MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

SICILIAN DONKEY

Equus asinus · *also called miniature donkey*

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
Teachers may copy and share this sheet freely as long as they credit Plumpton Park Zoo.

Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal: domestic donkey (horse family)
NATIVE REGION	The Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia
DIET	Herbivore: grass, hay and grain
HEIGHT	26–36 in at the withers
WEIGHT	250–450 lb
LIFESPAN	30–35 years with good care
SOCIAL LIFE	Herd
STATUS	Domesticated; not an IUCN risk category
OUR DONKEYS	Max, Nippy and Winnie



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

Did you know?

- "Miniature" means a small adult size, not a young age.
- A mature miniature donkey stands no taller than 36 inches at the withers.
- A donkey's loud bray can carry up to about 2 miles.
- What people call stubbornness is often a donkey pausing to check for danger.
- Unlike sheep and cattle, donkeys do not chew cud.

Words to know

Jack: A male donkey.
Jennet: A female donkey, also called a jenny.
Foal: A young donkey.
Withers: The high point of the shoulder, where height is measured.

Think about it

1. Where did Sicilian donkeys come from?
2. Does "miniature" mean a baby donkey? Explain.
3. Why might a donkey stop and refuse to move?
4. How does a donkey's bray help its herd?
5. How long is a donkey's pregnancy, and what can a foal do soon after birth?

Draw it

Draw a donkey. Label its long ears, upright mane, tufted tail and the withers, where height is measured.

Where the breed began



Breed developed here ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

STANDARDS · GRADES 1–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 1-LS1-2**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.1.B**

Draw here

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/sicilian-donkey/ · **Sources:** Oklahoma State University, Breeds of Livestock; Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Agribusiness; Animal Diversity Web; Mammal Diversity Database
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 1-LS1-2 (3.1.1.B)
Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo

SICILIAN DONKEY

Before and after your visit

Page 2 of the Sicilian donkey fact sheet · © 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.
Teachers may copy and share this sheet freely as long as they credit Plumpton Park Zoo.

Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where did people first raise this breed?

Circle one:

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.

☐ Jack ☐ Jennet ☐ Foal ☐ Withers

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the Sicilian donkey.

_____

_____

At the zoo · look closely

Watch for one minute. What is it doing?

☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your visit · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Where the breed began: The Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: Herbivore: grass, hay and grain. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.

• Does “miniature” mean a baby donkey? Explain.

_____

_____

• Why might a donkey stop and refuse to move?

_____

_____

4. Exit ticket.

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT

Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: https://plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/sicilian-donkey/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.

Grades 1–4 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 1-LS1-2** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.1.B**

Plumpton Park Zoo · 1416 Telegraph Rd, Rising Sun, MD 21911 · (410) 658-6850 · plumptonparkzoo.org · a 501(c)(3) nonprofit zoo