



Miniature Donkey

Equus asinus

Description: Miniature donkeys range in size from 26–36 inches at the withers. They are extremely intelligent, docile and easily trained. Gray in various shades with the dark dorsal stripe and cross is the most common color and marking of these donkeys. They also come in spotted, white, sorrel, chocolate brown and black. Donkeys have developed very loud vocalizations which help keep them in contact with other donkeys. The best-known call is referred to a “bray” which can be heard for over three miles. Donkeys have larger ears than horses. Their longer ears may pick up more distant sounds and may help cool the donkey’s blood. Miniature donkeys weigh between 250–450 pounds.

Geographic Range/Habitat: Miniature donkeys are native to the Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Donkeys have been domesticated for centuries. The donkey is an animal partial to hot and dry climates. Sicilian or Sardinian donkeys were brought to the U.S. and bred with other donkeys to produce a distinct breed called the Miniature Mediterranean Donkey.

Behavior: In the wild, donkeys travel in herds up to 100 in number, usually led by a male. Donkeys are most active in the evening but may also move about during the day and at night. They will defend themselves with a powerful kick from their hind legs as well as by biting and striking with their front feet. Donkeys are slower in their movement than horses and are still used as beast of burden especially in areas where horses do not thrive or where poverty prevents their purchase. They can live 30–35 years.

Diet: Grasses, hay and alfalfa

Status: Common. They are thought to be nearly extinct in their land of origin. However, breeders in the U.S. have maintained them by breeding for size, disposition and conformation.