

DONKEY DIGEST

The Magazine of the Affiliated Donkey Societies of Australia

June 2017



DONKEY DIGEST

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'Sweet 'n' sour' would be an apt description of my feelings right now. The 'sweet' is the usual uplifting feeling I have when I am reminded of how much joy and fun we all experience with our donkeys and mules. This issue of Donkey Digest reinforces that with such diverse activity including donkeys on national TV, starring in weddings, camping out in the bush and a whole lot more.

It's also heartening to see that Australian animals who served and died during the war will be permanently remembered with the construction of an Australian War Animal Memorial in France. This will be dedicated in an official ceremony at Pozieres next month. We are sending remembrance wreaths to be laid at the new Memorial and hopefully will bring you pictures in the next Digest. Lest We Forget our fallen animal heroes.

On a current 'sour' note, I find the global situation donkeys are now in to be appalling. The Chinese demand for donkey skins to make ejiao is resulting in big money being paid to secure donkeys from Africa. Theft and cruelty are rife but what's of long-term concern is the rapidly diminishing gene pool in countries where working donkeys are still vital to the economy. Poor farmers cannot replace these donkeys they depend on so much, and governments of affected African countries are struggling to stem the tide.

Australia is also well and truly in the Chinese sights. Why not round up the wild 'feral' donkeys of the outback, process them here and ship the chilled meat and skins to China? In the meantime we can set up donkey farms or donkey feedlots and send as many live animals to China as we can produce. It's not a wild idea. It is happening. The federal Department of Agriculture is now preparing regulatory changes to facilitate live export of equines such as donkeys, ponies and horses. Read the update on Page 8.

Donkeys need our help now more than ever. Please stand up and help your state donkey society by taking on a committee position. 'Someone else' won't always do it.

Happy Trails,

Christine

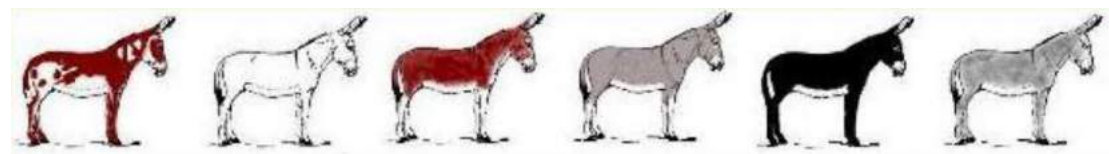
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COVER PHOTO:

TV stars Thumbelina and Snookums with owner Noeline Cassettari and her daughter Jodi, Read the full story on Page 4.



Registrar's Roundup

with Kerrie Haynes-Lovell

Transfer	Reg. number	From	To	Transfer number
Yurrah Moxie (mule)	15/001MO	Fiona Mottram	Tania Broadwood	16/039
Sentosa Razzamattazz	89/004GE	Pam Newton	Rachel Haslay	16/037
Camara Image	89/012JE	Pam Newton	Rachel Haslay	16/036
Pamaldon Pepperlee	92/023JE	Pam Newton	Rachel Haslay	16/038
Fangorn Gannon	16/016GE	Sarina Caccamo	Tommy Berry	17/001
Blithe Moon Echo		Surrendered by Linda Hall to DSV on 22/11/16	Ann Berrett (4/14/17)	17/002
Wattlewoods Wee Willow	16/003JEMM	Hazel Knight	Leonie Fitzpatrick	17/003
Wattlewoods Wee Velvet	16/004JEMM	Hazel Knight	Leonie Fitzpatrick	17/004
Eagle Rock Kai	17/002GE	Jen Dalitz	David Clews	17/005
Eagle Rock Fluffy	17/003GE	Jen Dalitz	David Clews	17/006
Eagle Rock Winston	16/012GE	Jen Dalitz	Kristy Derrig	17/007
Eagle Rock Henry	16/011GE	Jen Dalitz	Kristy Derrig	17/008
Eagle Rock George	17/006GE	Jen Dalitz	Carla Graham	17/009
Eagle Rock Leia	17/009JE	Jen Dalitz	Carla Graham	17/010
Eagle Rock Rudi	17/010JE	Jen Dalitz	Ross & Ainsley May	17/011
Eagle Rock Freckles	17/013JE	Jen Dalitz	Ross & Ainsley May	17/012
Eagle Rock Blackie	17/005GE	Jen Dalitz	Frank Placanica	17/013
Eagle Rock Mia	17/012JE	Jen Dalitz	Angus Grinham	17/014
Eagle Rock Isla	17/013JE	Jen Dalitz	Angus Grinham	17/015
Keysoe Duncan	15/011GE	H Bradbury	Jennifer McNab	17/016
Heatherbrae Jackston	00/005GE	H Bradbury	Jennifer McNab	17/017

Registrations	Reg.number	Owner	Re-reg. due	other
Hawaiki Pango	17/1/664CA	Debra Baker	Jan 2018	
Hawaiki Hara	17/002JE	Debra Baker		
Hawaiki Jessy	17/001JE	Debra Baker		
Hawaiki Mia	17/004JE	Debra Baker		
Shanessy Grove Seamus	17/001GE	Val Mackintosh		English/Irish
Shanessy Grove Sadie	17/003JE(E/I)	Val Mackintosh		English/Irish
Western Downs Indiana	17/006JE	Kim Dalton		Wild NT Large
Western Downs Memphis	17/005JE	Kim Dalton		English/Irish
Western Downs Georgia	17/007JE	Kim Dalton		Wild NT large
Zippy Golden Boy	17/001JA	Michelle Thomson		Vet check, 11.1/2 hands
Eagle Rock Billy	17/6/65CA	Jenny Dalitz	By 6/18	Colt Appendix
Eagle Rock Shiler	17/008JE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Leia	17/009JE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Rudi	17/010JE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Mia	17/011JE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Isla	17/012JE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Freckles	17/013JE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Hitmolee	17/004GE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Blackie	17/005GE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock George	17/006GE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Bowie	17/007GE	Jenny Dalitz		
Eagle Rock Lucky	17/008GE	Jenny Dalitz		



Letters to Editor

Dear Christine

Thank you again for your wonderful Donkey Digest edition. I particularly liked your article on bits (Donkey Digest Sept 2016) as I have had some experience dealing with a donkey who persistently put her tongue over the bit.

Initially, recognizing the fact that this is an evasion because the bit causes discomfort, I bought a bitless bridle. This applies pressure to the poll and nose rather than using a bit in the mouth. However, it simply didn't give me enough control to stop my donkey if she got spooked by something coming up behind her and as I needed to ride near roads and steep embankments, I needed to rethink the safety issue.

