

Ok... Are you up to owning a Mule?

Lots of people have opinions about those curious beasts who are the offspring of the mating of a horse with a donkey. One wise man said you must treat a mule the way you should treat a horse.

What type of riding do you do?

Select a mule to meet your needs. Because mules can come from any breed of mare and from different sizes and types of jacks, try to select your mule with the mental and physical aptitudes you need. Keep in mind that the jack will contribute to size, disposition, and soundness, but the majority of the mental attitudes and athletic ability will come from the mother. Know what you expect from your mule before you buy him, and select him to meet your expectations.

Do you enjoy head games?

If you like to match wits, you will enjoy mules. They are highly intelligent animals who are always thinking. Mules don't program like a horse, so in your training you need to mentally challenge your mule, keep him interested, quit before you bore him, and give him praise when he responds well. If your mule gets mad, or is in a bad mood, you might as well forget the day's training session. Realize, when you have a well – trained mule, that he is humoring you by responding correctly to your cues. Make him mad and watch him ignore you.

How patient are you?

It takes patience to own mules. You have to be able to out think them, not overpower them. If you start trying to force a mule to do something, instead of convincing them that he wants to do it your way, you will have problems. Working with mules involves a lot of head games.

How experienced with horses are you?

If you have not ridden or owned horses, you may not have enough background to deal with mules. They are smart, and if you make mistakes with them, they will take advantage of you. You must understand equine psychology and be able to read horse or mule body language – something that takes time and experience. If you allow your mule to outsmart you, he will.

OK... So are you up to owning a Mule (Or being owned by a Mule)?

In our next edition we will explore why there are more mules than horses in the world. We will also share why on the average mules are worth more than horses at sales around the world.