



**NATIONAL MINIATURE
DONKEY ASSOCIATION**



**THE OFFICIAL NMDA
MINIATURE
MEDITERRANEAN
DONKEY
BREED STANDARD**



Children of the Italian Royal Family (c. 1899)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Miniature Donkey Association Breed Standard Committee wishes to thank many dedicated and knowledgeable individuals interested in Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys. Their expertise and input in this document was invaluable. The following organizations also lent their support, ideas and encouragement: The American Donkey and Mule Society, The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy, Canadian Donkey and Mule Society and Good Samaritan Donkey Sanctuary, Australia.

NMDA BREED STANDARD COMMITTEE:

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THE NATIONAL MINIATURE DONKEY ASSOCIATION

The National Miniature Donkey Association (NMDA) is a non-profit, membership-supported organization established in 1990. The goals of the Association are to protect the Miniature Mediterranean Donkey breed, to educate owners and breeders on care and management and to promote the breed. The official publication of NMDA is **ASSET** which is provided to its members quarterly. The Board of Directors is guided by the official By-Laws to implement the Association's goals.

NMDA works cooperatively with The American Donkey and Mule Society which presently administers the Miniature Donkey Registry. Bea Langfeld of Danby Farms, Omaha, Nebraska founded the Miniature Donkey Registry in 1958. This Registry is the original and most complete registry of Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys in the world.



Bea Langfeld (1994)

THE NMDA BREED STANDARD

The NMDA Breed Standard is intended to describe the breed and assist breeders in the selection of stock. This Standard is a working document that will evolve as our knowledge and understanding of the Miniature Mediterranean Donkey grows. In developing a Breed Standard NMDA included a range of qualities that are necessary for the future integrity of the breed. NMDA is committed to maintaining this integrity in future revisions. Many breed organizations have attempted to reach an ideal animal with too much emphasis on only one quality or fad such as size or color. The results have been loss of function with reproductive, birthing, conformation and temperament problems.

Most importantly, this Standard is meant to assist people interested in the stewardship of this unique breed, the Miniature Mediterranean Donkey, with the final purpose of passing on healthy, vigorous and fully functional animals for the generations that follow.



THE HISTORY OF THE MINIATURE MEDITERRANEAN DONKEY

Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys 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. Over time the distinctions between the two island populations blurred and they are now considered one breed properly called Miniature Mediterranean Donkeys. They are simply referred to as Miniature Donkeys in North America.

Purebred Miniature Donkeys in the Mediterranean area are rapidly disappearing as the small donkeys are being mixed with larger breeds. For this reason, Miniature Donkeys in North America have global genetic value. Fortunately, numbers in the U.S. and Canada are strong and are increasing since the first Miniature Donkeys arrived in the United States in the early 1900's. Within the past ten years the export of Miniature Donkeys to England, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia has



demonstrated the increasing popularity of these versatile, affectionate creatures. Approximately 2,611 animals were registered with the Miniature Donkey Registry in 1997; 4,038 in 2008. As of August 2009 the Miniature Donkey Registry had issued registration number 57,373.

The Miniature Donkey is a compact, well-proportioned animal with a sweet, sociable disposition. At maturity (3 years) it is able to pull a cart or carry a pack as it did in its native Sicily and Sardinia.

The Miniature Donkey community should strive to combine as many positive qualities as possible in each jennet and jack pairing to ensure the progeny will be excellent representatives of the breed.

Although every Miniature Donkey is not breeding quality, all Miniature Donkeys, especially geldings, have a role to play as endearing companions and as public ambassadors in schools, fairs, parades and nursing homes.