My vet plus a friend who is a horse trainer both told me about the WTP (Winning Tongue Plate) bit. Designed by an ex jockey and racehorse trainer in Queensland, it is based on a plain snaffle bit but is curved with limited movement and has a backwards extending plate that sits over the tongue thus preventing the equine from drawing the tongue back and over the bit. It's a gentle bit as the limited snaffle action does not allow the nutcracker action on the roof of the mouth nor pinching. I rang Adrian at IiWinners.com in Queensland and found him immensely helpful in choosing the right size and fitting. I have now been using the bit for several months and Molly has never got her tongue over it nor suffers the pain that this causes to the sensitive bars of her mouth. Consequently, she accepts the bit and my hands much more readily, her ears have come up and she enjoys her rides – as do I because I can now steer and stop her! Such a relief! I would urge anyone else whose donkey



WTP 5 inch bit showing the tongue extension that sits back on top of the tongue preventing the donkey pulling his tongue back and over the bit.

suffers from this problem to try the bit. Please don't ride ignoring the horrible pain and discomfort caused by a bit pressing the sensitive soft bars of the mouth under the tongue. Donkeys are so stoical you may not realize it is happening so always check by slipping your finger into the side of his mouth and check that the tongue remains under the bit.

The bit cost me \$129 and is made of quality stainless steel. For further information see: www.iwinners.com/WTP/index.php Or ring Adrian 0413 898 128, or email: admin@iwinners.com

Hanna Silversides

Mt Helena, Western Australia



WTP bit in place. Note that it doesn't sit on the sensitive and often painful bars of the mouth.



The bridle with bit and flash noseband in place.

Snookums and Thumbelina on TV

Channel Ten's Logie-winning lifestyle show *The Living Room* featured animals big and small on May 5's episode.

The 'Big' was Big Moo, a Guernsey steer visited in his home paddock by *The Living Room*'s vet Dr Chris Brown. Needless to say, Big Moo is enormous. His back is about level with the forehead of your average NBL basketballer. At the other end of the measuring stick are Snookums and Thumbelina, small enough to visit the TV studio, to the delight of host Amanda Keller and other regulars Barry Du Bois and Miguel Maestre.

Self-confessed Queen of mini animals, Noeline Cassettari from Dural in Sydney supplied her pets for the show and gives us the inside story.

Snookums is a 27" 2-year-old miniature Mediterranean donkey from Joy's miniature donkey stud in Sutton, NSW. Thumbelina is a 25" 1-year-old horse bred in Western Australia. Thumbelina was 14" at birth, and still small when I bought her so she flew over in a dog crate!

Action Animals that cast animals for TV, called me saying Channel 10 wanted some 'miniature' animals and knew that I had some. We were to follow a story about a very large cow on *The Living Room*.

We arrived at the studios in Pyrmont, Sydney as the live audience was gathering. Some gates were opened and I was told I could drive in, drop the animals off and then find somewhere to park. But there was no street parking nearby. The fun begins!

After intense negotiations about parking, unloading the animals, finding a stranger to hold them, unhooking the float, doing a 23-point turn, turning the float around, hooking it up again, parking, and being so grateful I only have minis... we were set!

We were shown the studio location and the animals had a rehearsal with Chris Brown. He practised what he would say, and worked out he would need lots of carrots in hand to manage the animals. He also made the decision to have fake grass put down on the set as the animals' hooves were slipping a bit on the wooden floor. How thoughtful!

Then began a very long wait backstage for our segment to be filmed. But we had lots of company. It seemed everyone who worked at Channel 10 wanted their photo taken with Snookums and Thumbelina. Even the Director! After the long wait and only one poop pile on Channel 10's backstage hallway, it was time for our entrance.

Chris took the animals onto the set and everyone 'oohed and aahed' at them while he explained what was involved with keeping miniature donkeys and horses. All seemed to go fine and the carrots were a big hit with the animals. I was crouched under the camera with a dustpan at the ready so had a limited view!



We then stayed for photographs with the show's hosts. And also with young Robert Irwin from Australia Zoo who was there as well.

The animals took it all in their stride, and seemed to enjoy the attention... or maybe just the carrots that everyone gave them.

At home, Snookums and Thumbelina share their paddock with Cadbury the llapaca (llama x alpaca), Cardigan and Jacket the miniature sheep, Rose and Holly the miniature horses and Chelsea and Carlotta the miniature donkeys. Yes, I do like my animals small!

ABOVE: The big and the small: Dr Chris Brown poses with mini mates Snookums & Thumbelina live on the *Living Room*.

RIGHT: Snookums checks out the audience for anything edible, while Thumbelina sticks with Chris Brown, seen here talking to Amanda Keller and Barry Du Bois.



Purple Poppies for Pozieres, France



Over 9 million animals died during WWI including many thousands of Australian war horses, mules, donkeys, pigeons and dogs, and no Australian war animals were returned home due to quarantine restrictions.

The Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation (AWAMO) is proud to announce these forgotten heroes will be permanently remembered with the construction of a Memorial in Pozieres, France. This will be dedicated in a special ceremony on the 21st of July 2017.

President and Founder of AWAMO Nigel Allsopp is the man behind the organization that works to establish War Animal plaques at Parks, RSLs and local Federal government sites within Australia. The opening of Australia's official war animal memorial at Pozieres is an achievement all animal lovers can be proud of.

Supporting this initiative are the Affiliated Donkey Societies of Australia (ADSA) and the Queensland Donkey Society who will send remembrance wreaths to be laid at the new Memorial, surrounded by its garden of purple Charles De Gaulle roses. For the gardeners amongst us, Treloar Roses is raising funds for AWAMO with the Charles De Gaulle Rose, one of the best mauves around, with fragrant fully double flowers. Treloar Roses are donating \$1.50 from the sale of each Charles De Gaulle bush rose to AWAMO. Check their website for more details.

The wreath laying ceremony will feature a host of dignitaries, including Dr Brendan Nelson and Dr Harry Cooper representing all war animals.

For updates, log on to the Website or Facebook page - Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation

DONKEYS

The image of Simpson is so entrenched in our Nation's history that we forget the ADF used thousands of donkeys during all our overseas conflicts. In one campaign in East Africa 34,000 donkeys were used to support Commonwealth Troops between 1916-17. Due to death caused by tsetse flies only 1,042 survived the conflict.

In France, donkeys carried 200 pound loads up to the trenches and thousands were killed, wounded and gassed alongside our soldiers.

In recent deployments to Afghanistan ADF Special Forces used donkeys for carriage of equipment over difficult mountainous terrain. They were thus able to carry their laptops and communications gear into remote mountain areas on donkeys to call in coordinated precision air strikes on enemy targets riding locally purchased mounts.

MULES

The Australian Army Mule, one can argue, is perhaps the most underrated and under-appreciated animal that has served the colours. Simply put, without the mule no army in the world would have been able to launch any campaign, including the ADF in the jungles of Asia to the Islands of the Pacific to the Mountains in Italy. Perhaps more mules have given the ultimate sacrifice to man than any other animal and a sad testimony is very few memorials honour them in the world and none in Australia.

It is difficult to estimate exactly how many mules have been in Australian service due to poor records. Often regarded as stores item, unlike the horse, they were frequently not branded or numbered. Coupled with the fact many were pressed into service from local sources. The army trained pack mules and donkeys in the Townsville area in preparation for service in the SW Pacific Campaign. The 2nd Independent Pack Company was located at Wongabel before deploying to Port Moresby for service on the Kokoda Track.

