



# Donkey Breeds in Europe

## Inventory, Description, Need for Action, Conservation

Report 2007/2008



Waltraud Kugler, Hans-Peter Grunenfelder, Elli Broxham  
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## FOREWORD

Donkeys are well known to us, yet at the same time we know little about them. Who knows more than just a few single animals? The species "Donkey" was affected most of all livestock breeds by the industrial revolution and the upheaval in agriculture. The donkey as pack animal is no longer required. The Miller's donkey, known to us from central European fairy tales is already extinct. Other breeds are so rare that there are no longer any data about them. Not only are individual breeds endangered, the whole species is heading for extinction!

This danger is present in the whole of Europe. The Monitoring Institute, which is engaged in the conservation of endangered livestock breeds and cultivated plants in Europe, is therefore working together with the European SAVE Foundation (Safeguard for Agricultural Varieties in Europe). In the course of limited investigations in various countries, we experienced the extent of this occurrence and decided to undertake a stock inventory and assess the need for action for each breed.

The individual donkey breeds have each lost their niche and their unique value. They have become replacable. The pedigree breeding of the breeds is thus put into question. For the current hobby keeping, the mixedbreed donkey is considered to be adequate in most countries. If pedigree breeding is continued, this will be based on cultural, aesthetic and zootechnical grounds.

The research proved to need much more time as initially assumed. The first work began in Summer 1997. The first survey showed that there was very little documentation and concrete knowledge about donkeys available. What little was available had to be put together in painstakingly small steps. Many of the Monitoring Institute's scientific trainees cut their teeth on this project. Now, at last, the final report lies ready. May it help that the still existing donkey breeds are conserved not only as genetic stock but also as a cultural inheritance.

The situation of the various breeds is subject of change, thus, the Report in front of you can be no more than a snapshot of the present time. The Monitoring Institute will not file the report away but will, therefore, „keep an eye“ on the situation and move on to a continuous monitoring. From time to time there should be further reports in which the momentary need for action is suggested.

Hans-Peter Grunenfelder, Head of Monitoring Institute

## INTRODUCTION

In contrast to most other livestock breeds, donkeys rarely enjoy much esteem. Because of this the breed history of the donkey remains partly hidden. Breeds were mainly developed only in places where mules and mule breeding had a need for large and strong sires, as well as mares with particular looks. In other places, donkey breeds were developed for meat. Simple reproduction, specific breeding goals and also geographically determined isolation, differing husbandry and fodder and, finally, the climate conditions all led to a development of much diversity, especially as far as body size is concerned. However, no one knows exactly how many donkey breeds there are in Europe. Livestock breeds have, typically, a range of colour and other characteristics, not so the donkey. Where variation is found, however, is in its primitive colours and markings (eelstripe on spine, cross on shoulder, “zebra-stripes“ on the legs).

The move toward technology left the donkey redundant: the army no longer needed mules, water wheels and other technical achievements in craft work and farming were functioning fully automatically and electrically, The donkey, previously commonplace and ubiquitous, began to disappear completely from view. But with this disappearance, an important part of our cultural heritage is being lost.

Donkeys have been able to enjoy an increasing popularity with hobby keepers and for recreation – e.g. for hipotherapy or trekking - in central European countries in the last few years. However, this should not be allowed to cloud the issue – donkeys as a species, as well as once well known and appreciated breeds of donkeys, are disappearing from our surroundings.

The following research provides an overview of the current situation of the species Donkey. Alongside the origins and history of the farm domesticated donkey, the contemporary situation is presented. Donkey breeds and varieties are ordered by country. As well as the breed characteristics, stock numbers and contact addresses have also been researched. This research was not always easy. Especially in the South and South Eastern European countries there was little information available. Here the donkey as livestock breed suffers from such a bad reputation that even in the universities no one is interested in addressing the subject.

The following paper, it is hoped, will help strengthen the case for donkeys, to bring them into a positive light so that discussion and research is stimulated and, also, public awareness for this special animal is increased.

## RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

### Issues

Traditionally there were very few systematically bred donkey breeds in Europe. Most types are a product of geographical isolation and differing husbandry and use. In Central and Northern Europe, the "breed formation", which began at the end of the 18th century, practically ignored the donkey. The species was, already, economically uninteresting.

These days, since nearly all work processes in agriculture, transport and military are now mechanised and automatized, donkeys and the hybrids with horses (mules and hinnies) are no longer required. The hobby keeping of single animals is, in many European countries, a central point of interest. This change of use however, means that hardly any purebred breeding occurs (or can occur). Because of the increasing rarity of purebreds, the basis for breeding is becoming smaller. Diseases related to in-breeding weaken the already decreasing stock numbers of the European donkey breeds. With the disappearance of this domesticated breed there is the threat that cultural values will also be lost.

### Method

Extensive literature and internet research followed a questionnaire to all relevant institutes, NGOs and keepers organisations. Also questioned were the FAO designated "National Co-ordinators Animals" as state institutes – even when there was no known donkey keeping in the country. Additionally, all known institutions such as keepers organisations, breed organisations and further governmental and non-governmental were questioned. Alongside the questions about breeds, number of animals etc, a separate questionnaire asked for breed descriptions.

As early as 1997/1998 the first questionnaires were undertaken by the Monitoring Institute. The data collected was entered into a database so that they could be compared with official data such as the World Watch List of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) in Rome.

Since this first questionnaire in 1997/1998 the breeding situation has changed remarkably. Some donkey breeders have joined with other to form private breed organisations. For some breeds, cross-border stud books have been started. Some donkey breeds have now become officially recognised. Generally, interest in the species and the breeds has increased. However, the donkey in Europe is still endangered. This is true especially for those countries that have traditionally used donkeys in agriculture: in South and South Eastern Europe.

## PREFACE

### Zoological Systematics

Donkeys belong to the order of odd-toed Ungulates (Perissodactyla), sub-order Horse-like (Hippomorpha). They belong to the Horse-Family (Equidae). This family includes the genus Horse (Equus) with five under-genera (see Fig. 1): Wild Horse (Equus caballus, or. Equus przewalski), Wild Ass (Equus hemionus), Ass (Equus asinus), Zebra (Hippotigris), and Grevyzebra (Equus grevyi).

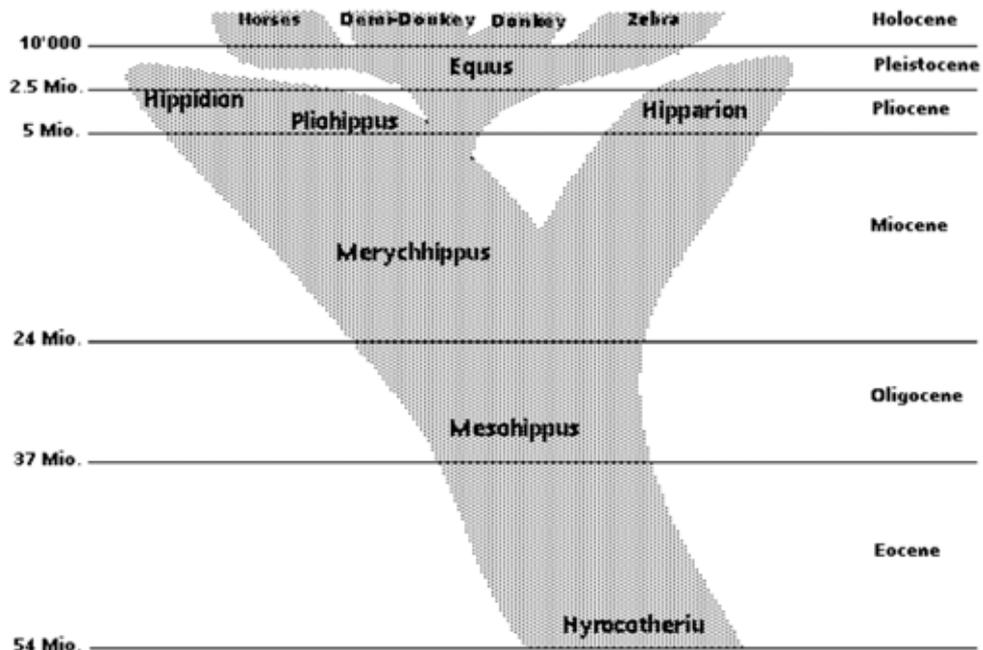


Fig. 1: Evolution of the Equides

### Phylogeny

The ancestors of the domestic donkey (*Equus asinus*) are the African Wild Asses. They were divided into three subspecies: North African Wild Ass (*Equus asinus atlanticus*), Nubian Wild Ass (*Equus asinus africanus*), and Somali Wild Ass (*Equus asinus somalicus*). *Equus asinus atlanticus* was already extinct in Roman times.

The Nubian Wild Ass, from which our domestic donkey (*Equus asinus asinus*) mainly descends, are also threatened by extinction. They are sandy coloured, have a distinctive eelstripe, the so-called shoulder cross and white legs.

They have a withers height of 110-122 cm



*Equus africanu asinus s*  
source: [www.biolib.cz](http://www.biolib.cz)



Equus asinus somalensis  
source: [www.tierdoku.com](http://www.tierdoku.com)

It is certain that there are still a few hundred Somali Wild Asses in existence but even these are acutely threatened with extinction. This ass is a light red, well built, lively animal of 130 - 140 cm. In contrast to the Nubian Wild Ass, they have no shoulder cross but do, however, have stripes on the legs.

### **Wild Donkeys and Asian Wild Asses**

Wild Donkeys or Asian Wild Asses (*Equus hemionus*) or, alternatively, Onagers, were originally found, as various subspecies, on the Steppes west of the Urals, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan to Mongolia and North West China and, from the Mediterranean through Syria, Iraq to Pakistan and West India. This enormous geographic range has shrunk to a few areas, which are isolated from each other. Due to this isolated existence, there are now five subspecies of the Onager: *Equus hemionus hemionus* (Mongolia and North China), *Equus hemionus kulan* (Turkmenistan), *Equus hemionus onager* (Persian Onager), *Equus hemionus khur* (West India) and *Equus hemionus hemippus* (Syria, extinction in 1929).

The European Wild Ass (*Equus hydruntinus*) was common in Europe during the Ice Age. However it died out before the emergence of the Asian and African Wild Ass.

### **Mules and Hinnies**

The most successful hybrids in the family of equids are those between horses and donkeys. Through this Mules and Hinnies are created. Breeding of mules began in 3BC in Mesopotamia or Anotolia. The horses were spreading from the North, the donkeys from the South and were, because of this, kept together and bred together here for the first time.

Mules and Hinnies combine the virtues of donkeys and horses. They are stronger



Mule; source:  
[www.tierpark.ch/tiere/maultier.htm](http://www.tierpark.ch/tiere/maultier.htm)

than donkeys but less nervous and more resitant to illness than horses. Through crossing them the enhancement known as Heterosis occurs: the off-spring are healthier, longer living and have more stamina than their parents.

**Mules** are a cross between a female horse and male donkey. They look more like horses than donkeys. This is one of the reasons why they are found more often than a hinny, which look more like donkeys. Additionally, breeders rather keep one male donkey than many female donkeys. Male donkeys are more

enthusiastic about mating with a female horse than a stallion is with a female donkey. A characteristic of the hybrids is that the male mule is sterile, the mares can, in rare cases, be fertile. The chance of successful reproduction is greatest when the female mule is mated with a stallion.



Hinny, source: [www.uni-leipzig.de](http://www.uni-leipzig.de)

**Hinnies** are the other way round: the mother is a donkey, the father a horse. Usually, they are smaller than mules. As with mules, the male hinny is sterile, the female hinny can sometimes reproduce if mated with a male donkey.

### Domestication and Geographical range

The domestication of the donkey began in 7000-6000BC in, what is today, Libya in North Africa. The domestic donkey is, thus, one of the few, African livestock species still alive. Even today, donkeys are used far more by North African nomads than by Bedouins.

In Egypt, the donkey was the most important animal and was kept in herds of up to thousand animals. In the Nile valley, the Nile donkey was domesticated already in the 4000 BC. On grave pictures, donkeys were often portrayed as grey and with a shoulder cross. Until the late Egyptian period (715-322BC) no camels were in use, donkeys were used as pack animals in trading caravans from Egypt to Nubia. The nomads appreciated their donkeys as pack animals. The settled farmers also found uses for donkeys: to carry, for planting seeds, for threshing and milling grains etc.

In the late Egyptian period the picture of the donkey changed totally: the Wild Ass was considered to be the embodiment of the god Seth, who was not only the guardian god of the Egyptian kings but also the god of storms, evil and the desert. The fact that this god was identified with evil and other negativity meant that the image of the donkey changed, not just in Egypt but also in many other cultures.



Seth; Photo: [www.rahorakhty.co.uk/magic/images/seth.h5.jpg](http://www.rahorakhty.co.uk/magic/images/seth.h5.jpg)

In Mesopotamia donkeys were used as draught and pack animals. They were even used for ploughing. Until the introduction of horses and, thus, the mule, donkeys

were crossed with Onagers in order to breed stronger and larger draught animals for the machines of war.

In 2000BC donkeys began to spread into Europe, probably through the Etruscans. The donkey arrived in Spain and Italy via Marroco. Both on the Iberian and the Ap-penine peninsulas there are rock paintings to be found, dating from 2000BC, upon which one can see donkeys in use as domesticated animals.

In Greece, mules and donkeys were used for many types of work: in agriculture, transport and in the army. The importance of these animals differed from region to region: in some places donkeys were carefully bred, in others the donkey was considered a lowly animal and treated accordingly.

The Romans spread the donkey further into Europe during their campaign of conquest: from Spain through to Hungary, to Germany and Great Britain. In most regions, after the fall of the Roman Empire, they disappeared again. However, in the Mediterranean olive and wine growing areas, the donkey remained an important part of agriculture. Due to their surefootedness, donkeys were also used as pack animals in mountainous areas. In Central Europe, the donkey was reintroduced in the middle Ages by monks for use in farming, for merchants and craftsmen, for the supplying of castles and milling grains.

At the beginning of 1BC donkeys were also introduced into India, the Malaysian archipelago, China and Mongolia. In the 16th century the Spanish introduced them into the continent of South America.

### **Characteristics**

In contrast to other domesticated animals, the donkey has seen no fundamental changes in use or the development of the animal in its 7000 years of domestication.

Due to the differences in breeding, region, husbandry and climate conditions, many physical differences can be found. Systematic breeds are rare. Often, even these are not exactly defined, unlike the case of other livestock breeds.

