

Common Name: Dom. Miniature Horse

Scientific Name: *Equus ferus caballus*



UCN Red list Status: Not listed

AZA Conservation Program: None

Class: Mammalia

Order: Perissodactyla

Family: Equidae

Genus: Equus

Habitat: The wild ancestors of domesticated horses inhabited the grasslands, steppes, and savannas of the cool, temperate regions of the world. Since domestication, miniature horses, along with their full-size cousins, have adapted to living in a variety of habitats, including urban ones, with humans.

Threats in the Wild: In North America, miniature horses can sometimes be prey to large predators, including domesticated dogs and wild predators including coyotes, wolves, and bears.

Physical Characteristics: Miniature horses are a height breed. They are not to exceed 34 inches (8.5 hands). They have the same conformational attributes as full-sized horses, though on a much smaller scale; this distinguishes them from ponies, which have different conformational proportions. They can have any color and pattern of coat found in full-size horses. Horses are ungulates, which means they walk “on their toes” and have hooves. Horses are also perissodactyls—ungulates with an odd number of toes (rhinos and tapirs also belong to this group). Horses walk on a single digit surrounded by a hoof (the other toes were reduced over time through evolution). Their teeth are specialized for chewing grass (dental formula: 3/3, 0-1/0-1, 3-4/3-4, 3/3); they have large incisors and molars with a diastema between them. They have simple stomachs (unlike ruminants).

Reproduction: Male horses can breed year-round. Females are fertile during the breeding period, which spans the spring and summer months. They are polyestrous during that time, with cycles averaging around 21 days. The gestation period averages 335 days. Mares usually give birth to one foal, although twins are possible. Foals are generally able to begin foraging at two months and begin weaning at that time. They are able to walk within hours after birth. Males are able to breed as early as fifteen months and reach full maturity at six to seven years. Females reach full reproductive maturity at four to five years, though they may be fertile as early as two years.

Fact Sheet – Mammalia –Miniature Horse

Last Updated: April 2020

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Longevity: 25–30 years on average

Diet: Grass, alfalfa, clover, Timothy hay, oats, barley, corn, wheat, flax; domestic horses are often provided vitamin and mineral supplements as well.

Miscellaneous: Important horse terminology: *mare* is a mature female horse; *stallion* is a mature, intact male horse; *gelding* is a neutered male; *foal* refers to a baby horse; *colt* is a male foal; *filly* is a female foal; *hand* is a commonly used measurement (1 hand = 4 inches). Horses are social animals. Miniature horses first appear in the historical record in AD 1650 in the court of King Louis XIV of France. They were bred as pets for the nobility but eventually worked in the mines of Northern Europe and Britain. The American Miniature Horse Association (AMHA) officially established the breed in 1978. Today, miniature horses are popular as pets. They compete in shows for conformation and in activities like driving (cart). Miniature horses are also used as therapy animals.

Signs of Stress: Kicking, aggression, sudden change in behavior.

Handling: Always use a halter and lead. Do not let him graze or pick foliage from trees and bushes while walking around the zoo. Have one docent stand at the hindquarters when walking around the zoo to prevent patrons from getting into the kick zone.

Brushing: Clarence likes to be brushed on his neck and back, but **NOT** between his front legs. If he seems unhappy at any time during brushing, stop brushing.

Exhibited: On exhibit at Children's Enchanted Forest Contact Barn

Docent Animal Specifics: Clarence was born in May 2000.