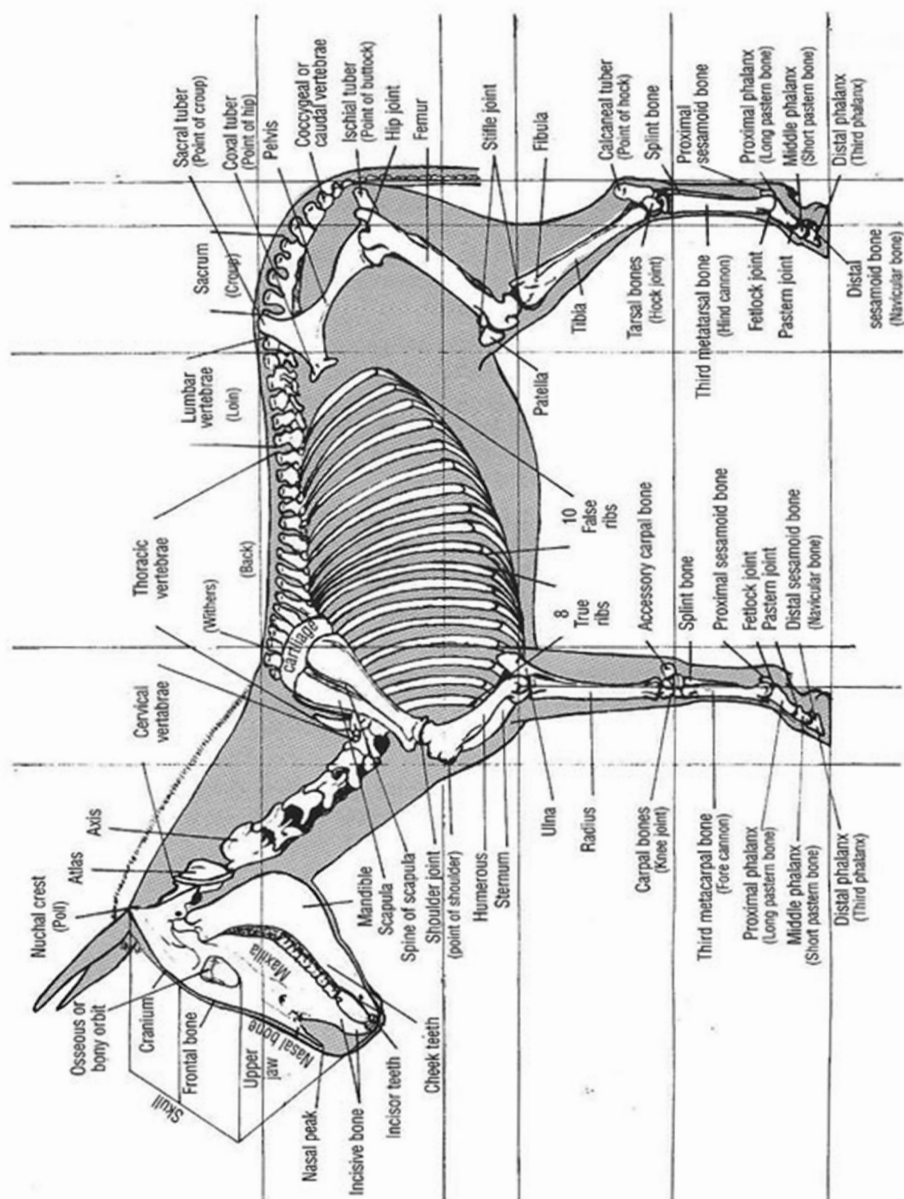
(Contact information on NMDA's Gelding Incentive Program can be found under "Resources", page 32).

The NMDA encourages breeders to help preserve the structure and character of the Miniature Donkey breed by keeping form and function a priority in their breeding programs. Regardless of whether a Miniature Donkey is selected for breeding, show or work purposes, a well-balanced animal should have proportions and conformation that bear directly on the health and function of that individual. Miniature Donkey breeders and owners need to understand the practical reasons behind the Breed Standard, keeping in mind conformation is a combination of bone structure, muscle type, body fat and fitness.