Domesticated donkeys weigh between 80 and 480 kg, the withers height ranges from 80 to 160 cm. They live on average 30 to 35 years, they can, however, live significantly longer and can carry on working up to a great age. The number of chromosomes is 62. To compare: horses have 64 chromosomes, zebras 46 (Equus grevy).

Sires are sexually mature at three years, mares at one year. The mating time runs from April to July. Normally, the young are born after 12-13 month gestation. Multiple births are rare.

Donkeys are most valued for their ease of care, resistance to disease and stamina. They have few needs, are harmonious in character, persevering, patient and unflagging. Exactly because of these qualities they have often found themselves badly handled and tormented.

When donkeys are mistreated they become, not only stubborn, but they also bite. This can remain the case even when a new owner treats them well. However, if a donkey is well treated it becomes a trusty companion. Donkeys are "herd animals"

and, because of this, should not be kept alone. They should, at least, have other animals to keep them company.

Their physical characteristics include the well circulated hoof, which makes the donkey so surefooted on rough ground. Donkeys have an excellent sense of smell, objects are not only looked at, they are first pushed by the nose and sniffed. In this way, objects are primarily recognised. The Wild Ass uses this sense of smell to find water. Another adaption to Steppe life is to be seen in the long ears, which can pick up vibrations at a distance and, the eyes that, whilst not good for near distances, have a very good periphery vision.

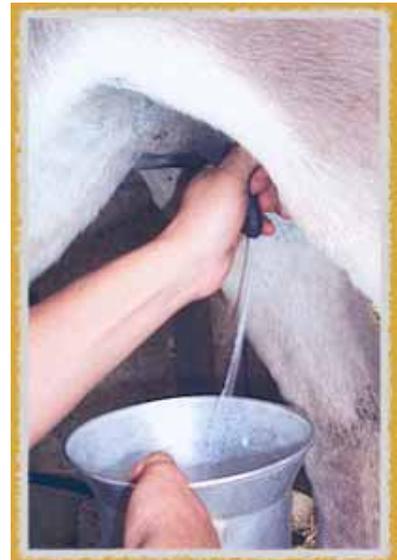
### Use

In antiquity, donkeys were used more diversely than today. They were not only used as a work force in agriculture, commerce and the military (draught and pack animals, for riding, milling, pumping etc) but also their milk, skin and meat was used.

The milk was highly prized as it contains more sugar and protein than cow's milk and is, thus, suitable for babies and the sick. The leather was used for parchment. Donkeys were also kept for meat, especially in China and Persia.

With the intention of creating a robust work animal, mules were bred. Good mule breeding depends on careful choice of the male donkey. Because of this, breeding the large donkey breeds began.

These days, the donkey is becoming insignificant. In Central Europe it is mainly seen as a pet or for leisure. Its talent as a draught or pack animal is seldom used. In Asia and Africa, the donkey is still often used as the leader of a camel caravan in addition to its use as a pack animal. Meat is only really used in the production of salami and donkey milk is considered insignificant even though, in contrast to cow's milk it is albumin rich and can be used for special nutritional purposes.



In the last few years, the sale and marketing of donkey milk and products as well as meat products, has increased. As a niche product for gourmets and for dietary purposes products are finding a market (see, for example, <http://www.asinus.fr/lait/info.html> or <http://www.lattediasina.it/> ). In Croatia, donkey milk is sold at a good price (100mls milk = 6 Euro).

Donkeys are also used for therapy (for example [www.medi-ane.ch](http://www.medi-ane.ch) )

## OVERVIEW OF POPULATION DATA

### In General

It is possible to see the species Donkey in all European countries. Many hobby keepers, trekking businesses, zoological gardens and similar institutions keep donkeys, also in the northern countries. Friends and keepers of the donkey are, these days, often joined together in organisations to keep informed about husbandry and use of the donkey. Mostly, the animals kept are crossbreeds that cannot be categorised into specific breeds. In a “best case” the donkey-types have developed particular characteristics due to geographical isolation and differing nutrition and husbandry. Increasingly, donkey types are seen as specific breeds such as the Wallon donkey or the Irish donkey. Standards and breeding goals have been established. In the last few years, organisations in various countries have set a further goal: to register the animals. However, there still needs to be a lot of effort made before there is an accurate overview of the donkey types.

The situation is different in areas where there is a tradition of breeding donkeys, especially those places where large donkeys for the breeding of mules have not only been kept, but also strategically bred (for example, the Poitou). Here the breeds are separately recorded. However, there are comparatively few systematically developed donkey breeds. Many of these are threatened with extinction. Due to the small numbers available for breeding there is a danger of in-breeding and the inherited illnesses associated with it.



Traditional Use: Donkeys on the Greek island Thassos 1994; Foto: Schultze-Westrum

### State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources (SoWAnGR)

One of the obligations that States have entered into upon signing the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio 1992) is the conservation of agricultural biodiversity. In the "Rome Declaration on World Food Security" of 1996 States committed themselves to the promotion of the conservation and sustainable use of animal genetic resources. With this background the situation of animal genetic resources was documented in 1999 and 2006. The report from the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation) "The State of the World's Animal Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture" (SoWAnGR, FAO 2006) also contains information about stock numbers and facts about donkey breeds: all over the world, donkeys are the chosen form of transport for poor people. Thus, there are more donkeys in developing countries, in the Middle and Far East. The country with the most donkeys is China. In the above mentioned report it is also stated that the breed diversity of donkeys is minimal compared to other livestock species. Only 3% of the globally documented livestock breeds are donkeys. In the current edition of DAD-IS database (Domestic Animal Diversity Information System ) from the FAO, 185 donkey breeds are recorded in the 7 FAO world regions.

Region	Population (%)	Breeds
Africa	26.9	26
Asia & Pacific	37.6	32
Europe & the Caucasus	3.7	51
Latin America & the Carribean	19.9	24
Near & Middle East	11.8	47
North America	0.1	5
World	41 million head	185

Tab. 1: Populationsizes and No. of breeds worldwide (FAO 2006)

The total global number is continuously sinking: between 1995 and 2000 the total number of donkeys found globally sank from 43,730 million to 43,472 million. In 2006 there were only 41 million donkeys to be found.

In 1995 there were 77 donkey breeds recorded globally, in 2000 it was already 97 breeds. At present, there are 185 donkey breeds registered in DAD-IS. This increase in the number of breeds is due to the attention payed to donkeys through the data collection for SoWAnGR. Efforts have been increased, especially in Europe, to discover breeds, to characterise them and to gain official recognition for them. The actual population and breed data do not always reflect reality as this data are based on official and often generalized state data.

In the economically less-developed continents there are far more animals to be found, the number of breeds, however, is relatively small. The opposite is found in Europe, North America and the Middle East where the number of breeds compared to the number of animals is high. This is related to the image of the donkey in the various regions: in poor countries farming without donkeys is unthinkable. It is possible that the animals are purebred but this is irrelevant to the owners and also unknown to them, mainly because they are interested in the work ability and not in the pedigree. In more prosperous regions, in contrast, breeding is more interesting.

### Endangerment of Donkey Breeds in Europe

A first impression of the population data and officially recognised breeds is provided by the DAD-IS database of the FAO. In table 2 the endangerment data of donkey breeds in Europe for 1995 and 2000 are shown together:

Risk Status	1995	2000
unknown	6	9
critical	7	5
critical-maintained	0	0
endangered	0	5
endangered- maintained	0	1
Not at risk	3	3
extinct	0	4
Total	16	27

Tab. 2: Risk Status of Donkeys in Europe and worldwide in 1995 and 2000

The FAO set criteria to classify the degree of endangerment of a breed are as follows:

Extinct	no sires and/or mares for breeding remaining
Critical	mares $\leq$ 100; sires $\leq$ 5
Endangered	mares $\leq$ 1000; sires $\leq$ 20
Not at risk	mares $>$ 1000; sires $>$ 20

Again, it is clear that between 1995 and 2000 (in Europe) that an effort had been made to find or to officially recognise donkey breeds. Four (Italian) breeds have gone extinct. Further, it is noticeable that at least one breed is protected by an active conservation (endangered-maintained). This is the only livestock species in Europe that DAD-IS shows so often ( $>$  35 %) as having the endangerment status of "unknown"

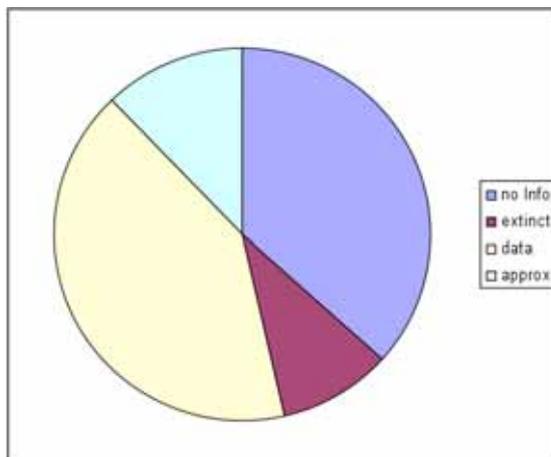


Fig. 3 Distribution of identified breeds in the FAO DAD-IS database

A summary of the data (as of end 2007) shows the following results:

Of the 41 listed breeds 15 have no information about the breed and/or no stock data.

Four breeds are declared extinct (Italy)

17 breeds have definite stock data (Italy 10, Spain 6, Albania (from 1994!) 1).

Five further breeds (Poitou – France, Cyprus Donkey – Cyprus; 3 Croatian breeds - Croatia) rough data such as " $<$  100" or "1000-10000" are available.

A comprehensive overview of the livestock breeds of the world is provided by "A World Dictionary of Livestock Breeds, Types and Varieties" by I.L. Mason. Here one can find 114 donkey breeds listed. 56 - roughly half – are to be found in Europe. However, even this comprehensive work cannot be complete because breeds and breed names exist in a dynamic situation of constant change as, for example, the Wallon donkey, listed in DAD-IS as a "breed under development" shows.

## Equine passport in the European Union



In every member country, all equines, used as domestic animals, should hold an equine passport. This passport is required for the movement of equines between the Member States of the European Union, and to record the administration of medicinal products that could have an effect on the safety of equine meat for human consumption. The rules are set European wide and are intended to protect those consumers in the EU that do consume equine meat. They apply to all equines in the whole of the EU without exception. The equine passport needs to be with the animal whenever it is moved.

The European equine passport, implemented since 2000, has not really established in the EU countries. Implementing regulations are missing or only just set into force in several countries. An area-wide enforcement is doubtful. In Germany about half of the donkeys have an equine passport up to now. In Belgium the implementation just started (2007/2008).

# Donkey Breeds in Europe:

## Description and Occurrence per Country

In this chapter, the European donkey occurrences and breeds are alphabetically arranged by country. Countries and regions referred to in this report are based on internationally agreed terms at the time of writing this report.

After a short overview of the situation in the country, a short description of the existing and known donkey breeds follows including a picture, inventory numbers, state of risk and contact address. Pictures were obtained - so far not differently specified – from the respective websites and/or from the contact people.

### ALBANIA

Occurrence of donkeys in the whole country: 67'600. Only the “Common Albanian” is mentioned. The occurrence of other breeds is not registered. In Albania the number of donkeys is increasing due to economic reasons, people need to use donkeys instead of vehicles, tractors and machines.

#### **Common Albanian (Syn.:Commune; Albanian; Gomari)**

Description: Albanian local donkey is a common breed origin from Nubia. Local donkeys are small, coloured grey, black, reddish or purple. Rump height:105 cm (100 - 114); Withers height 107 cm (102 - 120); Body length 108 cm (102 - 117)



Stock 2002: Total: 67'600; sires: 25'200 ; mares: 42'400

Risk Status: not at risk

Conservationprogramme: no; Statistic evaluation by ALBAGENE (Albanian National Association for Conservation and Development of Animal Genetic Resources). A conservation program is not formulated yet.

Contact: ALBAGENE -Association, Prof. Dr. Kristaq Kume, Rr.'abdyl Frasherri' Pall 3/3 Ap 5; Tirana, Albania; E-mail: [kkume@icc-al.org](mailto:kkume@icc-al.org)

## AUSTRIA

Occurrence of donkeys in the whole country: about 1500 - 2000. In 2002 the association IAA (Interessengemeinschaft österreichischer Esselfreunde) was founded. About 90 members are in this association and about 300 donkeys are registered, 2/3 of them are mares and geldings. The IAA is networking over the whole country. A census of donkeys is in progress. The common donkeys are about 100-120cm height at withers.

Contact: IA-Austria; Obmann Ulrike Knabl; Pirk 3; A-9433 St. Andrä; Tel 0043-4358/43 16 or 0043-650/29 12 958 E-mail: [esel.edenbauer@aon.at](mailto:esel.edenbauer@aon.at); web: <http://members.e-media.at/ESEL/>; [www.iaa.at.tt](http://www.iaa.at.tt)



### Baroque donkey (Syn.: Barockesel, Österreichisch-Ungarischer Albinoesel, Austro-Hungarian Albino)

Description: This special donkey was bred by rich estate owners of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Baroque, as an imitation of the white horses. They are of finer physique than pigmented donkeys and susceptible to diseases. Their reproduction rate is also low. These facts make breeding difficult. Genom-analysis are in progress (Forschungsgut Kremesberg); An international herdbook is planned. Breeding groups are in Austria, Germany, Switzerland and Hungary.



Baroque donkey with offspring 2007, Bio Noah Farm Schardax, Vöcklamarkt, Upper Austria  
Photo: Grunenfelder, SAVE

colour: pale yellow (=pale form of flavism); skin is not pigmented; eyes are blue.

Stock (2004): total: ca. 97 animals

Risk Status: critical maintained

Conservation programme: yes

Occurrence of other breeds and populations:

Donkeybreed	Herdbook	Contact
Poitou	French herdbook	Fédération d'ane Europe; H. Maché: <a href="http://www.zamorano.at.gs/">http://www.zamorano.at.gs/</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:white-eagles@gmx.at">white-eagles@gmx.at</a>
Zamarano Leonés	Spanish herdbook	Fédération d'ane Europe; H. Maché: <a href="http://www.zamorano.at.gs/">http://www.zamorano.at.gs/</a> E-mail: <a href="mailto:white-eagles@gmx.at">white-eagles@gmx.at</a>
Common donkey	in preparation	IA-Austria; Ulrike Knabl E-mail: <a href="mailto:esel.edenbauer@aon.at">esel.edenbauer@aon.at</a>

Tab. 3: Occurrence of non autochthous donkeybreeds in Austria

## BELGIUM

As in almost all Central-European countries, donkeys in Belgium are kept as pets. On the initiative of a few donkey keepers and breeders the “Association Adodane” was established in 1991. Since then a yearly programme of activities such as shows, meetings etc have been organised. Since 2004 Adodane has been the state-recognised keeper of the “Wallon Donkey” herdbook.

