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SAMPLE PREVIEW

MINIATURE DONKEY FARMING 101

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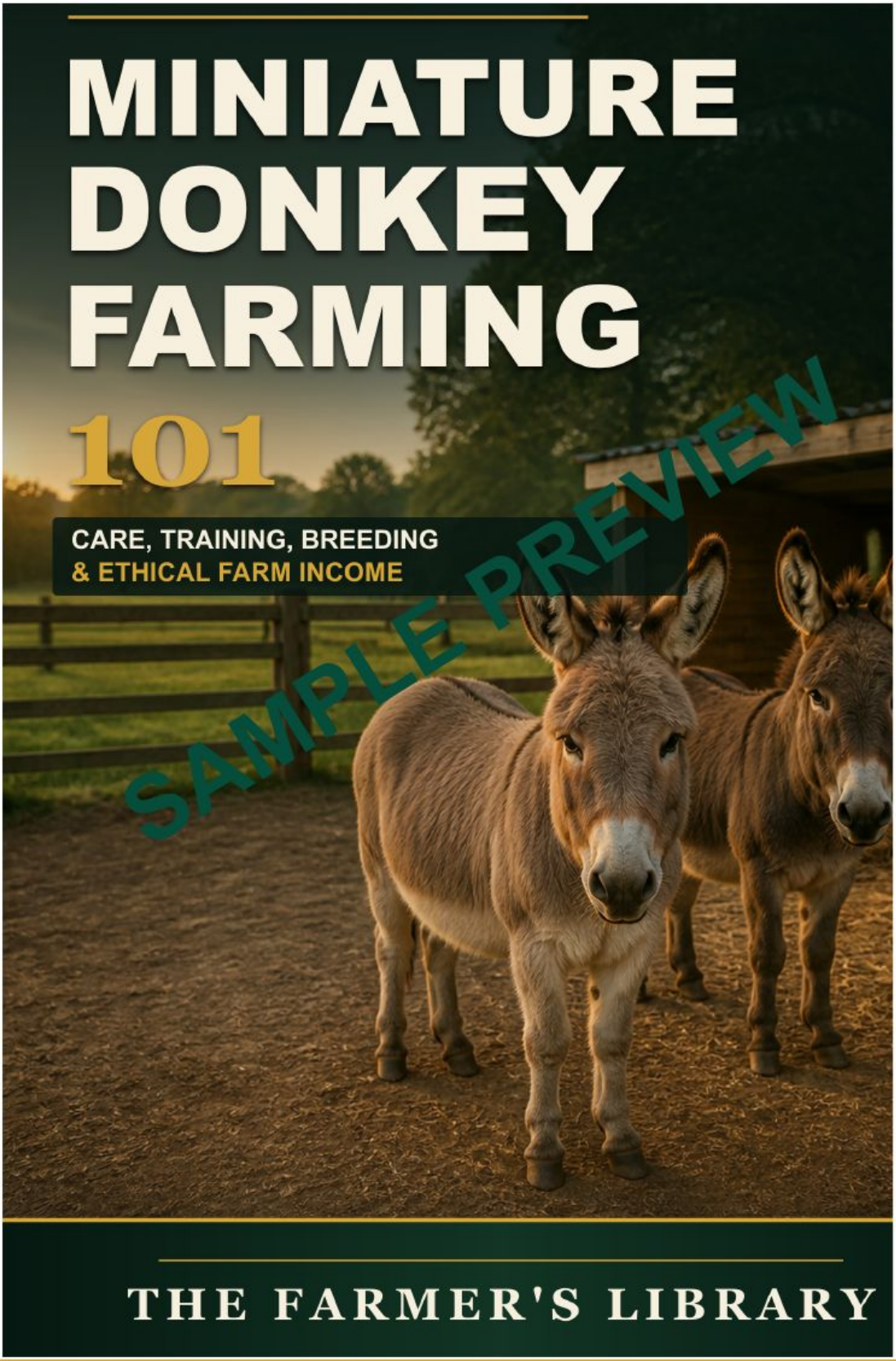
This preview contains selected pages from the complete 221-page eBook:

- The original cover and opening information
- Contents and introductory pages where available
- A practical sample from the opening chapter
- Representative records, checklists or appendices where available

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MINIATURE
DONKEY
FARMING
101
CARE, TRAINING, BREEDING
& ETHICAL FARM INCOME
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Who This Book Is For

This book is for anyone who is seriously considering keeping miniature donkeys and wants practical, grounded guidance before they buy their first animal - and before they discover through painful experience what they should have known in advance. More specifically, it will be useful to:

People deciding whether miniature donkeys are right for them. If you have seen miniature donkeys and want to know what is involved - space, time, money, veterinary commitment, and long-term responsibility - this book gives you the information to make a clear-eyed decision rather than an impulsive one.