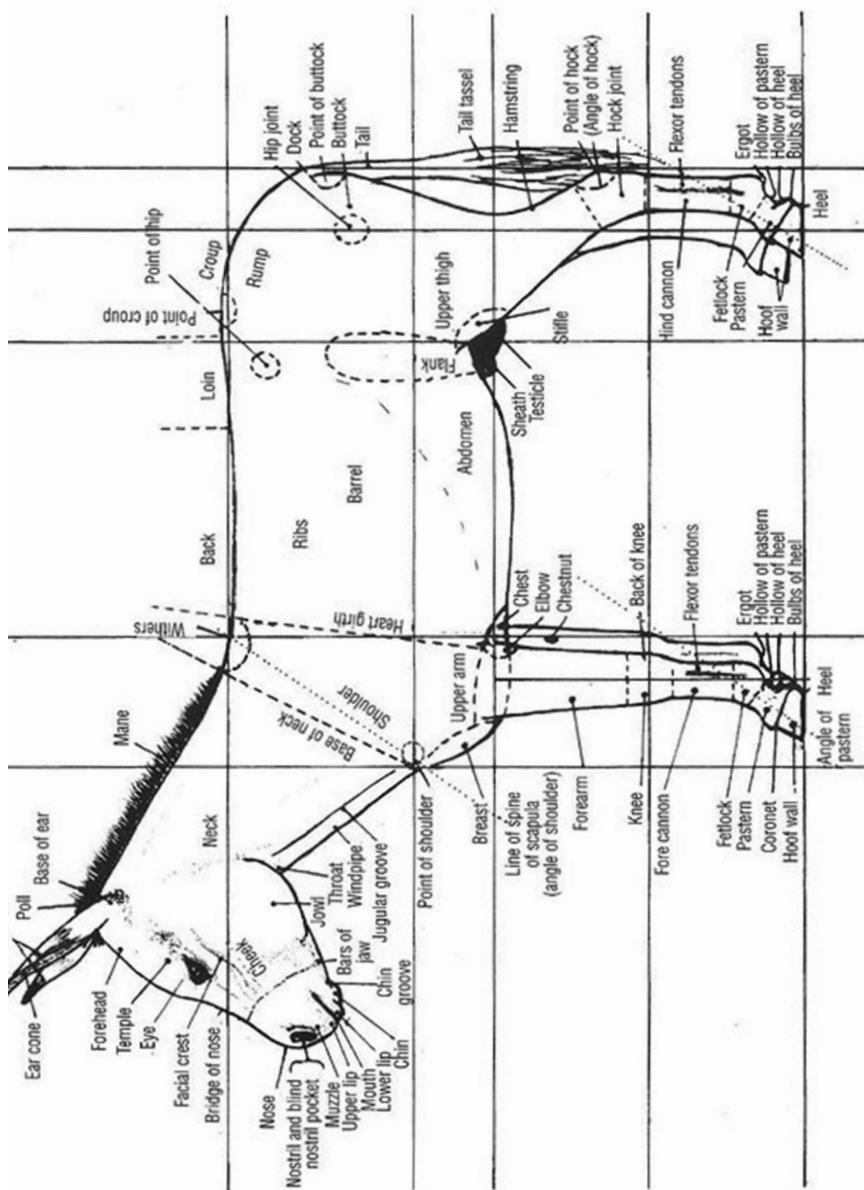


Robert Green, early importer and breeder (1946)

SKELETON OF THE DONKEY



POINTS OF THE DONKEY



THE BREED STANDARD

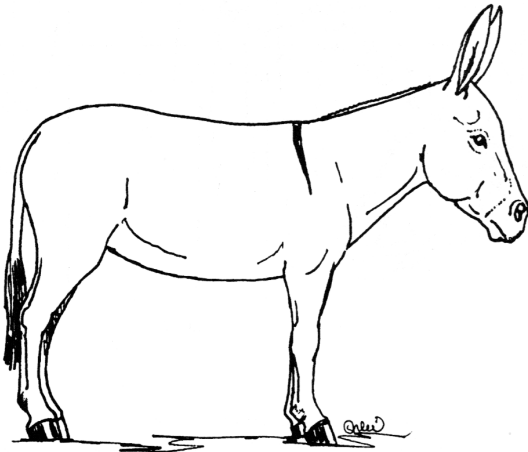
This Standard is written with the mature three year old in mind. Bear in mind that age may affect comparisons with this Standard. It is desirable to choose breeding stock at maturity (3 years).

GENERAL APPEARANCE

The Miniature Donkey should be attractive, sound, strong and sturdy. The animal should be well balanced as the various parts blend together in a nicely coupled, compact picture. The animal should have an alert expression and "presence"; jennets should look feminine and slightly more refined and jacks should be relatively stocky and masculine. A maximum height of 36" at the withers measured at 3 years is accepted by the Miniature Donkey Registry. A minimum height of 30" is strongly recommended by NMDA to prevent loss of potential reproductive fitness including foaling difficulties. Small size may also adversely effect conformation and balance. Overall bone should be strong and in proportion to the size of the Donkey and muscle development.

