



Registered miniature horses are no taller than 34 in. from ground to bottom of mane.



Miniature potbellied pigs are a hot commodity, selling for as much as \$13,000 apiece at recent exotic animal auctions.

SALE PRICES FOR SOME "MINIS" REACHING \$100,000

By Bill Gergen, Associate Editor

Business Is Booming For Breeders Of Miniature Animals

Enthusiasm for miniature animals has been growing by leaps and bounds, say breeders of exotic animals.

From a few hundred in 1978, miniature horses now number 28,000 in the U.S. Some 7,500 miniature donkeys are listed with the Miniature Donkey Registry of the U.S., double the number 10 years ago. Pygmy goats have become so popular as pets that owners formed the National Pygmy Goat Association and it's grown from a dozen members to 1,500 in the past 10 years. The American Rabbit Breeders Association says interest in miniature bunnies is so keen that some breeds of larger rabbits have begun to decline sharply in numbers.

Sale prices reflect this popularity. For example, at recent exotic animal auctions prices for mini horses have ranged from \$1,500 to \$10,000. Some special show horses have even sold as high as \$100,000. Miniature potbellied pigs bring in \$13,000 apiece or more. Miniature sheep sell for \$2,500 to \$3,500. Registered mini-goats are a comparative bargain at \$150, and dwarf rabbits can be had for as little as \$20.

Much of the appeal of mini-breeds is that their small size makes them easy to care for. They can be kept in small spaces and require less upkeep and feed than normal sized animals. They're also not as intimidating as full-size animals. For example, miniature horses are an excellent substitute for older people who no longer feel physically able to handle a large horse. Also, some people find miniature animals are friendlier towards humans than their standard-size cousins.

Here's a summary of some of the most popular miniature animals you can buy,

along with who-to-contact addresses. A good source of information on miniature animals, as well as exotic animals of all kinds, is *Rare Breeds Journal*. This bimonthly magazine contains articles on a wide variety of subjects covering all rare and exotic breeds. Subscription price is \$18 per year (\$24 per year in Canada and other countries). Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, *Rare Breeds Journal*, HCR 1, Box 45, Hebron, N.D. 58638 (ph 701 878-4970).

Horses - Technically no taller than 34 in. from the ground to the bottom of the mane, miniature horses can generally be divided into two body types - the more refined Arabian look and the heavier-boned Quarter Horse look. They come in all colors - buckskin, pinto, appaloosa, black, white, sorrel, etc.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Miniature Horse Association, Inc., P.O. Box 129, Burlison, Texas 76028, or The American Miniature Horse Registry, P.O. Box 3415, Peoria, Ill. 61614 (ph 309 691-9661).

Donkeys - Miniature donkeys stand no more than 36 in. high at maturity and weigh 250 to 450 lbs. Natives of the Mediterranean islands of Sicily and Sardinia, they are by nature friendly and affectionate. They love their owners and constantly seek attention through nudges and braying. The average sized 34-in. high donkey can carry up to 100 lbs. on its back so small children can ride them. They're gaining a reputation for their effectiveness as guard animals for sheep and goat breeders because of their natural dislike of dogs and coyotes.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The American Donkey & Mule Association & Miniature Donkey Registry, 2981 N. Elm, Denton, Texas 76201 (ph 817 382-6845). Another good source of information is "Miniature Donkey Talk", a monthly magazine that has become an unofficial forum for miniature donkey and horse fanciers. Sells for \$14 bulk mail or \$18 first class. Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, "Miniature Donkey Talk", 1338 Hughes Shop Road, Westminster, Md. 21157 (ph 301 875-0118).

Cattle - Dexter cattle, a mini breed that originated in Ireland, is the smallest breed of registered cattle. A fully-grown heifer is about as big as a 3-month old Holstein calf. Mature cows stand between 36 and 42 in. tall at the shoulder and weigh not more than 750 lbs. Bulls range from 38 to 44 in. at the shoulder at three years of age and weigh not more than 1,000 lbs. They're dual purpose (milk and meat) horned animals and are black about 90% of the time, although they can also be dun or red. There are an estimated 1,500 Dexter cattle in the U.S. and 2,500 to 3,000 worldwide.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, American Dexter Cattle Association, Rt. 1, Box 378, Concordia, Mo. 64020 (ph 816 463-7704).

Pigs - Vietnamese potbellied pigs mature at 60 to 80 lbs. and stand 16 to 18 in. high. Most are black in color, although a few have tiny splotches of white on their feet or foreheads. They've got wrinkled, funny-looking faces and a much friendlier disposition than the average normal-sized hog, say owners. They make great pets because they're friendly, smart, and adapt easily to a

leash. They can be taught to sit, roll over, climb stairs or jump into a car.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, The Potbellied Pig Registry Service, 20471 Rockstroh Road, Lakeville, Ind. 46536 (ph 219 784-8105 or 219 784-2989 or 219 784-2861). Another source of information is "Pig Tale Times", a newsletter for those interested in Vietnamese potbellied miniature pigs. It sells for \$6 per year in the U.S., \$9 in Canada and elsewhere. Contact: "Pig Tale Times", KiyoKo & Company, P.O. Box 277, Pescadero, Calif. 94060 (ph 415 879-0061).

Sheep - Miniature sheep are 16 to 21 in. tall and weigh 30 to 40 lbs. when mature.

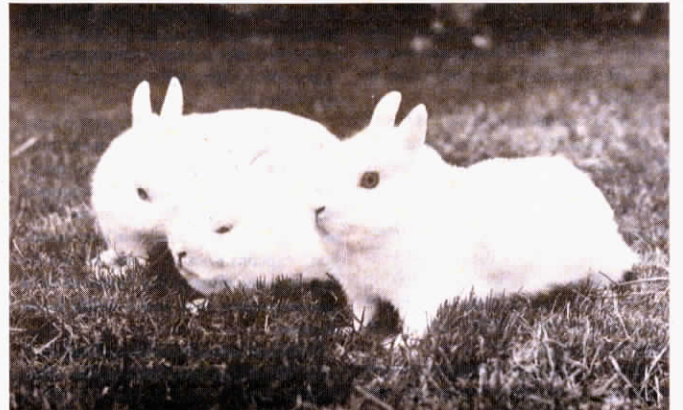
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Pygmy goats evolved in Africa. At maturity they stand less than 2 ft. tall at the withers.



There's a big demand for miniature donkeys to act as "guard dogs" for sheep because of their inbred dislike of dogs and coyotes.



These full-grown miniature rabbits can be held in the palm of your hand.