First-time miniature donkey owners. If you have recently purchased or adopted miniature donkeys and are building your care systems from scratch, this book provides the working framework you need: daily routines, feeding principles, health monitoring, hoof and dental care, and how to build a working relationship with the right veterinary and farrier support.

Small-acreage farmers and homesteaders. If you have a few acres and are thinking about adding miniature donkeys to your operation, either as companions for other livestock, as part of a small breeding program, or as a draw for agritourism visitors, the enterprise planning chapters will help you assess realistic costs and returns before you commit.

Families considering companion donkeys. Miniature donkeys can be excellent family animals when they are well-handled, properly housed, and purchased from reputable sources. This book explains how to buy the right animals, how to introduce children safely, and what day-to-day family ownership actually looks like.

Beginners considering breeding. Breeding miniature donkeys requires more planning, more expense, and more ethical consideration than many beginners expect. This book covers breeding stock selection, responsible foal production, and the market realities that determine whether a small breeding program is viable.

Agritourism and educational farm operators. If you are considering adding miniature donkeys to a public-facing farm program - for visits, educational sessions, or therapy partnerships - this book addresses the additional planning, insurance, welfare, and management requirements those contexts demand.

People who need care information without images. This book explains everything through text, tables, checklists, and worked examples. No illustrations, photographs, or image-dependent instructions appear anywhere in it.

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How to Use This Book

This book is designed to work at whatever stage you are in the process of becoming a miniature donkey keeper.

If you have not yet bought animals, start with Chapters 1 through 5. These chapters will help you decide whether miniature donkeys belong on your property, teach you what to look for when buying or adopting, and walk you through planning the physical setup your animals will need. Reading these before you spend any money is worth more than reading them afterward.

If you have recently bought donkeys and are now building care systems, the daily practice chapters - 6 through 10 - will give you the routines, feeding principles, health monitoring habits, and emergency awareness you need to keep animals well and recognize problems early.

If you are working toward better handling and training, Chapters 11 and 12 address donkey behavior and practical training in sequence, from understanding how donkeys think to working through the specific skills your animals need for safe daily management.

If you are planning a breeding program, Chapters 13 through 15 cover the ethics of selection, the management of pregnancy and foaling, and the care of foals from birth through weaning. Read these before breeding, not after.

If you want to build an enterprise or understand the business side of donkey keeping, Chapters 17 through 19 examine enterprise options honestly, lay out the real costs, and walk through the sales and marketing process in plain terms.

Chapter 20 brings everything together in a month-by-month first-year plan you can adapt to your own situation.

The appendices contain printable-style worksheets, checklists, record templates, and a glossary. These are designed to be used, not simply read.

All costs mentioned in this book are illustrative categories and ranges only. Actual costs vary by region, by the specific animals you keep, by local feed and labor prices, and by veterinary and farrier rates in your area. Always verify current local numbers rather than assuming any figure in this book applies directly to your situation.

Where sample income or profit examples appear, treat them as worked examples only, not as current price guidance or a promise of earnings. Rebuild every budget with local hay prices, local veterinary and farrier rates, local insurance quotes, current animal prices, your own labor cost, and the rules that apply where you live.

Laws, regulations, veterinary protocols, and welfare requirements vary by country, state, province, county, and municipality. When this book says "check your local rules," that instruction is serious. The advice that follows will help you ask the right questions - the answers depend on where you live.

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CHAPTER 1

Miniature Donkey Farming Without the Fantasy

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Two families each decided they wanted miniature donkeys in the same spring. The first family - call them the Reids - had been thinking about it for two years. They had already fenced a half-acre dry lot, built a three-sided shelter with a concrete apron at the entrance, sourced a large-animal veterinarian who also saw donkeys, and found a farrier with equine experience. They knew what hay cost per bale in their area, they had budgeted for an emergency fund, and they had read every care resource they could locate. They bought two geldings, bonded brothers, from a reputable breeder who provided vaccination records, deworming history, and a two-page care sheet.

The second family - the Martins - saw a miniature donkey at a county fair in June, fell in love immediately, and purchased two jennets through an online ad by August. They had a backyard with some grass, a dog kennel they planned to convert into a shelter, and a vague sense that donkeys were low-maintenance because they were small. They had not spoken to a veterinarian. They did not know what a farrier was.

