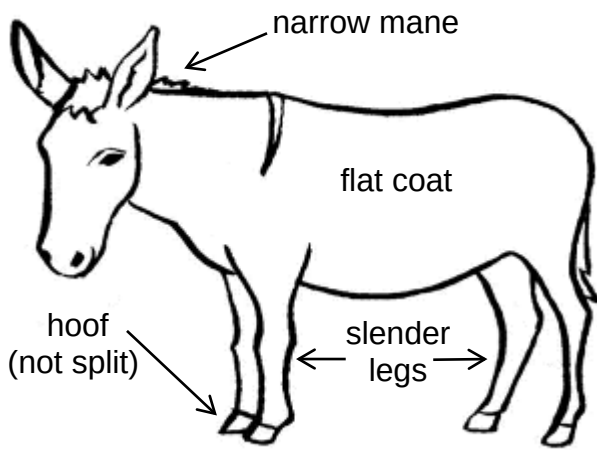


# General donkey information

Donkeys belong to a family of animals known as **equines**. Equines are animals with slender legs, a smooth coat, a narrow mane along the back of their necks and hooves that are not split. Other equines are horses, zebras, mules and hinnies.



A **mule** is the offspring (baby) of a female horse and a male donkey.

A **hinny** is the offspring of a female donkey and a male horse.

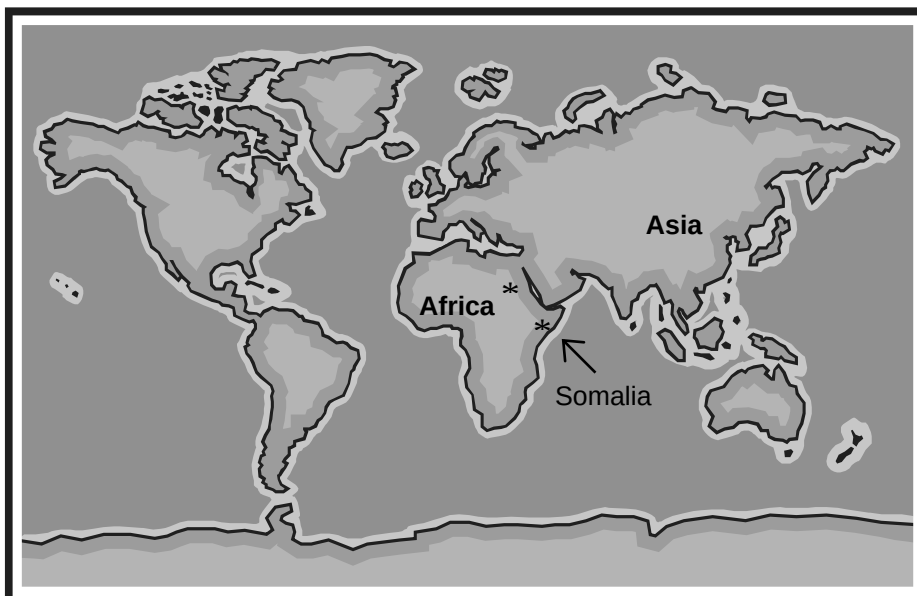
## Names of donkeys

Donkeys are also known as **asses** or **burros**.

A baby donkey is called a **foal**, the female donkey is called a **mare**, and the male donkey is called a **stallion**. A castrated male donkey is called a **gelding**.

## Donkey origins and types

Donkeys originate from wild asses of Africa and Asia. In Africa there were two types of donkeys, the Nubian wild ass in the north and the Somali wild ass in the east. The stripe on the shoulders of some donkeys comes from the Nubian ass. The Somali wild ass has stripes on its legs. These areas of Africa are hot and dry and have a lot of hills, therefore you find donkeys today that are very good at working under these conditions. Unlike Africa, Asia had many different breeds (types of donkeys). Some of the donkeys from Asia live and work in very cold conditions and therefore have very thick, woolly coats to protect them. Today donkeys vary a lot in their colour, coat and size. The smallest donkey is about 60 cm (from hoof to the top of the back) and the largest donkey is about 168 cm tall.



The two stars on the map of Africa show the areas where the Somali wild ass and the Nubian wild ass were found. The area that was known as Nubia is found in today's southern Egypt and northern Sudan. See if you can find Somalia, Egypt and Sudan in your atlas. Find out more about the ancient culture of the Nubians.

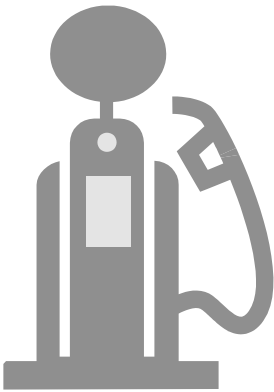
## From young to old

It is not good for female donkeys to get pregnant until they are four years old. You shouldn't ride donkeys or use them to work before they are four years old because their bones aren't yet fully developed. Donkeys usually live longer than horses. If they are looked after well they can live for at least fifty years.



## Donkey friendships

Donkeys like company and get lonely if they are kept on their own. One donkey can form a very close friendship with another donkey. It is stressful for the donkeys if they are separated. Whether donkeys are kept as pets or used for work, it is best to have at least two donkeys.



## Working donkeys

There are many countries in which people can't afford to buy or own a fuel-driven vehicle, for example a truck, tractor or car. Trucks carry things over distances. Tractors work the land so that food can be grown. Cars drive people around. Poor people use donkeys to do all this work.



Donkeys pull ploughs and carts and carry people, bricks, sand, food and water for their owners. Some donkey owners can't afford to feed their donkeys properly or give them the medical attention they need. The donkeys suffer a lot or die from being very tired, sick or not having enough food to eat.

## Caring for donkeys

There are organisations all over the world that work with people and their donkeys. They help take care of sick donkeys and give training to owners of donkeys to show them how to look after donkeys properly.

## Resting donkeys

Some donkeys that have been badly treated are lucky enough to be rescued. They stay in a sanctuary where they don't have to work anymore and they can simply live and rest. Eseltjesrus Donkey Sanctuary in the Western Cape is such a place.