Rationale:

Overall balance in conformation and adequate bone is necessary for work, such as carrying packs and pulling carts efficiently.



HEAD

The head should be in proportion to the Donkey. A shorter head is preferred to a longer one. The Donkey should have a broad forehead and width between the eyes. The muzzle should taper with firm, even lips and large, open nostrils. The profile should be straight or slightly dished. Eyes are ideally large, prominent, dark, clear, with symmetry and a kind expression. Ears are preferred long, but in proportion to the head, parallel, set upright and carried alertly. The head should be well-balanced and carried in an upright position.

R a t i o n a l e :

A large head that is not in proportion to the body may indicate dwarfism, which is to be avoided. In a desert environment large ears were adapted to help cool the body and to assist hearing over long distances. Eyes that are small, light colored or dull may indicate poor vision or ill health. Wide set, prominent eyes allow for wider field of vision. Large, open nostrils allow for optimum breathing with the ability to take in an ample supply of oxygen. Drooping lips can be a sign of ill health or age; a protruding or a receding jaw can interfere with eating and may indicate uneven bite.

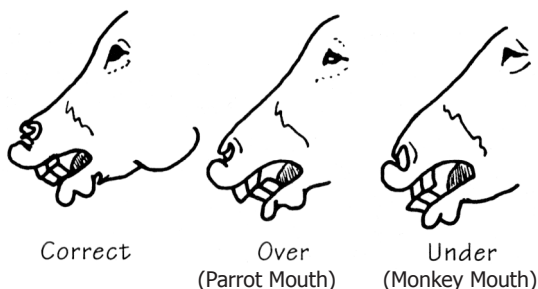


TEETH

At maturity (after the third year teeth have erupted) the teeth of the upper jaw should meet evenly with the teeth of the lower jaw – not overshot ("Parrot Mouth") or undershot ("Monkey Mouth"). Up to a 1/4" variation from an even bite (extreme limit) is accepted for registration into the Miniature Donkey Registry.

Rationale:

A good bite is important for grazing, chewing, digestion, nutrition and ultimately longevity.



NECK

The neck should be strong, straight and in proportion to the head and body. It should not be too short and thick, or too long and thin or weak in appearance.

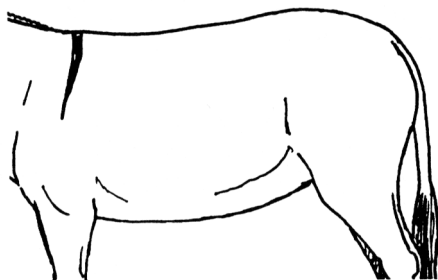
Rationale:

A short, wide neck does not allow for good control under the bit while driving. A strong, proportionate neck will also allow the animal to hold its head up alertly.



BODY

The body should have balance and symmetry. Each part should blend together in a well proportioned, pleasing picture.



SHOULDERS

Donkeys' shoulders are more upright than that of a horse, but should not be excessively straight. An ideal shoulder angulation is approximately 45° - 50°.

Rationale :

A 45° - 50° shoulder angle gives the Donkey the ability to carry weight and the power to pull.

HEARTGIRTH/RIBS

There should be a deep, generous girth. The ribs should be nicely rounded (well sprung).

Rationale :

A generous girth allows room for organs and expansion of the lungs during respiration. It also gives width of chest and space between the front legs.

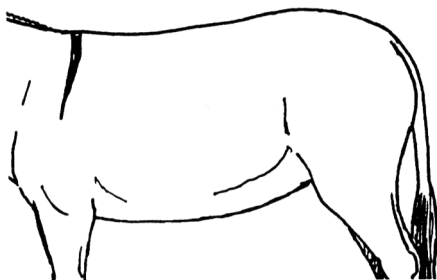


BACK

The back should be strong, compact and level with a slight curve at the withers. The back should not dip or sway. The topline should be gently sloped from the withers to a short, level back and loin and then to a moderately long and sloping croup and well-placed tail.

Rationale:

A good topline adds to balance and general appearance. Backs which are too long or too short look unbalanced, awkward and contribute to poorly coordinated movement



LOINS

The loins which are formed by the lumbar vertebrae should be short-coupled, wide and well covered. Loins should lead into a moderately long and gently sloping rump.

