

Storey's Guide to
**RAISING
MINIATURE
LIVESTOCK**

Goats · Sheep · Donkeys · Pigs
Horses · Cattle · Llamas



SUE WEAVER

**STOREY'S GUIDE TO RAISING
MINIATURE LIVESTOCK**

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**RAISING
MINIATURE
LIVESTOCK**

Health • Handling • Breeding



Sue Weaver



Storey Publishing

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*To Gib and Melba Mullins
of Ridgerunner Miniature Horses in Caulfield, Missouri,
who raise the best little horses in the world.
Thanks for your friendship, guys!*



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Why Raise Miniature Livestock?

ASK A HOST OF ESTABLISHED HOBBY FARMERS and most will agree that there is little (if any) money to be made in commercial, full-size livestock. Feeder cattle, market hogs, and standard lamb-and-wool operations are faltering. With the cost of keeping farm animals hurtling skyward, steadily increasing numbers of owners and producers are turning to raising smaller breeds of livestock, and wisely so. Miniature livestock require less housing space, pasture, fencing, and feed than do their full-size counterparts. According to American Miniature Horse Association figures, you can feed, house, and maintain five miniatures for the cost of keeping a single standard-size horse. Beef cattlemen can stock two or three miniature Herefords or Lowline Angus to one garden-variety cow (Hereford, Angus, Holstein). And a pair of miniature sheep or goats or even a pig can lodge happily in a doghouse in a fenced backyard.

Minis are easier to handle and less intimidating than commonplace livestock, especially for beginners, children, old folks, and the physically challenged, not only due to their smaller stature but also because many miniatures are specifically bred for calm disposition and tractability. Chores such as hoof trimming, shearing or clipping, giving shots, and administering dewormers are infinitely easier, as is training peewee livestock for show or pleasure.

In most states, keeping miniature livestock (especially cattle and heritage pigs, often goats and sheep, but rarely equines) qualifies landowners for valuable agricultural-use land tax exemptions, even on relatively small parcels of land. And minis are sometimes acceptable where zoning laws prohibit full-size barnyard pets.

Enthusiasts exhibit pint-size livestock and poultry at species-specific shows, state and county fairs, and as 4-H projects. Most species are locally transportable in a van or SUV. Scaled-down equines, cattle, goats, and llamas handily pull carts and wagons, even with adults at the reins. Country kids dress their mini friends in costume for the kiddies' day parade.

MINIATURE LIVESTOCK: WHAT'S THAT?

There are three kinds of miniature livestock. For this book's purposes we'll refer to all three groups as miniature livestock, though owners of traditional breeds in the first two groups are quick to point out that their favorite breeds weren't miniaturized by man.

- Naturally diminutive breeds that evolved as small animals to better survive the conditions nature handed them. Think Soay sheep, San Clemente Island goats, and British Shetland ponies.
- Small breeds that retained their original breed character when their parent breeds were selected for greater size. These include Miniature Jersey cattle and Babydoll Southdown sheep.
- Breeds that were deliberately miniaturized by breeders who selected for smaller stature, often through outcrossing to an established smaller breed. Miniature Highland and Miniature Longhorn cattle spring to mind.

Minis' irresistible "cute appeal" and their easygoing natures make them unrivaled tagalongs for nursing home, school, and hospital visitations. What better traffic-stopper than a 30-inch pint-size Zebu bull; an 18-pound miniature horse foal; or a teensy Pygmy goat kid. Minis are fun to own!

And the bottom line: Quality miniatures tend to pay their way. Miniatures cost less to raise, and because they are in short supply, a ready market awaits the conscientious breeder. They can fetch good money at annual sales. And customers tend to pay a premium for value-added products in lieu of the usual kind (goat cheese or yogurt, handspun yarn, and heritage beef or pork). If you want to raise livestock and show a profit (or at least break even), think small! This is the best time in history to invest in miniature cattle, horses, donkeys, mules, sheep, goats, and llamas: breeders abound, and they are eager to welcome newcomers into the fold. Breeders on one side of the United States can easily ship miniature lambs, kids, and piglets by air, two to a standard large-size dog crate.

Whether you're considering a pair of miniature fiber llamas, a herd of meaty Lowline cattle, or a flock of tiny sheep, this book is designed to help you find, select, buy, and take good care of your tiny charges, and if you wish, market them to others who would like to do the same.

