



# MINIATURE MEDITERRANEAN DONKEY

**Perissodactyla**  
**Family: Equidae**  
**Genus: *Equus***  
**Species: *asinus***



**Range:** originated in the Mediterranean area of Northern Africa in ancient times and more recently from the Islands of Sicily and Sardinia off the west coast of Italy.

**Habitat:** arid areas

**Niche:** Terrestrial, diurnal, herbivorous

**Wild diet:** grasses

**Zoo diet:** hay, mineral supplements

**Life Span:** (Wild)

(Captivity) 35-40 years

**Sexual dimorphism:** None

**Location in SF Children's Zoo**

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## APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

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Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys are a separate breed of donkey originating from the islands of Sardinia and Sicily. The most common color of the Miniature Mediterranean Donkey is grey dun with chocolate highlights. Other colors include brown, black, slate grey, sorrel, spotted, piebald, skewbald and cream. Nearly all miniature donkeys have a line down the back (dorsal stripe), with a cross over the shoulders, 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. The hair ranges from flat to curly to long and shaggy and in texture from smooth to wiry. The hair coat is shed out much later in the summer than that of the horse and serves to protect the donkey from the weather and the flies.

Donkeys utilize food very efficiently and will thrive on (by horse standards) a sparse diet.

The Miniature Mediterranean Donkey is by nature one of the friendliest and most affectionate animals of its type. They are very tame and gentle. They are also easier to manage in everyday life than some donkeys simply because they are smaller.

**Weight:** 250 - 450 lbs

**SH:** average 30 – 34 in.  
Accepted register max 36 in

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## STATUS & CONSERVATION

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Donkeys are common in captivity. Now almost extinct in their native land, Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys are a popular pet in the USA, especially in the southern states.

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## COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

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A donkey's voice is a raspy, brassy bray, the characteristic "Aw-EE, Aw-EE" sound. Jacks (male donkey) especially seem to enjoy braying, and will "sound off" at any opportunity.

Donkeys are herd animals and will not thrive well on their own.

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## COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

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Females reach sexual maturity at 3 years of age. Males are sexually mature at 7-12 months of age.

Foals may drink up to 5 gallons of mother's milk a day. Donkey's milk is higher in sugar and protein than cow's milk. Females can come into heat 10 days after giving birth.

Estrous Period:	Sexual Maturity: 3 – 4 years
Gestation: 11 –13 months	Weaning Age: 6 – 9 months
# of Mammae: 2	Weight at birth:
# of Young: 1 (twins are rare)	

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## MISCELLANEOUS

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Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys were so small they were employed to turn grinding stones for grain inside the peasants houses. They were also used to carry water from village wells and supplies into the mountains for shepherds. The first Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys arrived in the United States in the early 1900's.

Ass is the correct term for the animal known as the donkey, burro, or jackstock. It comes from the Latin term, *asinus*. A female miniature donkey is called a jennet or jenny and a male adult miniature donkey is called a jack or stallion. The young of a donkey is a foal with a young male may being a colt and a young female a filly. A castrated male miniature donkey is called a gelding.

### Sources:

updated: 1/12

<http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/other/donkey/mini/index.htm>

<http://www.miniature-donkey-assoc.com/>

<http://www.donkeys.com>

<http://www.rosamondgiffordzoo.org/assets/uploads/animals/pdf/MiniatureMediterraneanDonkey.pdf>