By October, one of the Martins' jennets had developed a laminitis episode from unrestricted access to lush late-summer grass. Both animals had feet in poor shape from going eight months without farrier work. The dog kennel had flooded. The family had spent four times more on emergency veterinary care than the animals had cost to buy.

condition assessment showed he was gaining weight, added a slow feeder to manage intake, and scheduled their second farrier visit for November. Their vet had been out once for routine wellness checks. They were not making money. They had not expected to make money. They were enjoying the animals enormously.

Both families wanted the same thing. The difference was preparation, not love.

Why Miniature Donkeys Draw People In

The popularity of miniature donkeys has grown steadily over the past three decades in North America, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other English- speaking countries. Social media has accelerated this considerably - a photograph of a miniature donkey under twenty inches tall in snow, or a foal that fits in a person's arms, reaches millions of people and creates demand that would not otherwise exist. This is not inherently a problem, but it creates a particular pattern: people who want the experience they saw in the photograph without fully understanding what supports that experience.

Miniature donkeys appeal because they are appealing in real life, not only in photographs. They are sociable animals that often approach people voluntarily, that respond to routine, that develop visible preferences and recognizable personalities. Kept in pairs and handled well from an early age, they can become animals that children interact with safely, that bring visitors to a farm, and that give their keepers something to look forward to every morning. That appeal is real, not manufactured. What the photographs do not show is the mud, the daily manure removal, the twice-yearly dental checks, the farrier appointments every six to ten weeks, the hay bill in January, the veterinary call at two in the morning when one of them goes off feed and you are not sure why, and the financial reality that most miniature donkey enterprises do not generate net profit when care costs are honestly accounted for.

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Miniature donkeys are classified as equines. That means they share veterinary requirements, hoof care needs, nutritional vulnerabilities, and long-term management demands with horses and ponies - adjusted for their specific size, metabolism, and behavioral profile, which differs from horses in important ways. They are not goats, they are not large dogs, and they are not the kind of livestock that you can set up in a pasture with a round bale and check on once a week. A typical well-managed miniature donkey will live between twenty-five and thirty-five years. You are not buying an animal for a few seasons. You are committing to a care obligation that may outlast your current mortgage, your children's time at home, your current employment, and several different veterinarians and farriers. Every decision you make about whether to bring miniature donkeys onto your property should be weighed against that timeline. The daily time investment is not enormous for a pair of healthy, well- managed miniature donkeys - perhaps thirty minutes in the morning and fifteen in the evening under normal conditions - but it is non-negotiable and it does not stop for weather, vacations, illness, or inconvenience. It expands substantially when animals are sick, when foaling is imminent, when the weather breaks badly, or when a routine situation turns into an emergency.

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The Six Ways People Keep Miniature Donkeys

Before you think seriously about acquiring miniature donkeys, it is worth being clear about which category of keeper you are actually planning to become. These categories are not rigid - some overlap, some evolve over time - but they have very different financial requirements, management demands, and risk profiles, and confusing them is one of the most common sources of beginner frustration. Companion keepers are the most common category. They own two or more miniature donkeys, primarily as pets and farm animals, with no breeding program and no commercial enterprise. Their donkeys are geldings or spayed/never-bred jennets, well-handled, well-cared-for, and maintained as part of a lifestyle rather than a business. Costs exceed income by a predictable margin. This is a legitimate and often rewarding choice.

jack or access to stud service, and produce one to a few foals per year. They may be registered with the National Miniature Donkey Association (NMDA) or another registry. They sell foals as companions or breeding stock. A carefully run hobby breeding program can recoup some costs, but it rarely produces much profit once veterinary care, feeding, farrier work, and the time spent on marketing and buyer communication are factored in. Beginners who start with breeding intentions before they have mastered basic donkey management tend to create welfare problems for their animals and stress for themselves.

Show participants exhibit their animals at NMDA-sanctioned shows or regional events, selecting for conformation, temperament, and breed standard. Showing is an additional cost center, not an income source, except for very successful breeders who command premium prices based on show records.

Driving enthusiasts train their miniature donkeys to pull a cart and participate in driving events. This requires specific training, appropriate equipment, and animals with the right conformation and temperament. It is a niche interest with a dedicated community, not a commercial enterprise.