SECTION 1

Raising
Miniature
Livestock



1

Before You Begin

BEFORE LAUNCHING any animal-related enterprise, be certain you understand its demands. Raising animals will impact your lifestyle, your physical and emotional health (typically for the better), and your bank account. Not everyone is cut out to keep livestock, however, miniature or otherwise. Are you?

Lifestyle Choices

Are you willing to be on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, whenever your livestock need you? Will you camp in the barn when foals are due? Roll out of bed at two in the morning to feed a bottle lamb? Retrieve errant cattle and patch their flattened fences under a noontime sun, missing that long-anticipated televised ball game in the process? Animals rarely get hungry, sick, loose, or injured at convenient times.

Is reliable relief help available when you need it? If not, would forgoing dinner invitations, overnight trips, and well-deserved vacations upset you (or your family)? Keeping livestock invariably ties you down.

Discuss your venture with your veterinarian. (Or if you don't yet have a veterinarian, talk with a few local vets to see who might be available.) Is she qualified to doctor Pygmy goats, miniature llamas, or whatever else you've chosen? Does she want to? If not, are you willing (and able) to transport sick or injured animals to a specialty practice and learn to perform routine maintenance procedures yourself?

Physical and Emotional Considerations

Can you weather the inevitable livestock keeper's lows? When your favorite cow dies of bloat or a coyote slays that special lamb, what then? Animals die. They

REQUIRED ITEMS FOR ANIMAL RAISERS

Before you bring any livestock home, you will need to have the following. Are you prepared?

- Safe shelters (see chapter 6 for information on facilities and fencing), proper fencing, bedding, feed, feeders, water containers, and a consistent source of clean drinking water.
- If you plan to breed your livestock, you also need safe birthing quarters and a well-stocked birthing kit and, if you maintain breeding males, strong, secure quarters in which to house them.
- Halters, leads, hoof or toenail trimming equipment, coat care necessities, and any type of specialized tack (carts, harnesses, show halters, and so on) your breed and species requires.
- Well-stocked first-aid kits, one for the barn and one for your towing vehicle (if you have one).

And most important:

- Phone numbers of at least three reliable veterinarians who treat your species. (Introduce yourself in advance so that they are familiar with who you are; what species you have; and, if they make farm visits, where you live.)

injure themselves and each other. Things go terribly wrong. Some stockkeepers neatly handle these stressors — could you?

Do you have the patience or the means to wait for the best animals? Some miniature breeds are in exceedingly short supply. With location and price factored into the equation, newcomers must often bide their time until the right individuals come along.

Are you capable of selling your livestock? Can you send the steer to slaughter; could you sell the sow you love? Are you willing to pull out the stops to market your wares? You'll need to continually monitor market trends to stay on the cutting edge, advertise, and maintain a Web site. Are you ready to haul your livestock to expos, demonstrations, shows, and sales? If not, think "pets," not "produce." Don't become a breeder. That way lies heartache if you find you can't (or won't) sell what you produce.

One animal or one hundred, you should genuinely enjoy working with the species you select. And you must also like the people associated with it. Buying, selling, co-op marketing, or showing, you'll be dealing with them on an ongoing basis.

Are you prepared to handle dwarfs? Some (but not all) miniature cattle, horse, and donkey breeds produce occasional dwarfs. Because of serious limb and internal abnormalities, dwarf calves and foals that survive birth seldom live happy, pain-free lives, so it behooves breeders not to knowingly produce them. The gene responsible for dwarfism in cattle has been identified, but miniature equine dwarf genetics are poorly understood. Miniature equine dwarfism is more prevalent than most new breeders imagine, so it's wise to research this issue before you commit.

Is the species you choose suited to your climate, your temperament, and your physical capabilities? You could raise Miniature Highland cattle in South Texas and Miniature Zebus in northern Minnesota — but why would you want to? For the animals' sake, choose something adapted for the weather where you live. You will need to do your homework to determine what your options are.

Interacting with some animal species requires more brawn than with others, and with some species you'd better be swift on your feet. Don't take on a species or breed you physically can't handle. It will be frustrating and dangerous if you do.

Loud, abrupt individuals rarely resonate with flighty, reactive livestock. "Do it my way or else" humans and headstrong, aggressive animals are bound to clash. Assess your mind-set carefully, and choose a compatible species. It will save a world of upset for all concerned.