The donkey made famous by Simpson is the main public image of a beast of burden. The mules, on the other hand, were in constant demand to carry supplies to the frontline. They were particularly suited for this role because of their resistance to drought and temperature extremes. However, as the Australians found them stubborn, difficult to handle and irritable, they were left to the ministrations of their Indian and Jewish Mule Corp handlers. Even so these animals worked and died for the AIF. Many thousands died and none were ever brought back to Australia.

Wedding Cele-bray-tions



When Sophia Foster married Liam Holland early in June, it was only natural that star donkey 'Kiwi' would be involved. Kiwi was enlisted to transport the bride to the ceremony and then deliver the newlyweds from the ceremony to the reception, both of which were held at the family farm at Thane, near Warwick, Queensland.

Adding to the glamour of the occasion, Kiwi was proudly harnessed to an antique sulky bedecked with a floral arrangement the jenny thoughtfully declined to nibble at. Kiwi has been part of the Foster family for the past three years and has been educated to saddle and harness by Sophia and her Mum Julie. In fact, Sophia credits her love of donkeys to her Mum who had a mini donkey she used to drive everywhere when Sophia was small.

Kiwi, Cisco and Matilda now make up the donkey family at Thane and Kiwi is a much-loved riding mount for Sophia.

With such a start to married life, how can it be anything but a success for Sophia and Liam – congratulations to you both!



Chewing and Cold Weather

Does your donkey have unexplained, occasional cravings for woody snacks? Gourmet items such as Fence Board Flambé, Stall Door Surprise, and Tree Trunk Tantalizers? If so, it could be the weather!

According to Wayne Loch, PhD, associate professor of animal science, University of Missouri-Columbia, USA, "When it's cold, there is often less grass, and if people don't feed enough hay, then the equine will definitely chew on wood if they don't have enough roughage. Equines depend upon fermentation from the digestion of roughage to keep them warm in the winter. If they're short on roughage and it's cold, they may chew on wood."

Gary Heusner, PhD, extension service equine scientist, University of Georgia, USA, noted, "Here in Georgia in January and February when the weather is its coldest, we get a lot of calls about equines chewing on woods and trees.

Although not totally conclusive, we believe the dampness softens up the wood. The fact that it's colder, the animal has a little higher requirement for energy to maintain body heat, so they go to chewing on wood that's been softened up and gives them a source of fibre."

Additionally, cool season forage may not provide roughage, as it's high in moisture content and low in fibre.

The solution? More hay. "We suggest owners provide all the hay or straw they can and see if that doesn't eliminate the chewing," said Dr. Heusner.

"We've also found that these cool season grasses and some of the hays are low in potassium. In that case, we recommend more potassium in the diet to see if that alleviates the wood chewing. Most of the time, once it starts warming up and the grasses get a little more growth and fibre content to them, and the wood isn't as soft from the wetness, these donkeys and horses stop chewing."

Aussie donkey meat and skins bound for China

By Christine Thelander



“We’re going to make sure if you want to eat donkey skins, you’re going to eat our edible donkey skins.”

Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce tells China –
NewsCorp Australia, 24 March 2017.



A new trade deal between Australia and China has paved the way for the export of Australian donkey meat and skins to the Chinese market. Following bilateral talks between Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in Canberra in March, the chilled meat market access to China has expanded from 11 companies to 36, encompassing all eligible Australian exporters.

Donkey meat and skins now make up part of the bilateral trade between Australia and China.

What does this mean for our Australian donkeys? It's a death sentence, I'm afraid. We previously reported on the donkey gelatin issue (Donkey Digest Sept. 2016) that's swept donkey-owning countries around the world. Now, it's in our own backyard.

Government protocols are currently being changed to accommodate this future trade which we anticipate will be done in two stages. First up, (we believe), wild donkeys will be rounded up and trucked for slaughter and skinning. They will be processed at multi-species abattoirs such as Chinese backed Grasslands Cattle, Charleville, Queensland, possibly Australian Agricultural Company's (AAco) abattoir near Darwin and possibly an abattoir in Broome Western Australia-with more expected to follow suit. We're led to believe all skins and most of the donkey meat will be chilled and exported to China.

In the meantime, it's anticipated interested graziers will set up donkey farms, more likely as an addition to their beef operations. This is likely to make up the live trade of the future, with a Northern Territory government discussion paper noting that a donkey farm would take 5-10 years to reach 'steady state' production.

Australia currently has no donkey meat market. Those pushing for this market to take off believe that Australia has millions of feral donkeys in regional Western Australia, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Queensland. Numbers, however, have never been counted. The Northern Territory Department of Primary Industries & Resources (NTDPIR) has a far more realistic estimate of the number of wild donkeys, stating that they believe there are roughly 50,000 donkeys in the Northern Territory alone – although this figure is thought to be about 10 years old. After the major culling that occurred until 2006, and with ongoing private culls, donkey numbers are said to have drastically reduced.

To satisfy China's current ejiao demand, upwards of four million donkeys are already believed to be slaughtered each year and the global donkey population literally cannot keep up.

You don't have to be Einstein to realise how quickly Australia's wild donkey population would be wiped out, provided they can be successfully rounded up, trucked and slaughtered.

What is ejiao?

Gelatin, or ejiao, made from donkey skin is highly prized in China as a medicinal tonic, thought to nourish the blood, boost the immune system and act as a general pick-me-up. It is also used in everything from aphrodisiacs to face cream. It is sometimes referred to by the Chinese as one of the “three nourishing treasures” (zi bu san bao), along with ginseng and the antlers of young deer. Health and longevity is a Chinese national obsession, and tonic foods like this are often lavishly packaged and presented as expensive gifts. Aside from gelatin, donkey meat is a delicacy in some Chinese regions, especially in the north of the country.

But these days, there simply aren't enough Chinese donkeys to make enough ejiao, so manufacturers are looking further afield. After two decades of high economic growth, the country's donkey population has nearly halved: from 11 million in the late 1990s to just six million today. It falls another 300,000 every year, according to government statistics.

As the Chinese middle classes have grown richer, demand for donkey gelatin and other tonic delicacies has soared - in January the New York Times reported that a shortage of donkey gelatin had encouraged a boom in imitation products.

Forget gold, diamonds or rhino horn. The hottest commodity around the world right now – is the humble donkey, thanks to a critical donkey shortage in China. But even this hardy beast of burden is struggling to carry the weight of an insatiable demand.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The RSPCA has now launched a major campaign against adding donkeys, horses and ponies to Australia's live export trade.

How can we help them?

An official Senate petition has been created by the RSPCA at www.liveexport.org.au. They have deliberately hosted this outside their website, and with no RSPCA branding, in the hope that you'll feel comfortable sharing and pointing your supporters to sign the petition. Donkey Facebook pages also contain the petition from the RSPCA site – so please sign and get all your friends to sign. The RSPCA is 'our' voice with the government.

Don't stop there. Send a letter to Barnaby Joyce. Fellow donkey lover Andrea Jenkins has made this easier for you. Log on to the Donkeys of Australia Facebook site and download the 'Barnaby Joyce' letter template she has made up. Sign it with your name and region, State you live in, then send it to Barnaby Joyce (details on Facebook). I would also suggest sending this letter to the federal Shadow Primary Industry minister and as many federal Independents as you can.

What more can we do?