### **Waalse Ezel; Wallon Donkey:**

Character: quiet, friendly character, suitable as pet, pack donkey or in harness.  
Wither height (4 years): 1.05-1.20m (sires)1.0-1.15m (mares); Colour: unicolour black, bay or grey with or without eelstripe; Head straight



Stock: total: unknown; sires: 10; mares: ?

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered maintained

Conservationprogramme: yes: Adodane

Contact: ASBL Adodane VZW; Rue des Champs Elysées, 4; B-5590 CINEY; Secrétaire: Paul Jacobs; 8, Rue de la Fontaine Dieu; B-5310 Mehaigne; Tel/Fax: 081/812458; E-mail: [info@adodane.be](mailto:info@adodane.be), web: [www.adodane.be](http://www.adodane.be)

A small population of Poitou Donkeys is registered in the French Studbook

## BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA

Up to now no information is available about breeds or numbers of animals in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Like in all Balkan Countries the “Domestic Balkan Donkey” also occurs. Experts are missing to make precise investigations on donkeys and probable occurring breeds.

The “Herzegovinian Donkey” is a donkey of small size. The colour varies from grey to brown. Eelstripe and shouldercross exist mostly. It is estimated, that about 100 animals still exist. In Buhovo near Mostar, a reservat for endangered animals is under construction. Here about 24 individuals of the “Herzegovinian Donkey” are kept.

Contact: Ravić I.; Tina Ujevića 1;88220 Široki Brijeg; Bosnia and Herzegovina  
E-mail: [iravic@hotmail.com](mailto:iravic@hotmail.com)



## BULGARIA

Donkeys are used in Bulgaria especially in the wine growing areas. There is no knowledge about autochthonous breeds. There is no herdbook for donkeys. In literature and also in other European Countries, a “Bulgarian Donkey” is mentioned sometimes, which originates from Bulgaria and is of large size. But within the country the “Bulgarian Donkey” or “Bulgarian Giant Donkey” is not known.



*Large Bulgarian Donkey pulling a four wheel waggon; Foto: G. Barzev*

Description: The animals generally are mixed and of small type like the donkeys in Africa. They are grey in colour with a black eelstripe. Also a bigger type like Martina Franca and Cyprus Donkey occurs.

Stock: Total (2000) 185744 (estimated)

Since 1985 (348'769) the no. of animals is decreasing continuously.

Contact: Prof. Dr. G. Barzev; BG-6000 Stara Zagora; Students Campus; Bulgaria;  
E-mail: [barzev@af.uni-sz.bg](mailto:barzev@af.uni-sz.bg)

## CROATIA

The Croatian Livestock Centre in Zagreb is conducting intensive investigations. In 2002 the genetic diversity of three donkey populations in the Croatian coastal region were identified. Also the phenotype features of donkeys were defined. This investigations lead to the result, that there are three types left in Croatia:

### **Primorsko Dinarski Magarac (Littoral Dinaric Donkey)**

By its size, demands and resistance adapted to the conditions of the Croatian karst coast. Small and horny hooves are adapted to movement on rocky terrains.

Weight: 90 kg; wither height: 96,3 cm; colour: grey to dark grey with a light to white belly, expressive and clearly discernible cross and stripes. Small, compact frame, a straight profiled head line, short bristly mane. Utilization: draught power, riding, driving and tourist attraction

Stock: (2005) total: 3'500; sires: 20; mares: 1020

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered maintained

Conservation programme: yes: Contact: Ante Ivankovic; Dept. of Animal Science; Svetosimunska Cesta 25; HR-10000 Zagreb; Croatia; Web :[www.hssc.hr](http://www.hssc.hr)

E-mail: [aivankovic@agr.hr](mailto:aivankovic@agr.hr)



source: <http://www.foto-julius.at/croatia/croatia361+.jpg>

### **Istarski Magarac (Istrian Donkey)**

Resistance, endurance and longevity are typical. Weight: 220 kg; wither height: 123,5 cm; colour black, the snout is light to white, the muzzle is dark to black and

the cross and stripes are not discernible. Larger frame, short, black and bristle mane, strong fibia. Utilization: draught power, riding, driving, mule production, hobby animals and tourist attraction

Stock: (2005)total: 107; sires: 7; mares: 100

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical

Conservationprogramme: yes: Croatia Livestock Selection Centre

Contact: Ante Ivankovic; Dept. of Animal Science; Svetosimunska Cesta 25; HR-10000 Zagreb; Croatia;

Web :[www.hssc.hr](http://www.hssc.hr) ; E-mail: [aivankovic@agr.hr](mailto:aivankovic@agr.hr)



Source: [http://www.labin.com/web/fotovijesti/vijesti\\_2809\\_v.jpg](http://www.labin.com/web/fotovijesti/vijesti_2809_v.jpg)

### **Sjeverno-Jadranski Magarac (North Adriatic Donkey)**

Body size is suitable for the climate of Kvarner islands; resistance, endurance and longevity, weight: 175 kg wither height: 115.5 cm; colour varies from brown to black, cross and stripes are not always expressive and clearly discernible. Medium size frame, fine head with a straight profile, strong and short mane, firm legs and strong tibia. Utilization: draught power, riding, driving, mule production, hobby animals and tourist attraction.

Stock: total (2005): 155; sires: 5; mares: 150

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered (critical)

Conservation programme: yes:

Contact: Ante Ivankovic; Dept. of Animal Science; Svetosimunska Cesta 25; HR-10000 Zagreb; Croatia; Web : [www.hssc.hr](http://www.hssc.hr) ; E-mail: [aiivankovic@agr.hr](mailto:aiivankovic@agr.hr)



source:

[http://www.hssc.hr/konjogojstvo/sjevernojadranski\\_1.gif](http://www.hssc.hr/konjogojstvo/sjevernojadranski_1.gif)

### **CYPRUS (GREEK)**

There is no indigenous donkey breed in Cyprus, but there are two main strains: firstly a brown donkey with a beige nose and stomach, which is of various sizes, some quite large. This may have originated from breeds in western to south-western France, possibly during the time of the crusades.

Secondly, a small grey donkey, almost certainly of African origin, which may have been in Cyprus for several millennia. The two strains have interbred.

A census in 2002 showed there are presently 2175 donkeys in the Greek Cypriot areas of Cyprus: 1700 working in rural areas; 300 working in tourist areas; 175 in sanctuaries; There is no breakdown of type, although there is some evidence to suggest that around 80% are of the brown type and 20% of the smaller grey type. In the Turkish part there are about 200 to 500 feral animals in the Karpas peninsula.



### **Cyprus Donkey; Gaidouri**

Stock total: about 2200-2700

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: Yes

Contact: Patrick Skinner; Honorary

Secretary Friends of the Cyprus Donkey; CY-4772 Vouni Village; Limassol District; Cyprus; E-mail: [s.patrick@cytanet.com.cy](mailto:s.patrick@cytanet.com.cy); Internet: <http://www.donkeycyprus.com>

## DENMARK

In Denmark there are no particular pure bred donkeys (except for some Poitou donkeys). Donkeys mainly are kept as hobby animals.

In May 1995 an association was founded: Aesel-foreningen is a national Society of which all people interested in donkeys can be a member. Aim is to promote the knowledge of donkeys and create interest in keeping and using donkeys. The largest activity of the society is a donkey meeting every year (last Saturday in June) on the isle of Funen. Besides this, different activities around the country, like hobby fairs, take place. Everybody can get their donkeys registered in the society.



Description: average height 100-110 cm (85-150cm); nearly all kind of colours; To avoid inbreeding there is registration. But it is voluntarily and not obligatory. For a period of 8 years there are only 160 registrations.

An estimation of the number of donkeys over the whole country is about 5'000 animals.

Contact: Poul Høgh; Aeselforeningen ; Ågårdvej 38, Thyregod; DK-7323 Give ;  
E-mail: [ikph@email.dk](mailto:ikph@email.dk) ; Web: <http://www.joergennielsen.hjem.wanadoo.dk>

## FRANCE

In France, the national stud farms [Les Haras nationaux], founded by Colbert in 1665, are responsible for promoting and developing equide breeding and activities related to equides, in partnership with other public and private bodies. From 400'000 at the beginning of the 20th century, the number of donkeys had fallen to less than 20'000 by the 1980s. As a pet and useful for trekking, its number have risen again to about 40'000 animals. There are 9 breeds identified in France. Except the „Ane Gascogne“ which is close related to the Ane des Pyrénées and the „Âne de L'Île de Ré“, which is not a special breed, but used for a special tradition, all breeds are accepted by government. Breeding organisations and herdbooks exist. The breeding associations organize many events, exhibitions etc. in the different regions of France.

EQUISAVE, a INTERREG IIIb EU- promoted project in the Atlantic area works cross-border on “Exploiting the natural heritage of native Equine breeds to promote the territories of the Atlantic Area“. In this project Spain, Portugal, France, the United Kingdom and Ireland are involved. Concerning donkeys the UPRa (organisation inter alia for the Poitou Donkey), Miranda Donkey and Zamorao Leones Donkey associations in Spain are included in the project (<http://www.equisave.eu/>).

**L'Âne de provence (Syn: Ane d'Arles; Ane de berger; Ane de la Crau; Ane de Savoie; Ane de transhumance; Ane gris de Provence; Provence; Savoie; Savoy-Esel)**

Description: since the 15th century used for transhumance between the Basse-Provence and the high mountain pastures of the Haute Provence.

The Donkeys have a strong bone structure, a docile temperament, good limbs in order to travel the mountain tracks.; The Provence donkey has a pinkish-grey coat, similar to turtledove grey; black dorsal stripe; stripes on the limbs.; Average size 1.20-1.33m (sires); 1.17-1.30m (mares); Large straight head well attached to a strong thick neck; often white around the eyes.



The long ears and the edge of the eyes often have a hint of brownish red. Straight back, wide loins, strong hindquarters and powerful strong limbs. The feet, with rather wide hooves for those of a donkey, are perfectly adapted for trekking and heavy weights.

Stock: Total (2004): 190; sires: 33; mares: 157; Studbook registered animals: 97

Herdbook: yes

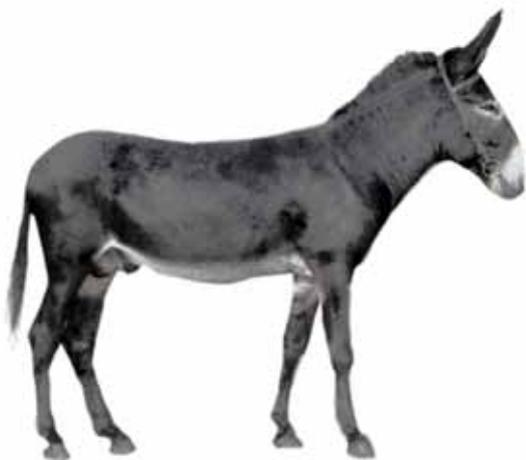
Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Association de l'ane de provence; Le Colombier; F-26750 Montmiral; Tel: 0033-(0)4 75 02 78 83; Fax: 0033-(0)4 66 22 44 23; E-mail: [bignon.da@wanadoo.fr](mailto:bignon.da@wanadoo.fr); Haras national d'Uzès; Mas des Tailles; BP 57; F-30700 Uzès; Tel: 0033-4 66 2233 11; Fax: 0033-4 66 22 44 23; E-mail: [haras.uzes@haras-nationaux.fr](mailto:haras.uzes@haras-nationaux.fr);

Web: <http://www.haras-nationaux.fr/portail/index.php?id=3645>

### **Grand noir du Berry (Syn.: Grand noir; Ane du Berry; Berry Black)**



Description: Working donkey for small everyday tasks on the farm; packsaddle donkey for hikers. Varying size: 1.35-1.45m for sires; minimum 1.30m for mares; plain coat: brown-bay to dark brown-bay and even black; no dorsal stripe; no stripes on the limbs. Belly light grey, including the sides of the breast, groin and the inside of the thighs Head = rectilineal, long open ears, muzzle whitish-grey, whitish-grey around the eyes, sometimes outlined by a reddish ring. The donkey is hardy, with a strong neck, open chest, straight back, rounded inclined hind quarters and strong limbs adapted to a rough terrain..

Stock: Total (2004): 155; sires: 25; mares: 130; Studbook registered animals: 97

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: AFAGNB; B.P. 10; F-18160 Lignères en Berry; Tel: 0033-(0)2 48 60 09 11; Fax: 0033-(0)2 48 60 09 11; E-mail: [anenoirduberry@libertysurf.fr](mailto:anenoirduberry@libertysurf.fr); Haras national de Blois; 62 Avenue Maréchal Maunoury; BP 909; F-41009 Blois Cedex; Tel: 0033-(0)2 54 55 22 80; Fax: 0033-(0)2 54 74 86 93; E-mail: [haras.blois@haras-nationaux.fr](mailto:haras.blois@haras-nationaux.fr); Web: <http://www.haras-nationaux.fr/portail/index.php?id=3645>

### **Ane Normand (Syn.: Normand)**

Description: descended from the common ass by recent selections. The belly is grey white. Its size (adult) varies between 1,10 and 1,25m height at withers, weight: 150 kg.

Stock: Total (2004): 192; sires: 40 mares: 152; studbook registered: 81 animals, 61 breeders registered

Herdbook: yes

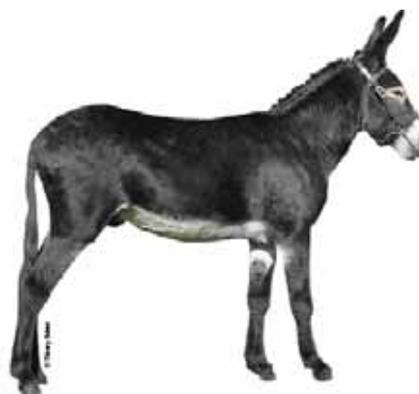
Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Association de l'Ane Normand; Pôle Le Pin, cedex 1703; 61310 Le Pin au Harras; Tel: 0033-(0)2 33 12 16 00; Fax: 0033-(0)2 33 36 14 12; Web: <http://www.haras-nationaux.fr/portail/index.php?id=3645>

### **Ane des Pyrénées (Syn: Pyrénéen; Pyrenean)**

Description: Originally used for mule breeding and bred as working animal. It is found in the Gascogne as well as the Pyrenean Mountains. It has a lively, hot tempered and alert character. This large donkey has a thin and straight body with an average head size, profile is straight or concave, long, thin upright ears and fine limbs. Colour: black to dark red or brown.



