Livestock Guardians: the Donkey

If you acquire a well-suited donkey and introduce it to your system at a young age, you can expect a prolonged and effective guardianship throughout its life, even into its old age. It’s important to note that donkeys can remain valuable for an extended period. However, when considering integrating a donkey with sheep or goats, some specific considerations are essential. For instance, it’s advisable to avoid intact male donkeys, as they may attempt to breed your goats or sheep. Moreover, the scent of blood during the birthing process can agitate donkeys, occasionally leading to accidents where they might harm the newborn or the mother. This concern is not as significant with female donkeys.

Pros and Cons of Donkeys

Pros:

1. Longevity: Donkeys are known for their remarkable longevity, often living over 20 years and, in some cases, up to 30 years. A well-chosen and well-trained donkey can provide extended service as a guardian.
2. Low Maintenance: Donkeys are easy to maintain in terms of their diet. They typically eat the same forage available in your farm, making them cost-effective, especially when paired with goats or sheep that graze on pasture.
3. Minimal Veterinary Care: Donkeys generally do not require routine vaccinations. A Coggins test may be necessary if you intend to sell the donkey. This translates to fewer veterinarian visits and reduced healthcare costs.
4. Adaptability: Donkeys are highly adaptable animals. They can be easily moved from one pasture to another, as they

tend to follow instructions well and adapt to new environments with minimal effort.

Cons:

1. Stubborn Nature: Donkeys are known for their stubbornness and strong-willed character. Once they form a particular behavior or habit, it can be challenging to correct.

In conclusion, donkeys offer several advantages, including their longevity, low maintenance, minimal veterinary requirements, and adaptability. However, it’s crucial to consider their temperament and potential issues when integrating them with other animals, particularly during the birthing process. Proper training and care can help mitigate any challenges associated with these animals’ strong-willed nature.