Economic Considerations

Do you have the wherewithal to purchase good-quality animals of the breed you want? Since miniature livestock tend to command top prices, getting started with certain breeds of certain species can be a pricey venture. Even so, start with the best animals you can find and afford. One calf or foal from outstanding parents will fetch a higher price than half a dozen mediocre animals, and it will cost far less to produce the single good one.

Are there enough dollars in your pocket to support your animals when things go awry? Markets falter. Disease rips through your herd. Expect the unexpected. Keeping livestock can be a pricey proposition. Do you have the financial resources to see yours through those bumpy times?

Will your animals be pets? Freezer fodder? A means of producing offspring to raise or to sell? If you keep livestock to claim a lower-cost agriculture land tax assessment, your venture must eventually turn a profit. How much profit is

enough? And would you be content if you lost money or if your animals simply paid their way?

Make certain your facilities are adequate before you bring any livestock home. If they aren't safe and appropriate for the species of your choice, do you have enough land, financial resources, and know-how to make the necessary improvements? Can you obtain the building permits to do it? If you need chutes and squeezes or tall fences to repel predators, can you build them or hire someone else to build them? If not, you might need to choose a different species. Factor in injuries, losses, and breakouts; it's the safe and economical thing to do.

Before purchasing livestock of any kind, acquire any licenses and owner/breeder permits required by state and local authorities, and make certain your property is zoned for the type of livestock you plan to keep.

BEFORE YOU CHOOSE AN ENDANGERED BREED

The feeling of helping a rare livestock breed survive is priceless. Some breeds, however, are so rare that every individual in their population counts, so be sure you know the best way to care for your breed.

Be prepared to be a stellar steward. Find a mentor before you begin and thoroughly understand the breed's needs and peculiarities before you buy. Hone your skills on a similar but more common breed before tackling endangered livestock. For example, before you try Kunekunes, get your feet wet keeping pet Potbellied pigs, or try raising Pygmies before you purchase San Clemente Island Goats.

Don't dabble in rare breed livestock; these animals need committed breeders. Don't crossbreed females of rare breeds. Carefully and permanently identify each individual. Plan for your breed's future; make certain your heirs know how precious they are.



2

Which Species?

THIS CHAPTER WILL COMPARE SPECIES and present basic information so that you can choose which species best suits your needs and resources. See section 2 for more in-depth information about the species you select. Whether you keep farm animals for pleasure, food, or profit, there are miniature livestock options designed for every pocketbook, lifestyle, and taste. Which of them beckon to you?

When choosing the species and breeds you might like to raise, factor in personal preference; time constraints; ease of handling; space, fencing, and facilities needed to maintain the species; start-up costs; and profit potential. The chart on pages 8 to 11 may help.

Miniature Cattle

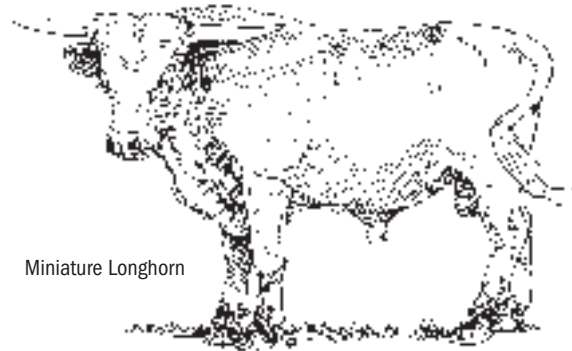
Hobby farmers seeking a diminutive, moderately priced, American Livestock Breeds Conservancy heritage breed (see box on pages 16 and 17) choose Dexters. Dexter cows stand 36 to 42 inches (91 to 107 cm) tall and tip the scales at roughly 750 pounds (340 kg); bulls can be 2 inches (5 cm) taller than cows. The Dexter is a good dual-purpose breed: steers dress out at a respectable 55 to 60 percent live weight, and cows give one to three gallons of 4 percent butterfat milk per day. And Dexters are fairly readily available in North America.

Where's the beef? On miniature steers! Pint-size Herefords registered with the American Hereford Association come in miniature (43 inches [109 cm] and under) and classic (44 to 48 inches [112 to 122 cm]) sizes. Stockier and shorter-legged than everyday Herefords, they mature 20 percent faster and dress out at 65 percent live weight. At 40 to 70 percent less than the size of standard Angus,

Lowlines require one-third the amount of feed to produce 70 percent as much rib-eye, and Lowlines dress out at up to 75 percent live weight.