Rims of eyes, oxters, belly, and inside legs pale to white. Short-haired: height at withers 120 cm to over 135 cm. Uses: Cosmetics made with ass' milk

Stock: Total (2004): 80; sires: 20; mares: 59

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Association nationale des éleveurs d'Anes et de Mules des pyrénées; Thierry Rabier, Président: Chemin Arboulet - 64400 Estos; Tél : 0033-(0)870 503 322;

E-mail: [contact@anepyrenees.net](mailto:contact@anepyrenees.net) Web: <http://www.anespyrenees.net>

and: <http://www.haras-nationaux.fr/portail/index.php?id=3645>

### **Ane Gascogne**

Ane Gascogne is a mountain donkey with wither height of 1,20m - 1,25m and compact body. This breed is not state recognised. It is closely related to the Ane des Pyrénées. .

### **Ane Bourbonnais**

Description: Height: sires 1,25m - 1,35m; mares: 1,18m - 1,28m; Head: straight profile, eyes light rimmed, grey muzzle. Long, upright ears;

Coat: brown (beige to chocolate) Croix-de-Saint-André. Straight, well muscled back; belly pale; legs bony and sturdy; with or without stripes, wide hooves.

Accepted by government since 2002

Stock: Total (2004): about 200 animals;

Studbook: 36 animals; 14 sires; 22 mares; 14 breeders;

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Association française de l'âne bourbonnais; Maison de l'âne; Beauregard; F-03360 Braize; Tél : 0033-(0)1 34 66 67 44; Fax : 0033-(0)1 34 66 62 22;

E-mail: [ane.bourbonnais@wanadoo.fr](mailto:ane.bourbonnais@wanadoo.fr)

Web : <http://ane.bourbonnais.wanadoo.fr>



### **Ane du Cotentin**

Description: Height at withers: sires: 1.20-1.35m; mares 1.15-1.30 m; Neck: Strong, with mane right-hand side; colour: grey ashy, grey bluish or grey turtle-dove with eelstripe (Cross of St André), with or without stripes on the legs. Reaches maturity at 4 years.

Stock: Total (2004): 405; sires: 65;



mares: 340; Studbook register: 191; 205 breeders  
Herdbook: yes  
Risk Status: endangered  
Conservationprogramme: yes  
Contact: Elevage COTENT'ÂNE; Daniel Conan; 2, la Belle Herbe; F-50690 Teurthéville-Hague; Tel: 0033-(0)6 03 67 20 99  
E-mail: [courriel@cotentane.com](mailto:courriel@cotentane.com); Web: <http://www.cotentane.com>

**Baudet de Poitou (syn.: Ane de Poitevin ; Ane du Poitou; Poitou-Esel;)**

It originates from North West Africa and appeared in France in the 10th century. The Poitou donkey was used for mule breeding. Therefore it was bred in an extra big size. Mule production and mule exportation were very famous. The Poitou donkey was exported to numerous countries, before the market collapsed after 1950. A herdbook is established since 1884; In 1972 the breed was nearly extinct.

Description : brown-bay coat, sometimes yellowish, silver-grey bordered by a reddish ring around mouth, nose and eyes ; very light colour underneath the belly and inside the thighs ;

Height: 1.35 - 1.56m (sires);

Weight: 350-420kg (sires); large

head, long open ears; strong neck,

long, straight back, short croup,

long muscular thighs, straight

shoulders, prominent breast-bone,

rounded rib cage ; powerful limbs

with very broad joints ; wide, open

hooves covered with hair.

Use: mule production. The National stud dept. of the Ministry of agriculture, in association with the breeders and the Marais poitevin national park encourages breeding to preserve the Poitou donkey. A safeguard program has been set up for identification of animals. Poitou donkeys are now found in 8 European Countries, but only in very small numbers. An international herdbook is lead by UPRA (see below). The international herdbook was closed 2004. Since January 2007 the studbook was closed for French animals.

Stock: Total (2004): 425; sires: 81; mares: 344

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: UPRA Mulassier du Poitou; 15, rue Thiers;

F-79000 Niort Tél: 0033-(0)5 49 35 22 68;

Fax : 0033-(0)5 49 09 72 39

E-mail:[upra.mulassiers\\_du\\_poitou1@tiscali.fr](mailto:upra.mulassiers_du_poitou1@tiscali.fr);

Web: <http://www.racesmulassieresdupoitou.com>



Poitou Donkey; Source: Grunenfelder, SAVE

## L'Âne de L'île de Ré



On the island Ré, of the French Atlantic coast near La Rochelle, an old tradition is in place. The donkeys are given „trousers“ to wear, a kind of long gaiter made from plain or checked material. These “trousers” are to protect the donkey from mosquito bites. The donkeys were used for the salt harvest in the salt marshes and to gather kelp from the beaches. This kelp was then used as fertiliser on the fields of the island. These days the tradition is only used as a tourist attraction and as ancient custom. Usually Poitou donkeys are used.

M. Léau - les Anes en Culotte; 32 bis, route des Chaignes; F-17740 Ste Marie de Ré; Tél. :

06.08.57.25.94 (GSM); Fax/répondeur : 05.46.27.19.74;

E-mail : [info@ane-en-culotte.com](mailto:info@ane-en-culotte.com); Web: <http://www.ane-en-culotte.com/default.htm>

## Ane corse

Description: The small Corsican donkey was already to be found on Corsica in Babylonian times. It derives from the African donkey (*Equus asinus africanus*).

In 1930 c. 20'000 animals were registered, today there are only 1000. Corsican donkeys were used as water carriers by shepherds, as pack animals during the olive and grape harvests but also for meat and sausages. They are robust, resistant to disease and are easy to look after.

Characteristics: grey or black, height at withers 98cm. Through a modern crossing-in of the Cataland donkey a height of 1,20m - 1,30m has been achieved. There are two types of Corsican donkey in existence and original and smaller grey and the crossbred black, Today donkeys in Corsica are most used as pack animals for tourists. Neither the grey nor the black are recognised as a breed. These days, an organisation called "A Runcada" works to promote the conservation of the Ane corse.

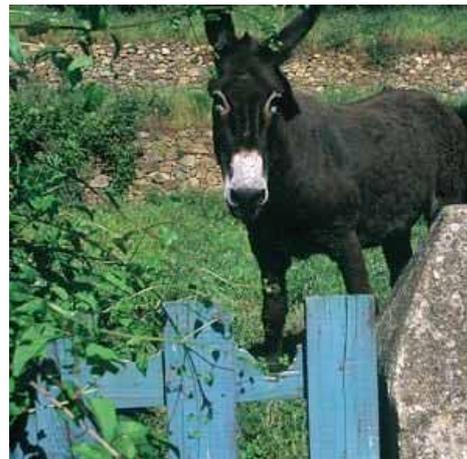
Stock: unknown

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: in progress

Contact: Association A Runcata; Daniel Lecomte;Torrighia; 20117 – CAURO; E-mail : [Titilecomte@aol.com](mailto:Titilecomte@aol.com) ; Web: <http://www.multimania.com/runcada>



## GERMANY

In Germany there are (no longer) any autochthonous donkey breeds in existence. The Thüringer Waldesel (forest donkey) has been, on occasion, described as autochthonous (see below)

In the interest group "Esel- und Mulifreunde" (DIGEF Friends of the Donkey and Mule) ca. 150 large donkeys and 2400 domestic donkeys are registered. The total number of donkeys present in Germany has been estimated by experts as being c. 7000. Of these, roughly 3000 possess the Equine Passport, obligatory in the EU since 1<sup>st</sup> June 2000 for all equids.

Occurrence of other breeds and populations:

Name	Herd book	Total	Mare	Sire	Remarks
Andalusischer Riesen-Esel	?	1			Internat. herdbook
„Bulgarenesel“ imported from Bulgaria	no	12	6	6	
Katalanischer Esel	?	6			
Grossesel	?	150			
Hausesel	?	2400			
Martina Franca	?	1			Internat. herdbook
Poitou	y	40			Internat. herdbook in France
„Thüringer Waldesel“	no	8	2	6	1965-71 aus Thüringen im Zoo Erfurt
White Donkey (Austro-Hungarian Albino)	no	20	13*	7	There is a special group with breeders from Austria, Hungaria and Germany. * 10 sires= Neusiedler See (HU)

Tab. 4: Occurrence of breeds and populations in Germany

In Germany donkeys are classified up to a wither height of 1.30 m only after their size:

Dwarf donkey up to 105 cm

Normal donkey up to 130 cm

Large donkey more than 131 cm

Whilst the colour of the large donkeys is a characteristic, the dwarf and normal donkeys come in different colours: pure white, grey, black, brown and pied, in which all colours are present in various shades. Nearly all the donkeys have the shoulder cross markings and the zebra stripes on the legs is also common. Other markings found on horse such as blazes, snips or stars are rare. An animal can only be considered to belong to a breed when it is registered with an official stud-book. All the large donkeys are threatened with extinction.

Contact: DIGEF Head office Petra Maurer, Steinweg 12 D-65520 Bad Camberg; Tel.: (0 64 34) 90 00 10, Fax: (0 64 34) 3 82 71; Web: <http://www.esel.org>

Mrs. Barbara Bank (also German delegate of the Pidotou breeding the UPRA, breeding organisation in France); Herbachstrasse 31; D-65558 Oberneisen; E-mail: [BB@bahoe.de](mailto:BB@bahoe.de); Web: <http://bahoe.de/Eselveerein>

### **Thuringian Forest Donkeys (Thüringer Waldesel)**

Known earlier as the "Miller's Donkey" or "Stone Donkey" (Mülleresel or Steinesel), donkeys with this name were collected in West Thuringia, Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt. Stock of the Thuringian Zoo were placed in the zoo and bred further. Animals with a suitable exterior were imported from the United Kingdom. There is no herdbook and no breed standard. Not even the animals sold were registered. Furthermore, there is no interest group or society for this animal in existence.

Description: stone-grey coat with white belly and black eelstripe and shoulder cross. Also found as black or dark brown/brown with lighter markings around eyes and on muzzle. Zebra stripes often found on the lower legs. Height m: 100-110cm; f: 95-110cm; Weight: male: 133-210 kg; female: 156-185 kg

Stock: unknown; few animals

Herdbook: no

Risk Status: unknown

Conservation programme: no

Contact: Thüringer Zoopark; Zum Zoo-

park 8-10; D-99087 Erfurt; Tel.: 0049-(0)361/7 51 88-0; Fax: 0049-(0)361/7 51 88

22; Web: <http://www.zoopark-erfurt.de>

und: <http://pferdeseminare.de/t-esel.htm>



*Photo: [www.schullandheim-plank.de](http://www.schullandheim-plank.de)*

## GREECE

Estimates of donkey numbers in Greece are not reliable as there is considerable variation between different sources. The population of donkeys decreased by 96% between 1955 and 2005 (508'000 to about 21'000). In 2007 official data show a number of 15483 donkeys and 13370 mules. The lack of any breeding programme and the importation of jacks from foreign breeds led to numerous crosses of donkeys. Donkeys in Greece are characterised by a large diversity in phenotypes as



well as significant variation in their morphological characteristics, with body height ranging from 80 cm up to 150 cm and body weight from 90 kg up to 180 kg. Donkeys are found singly throughout the country.

On some islands donkeys are used as tourist attraction. On the Argo-Saronic Island Hydra (Ydra), no motor vehicles are allowed. Bikes and donkeys provide the local transportation.

### **Arcadian donkey**

It originates from Arcadia region in Peloponissos

Medium size 0.95m-1.20m, weight 90kg-120kg, in Arcadia the largest number of donkeys kept in Greece.

### **Ellinikon (syn.: local Greek Ass)**

Adult asses measure about 1m of height. Colour: brown, with grey muzzle, belly and underparts. This type of ass was spread all over Greece. Later other breeds of larger sizes were imported. Today varieties of types in size and colour are found in the country. However, the predominant type is that of small to medium height, light coloured with an eel-stripe. It is a relative primeval breed with a big similarity to *Equus asinus*.



Local Greek Ass; source: Grunenfelder

### **Cyprus Ass**

Cyprus Ass is a large-sized breed. Well proportioned conformation; quiet and frugal character, adapted to heat and drought; probably originated from breeds in SW-France and brought to Greece (or Cyprus?) during the time of the crusades. It is considered the best donkey breed in the Middle East and is widely distributed throughout Greece.

Description: dark brown to black; short haired; white at belly, nose, mouth and around eyes; different varieties of colouring possible;

height: sires: 125-132cm; mares: 120-125; weight: sires: 300kg, mares: 250kg;

It poses a large head with convex forehead and straight profile. The donkey is characterized by its strong feet and is suitable for mule production.

## HUNGARY

In Hungary research into population data of donkeys recently began. Results are not available yet. Estimates show, that there are about 2'000 - 3'000 donkeys all over the country. As historical investigations show, donkeys were existent since more than 2000 years in the Carpathian basin. Nowadays donkeys are not included in the list of autochthonous livestock of Hungary. There are no characteristic traits, which could be identified for a distinct breed in the Hungarian donkey population. Around 1900 at the Royal State Stud farm "Mezőhegyes" a Hungarian fallow donkey were registered. In the 1950ies large size stallions were imported from Italy. Nowadays the "Hungarian fallow donkey occurs in several colour variants. Most common is a brown to brown-dark variant.

Already 1793 a white donkey was mentioned in literature. This "Rokkoko" or "Baroque" donkeys were described as poorly pigmented spontaneous mutants. The medium od large sized Baroque donkey is yellowish-white with a soft, fine fur. The skin is pigmentless pink. The eyes are light blue. The hoofs are waxy and sometimes striped (see also page 20).



The Association of Hungarian Donkey breeders was established recently. In this association, about 150 donkeys are registered. The "common donkey" (Scrub donkey) is of small and medium size, different shade of grey colour with eelstripe and shoulders (cross).

