

Alberta Donkey and Mule Club News, October, 2014

Our club website often gets questions regarding the care, behavior and differences between horses and mules or donkeys.

One subject that comes up is proper hoof care and trimming for a mule or donkey. Not all farriers get this training and so it is up to the owner to make sure that first the farrier is willing to work with a longears and has some understanding of them and secondly, has taken instruction in the differences in trimming them as compared to a typical horse's hoof. Unfortunately, there is a serious lack of farriers in Canada that are willing to do donkeys and mules, or that know how to trim them properly. Consistent incorrect trimming can cause lameness and other problems. Please visit our website and look under RESOURCES for articles on proper trimming for mules and donkeys.

Another subject that comes up often is proper fitting tack for mules and donkeys. Like horses, mules will have a wide range of backs - short, long, wide, narrow, flat or with some twist. Donkeys for the most part will have very straight and flat backs and tend to have spines that somewhat protrude as do some mules. It is very important that no pressure is put on their spine. Saddles need to be wide enough to fit individual backs, and the fit can be modified with a great understanding of the use of saddle pads and shims in order to achieve the best fit possible. If someone tells you that what you need to fit your mule is a mule saddle, be aware that you still have to make sure that the tree used in that "mule" saddle actually is the right shape to fit your mule! As with horses, care must also be taken to not ride with your saddle too far forward. If you do you can seriously limit their range of motion and cause them much discomfort as the saddle tree can be interfering with the movement of their shoulder blade. Donkeys can be very stoic about bad fitting tack, but mules not so much! Again, I want to refer you to our RESOURCES section on our website www.albertadonkeyandmule.com for many informative articles including several on Conformation, Saddle and Tack Fitting and selection.



Bill Thorpe of Pincher Creek, AB. On his young mule. Using a well fitted and properly placed britching can help keep your saddle in place especially when traveling in the mountains. When a britching is placed too low, it will interfere with movement of the hind legs

My last little point is that mules love horses! First time owners are often concerned about introducing their new mule to their horses. A mule seems to never forget his mother and carries with him for life, a great love of the horse. Even if that horse treats the mule badly, the mule will still want to be with a horse as compared to being with another mule.



Heather Shandro of Vegreville, AB and her mini mule competing in the Log Pull at Tees Longears Days. Its important to use a collar that fits properly, not too tight but also not so big that it slops around. Also the rest of the harness needs to be adjusted to the size and body of the mule or donkey for optimum performance.

Our Semi- Annual meeting has been set for Sunday, Oct 26, at 1 pm at the Ponoka Drop In Center, 5015-46 ave. Ponoka, AB. Please attend as this is the organizational meeting that sets the venues for 2015! Everyone welcome! Please bring a salad or a dessert to compliment Marlene's chili supper after the meeting!

Marlene Quiring