

ALBERTA DONKEY AND MULE CLUB NEWS, APRIL, 2009

[For those that are interested in the new executive]

2009 – 2010 Executive

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Our meeting March 1st, had an excellent turn out with many past members returning to share the workload. Congratulations to our new President Wes Bott, Treasurer Twyla Daly and Secretary Ron Morphy, New Directors are Lynn Weed and Danny Gibson. With such a diverse group of people, we should have a very exciting year!

Watch for us April 24 -26 at Booth #309 at the Mane Event in Red Deer. This gives us a great opportunity to advertise our events planned for this year plus make available information to the public about our still much misunderstood favorite equines. Maybe we will even have a chance to demo with a mule or a donkey.

We are very disappointed that last years' presenter on behalf of the longears, Jerry Tindell, from California, will not be in attendance but we do have a series of Clinics scheduled with him at the Lakedell Ag. Society at Westeros, AB. from July 10 -19. Jerry works with mules, horses and donkeys, riding, packing or driving and did a fantastic job for us last year with two clinics. There will be more information available at our Booth plus registration forms or you can contact me, Marlene at 403 783-5210. We will also have information on other Club Events, including our big yearly show, Tees Longears Days, August 15-16. We are especially excited to be celebrating the 20th Anniversary of this fun, family orientated salute to the longears! Please check our website www.albertadonkeyandmule.com for a complete list of events.

This is an exciting time of the year if a foal is expected, be it donkey, mule or horse. Those of us that have been around foals a lot tend to forget that most people do not always know the things about foal raising that we sometimes take for granted. The following is a little reminder of what it takes to "make a mule."

MAKING A MULE

A mule is a hybrid animal, the off spring of mating a male [Jack] donkey with a female horse. The horse may be of any breed, thus the mule can be a "made to order" animal. When a female donkey is bred to a horse stallion, which is much harder to accomplish, the offspring looks much like a mule but is called a hinny.

Donkeys [usually mammoths] intended for the production of mules must be raised with horses. This way they think of themselves as a horse and are attracted to mares and often then will not want to breed a jennet, as she is not one of their kind. Breeding a mare that is unfamiliar with donkeys to a donkey Jack is usually not that easy. Most folks fail to realize that the mare may not be receptive to a donkey and unless knowledgeable handlers supervise the breeding, the attempt can be futile. Some Jacks will pasture breed but some will not as their cautious nature often makes them timid with mares in heat. Thus "hand breeding" or Artificial Insemination is the best way to insure a successful outcome. The gestation period for a mule is the same as a horse, around 11 months. Donkey jennets carry their donkey babies for 12 months or more.

Mule and donkey foals do not often exhibit the early shyness that a horse foal usually does to human presence and touch. This "natural" trust can be built upon with consistent

and careful handling or it can be easily destroyed by over-exuberant and insensitive treatment. This does not mean that the foal is allowed to kick or bite, but often just a harsh word is enough to let them know that their behavior is not acceptable. Mules are extremely sensitive creatures and understand fair discipline but if treated with unnecessary cruelty they quickly categorize humans as bad news. Mules that are roughly and meanly treated can become branded as outlaws and can be very difficult to train and are best left for those who know how to re-gain the mule's mind and trust.

Most breeders agree that handling the young animals correctly from birth is the best way to ensure that the future of the mule or donkey is a good one with their new owner.

Happy Foaling
Marlene Quiring

(pictures on following page...)



Trailer Loading with Jerry Tindell at last years clinic.



Two "participants" at Jerry's clinic last year. Flame on the right and Clip Clop on the left are full brother and sister. Their mother is a draft cross mare and their father a mammoth Jack.