Contact: Jozsef Ernst; Donáti-u 20-22; H- 1015 Budapest;  
E-mail: [ernstjoz@axelero.hu](mailto:ernstjoz@axelero.hu)

**Improved donkey:** medium and big size, often dark colour, without any specifications of colour or stripes

Contact: Jozsef Ernst; Donáti-u 20-22; H- 1015 Budapest; E-mail: [ernstjoz@axelero.hu](mailto:ernstjoz@axelero.hu)

## IRELAND

Donkeys were imported from 1800 on. Two strains were to be found in the imports, a light brown shade and a darker coloured strain, both small in stature. The imported donkeys became popular with small farmers, mainly in the congested districts and were particularly useful in turf harvesting operations. These donkeys later were improved by bigger donkeys from Spain.

Donkey Derbys were a popular feature of Irish rural festivals in the post 1960s period.



Source: [www.oldirishimages.com/donkeys/donkeys.html](http://www.oldirishimages.com/donkeys/donkeys.html)

In recent years, the "English and Irish Donkey Society" was established. Breeders meet together and exhibitions of the donkeys are arranged.

Exact population numbers of donkeys in the country is unknown up to now.  
Contact: Louise Byrne; Agriculture House (4c); Kildare Street; Dublin 2; Ireland; E-mail: [Louise.Byrne@agriculture.gov.ie](mailto:Louise.Byrne@agriculture.gov.ie);  
Irish Donkey Society, E-mail: [martinod@eir.ie](mailto:martinod@eir.ie)

Remark: In literature often an "Irish piebald donkey" is mentioned as a breed. But piebald donkeys are occurring in several countries and breeds.

## ITALY

The study "Risorse genetiche agrarie in Italia" from the Monitoring Institute from 2000/2001 showed an alarming situation for the donkey breeds in Italy: Six donkey breeds are extinct. This is especially tragic, because the Apenin Peninsula is one of the cradles of European Donkey breeding. Here rock designs were found from the 2000BC. The following table shows the extinct donkey breeds.

Breed	Breeding area
Cariovilli	Abruzze (Aquila)
Castelmorone (Castel Morrone)	Kampania (Caserta)
Emiliano	
Grigio viterbese	Lazio (Viterbo)
Irpinia	Campania (Benevento; Avellino)
Sant' Alberto	Emilia Romagna (Ravenna; Forli)

Tab. 5: Extinct Donkey breeds in Italy

During the last few years, intensive work for the still existing donkey breeds was undertaken. Most of the nine breeds still in existence have been accepted by the government and breeding associations with managed herdbooks have been set up. Furthermore products of donkey like salami, milk and milk products e.g. for cosmetics become more and more interesting as exquisite niche products on the market (see: <http://www.lattediasina.it/> ). But still the situation for the donkey breeds is not assured, because the number of individuals is very low.

In order to promote donkeys, a group of interested people celebrate "Asinodays" in Italy, a three day event taking place in June 2008 (see: <http://www.asinodays.org/> ). "Asinodays" aimed at tourists, businesses and is also a cultural event. It is open to social issues as it is aimed at all the enthusiasts, to the residents of the area and, above all, to families and children – the hope is to make Reggio Emilia a recognised pole in the world of the donkey. "Asinodays" shall be held every year from 2008 on.

### **Asino Amiatina (syn. Asino Amiatino; Asino dell Amiata; Amiata)**

Description: This breed has distinctive zebra stripes on the legs and ears with dark signs. They descend from the area around Monte Amiata in the hinterland of Grosseto. Today some animals can be found in the Toscana, Reggio Emilia and in Liguria. They are markedly agile and, therefore, specially adapted to mountainous regions. They are used as pack- and working animals, but also as a draught- and riding animal. Amiatina-donkeys have a height at withers of 1,25m - 1,40m. The coat is grey with eelstripe and shoul-dercross. belly, mouth and rings around the eyes are blond. Asino Amiatina is persistent and resistant against diseases. It survives in harsh conditions  
Stock (2005): Total:373; mares: 198; sires: 24



source: [www.ilportaledelcavallo.it](http://www.ilportaledelcavallo.it)

Herdbook: yes  
Risk Status: endangered  
Conservation programme: yes  
Contact: Association Amicci Amiatini; Signor Bededetti, Viale Europa 30; I-58100 Grosseto;  
R.A.R.E. (Razze autoctone a Rischio di Estinzione), Riccardo Fortina; Corso G, Agnelli 32;

I-10137 Torino; E-mail: [info@associazionerare.it](mailto:info@associazionerare.it);

Internet: <http://www.associazionerare.it/>

AIA, Via Tomassetti 9; 00161 Roma; Tel.: 0039-(0)6/8545 13 08; Fax: 0039-(0)6/44 24 92 86; E-mail: [info@aia.it](mailto:info@aia.it); Web: <http://www.aia.it> ;  
[http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a\\_razze.htm](http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a_razze.htm)

### **Asino Argentato di Sologno**

Local population, probably not a pure breed, with silver ("argentato") or grey coat. Bred in a small Apennine area of Emilia Romagna (Sologno). Few animals are still bred. Local name for a homogenous population preferred by people for its colour. Monitoring of the population is urgently needed.

Contact: R.A.R.E. (Razze autoctone a Rischio di Estinzione), Riccardo Fortina; Corso G, Agnelli 32; I-10137 Torino; E-mail: [info@associazionerare.it](mailto:info@associazionerare.it); Internet: <http://www.associazionerare.it/>

### **Asino Asinara (syn.: Asino bianco di Asinara; Asino Albino dell'Asinara Asino dell'Asinara; Albinotischer Zwergesel)**

Description: The autochthonous breed of Asinara, an island off the North West coast of Sardinia is similar to the Asino Sardo. A special attribute of the Asino Asinara is the white colour of the coat. They live wild in small groups on the island. In contrast to all other donkey breeds, Asinara donkeys are less sure-footed. The origin of the breed is not clear: It is suggested, that the Asinara donkey originated from white asses imported from Egypt



source: <http://www.sardegnaambiente.it>

around 1800 by the Duke of Asinara. But also there are suggestions, that it was developed during the Baroque or Roccoco. Height: 80 - 105 cm Weight: 80-90 kg. The mouth is pink, eyes are pink – light blue, which may be an effect of an incomplete albinism. Since 1990 a herdbook is kept by AIA. Subsidies are available. The development is overseen by the university of Sassari. The stock is stable and slowly increasing. The Asinara Donkeys are in a National Park with some measures of conservation (bred by Corpo Forestale dello Stato in Capo Caccia reserve and other farms of Sardegna).

Stock (2005): Total: 41; mares: 24 ; sires: 6

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical maintained

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: AIA, Via Tomassetti 9; 00161 Roma; Tel.: 0039-(0)6/8545 13 08; Fax: 0039-(0)6/44 24 92 86; E-mail: [info@aia.it](mailto:info@aia.it); Web: <http://www.aia.it> ; [http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a\\_razze.htm](http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a_razze.htm)  
R.A.R.E. (Razze autoctone a Rischio di Estinzione), Riccardo Fortina; Corso G, Agnelli 32; I-10137 Torino; E-mail: [info@associazionerare.it](mailto:info@associazionerare.it); Internet: <http://www.associazionerare.it/>

**Asino di Martina Franca (syn.: Pugliese; Martinese; Martina Franca; Puli; Martina Franca Esel; Ane de Martina-Franca; Apulian)**

In General: Martina Franca are large sized donkeys from the region of Martina Franca, SE Italy. During the Spanish dominion in Apulia, the autochthonous donkey was crossed with Catalan donkeys. Martina Franca donkeys are traditionally used for draught and as pack-ass, but also for mule production with Murge-horses. Martinese-mules were famous in Italy and abroad.

Description: dark brownish to black coat with reddish markings around the eyes and part of the muzzle, whitish-grey nostrils, grey abdomen and inner hind quarters and dark pigmentation of the mucous membrane. The head is large, but not too heavy, with well developed jaws and long straight ears. The neck is strong and muscular, no demarcations divide it from its continuation into the back, large long and muscular croup, muscular legs with thick dry joints and hard hoofs.

Height: sires:1,35m - mares: 1,27m. Original Martina Franca donkeys have three brands: one on the cheek, one on the neck and one on the crural. On the first Sunday in December a market for Martina Franca donkeys and Murge horses takes place in Foro Boario Martinese. Since 1990 the herdbuch is officially accepted. Stock (2005): Total: 327; mares: 206; sires: 24 Herdbook: yes

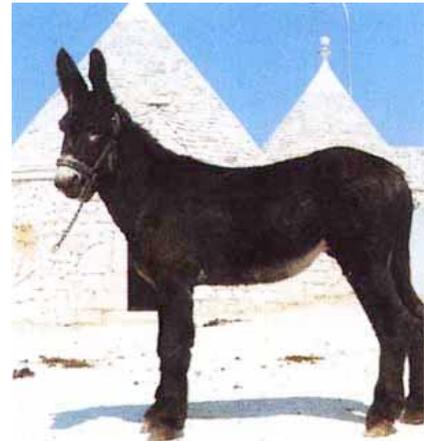
Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Ass. Naz. Allev. Cavallo delle Murge e Asino di Martina Franca, Via Letizia Marinosci, 74015 Martina Franca (Taranto), [www.anamf.it](http://www.anamf.it); E-mail: [info@anamf.it](mailto:info@anamf.it)

Allevamento San Paolo; Francesco Basile; Via Giannone 19; I-74015 Martina Franca; E-mail: [basile.sanpaolo@tin.it](mailto:basile.sanpaolo@tin.it)

AIA, Via Tomassetti 9; 00161 Roma; E-mail: [info@aia.it](mailto:info@aia.it); Web: [http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a\\_asinomf.htm](http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a_asinomf.htm)



Source: [www.medicavalli.com](http://www.medicavalli.com)

**Asino di Pantelleria (syn.: Asino Pantesco; Pantelleria; Pantescia; Pantesco)**

The Asino Pantelleria is breed on the island Pantelleria to the South West of Sicily. The strong African appearance of this donkey is explained through the geographical proximity to Tunesia. On the island the Pantelleria donkey is preferred above horses. They are considered to have much stamina, to be fast and temperamental. Races take place in which the donkeys reach speeds of 25 km/h. The Panterellia donkey is an exceptional surefooted pack animal. Typically they can move in the "Tölt-gait", a form of movement which Icelandic horses are well known for, this is both fast and comfortable for the rider. They were also used in the breeding of mules. Since the beginning of the 1990s there has been an attempt to breed these animals back to their old breed standard: all the animals that could be found (3

sires and 5 mares) were moved to San Matteo near Trapani. In order to have a genetic security double, some animals were moved to the nature park Zingaro.

Pantelleria donkeys have a withers height of 1,25 – 1,30 m. They are brown with white belly, muzzle and eye rings. The coat is short haired and fine, the legs are muscular and strong. Stock: Total: 31; mares: 13; sires: 10

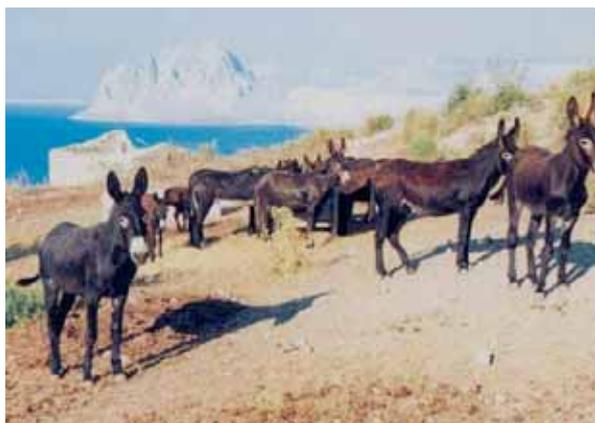
Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: AIA, D.ssa Silvana Gioia, Via Tomasetti 9, 00161 Roma, Tel: 0039-(0)6/854511, Fax:0039-(0)6/44249286, E-mail: [info@aia.it](mailto:info@aia.it), URL:[www.aia.it](http://www.aia.it); [http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a\\_razze.htm](http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a_razze.htm)

R.A.R.E. (Razze autoctone a Rischio di Estinzione), Riccardo Fortina; Corso G, Agnelli 32; I-10137Torino; E-mail: [info@associazionerare.it](mailto:info@associazionerare.it); Internet: <http://www.associazionerare.it/>



source: <http://www.agraria.org/zootecnia/asinopantelleria.htm>

### **Asino Ragusana (syn.: Ragusano; Sicilian; Ragusan; Ragusana)**

Description: Ragusana donkeys descend from SE Sicily. They developed from breeding with Pantelleria donkeys and Martina Francas.

Ragusana donkeys are good draught animals, but also used for mule production. The coat is dark bay with light underparts. The hoofs are strong, the animals are resistant against diseases and have a strong, vigorous character. Since 1990 the breed is in the register for endangered autochthonous equines. Breeding is supported by government. WWF Sicily, section Alcamo supports breeding.

Height: 1.30 m – 1.50 m.

Stock (2005): Total: 344; mares: 217; sires 30

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: WWF Delegazione Sicilia, Sezione di Alcamo, Vincenzo Spica, Via E. Albanese 98, 90139 Palermo

AIA, Via Tomasetti 9; 00161 Roma; Tel.: 0039-(0)6/8545 13 08; Fax: 0039-(0)6/44 24 92 86; E-mail: [info@aia.it](mailto:info@aia.it);

Web: <http://www.aia.it>; [http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a\\_razze.htm](http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a_razze.htm)

Istituto Sperimentale zootecnico per la Sicilia; Fondo Luparello - Via Roccazzo n° 85, 90136 Palermo <http://www.iszsicilia.it>; E-mail: [info@iszsicilia.it](mailto:info@iszsicilia.it)



Source: <http://www.agraria.org/zootecnia/asinoragusano.htm>

### **Asino Romagnolo (syn.: Romagnola)**

A native breed of the Emilia-Romagna (in particular Province of Forlì), derives from the Pugliese ass. Since 1996 the Association of Forlì-Cesena-Rimini has started a conservation programme. Less than hundred animals are recorded in the province of Forlì-Cesena, Rimini, Ravenna, Bologna and Reggio Emilia.

Description: Height: stallions: 135-145 cm; mares: 132-140 cm. Colour: grey, dark bay (bay and morello). Short and smooth hair. With eelstipe, zebature to the front, less obvious limbs or absent to the posterior limbs. Head: snout white, Abdomen white with ventral line of dark hairs from the tip of sterno to the genitals. Inner face of the limbs until 2/3 of the thigh and the forearm white, Tail with dark hairs in the inner part of the stalk and the ribbon, marmelle and scroto dark. Foot with dark nail.