Take action in your local State or Territory. Once again, log on to the Donkeys of Australia Facebook site and download the 'Ejiao Action' letter template Andrea has also made up. Personalise it and address it to the parliamentarian you are targeting. Sign it with your name and region, State you live in, then send it.

Tip: Go through your State's list of elected representatives.

We suggest sending this letter to:

- Your Premier & Shadow Premier
- Your Minister for Primary Industries & Shadow Minister for Primary Industries
- As many State Independents as you can round up

Yes, I know this will take a little more time but the government link is included on Andrea's letter template (don't forget to delete this link before sending). Our effectiveness as protesting donkey lovers demands mass action. Impressive numbers attract media attention.

The Donkeys of Australia Facebook page also contains updated news and petitions – the last petition with 5,000 signatures has already been mentioned in news stories. Please like and follow the page to keep abreast of how you can help. This is an ongoing issue and you can make a difference! We also suggest signing up to the RSPCA's e-news at www.rspca.org.au to follow this issue.

‘SILENT DONKEY HOLOCAUST’

Global media is not mincing its words, as you can see by the headline above. World news is warning that Chinese demand for donkeys could wipe out the species. Africa, in particular, is feeling the aftershocks as China is increasingly looking to that country to satisfy its demands.

The gelatin found in the animals' skins has made them a target, leading to a growing wave of donkey slaughtering in several African countries, as gangs seek to fuel a lucrative, and in South Africa, illegal trade.

There are any number of all-too-common grisly repercussions, including donkeys stolen in the night, bludgeoned to death in the bush, skinned where they drop and the carcasses left to rot.

The real and lasting legacy from what's happening in Africa is that farmers are having their livelihoods shattered because it's the donkeys which take their children to school, carry firewood and help fetch water. These same poverty-stricken farmers cannot afford to replace their stolen donkeys.

Recognising this unfolding crisis, Burkina Faso, Niger and Pakistan have banned the export of donkey hides. Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania and Kenya still have government-cordoned trade in donkey products. But, as we all know, money talks loudly and the black market is working overtime to cash in.

The Donkey Sanctuary in the UK is to be commended for taking up the issue globally. In the interests of our donkeys, please follow international progress on their website.

NEWSFLASH

Australian equines can be slaughtered overseas without controls, reports Dan McCulloch for AAP, May 2017

“Authorities are trying to close a loophole that allows Australian horses, ponies and donkeys to be exported overseas without any control over what happens to them. All other livestock species such as sheep, cattle, llamas, camel and buffalo are subject to strict supply chain assurances, but no such government conditions are in place for equine animals.

Agriculture department staffer Narelle Clegg, who oversees live exports, is attempting to close the gap after receiving a few sporadic enquiries.*

“Whether they're for slaughter or not isn't a consideration at the moment in export legislation,” Ms Clegg told a Senate hearing in Canberra on May 24.

“I'm therefore trying to work as fast as we can on having something ready to go in the event an application actually arrives.”

The department has proposed the minister consider including equine species intentionally exported for slaughter abroad in the supply chain assurance regime.

“What we're requiring exporters to do, if the policy's approved, would be to make sure the arrangements in place met international animal welfare standards for the handling, transport and slaughter of any equine species,” Ms Clegg said.

Independent senator Derryn Hinch quizzed officials about whether there was an application afoot to breed Australian donkeys for export to China to be slaughtered, skinned and used in anti-ageing cosmetics.

“No senator, there isn't. We haven't received such an application,”** Ms Clegg replied.

The department has been discussing the issue of equine animals being sent overseas for slaughter with both animal welfare groups and exporters.”

Editor's Note: The federal Department of Agriculture is moving to put the appropriate protocols into place allowing speedier approval for applications to export live donkeys in the future. *Some media reports (as above) deny knowledge of current applications; others say that a number of enquiries have been made about exporting horses and donkeys “in large numbers for slaughter”. On the positive side, closing this loophole will go some way to appease the RSPCA. However, it doesn't guarantee the end of cruelty to Australian animals overseas, as is regularly witnessed with the sheep and cattle live trade. **It is not surprising that applications have not yet been made to set-up donkey farms or donkey feedlots to supply live exports for China's future demand. It is early days for this secondary push. The only answer, according to the RSPCA, is for the Australian Government to stop this cruel live trade permanently before it even starts. We agree.

MULE CROSSING:

Neonatal Isoerythrolysis

by Meredith Hodges, Lucky Three Ranch, Colorado, USA

Neonatal isoerythrolysis (N.I.) is a condition in which the mare creates antibodies against the foal's red blood cells, and then passes these antibodies to the foal via the colostrum.



Once the foal absorbs these antibodies, they result in lysis of the foal's red blood cells within 24 to 36 hours after birth. This red blood cell destruction is widespread throughout the foal's body and can lead to life-threatening anemia and/or jaundice. (This is similar to the human Rhesus, or Rh factor, where a woman who is Rh negative gives birth to her second or subsequent child that is Rh-positive, resulting in destruction of the newborn's red blood cells.)

All legitimate mule breeders should be aware of this condition, especially because it can occur more often when breeding donkey jacks to mares than it does when breeding stallions to mares within the same species. If the hybrid foal's blood type is the same as its mother's, then there is no problem. However, when the jack and the mare have different blood types, and the foal possesses the jack's blood type, there is potential for N.I. to occur.

On the surface of the mare's red cells are antigens that will stimulate the production of antibodies against incompatible red blood cells (R.B.C.s). There are basically two ways that these R.B.C.s can get into her system:

- 1) If the foal's R.B.C.s enter the mare's circulation via the placenta during pregnancy or during delivery.
- 2) If the mare obtains these incompatible cells during a blood transfusion.

If neither of these conditions occurs, the mare can carry, birth and nurse her foal with no problem. However, if the incompatible red cells do somehow get into her system, she will begin making antibodies against those cells that, in turn, will be passed into the foal's system via the mare's first milk, or colostrum.

Signs of neonatal isoerythrolysis depend upon the rate and severity of red blood cell destruction. Affected foals are born healthy, and then typically develop signs within 24 to 36 hours. In severe cases, the signs of N.I. may be evident within 12 to

14 hours, whereas in mild cases, signs may not be present until three or four days of age. N.I. foals will develop progressive anemia, thus leading to depression, anorexia, collapse and death. These foals may also develop pale mucous membranes that later become yellow or jaundiced.

The mare's blood can be tested ahead of time to determine if she has a different blood type than the jack (or stallion), but a positive test result does not necessarily mean that N.I. will automatically occur, only that there is the possibility for occurrence. Blood samples from the mare and jack should be taken two to four weeks before the mare is due to foal to determine if she is producing antibodies against the foal's red blood cells.

If the blood test is positive, then precautions must be taken to save the foal at birth by making sure it is prevented from nursing its dam for the first 24 to 36 hours. The foal should be muzzled and bottle-fed colostrum from a mare that has not produced these same antibodies, and therefore is compatible with the foal. To be absolutely safe, the colostrum should be obtained and tested from a mare that has never had a mule foal.