Agritourism and educational farm operators use miniature donkeys as a draw for paid visitors — petting zoos, birthday parties, school visits, agritourism experiences, hackney farm partnerships, or general public access to a working farm. This category has income potential but also substantial additional requirements: liability insurance appropriate for public visitors, zoning compliance for commercial operations, animal welfare standards for public-facing animals, and management systems that keep animals calm and safe around people who may have no animal experience. Entry-level agritourism with donkeys does not require a large herd, but it requires more planning, compliance work, and risk management than keeping companion animals.

Small breeding enterprises run a larger-scale breeding operation with multiple jennets, careful genetic planning, and regular foal crops sold into the companion and breeding markets. These can approach cost-neutrality with good management, a strong reputation, and consistent buyer demand,

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considerations before making breeding decisions based on pedigree.

Registration, Contracts, and Long-Term Responsibility

Registration with the NMDA or ADMS does not guarantee quality, but it does establish a documented identity for the animal - a number, a pedigree, a recorded description - that benefits buyers, maintains breed records, and supports the registry's ability to track breed health trends. Breeding registered animals and registering their foals contributes to the legitimacy and traceability of the breed, which has long-term value beyond the individual transaction. Breeding contracts - between the owner of a jack and the owner of a jennet, or between a seller and a buyer of breeding stock - should address the expectations of both parties in writing: what happens if the jennet does not conceive after the agreed number of coverings, what veterinary care is expected, what biosecurity protocols apply to a visiting jennet, what the fee structure is, and who bears cost if problems arise. These contracts should be reviewed by a lawyer familiar with livestock transactions in your jurisdiction. The contract that seems adequate when the relationship is friendly often becomes the point of conflict if something goes wrong.

Long-term responsibility for foals means thinking clearly, before breeding, about what happens to every animal you produce over the span of its life. This includes having a rescue-back or right-of-first-refusal clause in your sale contracts, which allows foals you have placed to come back to you rather than being surrendered to a rescue if the buyer's

situation changes. It includes honest buyer screening. It includes not breeding more foals than you can realistically place in appropriate homes in a given year, even if you could physically produce more.

Table 17: Breeding Suitability Matrix

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straight legs; even bite; strong back Use with Caution Minor deviations that do not affect soundness Do Not Breed Significant structural deviations; parrot mouth; chronic lameness Trait Temperament Strongly Suitable for Breeding Consistently calm; easy to catch and handle; manageable in new situations Use with Caution Slightly nervous but manageable with experienced handling Do Not Breed Unpredictable; biting or striking; extremely difficult to handle Trait Soundness Strongly Suitable for Breeding No lameness; moves freely; no chronic health conditions Use with Caution Single resolved episode; well-managed chronic condition Do Not Breed Active lameness; unmanaged metabolic disease; chronic pain Trait Size (jennets specifically) Strongly Suitable for Breeding Appropriate size for safe foaling Use with Caution Very small jennet; consult vet about foaling

risk before breeding Do Not Breed Jennet whose pelvic structure, [illegible] high foaling risk Trait Health history Strongly Suitable for Breeding Clear vaccination/deworming history; known pedigree

Use with Caution Incomplete records; partially known

background Do Not Breed Unknown history; known hereditary

conditions Trait Reproductive history (jennets) Strongly Suitable for Breeding Previous uncomplicated foalings; good

maternal behavior Use with Caution First-time foaling at older age Do Not Breed History of dystocia; poor maternal behavior

with foal at foot Market and placement plan Strongly Suitable for Breeding Identified buyers or clear demand in your

area Use with Caution Uncertain demand; limited buyer network Do Not Breed No placement plan; breeding only for

personal reasons Checklist: Reasons Not to Breed This Animal Consider each of the following carefully. If any apply, the breeding decision should be reconsidered or delayed: - The animal has a significant conformational defect that affects or is likely to affect soundness - The animal has a bite deviation (parrot mouth or underbite) - The animal is routinely difficult or dangerous to handle - The animal has unmanaged or chronic metabolic disease - The animal has a history of repeated illness, lameness, or serious veterinary problems - The animal's breeding history includes dystocia or complications - The animal is very small and foaling risk has not been

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or using partial separation with visual contact - can reduce acute distress but extends the overall weaning period. It works best with good management of both the foal's solid food intake and the jennet's milk production.

Whichever approach is used, the weaned foal should be housed with at least one appropriate social companion immediately following separation. A foal weaned into solitary housing does not simply grieve for its dam; it is also deprived of social learning and companionship that are fundamental welfare needs. A weanling companion, or housing near older calmer animals it can see and interact with through safe fencing, significantly reduces the stress of weaning.