Rationale:

Loins which are too long weaken the back and interferes with the transfer of power from hind legs forward. Too much distance between the ribs and point of hip contributes to an awkward, unbalanced appearance and renders the animal's movement less efficient.





CROUP AND RUMP

As compared to a horse the rump of a Donkey has a sharper, more sloping croup. The pelvic bones are at a higher angle, therefore the Donkey croup is higher and rump narrower. The rump should be strong and gently sloping. There should be good length from point of hip to point of buttock.

R a t i o n a l e :

The hindquarters provide most of the Donkey's impulsion and they act as pistons to thrust the animal forward. A thin, "Goose Rump" can indicate an animal is in poor condition, may appear out of proportion and may reflect weak conformation.

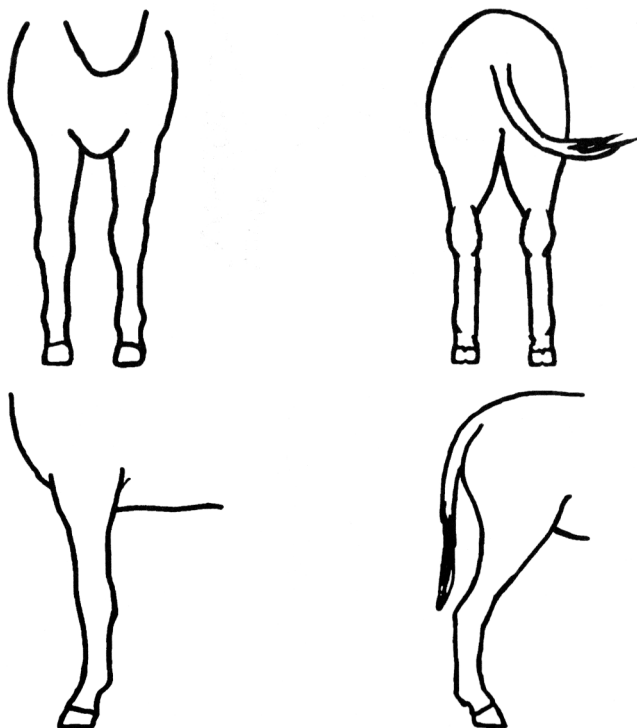


LEGS

Legs should be squarely set and straight when viewed from all angles, with adequate bone in proportion to the animal to provide strength and balance. There should be space between the front legs for good width of chest providing ample room for lung expansion. The rear legs should have enough space to move forward following the front legs without rubbing at the hocks.

R a t i o n a l e :

A working animal needs strong, straight, correct legs to be efficient and to prevent injuries, strain or lameness. Movement which is choppy, stiff or sluggish could be a sign of ill health or poor conformation. Animals that have significant "Toeing Out" or "Cow Hocking" will break down more readily.

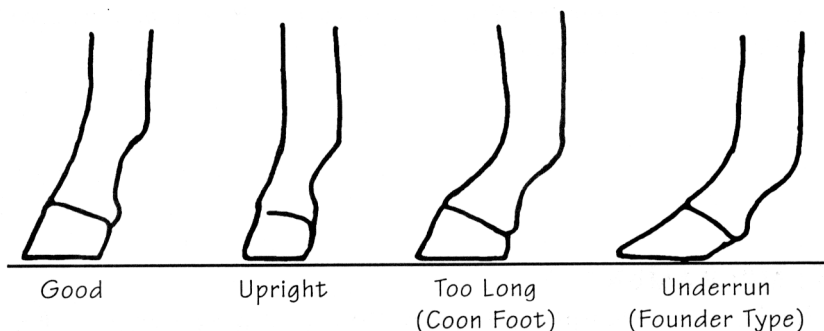


FEET

The hooves should be even and of a uniform shape. A Donkey's hoof is narrower, more oval and stands more upright than a horse. Hooves should be well trimmed.

Rationale :

Poorly shaped or uneven hooves can cause strain, lameness and clumsiness.



MOVEMENT

Movement should be active, smooth, straight, free flowing and should cover the ground evenly with good length of stride. Each foot should be lifted clear off the ground and carried forward in a straight line.

SIZE

Maximum height of 36" at the withers measured at 3 years has already been established by the Miniature Donkey Registry. A minimum height of 30" is strongly recommended by NMDA.

