

As we face our long prairie winters in our part of the world, let me give mule and donkey owners a refresher on some basic care that they require.

First, even though mules and donkeys require less feed than a horse their size and actually do better on a coarser quality of feed [grass hay is best, with little or no alfalfa], they still do need to eat and also require access to fresh water [not snow] and loose minerals and salt to supplement their diet. Salt blocks that are sold for cattle work fine for them and their coarse tongues, but mules, donkeys and horses have much smoother tongues and would have to lick for a very long time to get the salt they require.

Straw bedding is very much appreciated as like cattle, they do like to spend some of the day lying down. Shelter from wind and rain is absolutely NECESSARY, especially for donkeys!! Donkeys tend to grow longer, coarser coats that lack the protective undercoat that horses have in the winter. Their coat does NOT provide the protection needed during periods of weather extremes (colder and wet weather). Once a donkey gets wet and then it turns cold, the outcome can be deadly! We must remember that the donkey originates from the desert and they retain some of that ancestry. Please make sure your donkey has a shelter to get into and that he is allowed by other equines to use it. I can't stress how important that is.

There are far too many mules and donkeys that suffer from lack of proper trimming or any hoof care at all! Mules and donkeys have hooves that are tougher and more elastic and they are narrow in shape. The hoof wall is rounded and thick in the toe area, more pinched in and thinner at the quarter and flared out and thick at the heel. The bars are thick and prominent and the length of the hoof wall itself is relatively long and upright. They are generally trimmed at a steeper angle than a horse, but again should follow the angle of the shoulder. Too many in our part of the country are left with heels too low and toes too long and that can cause lameness. Please call in a competent farrier to make sure your stock goes into the winter with properly trimmed feet!

At our semi-annual meeting in Oct, we laid out plans for our events in 2015 including hosting a series of Jerry Tindell Clinics in early summer at several locations across Alberta and one clinic in Saskatoon, SK. You can contact me at marlenequiring@hotmail.com for updates on the clinics. We sure missed Jerry's help last year and the need is still there for his teaching and support. Visit our website for much more information on donkey and mule care under the RESOURCES tab at www.albertadonkeyandmule.com



Trimming a mules foot



a donkey with his left foot trimmed and the other untrimmed



close up of the right club foot and all its extra growth



Both feet properly trimmed - by Jerry Tindell [also a farrier]

Merry Muletidings to all!
Marlene Quiring