

Miniature Mediterranean Donkey

Kingdom: Animalia Phylum: Chordata Subphylum: Vertebrata Class: Mammalia Order: Perissodactyla Family: Equidae Genus: Equus Species: asinus



Photo courtesy of Tony Wisneski

Habitat

- In the Wild: Miniature donkeys originated in the Mediterranean area of northern Africa in ancient times and more recently from the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. They have been extensively bred in the United States and are almost extinct in the land of their origin.
- Exhibit Location: Domestic Animal Barn

Characteristics

- Height: 36 inches and under (measured to the shoulder)
- Weight: 250-450 lbs. (most are in the lower weight range)
- Although many donkeys are the familiar gray-dun color, there are many other coat shades. Most donkeys, regardless of coat color, will have dorsal stripes and shoulder crosses, dark earmarks, white muzzle and eye rings, and a white belly and inner leg.
- Donkeys' ears are much longer in proportion to their size than a horse's.
- A donkey's hair coat is shed out much later in the summer than that of the horse and serves as protection from the weather and flies.
- Lifespan: In the Wild 10 years; In Captivity 30-35 years

Behaviors

- Donkeys are social animals.
- They seek attention from their owners with friendly nudges, brays and funny little sounds.
- A donkey's voice is a raspy, brassy bray, the characteristic "Aw-EE, Aw-EE" sound. Jacks especially seem to enjoy braying, and will "sound off" at any opportunity.
- The miniature Mediterranean donkey is extremely intelligent and can be very stubborn.
- A donkey's favorite pastime is rolling on the ground.
- Enrichments at the Zoo: "amazing grazer" (object in which food is hidden), "jolly apple" (object used for scent enrichment), molasses, grooming, walks

Reproduction

- Females reach sexual maturity at 3 years of age. Males are sexually mature at 7-12 months of age.
- Gestation period is approximately 1 year, with 1 young (foal) born. Twins are rare.
- Foals are weaned anywhere between 6-9 months of age.

Diet

- In the Wild: grasses
- At the Zoo: hay, mineral supplements

Conservation Status

- IUCN status not listed; CITES Appendix not listed. Donkeys are common in captivity.
- Predators: coyotes (in the wild)

Did You Know?/Fun Facts

- The donkey is one of the smallest members of the horse family.
- There are 3 categories of donkeys: Miniature (36 inches & under), Standard (37-54 inches), and Mammoths (greater than 54 inches).
- Donkeys and burros are the same animal. The word burro is used west of the Mississippi River, while donkey is used east of the Mississippi.
- They were used through the centuries as a pack animal, for transportation (driving and riding), and as a guard animal for flocks of livestock.
- Donkey's milk is higher in sugar and protein than cow's milk.
- Ass is the correct term for the animal known as the donkey, burro, or jackstock. It comes from the Latin term, *asinus*.
- Young of a donkey = foal

Young male = colt Young female = filly
Female donkey (intact) = jennet (jenny) Male donkey (intact) = jack
Offspring of male donkey & female horse = mule Offspring of male horse & female donkey = hinny

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