

## Equine Germplasm of India

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Equines, comprising horses, ponies, and donkeys, have been an integral part of India's cultural heritage, agricultural systems, and traditional practices. India has produced distinctive native breeds over the centuries that are well suited to the nation's varied topography and climate. India possesses about 0.54 million equines as per the 2019 livestock census. The major population of equids comprises donkeys, mules, horses, and ponies. The population of horses and ponies has reduced by 1.81% per year and donkeys declined by 1.53% per year from 1956 to 2019. The registered Indian breeds by National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources, number for horses and ponies is 8 and for donkeys it is 3. These horse breeds not only represent India's abundant biodiversity, but are also essential to agriculture, transportation, rural livelihoods, and ceremonial customs. India's native horse breeding stock, which includes well-known breeds like the Marwari, Kathiawari, Manipuri, and Zanskari, is extremely valuable due to its distinctive traits like resilience, endurance, and adaptability. Breeds of donkeys such as the Halari and Spiti are equally valuable because of their contributions to rural economies, especially in the areas of agricultural labor and transportation.

### Registered Horse and Pony breeds of India: -

**1. Marwari:** - The breeding tract of the Marwari breed is Jodhpur, Udaipur, Jalore, Nagore, Pali,

Sirohi, Barmer, Jaisalmer and Rajsamand districts of Rajasthan. The coat of a Marwari horse is silky and fine. The breed is known for having good forelock, mane, and tail hair growth. Normally, the skin is soft but thick. The mane is long and silky. The mature horse's tail is 45–60 cm long, with hair that reaches the fetlock or occasionally the ground. Nowadays, a horse's color pattern is a crucial consideration, and breeders strive to produce horses with the most sought-after colors that command the highest prices on the market. Marwari horses come in a variety of colors. The head joins the neck at about 45-degree angles, proportionate with good musculature, and the neck breaks into sloping shoulders. The ear length varying from 9 to 15 cm are located on 90-degree axis and can rotate 180 degrees. The meeting of the tips of the ear when the animal is alert is a distinguishing feature of the breed.



**2. Kathiawari:** - The breeding tract of Kathiawari horses is the Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Surendranagar, Junagarh and Amreli districts of Gujarat. They are hardy animals with good bones and easy action. They are well known for their pace, speed and endurance. The Kathiawari are very attractive,

especially those of smaller stature. The animal has a good proportionate body. The most interesting color is dun, often with a definite dorsal list and distinctive "zebra" bars on the legs. Kathiawari horses have a concave face profile. The short, dry face has large nostrils, a small muzzle, and a triangle shape from pole to forehead. The nostril's edge is delicate, tiny, and thin. They have square quarters, short legs, and a long neck. They have big, sensitive, expressive eyes and a broad forehead. Most horses have an erect ear structure. It is distinctive in appearance, and notable features include the highly mobile ears, which curve inwards to touch each other at the tips and can move easily through 360°. The tips of the ears touching each other is the predominant feature of the breed.



**3. Manipuri:** - The Manipuri Pony's light head has a straight profile, a deep chest, sloping shoulders, a well-formed neck, and somewhat prominent withers. The croup is sloping, the legs sturdy and the hooves well-proportioned. It looks elegant all around. They are often bay in color, but can also be pinto, grey and chestnut. Because of the short height of the ponies, riders use shortened mallets while playing polo.



**4. Spiti:** - It is a small, robust mountain horse that is well-suited to the challenging conditions found in the Himalayas. It can move safely on ice, is quick and sure-footed on mountain terrain, and has good endurance and disease and cold resistance. It can be

ridden or used as a pack animal. Grey, piebald, black, and bay are the typical coat colors.



**5. Zanskari:** - A small mountain horse or pony breed from Ladakh in northern India is known as the Zanskari or Zanskari. It takes its name from the Kargil district's Zaskar valley or area. Although it is more suited to working at high elevations, it is comparable to the Himachal Pradesh Spiti breed.



**6. Kachchhi-Sindhi:** - The characteristics of Kachchhi-Sindhi horses are their short back, short pastern length, ears that are curved at the tips but do not touch, and Roman nose. They are mainly used for transportation and riding purpose; they have excellent draught and heat tolerance capacity.



**7. Bhutia:-** The Bhutia is a breed of small mountain horse from Sikkim and the district of Darjeeling in northern India. The usual coat colors are bay and grey.



### 9. Bhimthadi:

They found in the Ahmednagar, Pune, Solapur, and Satara of Maharashtra. A mare's average height is 128 cm, whereas a stallion's is around 130 cm and a stallion's average adult weight is around 267 kg. The colour liver chestnut is the most common coat colour. When pastoral communities in this area migrate, they use them to transport household goods.



### Registered Donkey breeds of India: -

**1. Spiti:** - Found in the high-altitude regions of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh, Spiti donkeys are known for their hardiness and ability to withstand extreme cold. They are primarily used for transportation and agricultural work. Face and body covered with long hairs.

**2. Halari:** - Native to the Kachchh region of Gujarat, white in color Halari donkeys are prized for their strength and endurance. They are often used for pulling carts and carrying heavy loads, they have excellent heat tolerant capacity.



**3. Kachchhi:** - Native to Kachchh region of Gujarat, Kachchhi donkeys are smaller than Halari donkeys but are still hardy and adaptable. They are used for various purposes, including transportation and agricultural work. The animals are Grey in color followed by white or brown.



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