For the best results in building the foal's immune system, this "replacement" colostrum should be collected within the first six hours after birth. The mare being used does not need to be the same blood type as the foal, but her blood must not contain antibodies to the foal's R.B.C.s. The quality of the colostrum will determine the amount fed to the foal. Immediately after birth, the foal should be given two to three feedings of colostrum within the first two hours, and then be given milk (for energy) for the first 24 to 36 hours after that. Goats' milk is best for this purpose.

After 24 to 36 hours, the foal should be able to be safely returned to its dam's milk. If N.I. is present but is caught early enough, the foal can be transfused with blood and there is a chance that it may live, but this transfusion procedure has inherent risks and there are no guarantees of success.

Research on N.I. has been done over the years on Thoroughbred horses, and statistics indicate that 20 percent have incompatibilities between dam and sire, yet only one percent of foals develop N.I. The incidence in mule breeding suggests that the rate is higher. The Colorado State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Fort Collins, the University of California at Davis and the Louisiana State University all have laboratories set up to do this initial N.I. testing on mares. Consult with your veterinarian about contacting any of these facilities for information on how to collect and ship samples for N.I. testing.

Out of concern for future mule offspring, the Lucky Three Ranch—with the assistance of our veterinarian, Kent M. Knebel, D.V.M.; Colorado State University researcher, Josie Traub-Dargatz, D.V.M., M.S.; and Louisiana State University researcher, Jill McClure, D.V.M., M.S.—began thorough testing of Lucky Three Ranch stock in the early nineties, with particular attention paid to our breeding jack, Little Jack Horner. It was discovered by Dr. McClure that Little Jack Horner's R.B.C.s were resulting in unidentified antibodies in many of the horse mares that carried his foals.

The mares that were sampled had antibodies present, but Dr. McClure was unable to "type" the antibodies found in the mares. The next step was to immunize some research horses at L.S.U. using Little Jack Horner's R.B.C.s. If they made antibodies, Dr. McClure would have a more readily available source of antibodies for further research. She also took samples from some burros from another L.S.U. project and discovered that they, too, had the same R.B.C. factor that occurred in Little Jack Horner, but the antibodies produced in the mares were



With N.I. a mule foal can be saved at birth by making sure it is prevented from nursing from its dam for the first 24 to 36 hours. A muzzle and bottle feeding of colostrum is recommended.

still unidentified. There was already quite a bit of medical and scientific data on N.I. that could help in the prevention of this potentially fatal condition. However, this discovery of new antibodies stimulated by the jack and produced by the mare proved that there was still a lot more that needed to be learned. All of Little Jack Horner's tests showed him to be of a compatible blood type to the mares if he was a stallion of the same species, and yet these unknown antibodies were being produced. Perhaps future research will hold the answer to this puzzle.

A debt of gratitude is owed to veterinarians like Dr. Kent Knebel, who take time out of their busy schedules to collect samples for this research, and to dedicated researchers like Dr. Josie Traub-Dargatz and Dr. Jill McClure, who continue with this important research that benefits our mule industry and its future generations. Their ongoing research will continue to have a significant impact on mule breeding programs, not just here in the United States, but all over the world.

For more about Meredith Hodges and her comprehensive all-breed equine training program, visit LuckyThreeRanch.com, Facebook, YouTube or Twitter.



My now-deceased breeding jack, Little Jack Horner, has been the subject of testing since the early nineties when vet scientists realized there was much more that wasn't known about N.I.

The Challenge of Tane

Story: Elizabeth Poultney, Western Australia

It was the 6th of November and the day that Tane was to arrive on our farm. I was so excited. At last I was to own my very own donkey. Tane arrived and we unloaded him from the trailer and introduced him to O'Reilly and Donovan. It always amazes me that when introducing donkeys to one another, there really doesn't seem to be any fuss. A well placed kick here or there seems to quickly establish order in the paddock and within a short space of time, one would assume that these donkeys have always been in the same paddock and on good terms with one another.

I was so looking forward to my first ride on our farm with Tane but thought that I had better take him out for a walk or two first so we could get used to each other. After a week had passed with lots of ground work I saddled Tane up and we set off. Initially I walked for a bit and then I mounted and continued. All seemed to be going really well as we walked for the first 2kms. Once or twice in the 6km ride, I chose to dismount Tane as he had thrown a bit of a paddy and turned for home and bolted for a bit. I must mention here that Tane doesn't really bolt for long and not too ferociously. He only takes off for about 20 metres and it is only ever at a canter and there is no bucking or pig rooting. He is such a gentle donkey and I am so grateful that the perfect donkey came to belong to me. I am not sure I would have such enthusiasm about riding if I had the challenge of a donkey trying much harder to tip me off. When I look at some of the riding Sarah has done with her boys and how she manages to stay on I am super thankful for Tane's cruisey nature. I am also super impressed with Sarah's confidence and ability considering we have both only just begun riding. Sarah constantly delights and amazes me on our donkey journey!!

Within the next week, Tane and I enjoyed another 6km ride with much the same issue - me dismounting a few times and walking Tane for a bit until I could sense that he had settled and wasn't going to turn for home again and do his bolting antics. Now due to the fact that our farm is also cropping as well as sheep focused, we were right into the thick of harvest so it was all hands on deck. The luxury of me taking off for a 2 hour ride on my own was unthinkable. Sarah and I did manage to sneak in a few smaller rides together on the weekends when the wheat bins were shut or when we had rainy weather that had held the harvest up but Tane and I had no more rides with just the two of us until the 1st of February when school went back.

I know that people say that once a donkey has learnt something, they really never forget it but I can tell you that the fun really began when I tried to take Tane out on his own after a few months off. And I have learnt a very valuable lesson here. Always make sure you take your donkey out on their own at regular intervals so they don't get too dependent on going out with others!!! Now when I saddled Tane, mounted and began to head off, Tane would huff and puff as he does and absolutely fight me to get back to O'Reilly and Donovan. I wasn't even able to get past the double iron gates at the back of our house. The only way I could ride him was to walk next to him, fight like hell to get past the double iron gates, and then continue walking as far as I wanted and then mount Tane and he would head for home. I was



Warm up exercise before heading out on a ride.

more than a little upset that I was not in control at all unless I was on the ground. The only good thing about this was that when he headed for home he was quite happy to trot in a hurry all the way back to his donkey friends. It was here that I also realized that Tane had no idea how to canter with me in the saddle so that was another challenge for us to face.

So, I put the idea of me riding Tane away from the house on the back burner for a bit and went back to ground work with him. Every day for 3 weeks I went out and did some sort of ground work with Tane. We went on lots of varied routes over our farm and I tried to keep things a bit unpredictable for Tane about where we were going. I did lots of leading with him, leading with Tane under saddle, leading him away and riding home bare back, etc etc. It was at this time that I also included long reigning with Tane. The first time I long reigned past the double iron gates he huffed and puffed and tried to turn for home but with me waving my arms behind him and tapping him with the whip I could sense he decided that I was the boss. From then on, whenever I long reined him, Tane just did exactly what I asked. I know that Tane was initially trained in harness and my observations led me to believe that Tane preferred the pressure of the bitless bridle when I was long reigning him rather than when I was on his back. I began to question if Tane actually would be a donkey that would prefer to be in harness rather than ridden. This was something that I had not counted on as my delight was really to be riding. I questioned many ladies in the WA Donkey Society about any other suggestions they had for getting Tane to behave for me. At the end of the 3 weeks I then took Tane out every other day for a bit then had a few more days off. I was getting over taking Tane out each day and feeling like I still wasn't getting the results I wanted and I am sure he was needing a break from me too. After another month had passed, I began the 21 day cycle again of taking him out each day. I did notice that Tane was improving in regards to the double iron gates so that was one hurdle crossed but everything else seemed to be the same. I s'pose one good thing about all this time Tane and I spent together was the fact we really got to know one another. I am also grateful for actually having the time to put into him.

