

DONKEYS





ORIGIN OF THE DONKEY

- ▶ Donkeys originate from desert areas of the earth. Donkeys come from the Somali and Nubian wild asses.
- ▶ The first captivity of the wild ass was in Egypt and western Asia dated back as early as 2800 B.C. to 2500 B.C.
- ▶ It was not until 1000 B.C. that the donkey became the common means of transportation through Egypt, Asia, and parts of Europe
- ▶ The donkey (*Equus asinus*) has been used as a working animal for at least 5000 years.
- ▶ There are more than 40 million donkeys in the world, mostly in underdeveloped countries, where they are used mainly as draught or pack animals





DONKEYS

- ▶ The donkey played a big role in the exploration, settlement and early economy of Australia. However the Donkeys contribution has received very little acknowledgement and has been largely overshadowed by the horse and the camel.
- ▶ Some sheep stations in the dry Kimberley district of Western Australia employed teams of thirty or forty donkeys to carry wool to port and supplies to the stations. They were no longer needed with the arrival of motor vehicles.
- ▶ The donkeys were set free and allowed to run wild. Wild donkeys are now considered pests. This may be part of why their early contribution has been forgotten.



AUSTRALIAN DONKEY

- ▶ Donkeys were first imported from Africa into Australia in 1866 by Sir Thomas Elder.
- ▶ They were used as pack and draught animals in outlying areas of Western Australia (WA) until the 1930s when the motor vehicle started to replaced the need for them.



KEEPING DONKEYS AS A PET

- ▶ Far from the stubborn beasts depicted throughout history, donkeys are gentle farm animals who enjoy interacting with people. When a donkey's needs are met and are properly cared for, they make excellent pets.
- ▶ Male donkeys are called a Jack and female donkeys are called a Jenny.
- ▶ The normal pregnancy period of a donkey is around 1 year.
- ▶ They can live for over 50 years.
- ▶ Training a donkey relies upon showing them with your words and actions, that they can trust you to protect them. They are intelligent animals and will learn what we want from them if we take the time.
- ▶ They don't like the rain and being out in it for long periods can damage their health because their fur is not waterproof.
- ▶ Donkeys are herd animals; they don't like being kept on their own; although a single donkey will live quite happily with goats.



SOME FACTS ABOUT DONKEYS

- ▶ Donkeys have an incredible memory; they can recognise areas they have been and other donkeys they have seen for up to 25 years.
- ▶ They have far larger ears than horses. In the desert environment a donkey can hear the call of another donkey almost 100km away. Their large ears also help keep them cool.
- ▶ Because food is scarce in the desert, donkeys utilise 95% of what they eat which means their manure is not a very good fertilizer. Their digestive system is designed to break down vegetation inedible to other animals. This allows them to extract moisture from food more efficiently.
- ▶ Donkeys are very strong and intelligent. A donkey is stronger than a horse of the same size.
- ▶ Donkeys are not easily startled (unlike horses) and have a keen sense of curiosity.
- ▶ Donkeys have a reputation for stubbornness, but this is due to their highly developed sense of self preservation. It is difficult to force or frighten a donkey into doing something it sees as different from its own best interest or safety.
- ▶ Donkeys are more independent in their thinking than horses and will make decisions based on their safety.



DONKEY'S ARE HERD ANIMALS



- ▶ A herd will choose the strongest donkey to be their leader. In the wild the lead donkey would stay to ward off an attack by a wolf or other predators in order to allow the rest of the herd to escape to safety.
- ▶ Donkeys in a herd will groom each other in the same way as monkeys and chimps do.
- ▶ Feral donkeys are common in the Katherine region of the Northern Territory (NT). It is estimated there are tens of thousands of feral donkeys in the arid zones of Central Australia, Western Australia and the Top End.



