



# Nature conservation with donkeys



## THE INNOVATION JOURNEY

Biology graduate Astrid Fölling was frustrated with her previous job and has therefore been running a nature conservation farm with her husband in the area 'Mainz Sand' in south-west Germany for 12 years. The farm covers 80 hectares and is managed with 30 - 40 donkeys in four herds. Astrid does not own the land herself but is commissioned by the state of Rhineland-Palatinate to manage the land in a nature conservation-friendly manner. The use of donkeys to graze rough grassland is an innovative method for Germany, as grazing with small ruminants or extensive cattle is normally used.



However, scientific studies have shown that the grazing of woody plants, the keeping clear of sandy areas at rolling places and a number of other donkey behaviours have a positive effect on the establishment of rare plants and insects.

## THE IMPACTS OF INNOVATION

Astrid is passionate about nature conservation with donkeys. She keeps registered 'German Donkeys' of various sizes. Some of the donkeys come from France and belong to the 'Provence Donkey' breed. These animals are robust, require less feed than cattle and are also better at keeping the sandy soil open than sheep. This has been of great service to nature conservation in the region and the preservation of this breed. The transfer of this method of extensive grassland utilisation from central and southern France to Germany was carried out together with a few other friendly nature conservation initiatives and represents pioneering work.



## USEFUL LINKS

<https://www.bingen.de/stadt/news/alle-pressemitteilungen/d-treue-blicke-in-der-landschaftspflege-1290542772>;  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279530000\\_Esel\\_in\\_der\\_Landschaftspflege\\_-\\_Erfahrungen\\_und\\_Hinweise\\_fur\\_die\\_Beweidungspraxis](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279530000_Esel_in_der_Landschaftspflege_-_Erfahrungen_und_Hinweise_fur_die_Beweidungspraxis)