Rationale :

- The reproductive fitness of a Miniature Donkey may be compromised in individuals under 30" - see Reproductive Fitness section on page 19.
- Focus on breeding individuals under 30" through each generation enhances the possibility of dwarfism.
- Individuals under 30" - may adversely affect conformation and balance.
- Individuals under 30" may hinder their own ability to enter performance classes where strength is often emphasized, i.e., driving, jumping.

CONDITION

A Donkey should be in good weight with ribs just palpated under the coat without appearing “Ribby”. A well-muscled animal will show optimum conformation.

R a t i o n a l e :

An animal in poor condition - either underweight or obese - is difficult to evaluate and can often appear dull and lethargic. Signs of poor condition may indicate or contribute to ill health. An animal in poor condition, even if structurally sound, will give a poor impression.

TEMPERAMENT

The Donkey should be gentle, loving and responsive. He should be friendly, kind, trusting and willing to please.

R a t i o n a l e :

The Miniature’s temperament is much of their appeal. These qualities are well-documented in the earliest references in history.



REPRODUCTIVE FITNESS

Breeders need to expect reproductive fitness and efficiency in their breeding stock.

1. The ability to conceive.
2. The ability to carry a foal to term.
3. The ability to give birth without assistance.
4. The ability to nurture a foal.
5. The ability to produce adequate milk.
6. The ability to rebreed.
7. The ability for a jack to naturally cover a jennet.

The above characteristics may be affected by husbandry and/or environment offered to the animal. Any jennet, however, which demonstrates a repeated problem in any of these areas may not have the reproductive fitness desirable for the breed. Breeders must plan for good reproductive performance from all their breeding stock. Evaluation of jennets as potential breeding stock are recommended at approximately three years of age when they become physically and mentally mature.

Lack of reproductive fitness in jacks is demonstrated in low fertility or infertility.



DEVELOPING A PHILOSOPHY OF BREEDING

A basic and guiding philosophy is the single most critical component of any breeding program. A breeder's first task is the development of a specific purpose in breeding animals. This may seem obvious but it is very often overlooked with the result that breeding is done with little progress toward any goal. Perhaps even worse than an aimless approach is a breeding program that chases after the fads dictated by the show ring or by other people. Such a program is constantly acquiring, discarding, and thus wasting genetic resources in a futile attempt to catch up to the current leaders in the breed.

A philosophy of breeding combines the elements of genetics, selection, and husbandry to accomplish a goal. If a philosophy is in place, every animal and every mating can be evaluated relative to the goal, giving purpose and identity to the herd or flock.

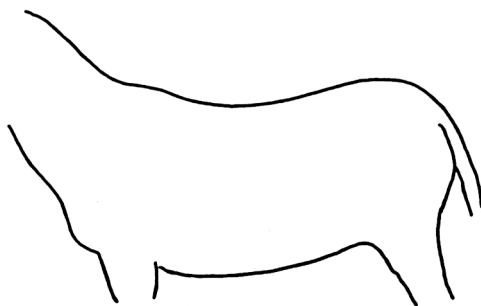
The above is an excerpt taken from ***A Conservation Breeding Handbook*** – D. Phillip Sponenberg and Carolyn J. Christman (with permission)



WEAKNESS IN BREEDING ANIMALS

All Donkeys have some weaknesses, but the degree and number of weaknesses and the cumulative effect on function and reproductive health is what needs to be kept in mind. Any animal with severe or multiple weaknesses should not be selected as breeding stock.

1. "Roman Nose" - Convex profile of the head. Coarseness of the head and neck.
2. Short, thick neck and low head carriage.
3. "Ewe Neck" - Thin, concave, weak neck.
4. "Roach Back" - Convex back.
Long, weak back; sway back (sagging).
5. Short, high or flat croup, hip too short (no depth of hip).
6. "Goose Rump" - Steep, sloping croup, narrow rump.



7. Insufficient bone in proportion to animal.
8. Too small to do the work that Miniature Donkeys are historically bred for.



Correct

9. "Cow Hocked" - The hocks of the back legs turn inward (toward) each other when viewed from behind.



Correct

10. "Bow Legs" - The hocks of the back legs turn outward (away) from each other when viewed from behind.



Correct

11. "Stands Close Behind" - The back legs are too close together. This is common in a narrow-bodied, flat-ribbed animal.

