

Alberta Donkey and Mule Club News, June, 2008

If you're interested in joining a group of us to ride or drive in the Ponoka Stampede Parade on Friday, June 27, give me a call at 403 783-5210. The parade starts from the arena grounds north of the Stampede, at 10 am, with the judging at 9:30 am. We've had a good turn out the last few years and been in the ribbons each time. Shine up your mule or donkey, put on your best duds and join us!

The MANE EVENT Report!

Many club members plus about 40,000 other enthusiasts attended the fantastic equine expo the "Mane Event" at Red Deer, AB. April 25 -27. The Alberta Donkey and Mule Club had an information booth at the event and several club members also participated in the Jerry Tindell clinics during the three days. I was one of the lucky ones that got to be there in person with my mule and benefit from Jerry's teachings.

Jerry is a horse/mule trainer from Oak Hills, California. He has a background in horse and mule logging, packing, training horses for mounted law enforcement and training mustangs. At the Mane Event, he worked with several mules and donkeys and a very troubled Arabian horse with amazing results. Jerry says the training approach is the same for all equines. His training is based on the belief that "you ride the horse/mule or donkey that you lead." It does make a lot of sense that if you have "holes" in your groundwork, it will show up under saddle. Often we are so anxious to get riding that we miss building a thorough connection with our animal on the ground first. How many of us have tried "fixing" an animal from the saddle without going back and fixing our foundation first? Jerry's program revolves around building a safe, responsive horse/mule handler relationship.

Jerry says that "we need to be in control but not controlling." He does not use training gimmicks or harsh bits but relies on his years of experience working with mules and horses and his understanding of equine behavior to achieve a safe, soft responsive animal. It is imperative that we as handlers develop our sense of timing and feel. We need to "look for the try" and reward it immediately with release of pressure. Jerry has the ability and desire to share and teach these skills to his students. Jerry's wife Toni, says "Jerry hates down time, he loves to teach and work stock from dusk to dawn!"

As to the very common thought that "Mules and donkeys have to be trained different than a horse," Jerry disagrees with that. He says the same basics apply with any equine. There are differences in the animals, but you work with what you have and you work with those differences. For example, you cannot push a donkey past what he can give you. You have to be able to read each individual animal, no matter what the breed. Mules are often quick learners, whether good or bad, so it's important to get things right to start with as otherwise retraining can be difficult.

A simple halter and a lead rope are Jerry's basic tools, no nerve lines, special tack or other devices that some mule trainers promote as the only way to a mule's brain. Watching Jerry work with animals with problem areas, made me realize that "gimmick's

and pain infliction devices" that are still advertised in the mule world need to be replaced with better training methods. However as long as the mule and donkey lovers continue to support and idolize those that rely on inflicting pain as a training tool, these "trainers" will continue to flourish. We need to embrace more trainers like Jerry Tindell, Brad Cameron and others that have found a "better way!"

Jerry Tindell is coming back to Alberta, August 8 -10 to Equine Wise Services, Tofield, to instruct a clinic sponsored by the ADMC. Due to his well-received clinics at the Mane Event, we have many horse owners that also want to attend. Unfortunately the clinic is already full, but we encourage anyone that couldn't participate with their animal to come and audit. The auditors fee is \$30 a day. Jerry's personal clinic organizer, Susan Brewer says that " Auditors receive a tremendous benefit because Jerry always involves his audience a great deal." No pre-registrations is necessary BUT, if you would like to purchase lunch for each day you must pre-order through me. The facility is 20 minutes from any food outlet so you might want to do this or bring your own lunch. Please call me at 403 783-5210 well before the clinic to order any lunches. Go to the website www.albertadonkeyandmule.com for maps to Equine Wise Services and further information on this and other events.

Don't forget the Club Trail Ride at the Hummingbird, July 25 -27. Phone Keith Kendrew at 403 843-3293 if you have any questions. All equines welcome!

See you on the trail!
Marlene Quiring



Jerry Tindell instructing at his clinic at THE MANE EVENT, Red Deer, Alberta April 25 -27. Colleen Campbell and Blossom the donkey, one of the participants.



A couple of photos at "Meet and Greet" the Breed at the Mane Event. Katherine Cook and Jane the mule in onein the other photo...the same with donkeys in the back. Janie is a show jumping mule...thus the haircut!