

American Miniature Horse

Perissodactyla
Family: Equidae
Genus: *Equus*
Species: *ferus*
Subspecies: *caballus*



Range: Domestic, Not found in the wild

Habitat: N/A

Niche: Terrestrial, diurnal, herbivorous

Wild diet: N/A

Zoo diet: Variety of hay, fresh grasses, and produce

Life Span: (Captivity) 25-35 years

Sexual dimorphism: None

Location in SF Zoo: Exploration Zone Family Farm

APPEARANCE & PHYSICAL ADAPTATIONS:

Miniature Horses come in a large variety of colors and coat patterns. Some colors that are rare in other breeds are common in minis, such as dark bodies with white or cream manes and tails. In miniature horse shows, there are even special competitions for the most colorful horses.

Weight: 150-250 lbs

SH: No taller than 34 inches, measured at the top of the shoulders.

A mini must be no taller than 34 inches, measured at the top of the shoulders. A full-grown mini weighs between 150 and 250 pounds. The goal of miniature horse breeders is to create a tiny horse, so it almost completely resembles a large horse, only smaller. A well-bred mini will have similar characteristics to large horses, and should not have short legs, a thick neck, or a big belly.

STATUS & CONSERVATION

The American miniature horse is a domesticated breed. They are not threatened. There is no such thing as a wild American miniature horse.

COMMUNICATION AND OTHER BEHAVIOR

Like humans, horses are social animals and live in large herds. This allows them to look out for one another. There is always someone else to “watch your back” for predators while you have your head down, looking for food. For life in a large herd to be successful, it is essential to have intricate ways of communicating with one another. Most people are aware that horses communicate via vocalizations. Most of their communication strategies however, are non-verbal.

Horses have excellent vision, and use a wide array of intricate facial expressions to communicate emotions. In fact, a recent study has shown that horses can make more facial expressions than chimpanzees! Their face will tell you if they are feeling relaxed, anxious, angry, stressed, or excited. They form expressions by contracting different facial muscles as well as using their eyes, ears, and lips. Most people know that a horse may pin its ears back when it is displeased. However, horses also use their ears to communicate many more things amongst their herd members. They use their ears to tell another horse where to direct its attention, which may help observing animals locate food and evade predators. They also use body placement, stomping feet, bucking or kicking, head shaking, and nuzzling as forms of expression and communication.

COURTSHIP AND YOUNG

Since Miniature horses are not wild, they are bred by mini horse breeders, and mates are chosen by those humans. However, when the mating choice has been made the filly or mare in estrus will be placed with a stallion, or she will be artificially inseminated.

Miniature horses rear their young as any other horse would. They have a gestation period lasting 11 months and will wean their foals at 4-5 months of age. Foals are completely full grown by the time they are 1 year of age.

Estrous Period: Seasonally polyestrous

Gestation: 11 months

of Mammae: 1 pair located in groin area

of Young: 1

Sexual Maturity: between 9-15 months old

Weaning Age: 4-5 months

Weight at birth: 20-35 lbs

MISCELLANEOUS

Sources:

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American Miniature Horse Association: <http://www.amha.org/>

The Guide Horse Foundation: http://www.guidehorse.com/faq_horses.htm

Extension- “Horse Breeding Behaviors”: <http://articles.extension.org/pages/9786/horse-breeding-behavior>