12. "Sickle Hocked" - The back legs stand in and under the animal when viewed from the side.



13. "Camped Behind" - The back legs are set too far back behind the body when viewed from the side.





Correct

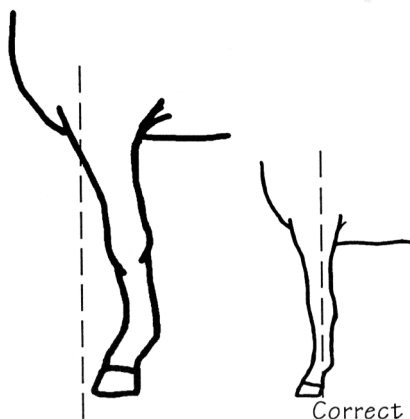
14. "Splay Footed" - Hooves of the front legs are turned outward and away from each other. This is common in narrow-chested animals.



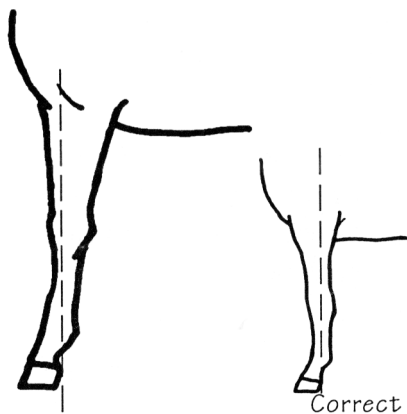
Correct

15. "Pigeon Toed" - Hooves of the front legs are turned inward and toward each other.

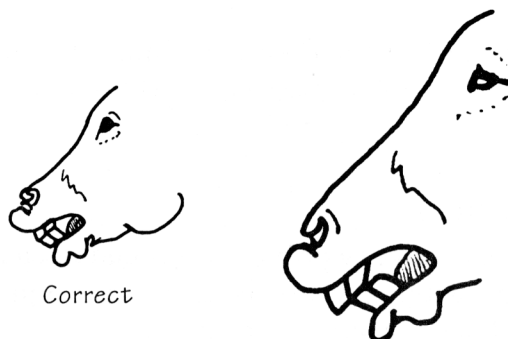
16. "Standing Under In Front" - The front legs stand in and under the animal when viewed from the side.



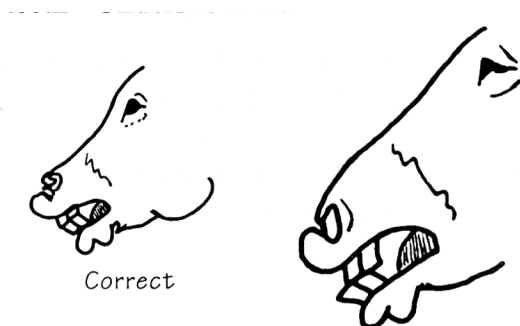
17. "Camped In Front" - The front legs are set too far in front of the body when viewed from the side.



18. "Parrot Mouth" - Upper teeth extend out beyond lower teeth
- Overshot Bite.



19. "Monkey Mouth" - Lower teeth extend out beyond upper teeth -
Undershot Bite.



Up to 1/4" variation from an even bite (extreme limit) is accepted for registration into the Miniature Donkey Registry.

FAULTS NOT ACCEPTABLE IN BREEDING ANIMALS

Animals with any one of the following faults should not be used for breeding. These faults are undesirable and should not be perpetuated.

1. CRYPTORCHID

A mature jack with one or both testes undescended into the scrotum after 2 years is called a cryptorchid. Cryptorchid males should be gelded.

2. DWARFISM

A dwarfed animal has an overall stunted, thick-set appearance. They can have multiple deformities in the legs with large, coarse and knobby joints or cannons short and stumpy. They have disproportionate heavy heads, usually carried low. Dwarfism traits are unacceptable for breeding.

3. EXTREME “COW HOCKS”

Cow Hocks that hinder the movement, and therefore the function of an individual.

4. EXTREME “PARROT MOUTH”/“MONKEY MOUTH”

Teeth that miss an even bite by more than 1/4” affect the good condition, health, and eventually the longevity of the animal.