A few occasions when I couldn't make a day in the cycle, Sarah would help me out and take Tane out for some training. It was on one of

these occasions that Sarah taught/encouraged Tane to canter with her in saddle. Sarah had taken Tane away past the sheds and down one of our lane ways. She had taken him much further than he had wanted to go and when she finally jumped on him and turned him for home, he was so cross with her he started to do his bolting trick. If, at this point, I had been on Tane, I would have been saying "steady, steady" etc trying to calm him, but Sarah just kicked him on thinking "Well if you are going to be grumpy and run for home without me asking you too, you can jolly well make it a decent ride for me and canter". You have to laugh really. I wish I had been there to see his carry on and the look on his face when he suddenly found himself cantering. It is so funny when Sarah and I are out riding and she asks if I would like to swap



ABOVE: Stretching and flexion of the neck before mounting.

RIGHT: Tane & I in the flowering canola crop at the farm. Here you can see the rein configuration which loops through the saddle dees for extra leverage before going to the rider's hands. It works!

donkeys for a bit, I can just see Tane going, "Oh no, not you again. You push me much more than I want to be!" Mereana, the previous owner of Tane, had spoken to me about how it took her 18 months to teach Tane how to trot in harness. She really thought he was never going to get it. I had wondered if it would take this long to teach him to canter. Thanks to Sarah she had taken care of that concern and I am pleased to announce that, even though it is not Tane's preferred pace, he can and will now canter on demand.

So here we are at the end of the 2nd lot of 3 weeks of intense training and it finished just before the Ride Walk Drive at Avondale Discovery Farm. We arrived there on the Friday and went for our first ride. Tane did his usual refusal of my request for control. Mereana watched intently, seeing if she could pick up anything I was doing wrong. I am very quick to admit that I am only a beginner rider. I rode bare back on my pony as a child but have not done any riding since then. I only began riding using a saddle in February 2015 whilst we were trying to tame O'Reilly. I am not sure I will ever ride with much finesse and in truth that doesn't really matter but I am always very happy for pointers. I was hoping Mereana was going to be able to pin point why Tane and I were not working together as a team. So it was a double-edged sword when Mereana couldn't pick anything up and I felt like my riding must be ok but I was still left with my unyielding donkey.

Saturday morning I arrived at Avondale and our group began harnessing and saddling up our donkeys. Lesley and Mereana came up to me suggesting we attach the reins to the saddle first and then through the bitless bridle. I was keen to give anything a go. We found some old rope lying around the stables and constructed our temporary reins. I mounted Tane in the sheep yards and found the gear we had fashioned worked well so I then opened the gate and headed out, walking Tane around the stables whilst everyone was still getting organised. Absolute delight. Tane was now responding and carrying out each of my instructions with poise and obedience. He even backed up with me in the saddle, something I had not been able to achieve before. Yay, yay, yay!! Can't begin to tell you how happy I felt. The pieces of the puzzle came together and our team was complete. It seemed that the new rein configuration gave me a different kind of leverage that Tane understood. We rode using the ►



reins like this for Saturday and Sunday and when I arrived back to our farm, I was bursting with enthusiasm to try it at home. A few days later, I saddled Tane in the usual place and jumped on his back, right outside his paddock. I then instructed him to head up past the double iron gates – nothing like jumping in at the deep end to see if we had actually arrived!! Twice Tane argued with me about my course of direction but I used the reins, voice commands and also the whip to tap gently on the side of his face encouraging him in the direction I wanted and Voila! No more problems. He decided he would oblige me and we had the best 6km ride ever with Jessie my kelpie dog coming for fun too. Ahhhh, don't you just love it when things come together. At the beginning of our Donkey Journey and of my search for my very own donkey, the thing I wanted most was to have a donkey I could ride on my own, with Jessie, any time of the day. My delight in the challenge of riding alone with Tane was, for now, complete.



Nothing like a little jump to clear our minds & remind us that riding is fun.



I always lift & stretch Tane's forelegs to iron out any skin pinching under the girth – then we're ready to go.



Stagecoach Truths

Story: Jana Bommersbach,
True West Magazine

One of the iconic symbols of the old west is the stagecoach, and here's betting there has never been a western movie without one making an appearance. It always looks so romantic, and if it's delivering a new lady to town, she arrives all fresh and sweet, every hair in place, every pleat in her floor-length skirt as crisp as newly ironed.

Reality was a very different picture. Stage journeys were expensive, nightmarish marathons over primitive boulder-strewn trails, up and down perilously steep grades, through swollen rivers or across them on flimsy tracks.

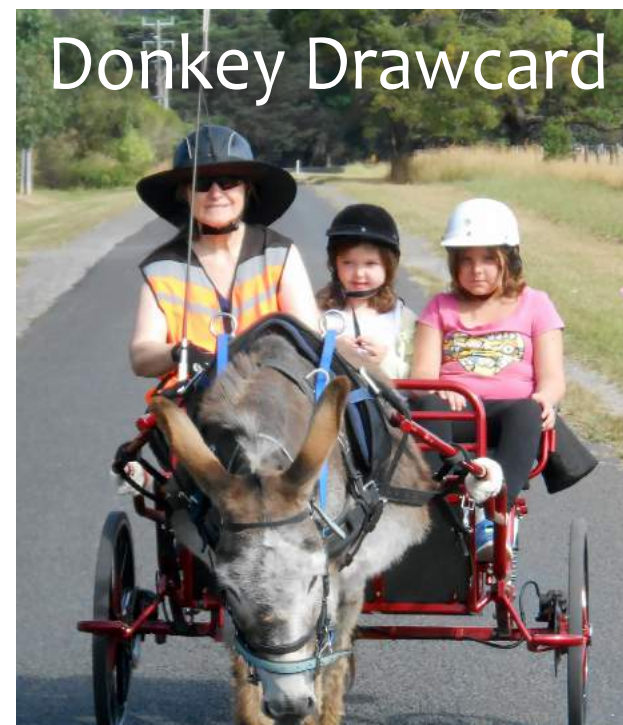
The small coaches were meant for nine people—only doable if folks locked knees. More than nine and extra passengers perched on the roof or "held on for their lives."

Food along the way was "poor," with this delicious tidbit of old west trivia explaining everything: "The experienced traveler carried mustard to mask the taste of the mule meat which sometimes was substituted for jerky or venison."

The physical discomforts of a stage journey were bad enough, with sleepless nights in a crowded coach with no shock absorbers. But the abuse to the nostrils must have been worse in the era of desert travel prior to deodorants, mouthwashes and tourist accommodations with showers.