If it's milk you want, miniature Jerseys are a good choice. Only 38 to 42 inches (97 to 107 cm) tall and weighing 600 to 650 pounds (272 to 295 kg), miniature Jersey cows give two to four gallons of butterfat-rich milk every day — enough for most families and then some.

Or choose Miniature Zebus, Miniature Highlands, Miniature Longhorns, or any of the array of cattle breeds created by Richard Gradwohl of the International Miniature Cattle Breeds Registry. Prices vary widely based on breed, availability (expect to be put on a waiting list), quality, age, and sex.



Miniature Longhorn

THINK BEFORE YOU BUY

Good things come in small packages, but please don't take miniatures for granted. Although small by commercial standards, these animals aren't toys. Miniature cattle sometimes weigh more than half a ton, and miniature equines tip the scale at 200 pounds (90 kg) and more. Even 100-pound (45 kg) miniature sheep can bowl over unwary adults with ease. We'll talk about handling livestock later in this book; in the meantime, take your strength and agility into consideration when choosing which species you'd like to raise.

By the same token, small livestock don't automatically make great pets. Folks are often surprised and dismayed when the miniature pig purchased from an unethical breeder grows to twice the size it's supposed to be, and people who buy sheep for suburban backyard pets are disappointed when their charges behave like sheep instead of dogs. It's perfectly possible to raise a house pig, sheep, or goat, but just because the critter's small doesn't mean raising it will be easy.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A SPECIES

Species	Availability	Ease of care	Fencing*
MINIATURE CATTLE	3–5 (depending on breed)	Beef cattle and nonlactating dairy cattle: 1 Lactating dairy cattle: 3–4	Any standard cattle fencing: multiple strands of barbed, high-tensile, or electric fencing; welded-wire mesh cattle panels; wood, plastic, or pipe post-and-rail construction
MINIATURE HORSES	1–3 (depending on quality)	1	Wood, plastic, or pipe post-and-rail construction; multiple strands of high-tensile or electric wire (but not barbed) fencing; welded-wire mesh cattle panels; woven-wire horse or sheep fencing
MINIATURE DONKEYS AND MULES	2–3 (depending on quality)	1	Wood, plastic, or pipe post-and-rail construction; multiple strands of high-tensile or electric wire (but not barbed) fencing; welded-wire cattle panels; woven-wire horse or sheep fencing
MINIATURE LLAMAS	4–5	1	Wood, plastic, or pipe post-and-rail construction; multiple strands of high-tensile or electric wire (but not barbed) fencing; welded-wire mesh cattle panels; woven-wire horse or sheep fencing
KEY:	1 = readily available 5 = rare or demand currently exceeds supply	1 = very easy 5 = time consuming or difficult	* It's always best to house and pasture miniature livestock and poultry of all species inside tall, stout, predator-proof fencing. Also consider keeping a livestock guardian dog or a full-size guard llama or donkey with miniature goats, miniature sheep, and with small groups of miniature equines.

Pasture and shelter	Compatibility with other species	Profit potential
<p>Allow approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ the pasture-stocking rate recommended for a conventional cow, based on local conditions (consult your county extension agent for particulars)</p> <p>Communal loose housing: allow 25–35 square feet of space per animal</p> <p>Box stall: allow 64–80 or more square feet of space per animal (ideal sizes: 8' × 8' to 8' × 10')</p>	All other livestock species of all sizes (barring horses that habitually chase cattle)	3–5 (depending on breed)
<p>Allow approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{6}$ the pasture-stocking rate recommended for a full-size horse, based on local conditions (consult your county extension agent for particulars)</p> <p>Communal loose housing: allow 30–40 square feet of space per animal</p> <p>Box stall: allow 64–80 or more square feet of space per animal (ideal sizes: 8' × 8' to 8' × 10')</p>	All other livestock species except aggressive full-size horses	1–4 (depending on quality)
<p>Allow approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{6}$ the pasture-stocking rate recommended for a full-size horse, based on local conditions (consult your county extension agent for particulars)</p> <p>Communal loose housing: allow 25–35 square feet or more of space per adult donkey or mule</p> <p>Box stall: allow 64–80 or more square feet of space per donkey (ideal sizes: 8' × 8' to 8' × 10')</p>	All other livestock species except aggressive full-size horses	1–4 (depending on quality)
<p>Communal loose housing: allow 25–30 square feet of space per llama</p> <p>Box stall: allow 48–80 or more square feet of space per llama (ideal sizes: 6' × 8' to 8' × 10')</p>	All other livestock species except aggressive full-size horses	3–5 (depending on quality)