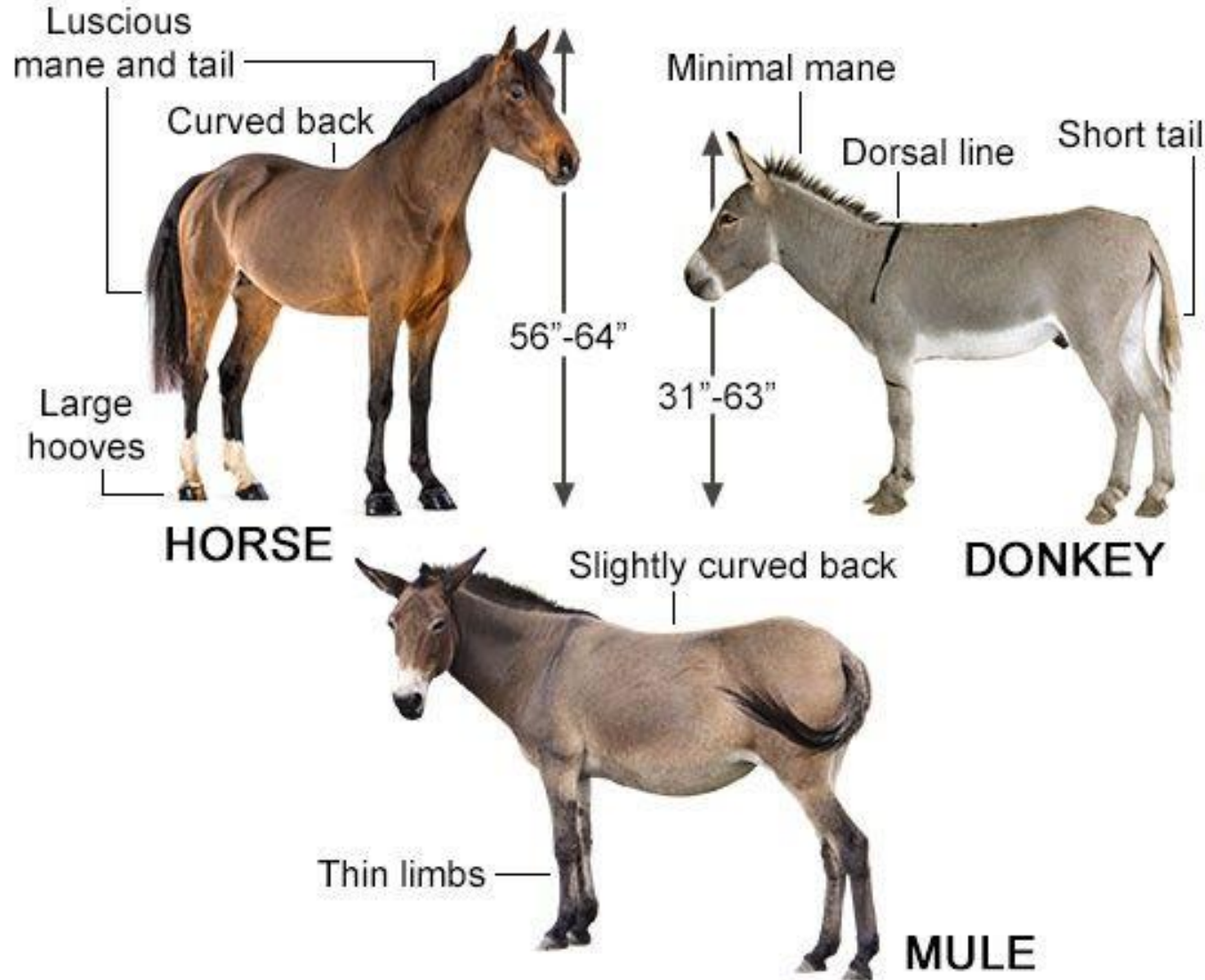
STILL WORKING HARD TODAY

- ▶ The donkey has been a critical tool for man throughout the ages.
- ▶ The vast wealth of the Egyptians was due to the precious metals carried from Africa by donkeys.
- ▶ Donkeys were used to carry silk along the 'Silk Road' from the Pacific Ocean to the Mediterranean in return for trade goods.
- ▶ In Greece donkeys were used for working on the narrow paths between vines and their work in vineyards spread as far as Spain.
- ▶ The donkey was associated with the Syrian God of Wine, Dionysius.
- ▶ The Roman Army moved donkeys into Northern Europe using them in agriculture, vineyards and as pack animals.
- ▶ Donkeys came to England with the Roman invasion of Britain in 43CE.
- ▶ Donkeys are still a lifeline to families in many regions of the world. They help with water and wood fuel collection, land cultivation and transportation of produce to market.
- ▶ Donkeys are used as guard animals for cattle, sheep and goats since they have a natural aversion to dogs and will keep them away from a flock.
- ▶ Donkeys are often fielded with horses due to the seemingly calming effect they have on nervous horses. If a donkey is introduced to a mare and foal, the foal will often turn to the donkey for comfort after it has left its mother.