And then there were the robberies! It just goes to prove that all is not what it seems in the western movies we watch.

Donkey Drawcard



Has anyone else noticed that as soon as it's known you have donkeys at your place, all of a sudden, you become the 'must visit' relative, friend or neighbour for kids, as well as adults?

Graham and Ann Berrett's Ardock Farm in Gippsland, Victoria is such a place. There are many resident donkeys to play with, ride, drive and just cuddle. It's a kid's dream, as happened when Ann recently hosted an array of relatives. Down from the country, the kids loved their holiday at the farm and notched up a few firsts like going for a swim in the ocean.

Ever-reliable jenny Elsie made sure Jacob, Isa and Annabelle got the royal treatment with riding and going out for a carriage drive. Looks like Ann has cemented herself as the favourite relative of all time!



Please help



ADSA needs an Administrator now, details are in the ad below.

It's not a hard job. It would suit someone who may not be as active with donkeys, or may not even own a donkey but would still like to keep an interest in our longears.

Our donkeys need us now more than ever (see P8-9).

Why not contact Ann and talk it over?

The Affiliated Donkey Societies of Australia

WANTED: ADMINISTRATOR

ADSA are seeking a volunteer to take on the role of Administrator at the commencement of the 2017 – 2018 financial year when the current Administrator completes their term.

The Administrator, Registrar and Donkey Digest Editor perform the three key functions of ADSA.

As the Administrator, you will be required to carry out both administrative and treasury duties.

Although the workload is not particularly high you will need to be organised, able to meet deadlines, have reasonable computer skills including using internet banking and a basic knowledge of bookkeeping. You will work closely with the Registrar, Editor and each State Treasurers particularly at the commencement of September, December, March and June each year. Most contact is through email. You will also be responsible for arranging for the auditing of financial records for 1 July-30 June each year, and organise a Biannual General Meeting every two years. This meeting is now held via Skype.

If you think you may be interested in taking on this important role then please contact the current Administrator Ann Berrett on (03) 5192 4567 or email annber2016@outlook.com Please do not feel committed if you want to make initial enquiries as I am happy to answer questions.

DONKEYS GO BUSH

Story: Fiona Mottram

Event: 5-7 May 2017

AirBNB took on a new twist when the Donkey Society of Victoria booked a lovely mudbrick house on a few acres of bush at Gherang (near Geelong) as a different venue for the annual camp.

After more than 20 years of the camp being based at the former Garibaldi school, significantly increased traffic, dirt roads upgraded to bitumen and remaining bush tracks being surfaced with large stones for logging trucks had made the old location unsuitable for safety, unshod riding and harness.

Gherang borders the Otway Forest Park so there's plenty of bush with numerous quiet dirt roads and tracks in lightly undulating terrain. Instead of regular traffic, the four harness drivers, one rider and several walkers who stayed over with their donkeys and mule from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon faced challenges such as huge kangaroos, the odd trail bike, bicycles, horses racing along fence lines, pigs, haughty alpacas and admiring neighbours! Accommodation was more comfy too, with better heating, beds, a shower and armchairs. Although there were times while queuing in the morning when some of us longed, cross-legged, for the old school's toilet block.

The longears stayed in a treed area that Pat Streefkerk had set up with an electric fence, with the necessary water tap fairly close by. The weekend's weather forecast was pretty horrible but in the end only one group got uncomfortably damp and cold on Saturday afternoon, Sunday proved relatively sunny, and Kitty Byrnes amazed everyone by wearing a t-shirt the whole time. In contrast to Kitty, the longears appreciated wearing their rugs when not touring out and about, and they ate a LOT of hay. "The kids" had a few squabbles over hay, with Fiona Mottram's gelding Frosty proving that a 21-year-old, 10.3hh donkey with attitude and high reaching rear kicking skills is more than a match for a posse of hungry mammoth donkeys.

Besides outings around the block, we admired the features of each others' floats and visited the nearby home of DSV member Chris Trotter where we took selfies with her miniature and mammoth donkeys. The broken-coloured, confident mini foal Belle (now owned by Chris' friend and new DSV member Carole Blake) with her relaxed mum Sassy really plucked our heart strings. However we were also taken by the chunky good looks and friendly temperament of mini jack Chocolate who was now schmoozing with Sassy's lookalike sister Savannah. Seeing Chris' two mammoth donkeys Simpson and Lloyd was a reminder that the camp had a "Major" attendance of mammoth and part mammoth donkeys and a mule also related to Pat Streefkerk's former stud jack Cokely Major Leo.

Sunday morning brought the pleasure of a visit from Judy Langshawe and John Wright who popped over from Ballarat for a flying visit with their two miniature donkeys Pete and Plonka. They promised to come to more events and stay for the duration in future. Three other would-be campers were unable to attend at the last minute.

Evenings were spent sitting close to the solid fuel heater (Ross West insisted everyone should bring in two logs for the fire whenever they came inside) chatting about donkeys and mules. The only two men present, Ross West and Rod Ebbott, occasionally conferred in a corner over secret men's business to retain their sanity. Fair enough seeing as both



Yes, we made a car wait while this picture was taken! L-R is Jan Murray with Spring Gully Diana, Pat Streefkerk (obscured) with Wendanjo Serena, Fiona Mottram with Keysoe Tambo (dorsal hitch cart), Ross West with Yurrah Frosty, Kitty Byrnes riding Wendanjo Susannah & leading mule Yurrah Spinifex.



LEFT: Kitty riding Susannah & leading Spinifex. I did hear Kitty exclaim 'Spinifex! Stop grabbing Susannah's rein!'

RIGHT: Ross West driving Yurrah Frosty who is wearing hoof boots (the Equine Fusion ones that fit Daisy mule, too).

BELOW: Fiona Mottram with Keysoe Tambo in the dorsal hitch waiting for the 2 shorter legged harness donkeys to catch up.



LEFT TOP: Crazy Donkey Ladies Fiona Mottram (left) & Ann Ebbott with Chris Trotter's minis Sassy & Chocolate.

LEFT BOTTOM: Ross West with Chris Trotter's foal Belle now sold to new DSV member Carole Blake (parents are Sassy & Chocolate above).

BELOW: Pat Streefkerk all smiles driving Wendanjo Serena



their partners were wearing identical purple hoodies emblazoned with 'Crazy Donkey Lady' and almost matching rainbow-bright woolly hats.

The photos clearly show the fun we had!

Differences I have noticed between donkeys and mules

By Fiona Mottram, Victoria

Having had more than 15 different donkeys since the early 1990s and 12 mules live with me since 2012, I wanted to share some differences that I have observed between the donkeys and the mules. Nonetheless these are not large numbers so I am sure there are many exceptions and differences with other people's experience plus plenty I forgot to include.

I have found that young mules can be incredibly silly and reactive compared to young donkeys. They move so fast it's a blur when they startle and gallop off in fright over even minor things. Stuff the donkeys wouldn't bother about. Then when the mules turn 3-4 years, they suddenly mature in personality and settle down to be much quieter to the point of being more serene and less suspicious than my donkeys. Go figure.