NOTES ON THE BREED STANDARD

COLOR

There may be changes from a foal coat to a mature coat color. A clearer idea of what the mature coat will be is to look at the color of a foal's hair close to the body or on the head around the eyes. The Miniature Donkey Registry requests registrations to be updated after an individual's third birthday providing mature height, one clear photo of each side and notification of any changes in markings or coat color.

Whether an animal is being evaluated for purposes of the show ring or breeding on the farm, coat color or pattern should be considered "invisible" as a selection factor and subordinate to characteristics of conformation.

The Miniature Donkey Registry recognizes the following coat colors:

- Gray-Dun

- Gray, Black or Brown or Red Roan

- Black with cross

- Black, no cross

- Blue-Eyed White (Ivory)

- Unusual colors (Cameo, colors that do not fit visual category) or

- Combination colors (Red/gray-dun = Rose dun)

- Red (Sorrel)

- Brown

- Spotted (on all base colors)

- White FSW (Frosted Spotted White)



The Miniature Donkey Registry does not use Chocolate, Pink or other coat color descriptions. For more detailed descriptions of the above coat colors contact the Miniature Donkey Registry, c/o American Donkey and Mule Society, P.O. Box 1210, Lewisville, Texas 75067

Albinoism is a congenital deficiency characterized by complete lack of pigment including the iris of the eyes which are pink. It is a recessive trait requiring both parents to carry this gene.

SIZE

While most of an individual's mature height is attained during its first year, an individual is not considered mature in height and strength of bone until three years.

AGE

This Standard is written with the mature three year old in mind. Age may affect comparisons with this Standard. It is desirable to choose breeding stock at maturity. A Donkey's age at three years is calculated from the actual birthdate.

PEDIGREE

Pedigree is important in selecting the best possible stock for breeding. The original imported Miniature Donkey stock had a relatively small gene pool so some inbreeding was inevitable. Breeders should try to avoid inbreeding by keeping pedigrees and selecting pairings that are not too closely related. Inbreeding can cause problems with conformation, fertility, hardiness and genetic defects.

(NMDA has been involved with DNA Typing/Testing since 2000. Contact information on this service can be found under "Resources", page 32.)



REGISTRY

The Miniature Donkey Registry

c/o American Donkey and Mule Society

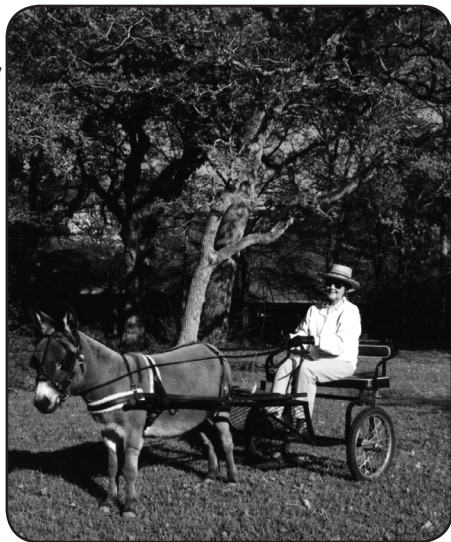
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Published by the Donkey Sanctuary

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A Conservation Breeding Handbook

The American Livestock Breeds Conservancy

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Storey Publications 2008

Purdy, Stephen R.

Donkeys – A Veterinary Guide for Owners and Breeders

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P.O. Box 477, Pittsboro, N.C. 27312
(919) 542-5704

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P.O. Box 1210, Lewisville, Texas 75067
(972) 219-0781

Donkey & Mule News

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Canadian Donkey and Mule Association,
25766 - 48 Ave., Langley, BC V4W 1J2
Phone 604-857-4990



NMDA RESOURCES

The following additional resource information is available from the NMDA through direct contact with the central office:

6450 Dewey Road, Rome, NY 13440 (315) 336-0154

Email: nmdaasset@aol.com or online www.nmdaasset.com

- NMDA **ASSET** Miniature Donkey magazine
- NMDA Miniature Donkey brochure (general information)
- NMDA Gelding Incentive Program
- NMDA Gelding Pamphlet
- NMDA DNA Typing Program
- Manual – ***Training Your Miniature Donkey To Drive***
- ***NMDA Show Rules*** Handbook
- NMDA Mini Mart
- www.nmdaasset.com

NMDA recommends microchip placement at the base of the left ear.







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