Registration and Sale Preparation

If the foal is to be registered, initiate the paperwork early. Registry processes vary in their timelines and requirements, and some registries have age windows for registration that can be missed if the process is not started promptly. Registration typically requires a description of the animal (color, markings, sex), parent registration numbers, documentation of the breeding, and a fee. Foals intended for sale should have a complete health history documented from birth: vaccination status, deworming records, farrier records (first trim typically needed at two to three months of age), veterinary records, and the results of any health testing. Buyers of foals have a right to complete information and providing it is both ethical and commercially sound - buyers who receive thorough records are better positioned to continue appropriate care and more likely to recommend you as a source to others. Checklist: First 24 Hours After Foaling Within the first hour: - Foal makes standing attempts before 90 minutes (call vet if not) - Jennet is licking and attending to the foal - Umbilical cord has been treated with dilute chlorhexidine solution - Preventive enema given per vet protocol Within 2-4 hours: - Foal standing and nursing (call vet if not nursing by 3-4 hours) - Meconium passage occurring (call vet if straining without passing) - Foaling area safe and dry; foal not chilled Within 6-12 hours: - Foal nursing regularly and frequently - Jennet's placenta passed (call vet if retained past 3 hours) - Jennet eating and drinking normally - No signs of uterine pain in the jennet Within 24-48 hours: - Veterinary examination of the foal completed - IgG test performed and result assessed - Foal alert, active, nursing well -

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with times in foal record

Table 19: Foal Development and Handling Milestones

Age Birth to 2 hours Normal Development Standing attempts; first nursing Handling Goal Observe with minimal interference

Warning Signs Not standing by 90 min; not seeking udder Age 2-12 hours Normal Development Nursing established; meconium passed Handling Goal Allow bonding; dip umbilicus; gentle brief

contact Warning Signs Not nursing; straining without passing

meconium Age 12-48 hours Normal Development Active, alert; nursing frequently Handling Goal Brief handling sessions; introduce touch on

body Warning Signs Weak or lethargic; reduced nursing; joint

swelling Age Days 3-7 Normal Development Mobile; beginning to investigate paddock Handling Goal Introduce small halter; practice catching Warning Signs Swollen umbilicus; persistent fever; lameness Age Weeks 2-4 Normal Development Nibbling at hay; following dam closely Handling Goal Lead a few steps in hand; groom briefly Warning Signs Weight loss; persistent diarrhea; respiratory

signs Age Months 1-3 Normal Development Increasingly independent; playing; solid food

interest growing Handling Goal Picking up feet; accepting full grooming;

short leading Warning Signs Failure to gain weight; abnormal gait

developing Age Months 3-6 Normal Development Preparation for weaning; solid food primary Handling Goal Confident haltering and leading; loads

calmly Warning Signs Any health decline as weaning approaches Age Post-weaning Normal Development Social integration; independent feeding Handling Goal Consistent handling without jennet present;

continue all skills Warning Signs Significant anxiety; weight loss; social

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health history including vaccinations and deworming, good handling and training, selling in bonded pairs, younger age, proven companion temperament, and a breeder reputation for quality and buyer support.

What limits price: lack of registration, incomplete health records, minimal training, selling singles rather than pairs, animals older than twelve to fifteen years, any known health history that buyers will need to manage.

The companion market rewards breeders who screen buyers carefully, sell pairs consistently, and provide after-sale support. The reputation built over five or ten years of placing animals responsibly - with buyers who come back for a second animal, who refer friends, and who do not struggle through their first year because you gave them no guidance - is worth more commercially than any single sale.

Example: a breeder sells two bonded geldings to a family rather than splitting them because two separate buyers each wanted "just one." The immediate revenue might be the same either way, but the paired sale reduces stress for the animals, makes the buyer more likely to succeed, and protects the breeder's reputation. In miniature donkeys, ethical placement is long-term marketing.

Breeding Programs

A small breeding program - one to three jennets producing one to three foals per year - is the foundation of most registered miniature donkey enterprises. The economics of breeding are often less favorable than breeders expect when they begin.

The cost of producing a foal includes: the stud fee or the cost of keeping a jack (which includes his full feed, farrier, veterinary, and housing costs allocated across the number of foals he sires in a year), extra veterinary care for the pregnant jennet, increased hay and supplementation in late pregnancy and lactation, foaling supplies, the foal's first veterinary exam and IgG testing, umbilical care, registration fees, and the time investment in early handling and socialization. These costs must be recouped in the foal's sale price before any profit is calculated.

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