

Discover Delightful DONKEYS!

BY COLLEEN ARCHER

Donkeys are possibly the most charming equines, with their big ears, cute faces, and unique braying voices. Generally slate grey in colour with a thick coat, big head, flat withers, little box-like feet and black dorsal and shoulder stripes, donkeys are descended from the African wild ass, which is thought to have been domesticated about 5,000 years ago. The donkey's loud bray can be heard by other donkeys from as far away as a mile, which would have come in handy when wild donkeys had to navigate across large areas of sparse and rocky territory while looking for food.

Since they originated in dry climates, donkeys need far less food than horses, so if donkeys and horses are kept together, care must be taken that the donkey isn't getting too much feed or it could easily founder. Also, donkeys are known to carry the lungworm parasite, which doesn't seem to affect them, but does cause severe coughing in horses and ponies. All donkeys and horses should be on a vet-recommended deworming schedule, especially if they are kept together.

Along with zebras and horses, donkeys are members of the family *equidae*. Unlike zebras and horses, donkeys aren't natural flight animals, but tend to stop and assess a strange situation rather than turn and run in panic. This instinct to stand still and consider what is expected of them has been called stubbornness by some folks, while others realize it's just plain common sense!

As well as being clever, donkeys are also very stoic. Sometimes it's hard to know when they are in discomfort. Like horses, they should have regular vet checks, and their hooves should be trimmed by a farrier every six to eight weeks.

While donkeys are considered to be the most important draft animals in the world, in North America they are mostly pets and companions, with some being used for pleasure driving. There are three types: the mini, which stands under 36"; the standard, 36 to 54"; and the mammoth, taller than 54".

The humble donkey played a prestigious role during Queen Victoria's reign in the late 1800s. The British Queen was particularly fond of donkeys and often had them pulling her carriage, which helped increase the popularity of donkeys quite a lot!

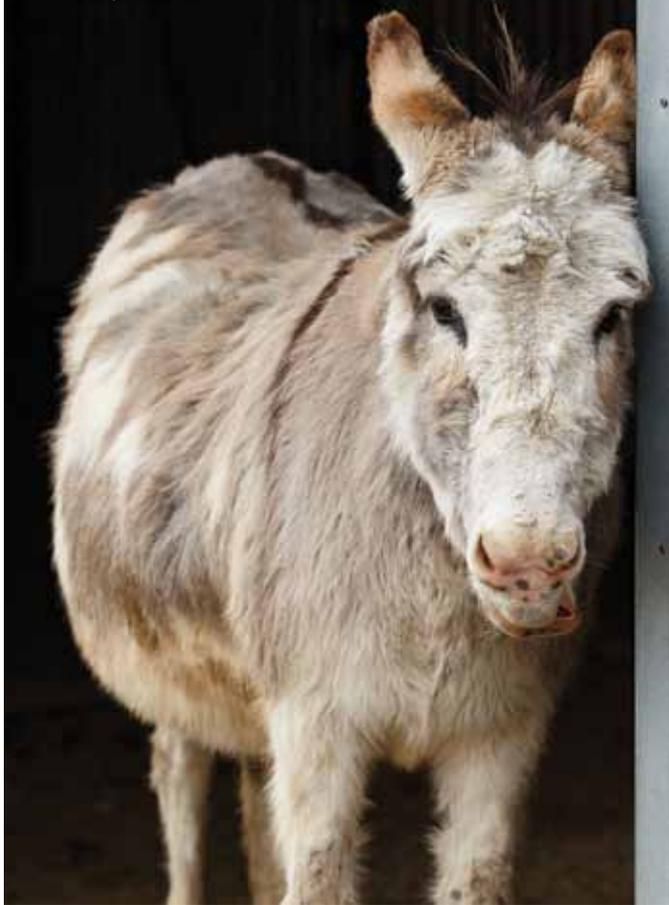


Donkey Facts:

- A group of donkeys may be referred to as a drove, pace, or herd.
- A male donkey is called a jack.
- A female donkey is called a jenny or jennet.
- A mule is the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse (mare).
- A hinny is the offspring of a male horse (stallion) and a female donkey (jenny).
- Donkeys are sure-footed animals.
- 'Burro' is the Spanish word for donkey.

Opposite: Flint, a resident of the Donkey Sanctuary of Canada - how could you not love that face!?

Below: Carmen takes a break in the sun and contemplates life.



LOVE AND DIGNITY FOR RESCUED DONKEYS

If you'd like to get up close and personal with a donkey, mule or hinny, visit the Donkey Sanctuary of Canada (DSC) located near Guelph, Ontario. The DSC was founded in 1992 and is a registered charity providing a lifelong home to donkeys, mules, and hinnies that are unwanted, neglected, or abused. At present there are over 70 of these animals at the sanctuary, and about 30 more at foster farms.

While DSC promotes the responsible stewardship of all animals through offering humane education programs for elementary and high schools, the main focus at the farm is donkeys.

"Part of our mission is to help educate the general public about donkeys," says Lesley Bayne, DSC executive director. They also ensure the animals who come to live out the remainder of their lives at DSC are surrounded by love, dignity, and the respect they deserve. "The Sanctuary is 100 acres of tranquility in which we strive to live in peaceful harmony with the animals we have rescued."

There are many ways people can help support DSC such as through donations, sponsoring or fostering a donkey, volunteering, even making a purchase at the Long Ears Boutique. To find out more about the Donkey Sanctuary of Canada's various programs, hours, and special events, visit thedonkeysanctuary.ca.

PHOTOS COURTESY DONKEY SANCTUARY OF CANADA



The geldings enjoying turnout in the rolling fields at DSC near Guelph, ON.