Stock : Total: 139; mares 71; sires: 11

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: [www.montebaducco.it](http://www.montebaducco.it); [www.lattediasina.it](http://www.lattediasina.it); <http://www.agraria.org/zootecnia/asinoromagnolo.htm>



source: <http://www.agraria.org/zootecnia/asinoromagnolo.htm>

### **Asino Sardo (syn.: Sarda; Ainu; Burriku; Molente; Molingianu; Pegasus de mola; Poleddu; Sardo; Sardinian Dwarf)**

Description: The Sardinian dwarf donkey is traditionally used for draught. It measures only 80-100 cm height at withers. The coat is mousey grey and lighter around the eyes, muzzle and underparts. It has the typical eelstripe and shouldercross and also zebra stripes on the legs. Asino Sardo is frugal and agile. It has small, strong hoofs. Especially small Sardinian donkeys were sold abroad as a basis for breeding of „mini“ donkeys.

The herdbook of this officially accepted breed is lead by AIA, Rome

Stock (2005): Total: 598; mares: 303; sires: 74

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: ATAS – Associazione per la Tutela dell'Asino Sardo, Località Palloni, 09070 Nuraxinieddu (OR), Tel: 0039-(0)783/33367



source: <http://www.agraria.org/zootecnia/asinosardo.htm>

AIA, Via Tomassetti 9; 00161 Roma; Tel.: 0039-(0)6/8545 13 08; Fax: 0039-(0)6/44 24 92 86; E-mail: [info@aia.it](mailto:info@aia.it); [http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a\\_razze.htm](http://www.aia.it/tecnico/equini/a_razze.htm) ;  
Web: <http://www.aia.it>;  
Istituto Sperimentale zootecnico per la Sicilia; Fondo Luparello - Via Roccazzo n° 85, 90136 Palermo; web: <http://www.iszsicilia.it>; E-mail: [info@iszsicilia.it](mailto:info@iszsicilia.it)

### **Asino Grigio Siciliano**

Asino Grigio Siciliano are the original donkeys of Sicily. They are the ancestors of the Ragusana donkeys. During monitoring in Sicily from the department of Zootechnic and Animal Nutrition of the University of Messina on the Sicilian grey donkey in 2004, about 100 animals, between 4 months and 14 years could be found (Demographic and phenotypic characterization on "grigio siciliano" donkey; Liotta L., Chiofalo B., Chiofalo L. Dip. Morfologia, Biochimica, Fisiologia e Produzioni Animali, Università di Messina). Special characteristics of the milk were investigated recently.



<http://www.agraria.org/zootecnia/asinogrigiosiciliano.htm>

Stock : Total: 5; mares: 4; sires: 1

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: WWF Delegazione Sicilia, Sezione di Alcamo, Vincenzo Spica, Via E. Albanese 98, 90139 Palermo; web:

<http://www.agraria.org/zootecnia/asinogrigiosiciliano.htm>

## **KOSOVO – UNMIK**

Up to now no information is available about breeds or numbers of animals in Kosovo. Like in all Balkan countries the "Domestic Balkan Donkey" is found. Experts are missing to make precise investigations on donkeys and probable occurring breeds or strains.

## MALTA

### **Maltese Donkey; Hmar Malti**

The Maltese donkey is an agile breed which is large and "horse-like". Today it is used in sport (as a Trotter). It is a brisk and resistant donkey; Historically, it was used for transport, draught, meat, production of mules and sport.

Description: The coat is unlike other donkeys': It is short and glossy. Coat colour: dark bay with white muzzle; Coat type: short and glossy; average height (base of neck): sires: 150cm; mares: 143cm.

Stock: Total: about 50 animals

Herdbook: no

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: in progress

Contact: Dr. J Mallia; Institute of Agriculture; University of Malta; Villa Mimosa;

Valetta Rd. Attard BZN 03 Malta E-mail: [malliaj@hotmail.com](mailto:malliaj@hotmail.com)



Source: <http://www.world-covers.com/cover-405>

## FYR MACEDONIA

### **Macedonian Donkey**

Up to now no information is available about breeds or numbers of animals in Macedonia. Like in all Balkan countries the "Domestic Balkan Donkey" is found. Experts are missing to make precise investigations on donkeys and probable occurring breeds or strains.

## MONTENEGRO

Up to now no information is available about breeds or numbers of animals in Montenegro. "Domestic Balkan Donkey" is found. Experts are missing to make precise investigations on donkeys and probable occurring breeds or strains.

## NETHERLANDS

No autochthonous breeds of donkeys known.

Recently the "Stichting de Ezelsocieteit" was founded: Contact: Zwitsersekade 5; Zeist, Country; 3707 HZ; Tel.:0343 - 49 13 71 web: <http://www.ezelsocieteit.nl/>

The "Dutch Donkey Breed Society" is also working on donkeys in Holland. But up to now no special standard or herdbook is created.

Contact: Miss A.E. Bander; Buurtweg, 161, 2233 B.J.; Wassenaar, Holland



source: <http://www.ezelsocieteit.nl/ezels.html>

## PORTUGAL

Besides the official governmental authorities, AEPGA (Associação para o Estudo e Protecção do Gado Asinino) takes care of donkeys in Portugal. On a scientific level, investigations to the genetic distance of several Mediterranean and Eastern European donkey breeds are taking place. The result is awaited with suspense. However - as also with searches - co-operation in several countries is very difficult, because of the lack of information and contact persons within the single country.

### **Burro de Miranda (syn.: Burro do Planalto Mirandes, Raça asinina de Miranda; Mirandes; Transmontano)**

This autochthonous donkey breed is located in North-Eastern Portugal, in the neighbouring area to the Spanish Zamorano-Leones donkey breed. Here (Terra Fria de Planalto) agriculture is characterized by large fluctuations of yearly temperature and high precipitation. The donkeys are predominantly used as draught animals in agriculture and as pack animals in tourism. For preservation it is problematic that almost only old people keep this breed. The AEPGA awakens the public interest with events like a traditional donkey market and festivals.

Description: Colour: brown chest-nut; Base pigment brown and possesses black extension. Height: 1.20 - 1.35m.

Stock (2003): Total: 1000; sires: 10; mares: 990

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered maintained

Conservation programme: in process

Contact: Dr. Albano Beja-Pereira; CIBIO-VP; Campus Agrario de Vairão; P-4485661 Vairão; E-mail: [albanobp@mail.icav.up.pt](mailto:albanobp@mail.icav.up.pt).

AEPGA (Associação para o Estudo e Protecção do Gado Asinino); Miguel Nova; E-mail: [aepga@aepga.pt](mailto:aepga@aepga.pt); Web: <http://www.aepga.pt>



### **Burro de Graciosa (syn.: Burro anão da Graciosa; Dwarf Donkey of Graciosa)**

The Burro de Graciosa is located in the Azorean Atlantic Archipelago, on the island of Graciosa. They are dwarf donkeys, less than 1,2m. Their coat colour is greyish, often dark on the extremities and all possess a black bar in the shoulder area and two black stripes in the front limbs. This population is most endangered. Less than 90 animals (mares or castrated sires) are existing.

Stock: Total: 26 (2001)

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Dr. Albano Beja-Pereira; CIBIO-VP Campus Agrario de Vairão; P-4485661 Vairão; E-mail: [albanobp@mail.icav.up.pt](mailto:albanobp@mail.icav.up.pt).

AEPGA (Associação para o Estudo e Protecção do Gado Asinino); Miguel Nova; E-mail: [aepga@aepga.pt](mailto:aepga@aepga.pt); Web: <http://www.aepga.pt>

## ROMANIA

In Romania Donkeys have been used for a long time. It is assumed that it was brought by Roman colonialists the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Traditionally, it is used as a saddle animal and by peasants from some plain regions (Teleorman, Constanta, Tulcea in the SE and Salaj in the NW of Romania. Especially in the transhumance, donkeys play an important role. Usually 1-2 donkeys are with a flock of 300-500 sheep. It is also used as a light draught and small cart animal. For farmers in Romania it is not honorable to use a donkey as a farm animal, because a donkey is a sign of poverty.



*Donkey used as draught animal in the region of Constanta; Source: [www.karpatenwilli.com/images/dobro012.JPG](http://www.karpatenwilli.com/images/dobro012.JPG)*

Stock: about 40,000 animals

Description: The colour is mainly grey, but also silver, black and sometimes white occurs. There is a large variation of body length, probably because of the change of confirmation from youth to maturity.

Contact: Prof. Dr. Condrea Draganescu; Institute of Biology and Animal Nutrition; Calea bucuresti nr. 1; RO-8113 Balotesti; E-mail: [condrag2002@yahoo.com](mailto:condrag2002@yahoo.com)

## SERBIA

Especially in the mountain regions of Serbia, but also in the coastal regions, donkeys occur. They are known for their easy keeping regarding feeding and their willingness for working hard. But there is no information about the number, use and probably occurrence of breeds. Like in most of the other countries of the Balkans, experts are missing, which are able to undertake some investigations on donkeys. Officially, the Cuprus donkey, Domestic Balkan Ass and a variety named "Italian" are mentioned in the FAO Database "DAD-IS".

### **Domaci Balkanski Magarac; Domestic Balkan Ass**

It occurs in the mountain regions of Serbia, but also in the coastal regions of Montenegro.

Description: Weight: about 250 kg for sires; 200 kg for mares; Withers height: about 100cm for sires; 95cm for mares; Colour: grey, brown, dark grey, and red-dish brown.

Stock: unknown

Herdbook: no

Risk Status: endangered

Contact: DVM Srdjan Stojanovic; Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; Nemanjina 22-26; CS-11000 Belgrade; Serbia;

E-mail: [agrvet@hotmail.com](mailto:agrvet@hotmail.com)



source: S. Stojanovic, Belgrade

## SLOVENIA

No autochthonous breeds of donkeys known; there are about 200 crossbred donkeys in the country. Their number has increased slightly over the last years. Their origin is mainly from Balkan states and Italy, they are purchased from different handlers, as in the case in most European countries. In short, a "melting pot" makes out of this conglomerat "pet donkey" of different sizes.

In the past, donkeys were very much in use in the Mediterranean part of Slovenia, in Istria, to transport water and to take goods (like vegetables) to town market for selling. It was the "Istrian Donkey".

Stock: Total: 26 (2001)

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: nearly extinct



Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Marko Suklje; Oteljan 121A; SLO-5261 Sempas; E-mail [marko.suklje@email.si](mailto:marko.suklje@email.si)

## SPAIN

In Spain there are about 75'000 Donkeys. There are some breeds, but also varieties and commercial crossings. Since the seventies the total number of donkeys is decreasing. The donkey census showed increases since the beginning of the 1990s, because rare breeds attracted more interest. A.N.D.R.E.A. (Asociacion para la Defensa, Recuperacion y Estudio Therapeutico de la Razna Asnal), is a non-profit association for the protection, recovery and therapeutic study of donkeys. A.N.D.R.E.A. has three lines of intervention:

1. The Centre for Sanctuary and Rehabilitation of Donkeys
2. The Centre for Therapy Assisted by Donkeys (Asinotherapy)
3. The program for the Rehabilitation of the Donkey, and its use and work in the rural environment. Contact: [info@andreaasociacion.com](mailto:info@andreaasociacion.com) . Web: <http://www.andreaasociacion.com/>

There are several initiatives looking for the consolidation of the autochthonous breeds of donkeys in Spain but most of them are less important and very isolated. Except for these conservation initiatives, the donkey breeds are considered in a serious danger of extinction.

**Asno Andalucia (syn.: Cordobesa; Andaluz; Gran raza Asnal Andaluza o Cordobesa; Cordobés; Córdoba; Campiziesa; Campinesa; Asnal Andaluza; Andaluza-Córdoba; Andaluza o Cordobesa; Andaluza; Andalusischer Riesen-Esel; Cordobese; Andalucian; Andalusian)**

The Asno Andalucia (descended from *Equus asinus somalensis*) is probably a descendant of the Pharaoh donkey, an extinct Egyptian giant donkey breed. It was already brought to Spain about 3000 years ago. In the whole of Andalusia it was known as a work and draught animal as well as being suitable for mule breeding. It was especially found in the region El Guadalquivir, El Guajaro and between Genil and Baena. By the end of the 1980s it was practically extinct. These



days, the A.D.E.B.O. (Asociacion cologista para la denfesa del Borrico) takes care of its conservation. Asno Andalucia is disease and heat resistant and full of energy with a calm and balanced temperament.

Description: Height: 1.46-1.55cm; weight: 320-460kg; Colour: dapple gray - white  
Recognised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries since 2001. ANCRAA, the Asociacion Nacional de Criadores de la Raza Asnal Andaluza, was founded in 2001.

Stock (2006): Total : 120/150

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: SERGA:

<http://www.grupocordobes.com/clientes/juanvi/general.phtml?libro=1&cte=6&codigo=5> ;

Asociación Nacional de Criadores de la Raza Asnal Andaluza  
<http://www.ancraa.org/> ;

Unión de Ganaderos y Arrieros de la Gran Raza Asnal Andaluza; Yeguada Militar de Écija. Finca el Trujillar. Crta Écija-Osuna km 17; 41400 Écija; Provincia Sevilla; Tel.: 955 95 80 19; Fax: 955 95 81 20

### **Burro Castellana (syn: Castellana; Common Spanish; Castilian)**

In literature, burro Castellana is mentioned as a variety of the common Spanish donkey. More information was not available before publication.

### **Asinina Catalana (syn.: Vich; Catalana; Catalán; Ausetan; Catalana; Katalanischer Riesen-Esel; Catalan; Ane catalan; Catalanian Donkey; Catalanian; )**

The breed belongs to the species *Equus asinus somaliensis* or *Equus asinus europeus*. This breed has contributed to the formation and improvement of several European breeds. It has had a great and decisive influence in the formation of the American Mammoth ass.

The herdbook was established in 1880. The stock was decreasing until end of the 1970s. Since 1978 a conservation programme has been running.

Description: Height at withers: 1.36m, weight: 350kg. Elongated harmonically conformation: Colour: black, with characteristic shades on the muzzle, around the eyes, on belly and legs.

The shade varies with the seasons. The ears are very mobile, mostly upright. Large-sized and elongated animals with a concave profile. The breed is known for its longevity and sexual prowess.

