A story by Maddie the miniature Mediterranean Donkey (based on a real event). Written with Paula Johnson.

**Donkey Companions**

We donkeys tend to make really good friends with each other, I mean, **really** good friends! You might notice us pushing each other around at times, pinching each other’s carrots or playing our live version of buckaroo on a spring morning, but we are very loyal to our friends and will stick together whenever we can, hence the description of being ‘good companions’.

Well, I didn’t realise this companion role would take me to hospital with my good friend Petal!! Petal is also a miniature Mediterranean just like me; we came over from Spain together a few years ago and now live on a lovely community farm in Wiltshire. I was so worried one Thursday morning. We came in from our night shelter as usual to have breakfast but Petal just wasn’t herself. Don’t get me wrong, I didn’t mind eating her breakfast for her, but I have to say, as the morning progressed, I was as worried as our carers, especially when she just hung around looking miserable and not really eating or drinking. Of course the vet came out a couple of times but couldn’t really find out what was wrong.

The ears gave it away! Petals ears I mean – they just stuck out sideways, not up or back or forwards, just out. She didn’t really move when they took blood from her; I tried to get in the way and stop them from doing too much to my poor friend, especially when they put this tube in to see what was in her tummy. I could have told them there was nothing but a bit of old grass in there because I knew she hadn’t eaten anything for a few days! Anyway, the vets and carers decided Petal needed to go to hospital but of course she couldn’t go without her companion….me!

The journey there was long and slow. Petal hadn’t said a word for days. She was very sad with sideways ears and I was very worried. The hospital carers were concerned about Petal and she needed a drip up. It didn’t look very comfortable but Petal was too poorly to complain. I stood close, maybe a little too close, because they kept walking me around to give her some space. Then they decided to check me out as well.

Hang on a minute! I’m the companion, not the patient! I know I’m a bit overweight but I’ve been helping Petal by not letting her food go to waste, I don’t think I should have been the focus of their dieting advice. The grazing muzzle was just the last straw!! As Petal improved and was turned out to nibble a bit of grass, I was turned out to keep her company but not allowed to eat too much – being prevented from over indulging by a grazing muzzle. I tell you this companion role is no easy thing; you really have to like your friend to put up with this!

Fortunately, Petal did improve with antibiotics and fluids (and grass!). Her ears stood up again and we were allowed home a week later. The greatest joy was a few days after we got home when the ears went forward and she brayed again – the best sound ever! It doesn’t matter that we are both dieting, my companion is back!

