding herd. Intact jacks are not permitted at any BRAY event.
- Pen/Corral \$1265+ should include shade, the price listed is for a 10x20 4-rail stall kit with 10x10 shade
- Trailer \$4,000-\$20,000+
- Booster shots \$100-\$200 young, unvaccinated, previously wild, or animals with unknown backgrounds will require booster doses of several vaccines their first year

**Yearly Costs**. Bear in mind a barn call fee of \$60-\$150 is typically added if the vet comes to your facility rather than you taking your donkey into the clinic.

- Vaccinations \$400 (split between fall vaccines and spring vaccines)
  - Vaccines can be purchased at your local feed store. However some facilities and interstate travel do not accept these as proof of vaccination. The cost will be marginally lower, at approximately \$150-\$300 per year. A vet will have to administer rabies vaccines, so many people opt to have the vet administer the others as well.
- Coggins \$65+
- Routine Teeth/Dental \$250+ costs will increase with procedures beyond standard floating, such as extractions.

## **Monthly Costs**

- Hay \$135 (current 3-string, 80-100lb bales of bermuda grass are around \$27/bale)
- Straw \$50 (for 3 string bales, Standlee compressed bales increase the cost to ~\$75)
- Supplements \$20-\$100 (varies greatly depending on needs/supplements, basic supplementation includes psyllium once monthly and a salt/mineral supplement)
- Farrier \$50-\$70
- Manure Management \$50-\$200 (varies depending on management type)
- Increased Water Bill (varies - especially if you forget to turn the water off overnight when filling buckets!)
- Fly/Pest control \$20-\$100

## **Misc. Costs**

- Worming (including fecal egg count) \$50-\$90
- Health certificate \$55+
- Fly Mask \$25
- Grooming Supplies \$30-60
- Feed/water buckets \$25-50
- Halter & Lead Rope \$30
- Pack Saddle \$450 (BRAY events do not require a pack saddle)
- Hoof Boots \$250 (not every animal will need hoof boots but many burro racers use them)
- Driving harness \$600-\$1,500
- Cart \$400 (used average price) - \$1000+ (new)

**TOTAL monthly average for feed, yearly care (vaccinations, dental, coggins, call-charge), farrier, and worming: \$320**

The above breakdown is based on setting up your home to house a donkey, however, some might need to board a donkey at an equine boarding facility. Boarding will come with a space/stall for your donkey but will vary from full care (feed provided and animal fed by barn owner) to just land rental (you will be responsible for feed and feeding, you're just paying for the space to house your donkey). Full care boarding averages about \$350/month in Arizona (location will affect price) and you'll still be responsible for vaccinations/vet care (coggins, dental, health cert, etc), farrier, halter/lead, fly mask, worming, grooming supplies, tack, and initial animal purchase price.

While animals purchased from auctions or sale barns may be lower in initial cost, they often arrive with various illnesses or injuries they have acquired at the sale barn. If you choose to purchase an animal from the sale barn be sure you have an established relationship with a vet, and let them know your intentions to purchase a sale barn animal. They can assist in letting you know what illnesses can be treated at home, and what thresholds constitute an emergency that requires veterinary intervention. We recommend always quarantining sale barn animals for at least 30 days (see our post on quarantining), having a new coggins test pulled, gelding jacks, and beginning your vaccination regime prior to introducing animals from the sale barn to the rest of your herd. It's not atypical for post-purchase veterinary care to exceed \$1,500 on a sale barn animal. If you are not set up to absorb the cost and time lost to get an animal healthy from the sale barn, we recommend looking into reputable rescues who often have sale barn animals for adoption after they have been appropriately rehabbed.

Information gathered August 2023 by BRAY [Burros Rock Arizona & Yonder]. More information about donkeys at: [www.bray.club](http://www.bray.club)