



Donkey

Common name: **Donkey**Latin name: **Equus asinus**Local name: **الجمار**

ECOLOGY

Type:

Domestic

Role in Ecosystem:

If left without control, the increase in their population may negatively affect the natural environment by damaging the natural vegetation and soil and competition with other grazing animals.

HABITAT

The fact that this species originates from wild ancestors, developed and evolved in Africa, clearly indicates that the species adapted to harsh climatic and ecological conditions. Such an environment resulted in harsh conditions that imposed a corresponding biological response. This species is adapted to live in a wide range of habitats.



Food

Herbivores

Donkeys are herbivores. Their teeth are used to grind and break off plants from their roots. The wide shape and blunt, shallow grooves of their molars help grind up the material and allow the food to pass into the stomach quicker and more efficiently. Donkeys consume a variety of grasses, herbs, and browsing plants.



Movement and Communication

Communication:

Donkeys use many forms of communication. They use their body, sound, and smell to convey feelings. When using their bodies, they use their ears and tails to exhibit signs of their mood. Their ears can be pinned back to show anger, perked forward to show alertness, or one ear forward and one ear back to show curiosity. They will use their tail to show annoyance by swishing it back and forth quickly. Donkeys use a "hee-haw" sound that can travel up to 3 km away. These animals have a good sense of hearing that can detect these calls at such distances.

Movement:

The domestic donkey (*Equus asinus*) has a very specific body structure. Its design ensures that the interrelationship of different body regions enables great endurance.

Social Habits

Social

Donkeys have a territorial social system. Breeding males hold their own territory through which solitary females with their young pass. Females travel solitarily with their young or in small groups.

Donkeys are considered at least as intelligent as dogs. They understand voice commands and will come when called. They can form strong bonds with animals from other species.

Reproduction

Vibiparus

Donkeys are nonseasonal breeders. Females will start cycling regularly between 10 and 22 months old with a wide variation in oestrus duration of 2–10 days.

Gestation period is 11 – 14 months.

Donkeys are considered mature at around 3 years of age.

Donkeys can be interbred with horses to produce mules, which are mostly sterile.

Attributes

Size:

106.64 cm

Weight:

120-160 kg

Lifespan:

27 – 40 years

INTRODUCTION

There are approximately 43 million donkeys in the world. Donkeys contribute to developing countries' livelihoods, both directly and indirectly. Donkeys supply draught power (for plowing and hauling) and serve as a transportation resource for passengers and agricultural products, making a significant contribution to food security, mobility, and income generation. The population of donkeys in Africa is estimated to be 13 million. Despite motorized transportation worldwide, donkeys play an essential role in many developing countries' farming systems and poor people's lives. Donkeys represent an essential part of the smallholder agricultural system, especially in rural communities. Donkeys are valued for their characteristics: inexpensive, hardy, adaptable to many terrains such as dry areas and hills, disease resistant, and simple to manage and train.

Sudan was identified as the origin of the Nubian wild ass Beja-Pereira.

The donkey population in Sudan is approximately 7,608,854. It is divided into two types:

- Pack donkeys carrying local names Mackady, and Darawy, have short legs, thick & short neck & ears, it is a slow animal used in carrying water inside & outside villages and small towns and pulling small carts.
- Riding donkeys Donglawy (Rifawi) Its high –fast animal used for riding, the color is black or white grey or white, found in the Northern part of the Sudan in the agriculture schemes around the Nile and in Eastern states, Darfur and Kordofan. It is also used for the transport of milk & vegetables inside the towns.

The *Equus asinus* x *Equus caballus* hybrid, commonly known as the mule, was once fairly common in the Sudan, especially as a military transport animal but is now very seldom seen.

LIVELIHOODS AND CULTURE

Human interaction

The researchers found that all donkeys could trace their lineage back to a single domestication event of wild asses in East Africa, perhaps in the Horn of Africa, around 5000 B.C. From there, domesticated donkeys spread to the rest of the continent and into Europe and Asia, where they formed genetically distinct groups based on region. Humans have now brought donkeys to nearly every continent on Earth. Donkeys contribute to developing countries' livelihoods, both directly and indirectly. Donkeys supply draught power (for plowing and hauling) and serve as a transportation resource for passengers and agricultural products, making a significant contribution to food security, mobility, and income generation. The population of donkeys in Africa is estimated to be 13 million. Despite motorized transportation worldwide, donkeys play an essential role in many developing countries' farming systems and poor people's lives. Donkeys represent an essential part of the smallholder agricultural system, especially in rural communities. Donkeys are used mainly for pack work in rural areas but are used in carts in urban areas. In urban areas, donkeys have an important role in milk and drinking water selling and distribution. This role is very important for food security and income generation.

Cultural value

Donkeys are an essential component of pastoral societies and smallholder agricultural systems. As important working animals, Sudanese value donkeys and their important roles in facilitating draught and movement. In pastoral communities, women and children, use them to transport water, firewood and other crucial resources and for long-distance migrations across their dryland environments. In some tribes in western Sudan, the groom roams around riding on a donkey female back during his wedding days as it symbolizes fertility and productivity.

Cultural expression

In Sudan, the donkey symbolizes loyalty, patience, and the ability to tolerate hard conditions. However, the term "donkey" is also used as a synonym for stupid.

Many jokes and funny stories are based on the donkey's learning abilities that enable them to memorize the roads that they use. "Kyriakou" was a drunkard Greek man who lived in Sudan, and his donkey brought him home no matter how different the paths were!

One of the donkey types is Makadi or Dabalawi which comes from Ethiopia at a certain historical time. This type is disobedient and slow. That is why the name of this donkey is given to a person who is not responsive. In the Darfur Sultanate, the Sultan rode horses while donkeys carried the Sultan's fighting tools such as swords and harpoons. The "Farshah" one of the responsables at the national administration level of the Darfur sultanate used the donkey for transportation.

There is a common proverb about the "Hassaniya" tribe that is used to describe people or individuals when doing marginal things under serious conditions. The story behind this proverb is that when this tribe was asked to join the other tribes in preparing for war during the Mahdist period, they answered that they were busy with a donkey race where they raced riding donkeys in reverse direction.

The stories of Juha and his donkey, which carry wisdom and humor, are among the important stories that came from the Arabic heritage and became an integral part of the stories told in the Sudanese languages.

Kalthoum's donkey is a famous donkey that is mentioned in a well-known Sudanese song.

THREATS

Domesticated donkeys are not listed as being endangered or threatened.

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