

Alberta Donkey and Mule Club News, July, 2007

Each summer, many of our members together with friends and families try and spend a little time riding our great Alberta Rockies. After all, there is no more sure-footed animal on a mountain trail than a donkey or a mule. Plan to join us for the weekend of July 27-29 for our annual Hummingbird Trail Ride. Horse riders are welcome too. There are trails for every level of riding skills. If you need directions or have questions, please call Keith Kendrew at 403 843-3293. Roy and I had to miss last year's ride, but this year we plan to be there!

TEES LONGEARS DAYS, August 18-19, at the Tees Rodeo Grounds, 25 km east of Lacombe, AB. on Hwy 12. Two days of mule and donkey events ranging from hilariously funny classes to driving, jumping and cowboy polo. Previous participants should have received an entry form in the mail by now, but if not, phone our show chair, Ethel Hollihan at 403 783-3083, or check out the program on our club website at www.albertadonkeyandmule.com. If all else fails, you can just show up with your mule or donkey and enter the day of the show. Pre entries are appreciated but we realize that haying and work sometimes get in the way of having fun! Advance Supper Tickets need to be ordered through Ethel and we would appreciate donations toward the Fun Auction that helps to keep this show running and enables us to keep the entry fees low. If you want to ride in the Drill Team, you need to show up Friday night at 7:30 for practice.

Our Trip to Bishop, California

At the end of May, for our honeymoon, Roy and I elected to travel to Bishop, California for the biggest Donkey and Mule Show in the World. I have wanted to attend for years and Roy was "game" enough to take me there. I know, it might not be everyone's idea of a place to honeymoon.... But for a "mule nut" like me, it was ideal!

The weather was hot during the day and cool at night, Bishop is in northern California surrounded by the Sierra Mts. We saw many wonderful mules and donkeys and the talented folks that showed them in a vast array of classes. The show lasts 6 days building up to the Saturday and Sunday performances. It is impossible to see it all as often, several rings are running at the same time. It was good to see so many animals, but it was also nice to see that we DO have donkeys and mules right here in Alberta, that although generally not as well trained, could be very capable of comparing with the stock at Bishop.

A huge Trade Fair is held in conjunction with the show and many exhibitors have animals for private sale during the show. It is very impressive, but the biggest thrill for me was the opportunity to watch a truly wonderful teacher, Jerry Tindell from Hesperia, CA. host 2 daily hour-long clinics all 6 days of the show.

This free event was provided by Bishop Mule days and I sure want to commend them on picking a wonderful educator.

Jerry Tindell's training program works on horses, mules, donkeys, wild mustangs AND

any of the previous that are "troubled" - Jerry's term for equines that have suffered abuse or been mishandled in any way. In other words those that have been labeled "no good" or "outlaws" by their behavior. Throughout all of the clinics, safety was always emphasized, for the human and for the equine.

There are many good trainers that use similar methods but Jerry's "edge" is that "he never stops talking"! It didn't matter what was going on in the round pen, whether it was a couple of donkeys with "separation anxiety" or a mule and rider that needed to communicate better, Jerry NEVER quit explaining what was going on, why it was happening, how to correct it, how to see the "try" in the animal and how the rider or handler needed to respond to that. At no time, did he suggest that mechanical means, bigger tools, bigger spurs, or harsher bits had anything to do with making a better mule, horse or donkey.

Learning to have good "feel" and "timing" are what is required on our part in order to get the most out of our equines. Jerry Tindell believes we all can be taught how to do this ourselves and he succeeds! Time and again we witnessed owners, "getting it" and with Jerry's enthusiasm, they began to believe in themselves and develop focus so that they could indeed be the leader of their mule or donkey. Jerry was able to "teach" Timing and Feel to participants, the truly great tools necessary in order to produce a soft, willing equine partner.

Jerry believes that groundwork is crucial and that you "ride the horse, mule or donkey that you lead." Jerry teaches the components of groundwork that are essential to establish before you proceed to ride your critter. If they do not lead well, will not yield their shoulder to you but want to "brace" their neck instead, are not soft in the poll, won't stand still, do not back well etc. they will have the same problems under saddle. Jerry has a very simple program to fix all of these things and he loves to teach people how to do this themselves. Anyone that is willing to learn can master the process. This is very "good news" for mule and donkey people 'cause if you've been around these critters long, you likely know what its like to be taken on a "ski ride." For those that don't, it is when a donkey or mule bolts while being led and because of the brace they can put in their necks, takes you "skiing" across the terrain...until you let go! Jerry can teach us how to fix that in our animals and it doesn't take whips, nerve lines or brute strength to do it. And the end result will be a mule, horse or donkey that is soft and willing in the end.

Questions from the audience on many training problems included trailer loading, being cold-backed, hard to catch etc. Jerry always had an answer, which included why it was happening and what was needed on our part to correct the behavior. At no time, did he suggest harsh methods should be used. He always explained how to use release from pressure, with good feel and timing in order to get the correct response. Respect for the animal, developing understanding without resistance or fear is key to our success with our critters.

We are hopeful that arrangements can be made to bring Jerry to Alberta next year for a

clinic. We purchased two of Jerry's tapes - Rachael the "troubled" mule and "Ground Work," to help remind us of what we learned at Bishop. I highly recommend that if you get the opportunity to attend a Jerry Tindell clinic or view his tapes, that you do so. Whether you prefer horses, mules, donkeys or mustangs or have any one of these that is "troubled," Jerry has the savvy to help you with your critter! You can read more about Jerry on his site www.jerrytindell.com

See you at the Hummingbird Trail Ride!

Marlene [Malcher] Quiring