

# Miniature Mediterranean DONKEY

*The Miniature Mediterranean Donkey is like no other equine. Native to the Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia, they range in height from 26" (66cm) to 36" (92cm) and are characteristically particularly friendly and kind natured.*

Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys are a breed of their own, and not 'bred down' as are many other Miniatures, which can cause the inherent genetics of an animal to become diluted.

Believed to be originally from Africa, they were shipped to the Mediterranean islands of Sardinia and Sicily, literally thousands of years ago, to be beasts of burden, pulling carts, loaded with packs, carting water and other general farm work.

*Donkeys have been domesticated and working for mankind for over 5,000 years.*

Because of their small stature, they were often used inside peasants houses to turn grinding stones. Wood block pictures from the 18th century have been found showing the miniature donkeys blindfolded and attached to the arm of the grain mill, walking endless circles grinding grain.

Today most Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys in



Photo courtesy of Winterwood Stud [www.minidonkeys.com.au](http://www.minidonkeys.com.au)

Australia, UK and USA are kept as pets, as a hobby, recreation, and showing. As well as conformation classes there are also ridden, harness and agility classes. However, donkeys and mules are still used as working animals in many other countries around the world, especially in underdeveloped areas (mules

*This photo of a Miniature Mediterranean Donkey foal went viral, with thousands of viewers worldwide, when we shared it on facebook, simply titled 'I want one'.*





and donkeys were used as pack animals in the Chile to Argentina Trekking article also in this issue). The life expectancy of a well cared for donkey is between 30 – 35 years.

There were originally two distinct breeds, Miniature Sicilian and Miniature Sardinian, dependant entirely on where they originated, which are now grouped as Miniature Mediaterranean. Although nearly extinct on their native islands, there is believed to be over 10,000 registered in the USA.

### *Australia has a growing Miniature Donkey registry*

In 1929 six Jenny's and a Jack were imported to the USA from Sicily. Their particularly friendly natures and petite size created interest, and many more were imported by enthusiasts until the late 1950's when a registry was established in 1958.

This miniature breed did not arrive in Australia and New Zealand until around 1990. At present there are less than 100 purebred Miniature Mediterraneans in Australia but the registries are growing in both countries.

Although many donkeys are the familiar grey-dun color, there are many other coat shades. Colors range from the gray shades of gray-dun to brown, a rare bay, black, both red and grey roans, variants of sorrel, the blue-eyed Ivory - also called cream or white-phase, Frosted/spotted White, and a unique Spotted pattern. Typical horse coat colours such as palomino, buckskin and paint do not occur in donkeys.

Most donkeys, regardless of coat color, will have dorsal stripes and shoulder crosses, dark ear marks, as well as a white muzzle and eye rings. The hair ranges from flat to curly to long and shaggy and in texture, from smooth to wiry.

Because of their size, exceptionally friendly and communal nature the Miniature Mediterranean Donkey makes a wonderful companion for a lone horse or just as a super cute, friendly pet however, they are happiest with company.



*Above: Donkeys are characterised by their long ears. Left: There are many classes available for miniature donkeys (Photo courtesy of AssN9 Ranch, USA [www.assn9ranch.com](http://www.assn9ranch.com)). Below: Coat colors vary from the normal grey-dun below to the pure black at the bottom. More information can be found at [www.donkeyallbreedsaustralia.org](http://www.donkeyallbreedsaustralia.org)*



*Photo courtesy of AssN9 Ranch  
[www.assn9ranch.com](http://www.assn9ranch.com)*



*Photo courtesy of Winterwood Stud [www.minidonkeys.com.au](http://www.minidonkeys.com.au)*