DONKEYS, HORSES AND MULES

A mule is the result of breeding between a male donkey and a female horse.



HEALTH CARE, PESTS & DISEASES

- ▶ Animal health, welfare and biosecurity are all important stages of the livestock production chain. If managed poorly each can have adverse impacts on productivity.
- ▶ Biosecurity programs for farming industries are designed to prevent the spread of infectious disease and contain disease outbreaks when they occur.
- ▶ Parasites and disease impact on all animals, including Alpacas. Animals affected by disease may not always show obvious clinical signs.
- ▶ Biosecurity is important at the national, regional and property level.
- ▶ Producers are governed by Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines. State and territory governments are responsible for animal welfare laws and their enforcement. These are enforced through animal welfare or prevention of cruelty to animals' legislation.



RISKS & CHALLENGES

- ▶ Like any primary production enterprise there are risks associated with commercial production of Donkeys. Some will be outside of a producer's control however experienced producers are usually able to manage these risks.
- ▶ Risks include the loss of vital export markets. The COVID-19 outbreak had a massive impact on a lot of our export markets.
- ▶ Disease and pests, it is extremely important that we maintain Australia's freedom from major diseases through strict quarantine laws and procedures.
- ▶ Here in Australian weather events such as drought, fires and flooding take a huge toll on our farming communities. They really need our support.