1 = very unlikely
5 = high

continued on next page

FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A SPECIES *CONTINUED*

Species	Availability	Ease of care	Fencing*
MINIATURE DAIRY GOATS	1–5 (depending on breed)	Non-lactating: 1 Lactating does: 3–4	Goats require secure fencing to keep them in and predators out: welded-wire cattle or tall sheep panels; woven-wire horse or sheep fencing; multiple strands of high-tensile or electric fencing
MINIATURE FIBER GOATS	3	2–4 (1 on an everyday basis, but Pygoras and Nigoras require annual or biannual stripping or shearing, depending on fiber type)	Same as for miniature dairy goats
PYGMY GOATS	1–3 (depending on quality)	1 (3–4 if milking lactating does)	Same as for miniature dairy goats
MINIATURE SHEEP	3–5 (depending on breed)	2 (1 on an everyday basis, but most miniature sheep also require annual shearing)	Sheep require secure fencing to keep them in and predators out: welded-wire cattle or tall sheep panels; woven-wire horse or sheep fencing; multiple strands of high-tensile or electric fencing
MINIATURE PIGS	Potbellied pigs: 1 Kunekune and heritage pigs: 5		Welded-wire hog panels work best
KEY:	1 = readily available 5 = rare or demand currently exceeds supply	1 = very easy 5 = time consuming or difficult	

Note: Figures and comments are subjective and based on the author's experience and that of veteran livestock owners surveyed through species-specific e-mail forums.

Pasture and shelter	Compatibility with other species	Profit potential
<p>Communal loose housing: allow 12–20 square feet or more per goat</p> <p>Box stall: allow 16–24 square feet or more of space per goat (ideal sizes: 4' × 4' to 4' × 6', depending on breed)</p>	All miniature live-stock species; full-size goats, sheep, llamas	2–4 (depending on breed)
<p>Communal loose housing: allow 16–20 square feet or more per goat</p> <p>Box stall: allow 16–30 square feet or more of space per goat (ideal sizes: 4' × 4' to 4' × 6')</p>	All miniature live-stock species; full-size goats, sheep, llamas	3
<p>Communal loose housing: allow 12–16 square feet or more per goat</p> <p>Box stall: allow 16–24 square feet or more of space per goat (ideal sizes: 4' × 4' to 4' × 6')</p>	All miniature live-stock species; full-size goats, sheep, llamas	1–3 (depending on quality)
<p>Communal loose housing: allow 12–16 square feet or more per sheep</p> <p>Box stall: allow 16–24 square feet or more of space per sheep (ideal sizes: 4' × 4' to 4' × 6')</p>	All other livestock species	3–4 (depending on breed)
<p>Communal loose housing: allow 20–25 square feet of space per pig</p> <p>Box stall: allow 24–48 or more square feet of space per pig (ideal sizes: 4' × 6' to 6' × 8', depending on adult size and breed)</p> <p>Smaller miniature pigs can also be housetrained and kept indoors as pets</p>	All other livestock species with one caveat: pigs have been known to kill and eat small, weak lambs and kids, so they shouldn't be kept with sheep or goats with newborn offspring at their sides	<p>Potbellied pigs: 1</p> <p>Kunekune: 4–5</p> <p>Heritage breeds: variable (based on whether they're raised for breeding stock or pork)</p>
		<p>1 = very unlikely</p> <p>5 = high</p>

Miniature Horses

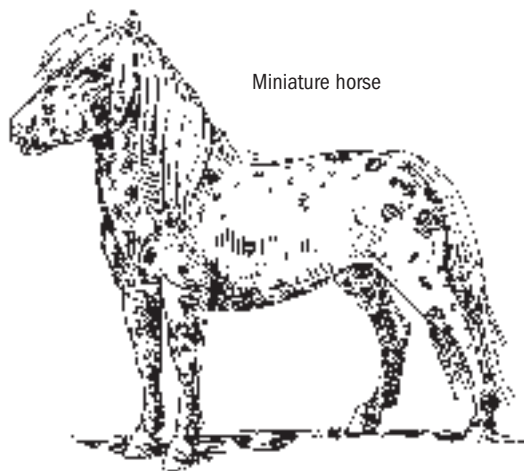
Once the playthings of royalty and the ultra-rich, today's miniature horses are priced within the means of people with moderate incomes.