Stock (2003): sires: 49; studs: 118; Total: 206

Herdbook: yes

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Asociación para el fomento de la Raza Asinina Catalana (AFRAC); C/ Rotes, 48; 01780 Banyoles; Provincia Girona; Tel.: 972 57 48 05; Isabel García Sanz; Secretaria General de Agricultura; Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y alimentación; E-mail: [igarcias@mapya.es](mailto:igarcias@mapya.es); Phone: +34-(913)-476612-13; Fax: +34-(913)-476671



### **Asno de las Encartaciones (syn.: Las Encartaciones)**

Description: Las Encartaciones (Viscaya, Basque provs, Spain); black, grey, white or chestnut; The distribution area of Asno de las Encartaciones is in the north-western part of Spain (Biskaya up to Cantabria). This breed was used as a draught

animal in the villages. Mechanisation of agriculture led to nearly extinction of the asno de las Encartaciones. Today they are still used as reminiscence of the traditional image of the Basque small villages. This donkey breed plays an important role in the traditional basque agriculture and pasturing. They are about 120 cm withers height.



The color is brown and black sometimes dark strips on the legs, white signs around mouth and eyes. Belly is also white.

Since 1996 Association ADEBUEN works (Association for the Defense of the Donkey of the Encartaciones) on conservation of the donkey. In the southwest of France, the "Ane des Pyrénées" (see page 25) is bred, which is very similar to the Asno de las Encartaciones. Stock : Total: ca 100

Herdbook: no

Risk Status: critical

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Asociación de defensa del Asno de

las Encartaciones (ADEBUEN); Euskal abereak San Miguel 11-1<sup>o</sup>; 48200 Garai; Provincia Bizkaia; Tel.: 946 79 80 02; Fax: 946 79 80 04; others: [http://www.nekanet.net/razas/asno\\_c.htm](http://www.nekanet.net/razas/asno_c.htm)

### **Burro Majorero (syn: Canary Island; Common Spanish)**

The ancestors of the Burro Majorero originally came from the North West of Africa. It is an autochthonous breed of the Canary Islands and these days is used in the tourist business. The Burro Majorero has a withers height of c. 1.10m and weighs 100 to 150 kg. The coat colour is dark or light grey. This breed is particularly well adapted to the volcanic environment of the Canaries. There is no known conservation organisation. The stock numbers are in decline.

Stock: Total (2005): less than 200 animals at Fuerteventura and a few purebred individuals at Lanzarote.

Herdbook: unknown

Risk Status: endangered

Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Asociación SOO Grupo para la Conservación y Fomento del Burro Majorero; Gambuesa, 30; 35600; Puerto del Rosario Fuerteventura; Tel.: 928 85 10 15

### **Ase Mallorquí (syn.: Asno Mallorquin; Burro Mallorquin; Malorqunia; Balear)**

The main geographical area of the donkey was the island of Mallorca but it did extend to almost all the other islands of the Balearic group. The mares were used for reproduction and draught, carrying sacks of olives at harvest time and as a means of transport for breeders. The stallion was dedicated to mule breeding. A group of interested breeders and owners founded an association (ACRIPROASMA) to promote the awareness of the breed. In 2002 it was recognised by the government. The association defined a standard, identified animals and set up a registration book.

Description: its structural confirmation is similar to that of the Catalan donkey but it is shorter in height and finer boned. Height at withers: 1,45m - 1,55m for sires and 1,25 - 1,35m for mares. The coat is black to dark grape with shading of white to grey around the nostrils, under the mouth, eye and underbelly.

Stock : Total 150  
 Herdbook: yes  
 Risk Status: endangered  
 Conservation programme: yes  
 Contact: Asociación de Criadores y Propietarios de Pura Raza Asnal Mallorquina (ACRIPROASMA) Ctra. S'Esglaieta, km. 0,01 Apartado 10 E-07190 Esporles; Mallorca; Tel.: 971 61 91 65; Isabel García Sanz; Secretaria General de Agricultura; Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesa y alimentación; E-mail: igarcias@mapya.es; Phone: +34-(913)-476612-13; Fax: +34-(913)-476671



### Zamorano-Leonés

The Zamorano-Leonés-Donkey is said to have been in existence since the 10th Century. Originally it was bred in the Cantabrian mountain range between the rivers Cea and Orbigo. In the Province Zamora in the north of Salamanca it was mainly used in mule breeding. In the 13<sup>th</sup> and again in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, Zamorano-Leonés were exported to many neighbouring countries and also overseas. Since 1950 both the internal and foreign markets shrank. These days worldwide conservation measures are taking place and the donkey is used in tourism, leisure and trekking. Worldwide it is estimated that there are c. 150 purebred animals. The advanced age of both donkeys and their keepers presents a big problem. 95% of the Spanish donkey stock is in the hands of retired farmers. About 75% of the mares are supposedly sterile or no longer able to give birth.

Description: Withers height: 1.40m - 1.55m; balanced conformation, corpulent and with a powerful body. The large head is characteristic as is the very rough, dark brown coat. Also characteristic is the mass of hair on the forehead. The well developed capillary wool lends the amorano-eones a special physiognomy.



Stock : Total 155: sires: 5; studs: 150  
 Herdbook: no  
 Risk Status: stable  
 Conservation programme: yes

Contact: Asociación Nacional de Criadores de Raza Asnal Zamorano-Leones (ASZAL); C/ Regimiento de Toledo, 2, Local; CP; 49011 ZAMORA  
 E-mail: [aszal@aszal.com](mailto:aszal@aszal.com) web: <http://www.aszal.com/>

## SWEDEN

As in the middle and western European countries, in Sweden donkeys also are kept as hobby animals.

There are two organizations engaged in donkey keeping in Sweden:

Svenska Poitou Foreningen/Trait Poitevin; Vastra AA S-640 20; Bjork Vik, Sweden

This Association is looking for the Poitou donkeys in Sweden. The studbook is international. About 15 Poitou donkeys are registered in Sweden (see: Poitou, France).

### „Svensk husasna“, „Swedish Donkey“

It is of no specific breed. There were 404 animals registered in the herdbook in 2002

Contact: Catharina Asberg; Swedish Donkey Society; Svenska Asnefzreningen; Foderbylund Molnby; S-18699; Vallentuna;

E-mail: [catharina.asberg@kyrkanstidning.com](mailto:catharina.asberg@kyrkanstidning.com)



Source:

<http://www.traveljournals.net/pictures/11897.html>

## SWITZERLAND

Donkeys in Switzerland are mainly not registered. SIGEF (Schweizerische Interessengemeinschaft für Eselfreunde), a countrywide active NGO, estimates the whole number of donkeys in Switzerland as more than 5'000 animals. Official statistic agricultural data show a number of 5672 donkeys hinnies and mules at 2401 establishments. About 90% of the donkeys have no pedigree certificate. All donkeys originated abroad. SIGEF registers donkeys of their members. About 1'900 animals are registered in three categories: Small donkey, domestic donkey, big donkey. A list of sires is compiled to prevent breeding with degenerated or sick animals. Thanks to the intensive work of SIGEF, the situation and understanding for the species "donkey" is becoming well known. But still donkeys are kept as fashionable, as a matter of prestige or a funny gag. Breeding starts in a small scale. A standard will be worked out in the nearer future.

Stock : Total about 5'000 animals:

Herdbook: no

Risk Status: unknown

Conservationprogramme: no

Contact: SIGEF:web: <http://www.eselfreunde.ch/>

E-mail: [eselfreunde@eselfreunde.ch](mailto:eselfreunde@eselfreunde.ch) Annamaria Matter; Mitteldorf 9; CH-3283 Kallnach; Tel.: +41-32/392 18 23; Fax: +41-32/ 392 70 74

### Baudet de Poitou

In august 2007 a Swiss association of Baudet de Poitou was founded. Aim of the new association is to promote the Poitou donkey, opening of a Swiss herdbook and collaboration with the international Poitou association.

Contact: Dr. Felix Weber, Natur- und Tierpark Goldau, Parkstr. 40, CH-6410 Goldau, E-mail: [info@tierpark.ch](mailto:info@tierpark.ch), Tel. +41-41/ 859 06 06

## TURKEY

The DAD-IS Database of FAO lists three donkey breeds for Turkey. The Anatolian, the Karakacan, the Merzifon. But there are no descriptions available. The Anatolian donkey occurs in the whole country, not only in Anatolia.

There are no reliable data available for donkeys in Turkey at the moment (2007/2008).

### **Anatolian Donkey**

Domestic breed of Turkey. Black and grey varieties of this breed exist. There is no in situ or ex situ conservation programme running.

Stock : unknown

Herdbook:

Risk Status:

Conservation programme:

Contact: Dr. Gürbürz Mizrak; Prof. Dr. M. Ihsan SOYSAL and Research Asst. Emel ÖZKAN, Trakya University, Agriculture Faculty, Dept. of. Animal Sci., Tekirdag/TURKEY

E-mail: [misoysal@ttnet.net.tr](mailto:misoysal@ttnet.net.tr)

also see:

<http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/>



provided by Prof. Dr. M. Ihsan SOYSAL and  
Research Asst. Emel ÖZKAN

### **Karakacan**

"Karakacan" is sometimes used as a slang word for donkey. The Karakacan nomads didn't use donkeys, as historic literature shows (Aleksander Petrov, 1940). A. Petrov was the first, who described Bulgarian equine breeds in the 30s to 40s of the last century.

### **Merzifon**

This breed is mentioned in the DAS-IS Database of the FAO as an indigenous breed. But there is no additional information available. Merzifon is a rural district in the province Amasya in the Black Sea Region of Turkey.

## UNITED KINGDOM

Some organisations are working on donkeys in UK. But there is no complete overview on the number, breeds or varieties of the country.



Source : [www.greatorme.btinternet.co.uk/Donkeys.jpg](http://www.greatorme.btinternet.co.uk/Donkeys.jpg)

**The Donkey Breed Society** is the British Society for everyone whose interest is in the donkey. Founded in 1967, the Donkey Breed Society seeks to encourage a fuller and more active life for those donkeys who are much loved family pets or companions to other animals.

Contact: <http://www.donkeybreedsociety.co.uk>

**The Donkey Sanctuary** is a UK based charity working worldwide to improve conditions for donkeys and mules. Since 1969 over 12,000 donkeys were taken into care in the UK and Ireland and over 45 welfare officers are there who can follow up reports of cruelty to or neglect of donkeys, quickly and efficiently. There are also overseas projects - bringing urgent veterinary assistance to working donkeys in distress. Further projects exist in Europe

Contact: <http://www.thedonkeysanctuary.org.uk/site/1/home.html>

## CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

The European Donkey survey gives an overview about occurring breeds and activities in the countries. In 24 countries donkey breeds or varieties were found. In total, 57 breeds or varieties could be identified. In nearly every country, a “common donkey” is recognised, which means, that no differentiation or standardisation has taken place.

The following table gives an overview about the situation per European country:

Country	Breeds	No of animals	Breeding organised
Albania	1	67600	no
Austria	2	2000	yes
Bosnia & Herzegovina	?	?	no
Bulgaria	1	185744	no
Croatia	3	3800	yes
Cyprus (Greek)	1	2700	yes, partly
Denmark	1	5000	yes
France	9	40000	yes
Germany	4	7000	yes
Greece	3	21000	no
Hungary	2	3000	yes, partly
Ireland	1	?	partly
Italy	9	3000	yes
Malta	1	100	yes, partly
Macedonia	1	?	no
Netherlands	1	?	yes
Portugal	2	?	partly
Romania	1	40000	no
Serbia	1	?	no
Slovenia	1	26 (?)	yes
Spain	6	75000	yes
Sweden	1	450	yes
Switzerland	1	5000	yes, partly
Turkey	3	?	no
United Kingdom	1	?	yes, partly
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>461420</b>	

Tab. 6: Donkeys in Europe: No of animals per country.

The “common” donkey is occurring in nearly all listed countries. Often this means, that there is no information about any breed. The total number of animals listed here is also not an accurate number, because often the stock numbers are estimated (by governmental bodies).

The breeds per country are also shown in the figure below. France, Italy and Spain are the European countries with the most identified breeds. In comparison with the numbers of animals, it seems amazing, that e.g. in Bulgaria but also in most of the other south and southeast European countries only the “common” donkey is identified. A differentiation into breeds and varieties has not yet taken place.

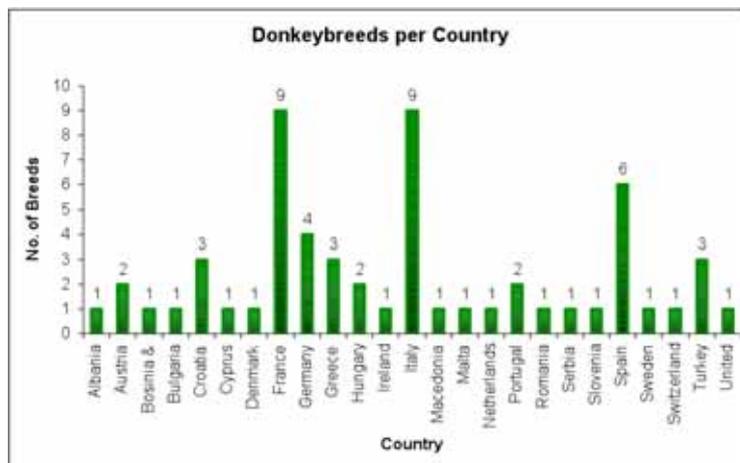


Fig. 4: distribution of donkeybreeds per country in Europe

The situation of donkeys in Europe is dramatic. The total number has been decreasing for decades. Breeds are often not identified. Where breeds are known, the number of breeding animals is dramatically low.

For 31 breeds in 10 countries population data could be evaluated. Most breeds are identified in France, Italy and Spain. But here also the number of registered animals is critical as the detailed graph shows below.