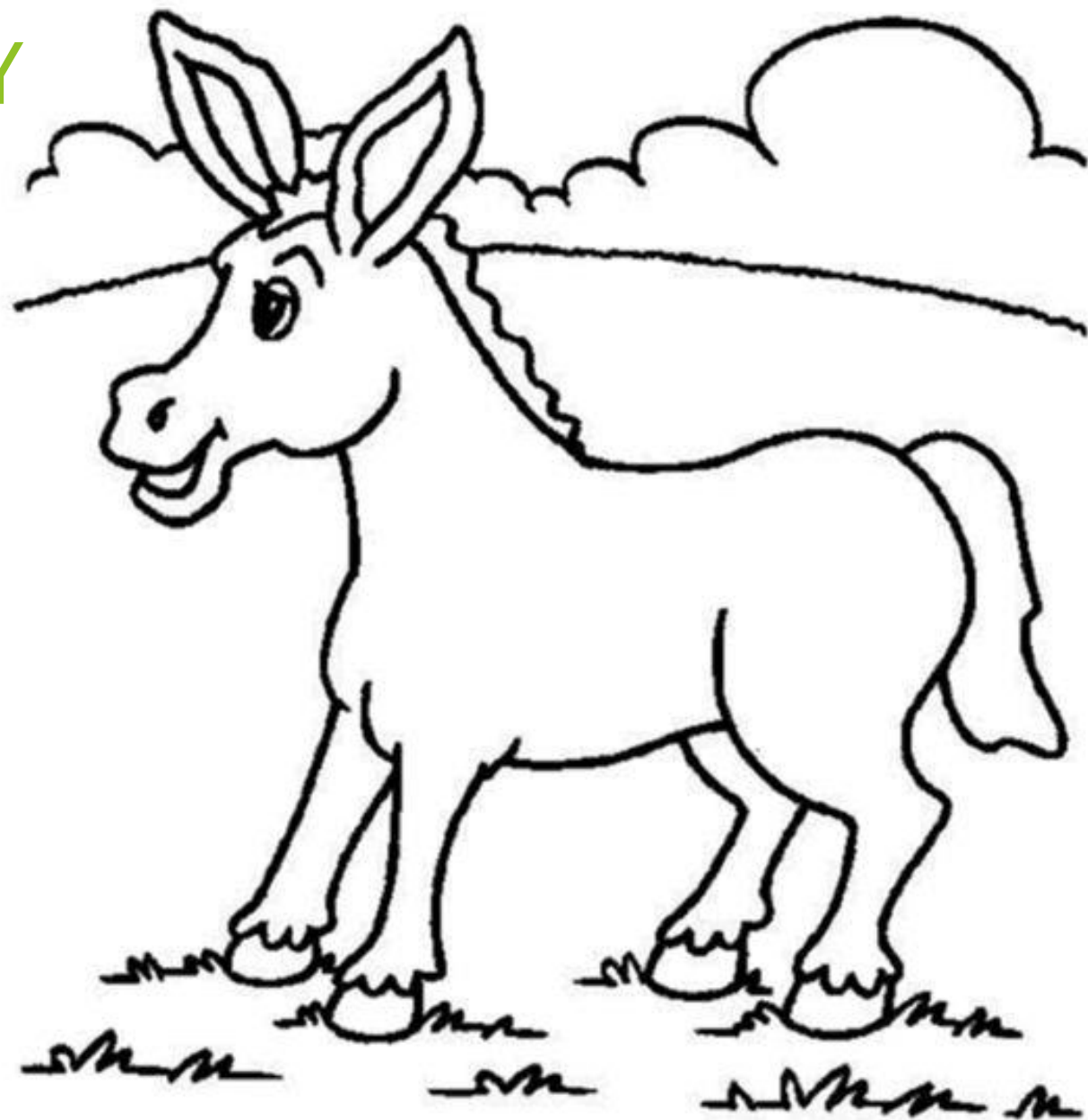
POP QUIZ

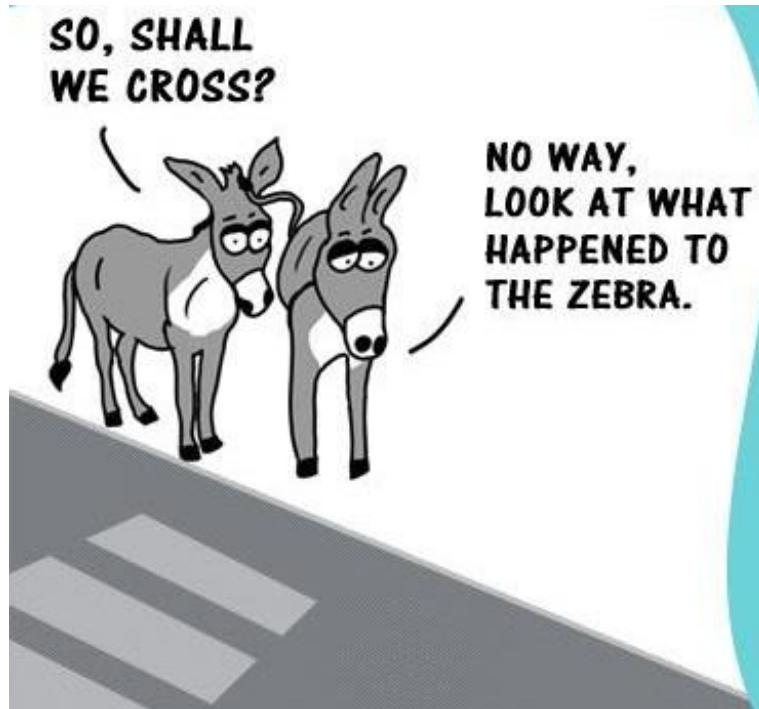
- ▶ There are more than _____ donkeys in the world.
- ▶ Donkeys can live for up to _____
- ▶ Donkeys were first imported from Africa into Australia in 1866 TRUE/FALSE
- ▶ Male donkeys are called a _____ and female donkeys are called a _____.
- ▶ In the desert environment a donkey can hear the call of another donkey almost _____ away.
- ▶ Donkeys are still a lifeline to families in many regions of the world TRUE/FALSE
- ▶ Pregnancy period of a donkey is around _____.





DONKEY





RESOURCE

habitateforhorses.org,
environment.gov.au, Wikipedia