Miniature horses are registered by the American Miniature Horse Association, which requires mature AMHA horses to measure 34 inches (86 cm) and under, and the American Miniature Horse Registry, which registers in two divisions:

34 inches (86 cm) or less and 34 to 38 inches (86–97 cm) in height. It's best to buy breeding stock recorded with both groups; other factors being of equal quality, the tiniest minis, the flashiest individuals (pintos, Appaloosas, Pintoloosas), and the double-registered horses sell dearer than the rest.

Size, type, training (minis make outstanding driving horses, singly or in tandem), show record, color, and bloodlines play a big part in determining mini horse prices, so if you plan to breed to show a profit, study the market before you invest. Depending on your needs, you could spend \$200 or \$20,000 for a mini horse and in both cases get precisely the horse of your dreams.

Or consider breeds less frequently encountered in North America, such as Falabella miniature horses from Argentina (most are also registered with one or both of the American miniature horse registries listed above), British Shetland ponies from the United Kingdom, or Caspian horses from Iran.



Miniature horse

ONE SPECIES OR SEVERAL?

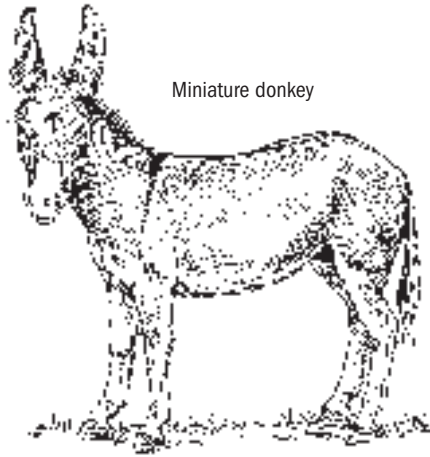
Folks who keep miniature livestock tend to start with one breed of a single species and later expand to raising several breeds and species. Read the breeder profiles scattered throughout this book to get a feel for raising multiple species. For your sake and the animals' too, however, start small, learn everything you can about your first breed and species, and expand later on if you like.

Miniature Donkeys

In 1958, Bea Langfeld of Danby Farm in Nebraska incorporated the Miniature Donkey Registry (MDR) to record the pedigrees of Sicilian and Sardinian imports and their offspring. Ownership eventually passed to the American Donkey and Mule Society (ADMS), which still maintains the original MDR stud-books. More than 40,000 miniature donkeys measuring 36 inches (91 cm) and under at the withers have been duly recorded. Another group, the International Miniature Donkey Registry (IMDR), records donkeys in two divisions: Class A (36 inches [91 cm] and under) and Class B (36.1 to 38 inches [91.7–97 cm] tall). The American Council of Spotted Asses registers spotted miniature donkeys of all sizes.

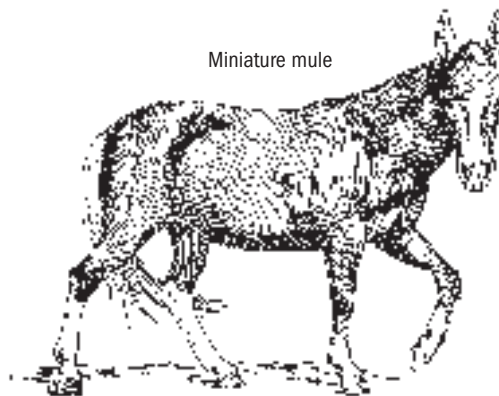
Mini donkeys are arguably the world's most charming pets. Most are hefty enough to pull an adult or several children in a cart or to pack up to 50 pounds (22 kg) of camping gear. They're a hit at parades, and donkey and mule shows offer a wide array of classes for bantam brayers.

Miniature donkey prices vary widely, from \$200 or so for an unregistered, plain-Jane gelding to \$7,500 or more for a well-bred young jack or jennet with a show record, popular bloodlines, and color du jour. Tinier donkeys tend to garner the most cash.



Miniature Mules and Hinnies

Miniature mules are created by breeding miniature donkey jacks to miniature horse mares; miniature hinnies (they are much rarer beasts) are the offspring of miniature stallions and miniature donkey jennets. The American Miniature Mule Society and the American Donkey and Mule Society both register



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