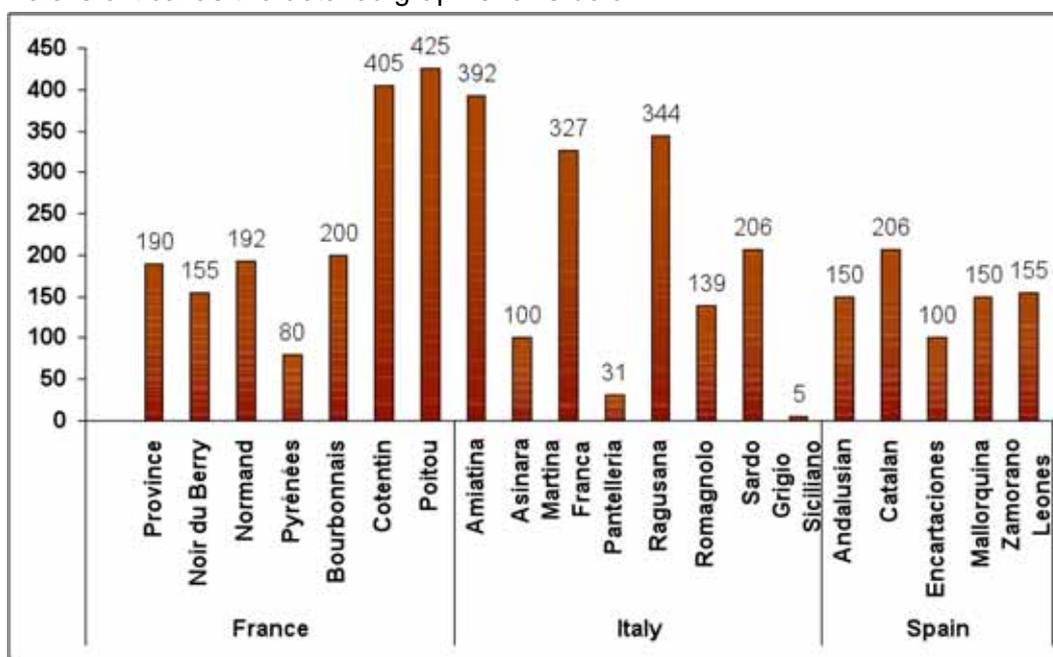


Fig. 5: registered numbers of individuals per identified breed in France, Italy and Spain

Furthermore within seven identified breeds in France, Greece, Italy and Spain population data are not available up to now.

Breeds identified per European country

Country	Breed	Animals
Austria	Baroque	97
Croatia	Primorsko dinarski	2500
	Istarski	107
	Sjeverno jadranski	155
Cyprus	Cyprus	2175
France	Provence	190
	Grand Noir du Berry	155
	Ane Normand	192
	Ane des Pyrénées	80
	Ane Bourbonnais	200
	Ane du Cotentin	405
	Baudet de Poitou	425
Germany	Thuringian Forest	8
Italy	Amiatina	392
	Asinara	100
	Martina Franca	327
	Pantelleria	31
	Ragusana	344
	Romagnolo	139
	Sardo	206
	Grigio Siciliano	5
Malta	Maltese	50
Portugal	De Miranda	1000
	Graciosa	26
Slovenia	Istrian	26
Spain	Andalusian	150
	Catalan	206
	Encartaciones	100
	Mallorquina	150
	Zamorano Leones	155

Tab.7: Number of animals per breeds and country identified

Despite the fact that there has been a lot of activity to identify animals and breeds, for setting the species into value by products and services, donkeys in Europe are in danger of extinction. Official data from FAO show an increasing number of donkey breeds at first glance. But a deeper view into the data and information show a great need for action: The numbers of animals of the species “donkey” is decreasing dramatically – worldwide and especially in Europe. Especially in those countries where donkeys are traditionally used in agriculture for work, for transport issues and more, there is often no overview of breeds of donkeys or the real number of existing individuals. The FAO “State of the World’s Animal Genetic Resources (SoWAnGR) led to some more listed breeds in the FAO DAD-IS database. But more than 60% are listed without any additional information.

### **Private engagement**

In some of the Central European countries, donkeys are not accepted as farm animals. In consequence, the animals are not covered by any governmental support as (endangered) farm animal. This means no state assistance to establish a herdbook or register and also no support in the case of infectious diseases and epidemics. Donkey keeping is dependent upon enthusiasts. But hobby keeping leads to other results in character, type and biological attributes of the breed or variety than breeding for agricultural purposes.

On the other hand, the private engagement of enthusiasts leads to the differentiation into "breeds" or "groups" especially in the Central European countries, like the standard of classification of the British Donkey Breed Society shows. Also the engagement by monitoring, collecting and herdbook establishment in the southern European countries is done mainly by enthusiasts - if there is any activity at all.

Private engagement needs to be supported more by government, at least in acceptance of the donkey as farm animal.

### **Economic interest**

Donkeys do not fit into modern living circumstances. To keep donkeys often means not being able to buy a machine or tractor. The increase of the number of donkeys in Albania is a result of a bad economic situation for the farmers and not an increase of interest.

On the other hand there is an increasing interest in products and services:

#### **Products**

Research shows, that donkey milk is very useful for dietary purposes in a situation of increasing human allergic diseases. Also market niches are developed for cosmetic products. Meat production runs on a low level. Breeding for meat production is very rare. Today donkeys are still exported from eastern European Countries e.g. to Italy for production of salami and other meat products. This animal transport often occurs under horrible conditions, because it is illegal and cheap. Donkey breeding for human food is not common in many western European countries.

#### **Services**

Recreation, tourism purposes and therapies with donkeys are increasingly offered. Also psychotherapy, such as integration of emotionally disturbed people in prisons or residential homes for handicapped people, are playing an increasingly role. This niche market may be an option for some donkeys, (e.g. gaited donkeys like Pantelleria donkeys in Italy).

Another fact is that donkeys in some regions are traditionally used as a herding donkey with sheep. With the re-introduction of wolves in e.g. alpine pastures, probably a new herd management will be established not only with dogs, but also with donkeys.

### **Equine passport**

In every EU member country, all equines used as domestic animals, should get an equine passport. This passport is required for the movement of equines between the Member States of the European Union, and to record the administration of medicinal products that could have an effect on the safety of equine meat for human consumption. The rules are set European wide and are intended to protect those consumers in the EU that do consume equine meat. They apply to all eq-

uines in the whole of the EU without exceptions. The equine passport needs to be with the animal within each transport.

The reality shows another picture: the European equine passport, implemented since 2000, is not really established in the EU countries up to now. Implementing regulations are missing or only just set into force in several countries. An area-wide enforcement is unlikely, especially, because donkeys are not registered in any way in many European countries.

### **Donkey husbandry**

Today, donkeys in Europe are kept for several reasons: They are used as draught and pack animals in rural areas of south and southeast Europe. Here they are an important part of the rural economy, especially for small farms. The use as a companion animal e.g. as leisure, recreation and companionship is more common in the Central and Western European countries or in tourist areas as an attraction.



Feeding management and practices are very different, depending on the cultural, economical and emotional importance of the animals for their owners. Because the donkey is perceived to be a stupid draught and pack animal, the husbandry conditions are often not appropriate. Bad management under harsh conditions is usual in rural areas, where donkeys are in use for draught. But also hobby keepers often do not know the basic needs of their animal. There are special aspects in donkey husbandry, because there is a special relationship between the owner and the donkey. For example foot and dental problems are not only occurring in the wet northern countries, but also in the more donkey-appropriate climate of the south. Also veterinarian services like vaccination programs etc. are not common practice especially in the south and southeast of Europe.

There are some organisations, which are working on donkeys under distress, like the British Donkey Sanctuary or the FAWAC ( Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Council), founded 2002 in Ireland. FAWAC worked out animal welfare guidelines for horses, ponies and donkeys in 2005. They stated five basic needs for husbandry:

1. Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease
4. Freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour
5. Freedom from fear and distress

The need to establish such guidelines shows the bad situation in the management of donkeys. It is remarkable, that these basic needs were established in a northern European country without a special tradition of keeping donkeys or breeding.

The Italian Asino Days Club is a “community of donkey breeders, insiders, passionate and curious people, and of all those who, adults or children, want to know these extraordinary animals.” There is an international event, the Asino Days in June 2008 in Reggio Emilia, Italy (see: <http://www.asinodays.org/> ). This organisation goes one step further: They proclaim the “Carta dei diritti”, a “Donkey Rights Charter”:

### **Carta Dei Diritti**

#### **1) RIGHT TO HOSPITALITY**

The donkey adapts itself to all the situations, but must be feed in the ethical respect of its wellbeing, and be sheltered in appropriate structures.

#### **2) RIGHT TO THE HEALTH**

The donkey is a healthy and sturdy animal, but it must be attended and controlled during all its long life. Every breeder must consult a veterinary who controls the donkeys state of health, who takes care of the normative laws and all that regulate the sanitary directives

#### **3) RIGHT TO A FAIR JOB**

All the time the donkey has been used as an animal for job thanks to its gifts of adaptation to the hard work and the endurance, but this has often contributed to create situations of exploitation towards it. In the job also, the donkey has the right to live a peaceful life that suits to its own requirements. The use of the donkey as an animal for job (trekking by pack animal, ludic activities with children donkey-therapy, milk production etc.) must be meant like a natural activity of the donkey, without excessive efforts and stress.

#### **4) RIGHT TO AN ETHICAL TREATMENT**

In its millenarian history at man’s side, the donkey has shared the collective growth of people and civilization, but often it has been denigrated and rendered ridiculous in a wrong way. From that it was born a sure tendency to mockery and insults that today we must abandon, thanks to a rediscovered relationship man-donkey, in a modern perspective of complicity and affectivity.

The use of the donkey in the sport activities and entertainment (competitions, shows, ludic activities, etc.) must consider the respect of the animal and of its physical security, valuing its calm nature, peaceful that has never had the anxiety of running

The donkey does not have to be insulted and its characteristics do not have to be rendered ridiculous

For no reason and never the donkey must be cudgeled or struck or beat.

#### **5) RIGHT TO TRAVEL**

Sometimes it can be necessary to transport our own donkeys by vehicles (trailers, van, etc). During the movements the donkey must receive particular attention to its physical security. The owner must put into effect every behavior norm in order to guarantee a sweet travel without shocks. In the long distances some pauses must be planned in order to avoid excessive stress to the animals

### Cultural aspects

Beyond saving individual donkeys and donkey breeds there is also a view needed to preserve the culture of the donkey and mule keeping, not just as a relict of an agrarian past but as an element of an environmentally sustainable future. From Homeric legends to ancient traditions kept until today, the culture around donkeys is target of the “Hydra Conference”. Already in ancient times, donkeys were used as draught and pack animals, but also for fancy reasons or as a status symbol, like the “Pharao Donkey”, the “white Egyptian” and later the “White Baroque Donkey” in



the Austrian Hungarian Monarchy. Cultural aspects and religious connotations are important to understand history and tradition, like the figure of the donkey and its humility in Islam, Judaism and Christianity. On Hydra, Greece, members of the incipient Free University established a biennial conference on the role of the donkey and the mule in Mediterranean culture, their millennia-long presence and the viability of their future. The first conference was held in 2005 and the second conference took place on 12-14 October 2007. Here also a “Charter for the

working mule and donkey in the Mediterranean” is in progress, which will build upon the work done by other equine organisations.

## NEED FOR ACTION

As shown before, donkeys need to be protected on both sides: as a species at whole and especially the single occurring donkey breeds. Despite the fact that donkeys seem to no longer fit in modern practises, breed selection was never on a high level. Except breeds for mule production, the interest of breed selection or attempts at breeding at all was relatively low. Therefore donkeys seem to be the least of all selected farm animal species in Europe. Maybe this is also a reason why donkeys are in danger of extinction. Nevertheless, if there is any interest to keep this farm animal species, we should get into action as soon as possible.

### Need

The following facts show the need of action very clear:

- Donkeys as species are in danger of extinction. This seems to be a worldwide tendency, but in Europe the trend is dramatic.
- Information about donkey breeds is in danger of being lost. The European Donkey Report shows that there is often no clear description available about breeds and varieties. Up to now it depends mainly on enthusiasts to divide different breeds and varieties. Standardising of breeds and varieties is urgently necessary, especially in areas with a donkey tradition.
- Donkeys are commonly seen as stupid working animals. The image of Donkeys needs to be amended.
- The knowledge about donkeys and their husbandry is very low. Often in the north, donkeys are kept incorrectly, because of misplaced love for animals. In the south, animals are not kept properly, because they are without any value.
- In society, donkeys play a role in legends and stories, but not in the real life. Increasingly, children know donkeys only from fairytales but not in reality. Sparking interest of the public to the donkey in general and also as a part of our culture is necessary.
- Research and monitoring of donkeys is still on a very low level of interest.
- In several countries, donkeys are not accepted as farm animals.

### Realization

- The need of action should be realized on different levels:
- Activities to promote the donkey as a species need more support and notice from the public.
- Awareness raising in the scientific community is necessary. The donkey must be brought out of its shadowy existence.
- Monitoring on a national level is necessary. We need to know more exactly what we have to be able to keep it.
- Research on the differentiation of breeds is urgently necessary. This requires close cooperation of experts throughout Europe to share information and experience.
- Research on donkey welfare, health, nutrition and management is urgent necessary. Health and veterinary care of donkeys needs to be intensified

The European Donkey Report shows clearly, that a transboundary conservation policy is needed to keep the donkey as a part of the European living cultural heritage. Besides the description, the numbers of animals, breeds and strains, also basic information about the recent use and role of the donkey is needed. In a time where everything has to have an economic value, we should not forget that there is another value behind a cultural value which cannot be quantified economically.

This is already shown in religion and mythology, but also in conventions and practices: Jesus came with a donkey to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Muhammad, the prophet of Islam said that "when you hear the braying of donkeys, seek Refuge with Allah from Satan for (their braying indicates) that they have seen a devil." In Ethiopia it is said: "A woman without a donkey is a donkey herself."

For an effective conservation work, SAVE foundation initiates structured conservation programmes and expert networks. This needs a lot of energy and activities as it was shown above. Donkeys at existing places like stations, farms etc. shall be made open to the public for all interested people by the arca-network ([www.arca-net.info](http://www.arca-net.info)). In this way Donkeys shall come into worth again as a companion of men in society.

In this sense: Let's keep the donkeys and not be donkeys. If this Report helps to initiate at least a first step towards a common European strategy for conservation of donkey breeds, strains and varieties, the aim of the investigation will be fulfilled.



Portuguese donkeybreed Burro de Miranda: promotion as a transport animal; source AEPGA, Portugal

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### **Internet links**

Meredith Hodges „Lucky Three Ranch” an American Website with addresses of Mule and Donkey associations in America, Australia and several European countries: <http://www.luckythreeranch.com/muleclubs.html>

Asinomania, an Italian website with several Italian and European Links: <http://www.asinomania.com/links.html>

FAO DAD-IS-Database: <http://dad.fao.org/>

Rome Declaration on World Food Security: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/003/w3613e/w3613e00.htm>

Convention on Biological Diversity: <http://www.cbd.int/>