

Alberta Donkey and Mule News, Feb. 2010

Submitted by Vicki Barrow

This past year has been an education in the naming of critters. We've been introduced to many long-ears and other equines with interesting names. Everything from biblical (Moses) to physiological (Ain't Got No Doodles and Freckles). Arachnidian (Spider) and colourful (Red Mulrooney and Ruby). Some critters are literary with Xote (as in Don Quixote,...you have to say it fast) and Stella, or nefarious with Clyde Barrow of the Burro Gang (as in Bonnie and Clyde). A few are confusing, as in a molly mules named Horse or Sonney. Some names are inherited from the original owners and others seem to name themselves. Personally, I love the name of a mule I was privileged to drive in a class, her name was Daisy. I was tickled pink to be driving Miss Daisy! All are members of the family whether they are companion animals, (as Xote and Clyde were originally, or are working animals that drive, trail ride, do snigging or guard sheep. Long ears are a diverse and versatile group.

We spent a fair amount of time last year in various information booths handing out literature, breeder's lists and answering questions about donkeys and mules. Perhaps the most interesting and surprising question was "What do you do with them?" I have to admit, about four years ago I would have been hard pressed to give an answer to that. Now, I have seen donkeys and mules excel at precision driving, jumping (both hunter/jumping and coon jumping), trail riding, barrel racing and pleasure riding. They can pull logs out of the bush and keep their riders safe, as they are a thinking animal. I liken their personalities to a cross between a smart dog and a horse. Their natural curiosity and willingness to do new things is amazing. Their strength and stamina are impressive to me as well as to some notable figures in history.

The conquistadors brought donkeys or burros with them to the New World and the offspring of those animals are still working in Mexico and the southern US.

I read recently that George Washington was responsible for bringing the first Mammoth Jack stock to North America in 1785 as he was impressed with mules and wanted to introduce the larger animals to his farming after his retirement from office. He received "Royal Gift" a mammoth jack as a gift from the King of Spain along with an unnamed jenny. There were originally two jacks sent, but one was apparently not a good sailor and didn't make it across the Atlantic. Royal Gift had exceptionally long ears, measuring in at fourteen inches. Washington received another gift, this time from his good friend, Lafayette, another mammoth jack with less impressive ears, measuring twelve inches, but apparently a very hard working and vociferous animal that introduced the surrounding countryside to his distinctive voice. Apparently the Knight of Malta liked his work and let everyone know about it.

February is a month of reviewing and planning. Reviewing the previous years activities and improving on those for the coming year. Please mark your calendars and join us for as many ADMC events as you can.

March 7th we will be holding our Semi-annual general meeting with a pot luck lunch at noon and the meeting to follow at 1:30. Join us at the Drop in Centre located at 5015 – 46th Avenue, Ponoka. Just a reminder that you don't have to "own" a donkey or mule to become a member,

We will be appearing at the Mane Event again this year April 23rd to 25th, please stop by to say hello and ask any questions you may have about donkeys or mules, or as Russ Shandro likes to call them, 'the half horse'.

Please check the website Albertadonkeyandmule.com to see what events are coming up. We hope to see you at Long Ears Days on the 16th and 17th of August either in the stands but hopefully riding your mule or donkey in competition. It really is the friendliest equine event around. If you don't have a mule or donkey and want to ride one, I'm sure that can be arranged.

The Alberta Donkey and Mule Club will be at Spruce Meadows in September to compete in the Battle of the Breeds and we will be represented in Breeds of the World and showcase a variety of animals to folks that are as fascinated with our long eared friends.

[Vicki and her husband Paul are relatively new club members, but have dived in'' head first'' and been immensely supportive, enthusiastic and hard working amb''ass''adoors of the Longears! They head up the promotional committee, which organizes and maintains the club booth at all events we participate in. They presently share their lives with their two donkeys Xote and Clyde. Our thanks to Vicki for also volunteering to write this month's newsletter – Marlene Quiring]



Xote and Clyde getting suited out



Daisy taken at last year's Tees Longears Days



Clyde at Sunset