In the paddock, the donkeys are much more placid with me, visitors and each other. The mules get excited easily and vie vigorously for attention, look for opportunities to sneak out the gate, investigate pockets and generally mill about. Most visitors love to go in the donkey paddock and they just want to touch those big ears. In comparison, most visitors prefer to meet the mules over the gate even though in general my donks are bigger than my mules.

Kicking is a topic most visitors bring up. I reckon donkeys are very accurate kickers but don't bother too often. My donkey gelding Keysoe Simon once kicked my attacking gander right in the side of its head even though a goose head isn't a very big target. (The gander got somersaulted backwards then returned for more fight.) But donkeys prefer to sort issues out with simple body language threats. In contrast, mules seem to kick each other over anything and everything. They will also wave their legs about (air kicking) when displeased (for example, tied up longer than they think is right) and paw the ground after only seconds of waiting for anything. Mules seem to have excess energy and feel obliged to use it up. The mules combine the donkey's kicking accuracy with the horse's power and reactive readiness to kick. Like donkeys, the mules can kick in any direction and can do so even if they already have one foot lifted up and only have 3 feet still on the ground! The vets I have used say that horses commonly strike forward at them with a front leg, however I have only seen mules and donkeys strike forward with a front leg at dogs, not at people such as vets and equine dentists. Even when mules have learned not to kick people, it is easy to get kicked in the mule paddock if you aren't careful because they are still thumping each other and are not as thoughtful as the donks about checking what else might be in the vicinity before waving that back leg - or two back legs as they seem to prefer to double-

barrel kick. The mules also seem to have a larger personal space than the donkeys, particularly when food is involved but it can also include the space they like around them in the shed.

The donkeys definitely graze a wider range of plants - especially shrubs and trees - than the mules. The donkeys are also keener on eating hay even when grass is available. Mules will ignore hay when grass is accessible but the donkeys return to the hay several times a day even when a paddock has plenty of grass. Although I know other people's donkeys that eat clover, none of mine do but the mules love it plus another small-leaved groundcover that I haven't yet identified and which the donkeys won't touch. When let (or sneaking) in to the orchard, the donkeys love to chew the fruit trees' leaves, branches and trunks, but the mules commonly ignore the trees unless they are fruiting. Both equines will chomp our grape vines and pot plants if allowed to reach them. Both longears also happily eat blackberries, milk thistles and scotch thistles.

Is it raining? Two drops and my donkeys hurry into the sheds or look very miserable if they haven't got dry cover. If we are out in harness or riding, the donkeys prop under a tree or stop and swing their bottoms to the wind. The mules will keep on grazing, standing or working in heavy rain without even showing apparent signs of noticing the weather.

Out and about working, the mules seem much more inclined to do what you ask without arguing or disagreeing. I also find them less cautious and suspicious of objects than the donkeys, and if they get a fright over something they relax and get over it very quickly. The donkeys seem to enjoy their independence more and insist that their opinion is equally valid. While the donkeys accustomed to all sorts of obstacles are generally calmer, if they are suspicious of something it takes more effort to convince them that the situation is ok. When my donkey has been scared, it can maintain a nervous demeanour for the 30 minutes or can be suspicious of that particular situation for months later.

The mules consistently like to go forward and generally at faster speeds than my donkeys even though the donks are fit and can trot long distances and will readily canter too. Neither equine seems to like standing still. They would rather be going somewhere and seeing something interesting. The mules have softer mouths and are super sensitive and responsive to the bit and reins compared to the donkeys. That said, if the donkey agrees with you, it will respond to the mildest request of a rein.

When they are working or running about playing in the paddock, the donkeys only sweat a little bit or often not at all. The mules don't sweat as quickly as the ponies and horses we go harness driving with, but they sweat a great deal more than a donkey on the same outing or playing the same game.



Back home from a weekend away or approaching the gate with food treats, the donkeys will huff excitedly or perhaps bray loudly. My mules make a put-put grunting noise when quietly excited. The first time I heard it I was looking around to see what kind of motor was making the noise, unaware it was the mule! When calling loudly, the mules whinny but it is a warped version of the horse whinny, with some adding some kind of hiccup bray noises into the message. The mule whinnies vary massively in their sound but so can donkey brays from sounding like asthma wheezing and high-pitched screaming through to full-throated bellowing.

Some mules quite like water. One of my mules Yurrah Daisy swims in a dam with me in summer at harness camps and if not worried about depth or sinking into mud, she'll cross through water quite readily. Once on a lead rope I thought she was going to lie down and roll in some shallow water. She definitely drinks a lot more on outings and at camps than my donkeys do and normally wants a drink during breaks when we're out or will stop

to drink from a puddle along the way. My other mules also drink more water and more frequently than the donkeys but not as obviously as Daisy. All my mules drop their muzzle into the water when drinking and some slurp quite rudely. The donkeys are the opposite. They seem to hover their lips above the surface and the water seemingly lifts into their mouth by will power without a drop splashing. All you can see is their swallowing. While I have seen photos of donkeys swimming and mine have crossed through chest deep water, they would much rather avoid getting even a hoof wet.

Size is not a factor separating donkey characteristics from mule ones. There are mini ponies and horses to mate with mini donkeys to birth mini mules, and all sizes upwards to mammoth donkeys mating with draught breed horses to throw draught mules.

After writing this article, I asked my partner Ross what differences he noticed between the donkeys and the mules. The smell, he said. They smell different.

Donkeys	Mules
Tail is normally a fleshy fur-covered length with a hairy tassel at the end.	Tail is normally is thin version of a horse tail but has a fleshy length underneath the hair. The fleshy part is much less hair-covered than that of the donkey.
Long ears	Medium ears
The summer coat is noticeably thicker than a horse's coat. Showerproof.	Summer coat is smooth like a horse's coat but thicker though not as thick as a donkey's coat.
Short stiff upright mane and minimal forelock very common. Thin floppy mane and forelock are less common.	Mane often halfway between stiff upright near the base of the hair and then floppy as the longer ends, so tends to be lying variously over both sides of the neck unless trimmed short to the upright section only. Much bushier forelock than a donkey but not nearly as generous or floppy as that of a horse.
Hooves long from toe to heel relative to width. Hoof fairly upright in alignment with the pastern.	Hooves a little wider than the donkey's hoof relative to length, but not as wide as that of a horse which has the same length hoof. Hoof is at a midway upright angle – between that of a horse and a donkey.
Normally 2 chestnuts (1 each front leg). Rarely have chestnuts on back legs.	Normally 2 chestnuts (1 on each front leg). Can have chestnuts on back legs.
Brays and huffles.	Whinnies though sometimes a bit of a bray mixed in, and grunts (put-put noises)

OUT & ABOUT with BENNY

My fellow donkeys,

Things have been pretty busy lately up here at the Prickle Farm. For the first time in years I had nothing to do on ANZAC Day as the human and his friend rode in the Light Horse instead. Everyone asked where I was so it was a bit disappointing as it is important to show the younger people some of the greatest moments in our history and the ANZAC story must never be forgotten.

I was taken for a cruel drive on the road the other day with one of the mini shortears in the sulkies. It was a gruelling drive but there was a surprise in the middle of it - we were tethered to a fence in ankle deep sweet grass while the humans spent some time helping another cruel human teach her Welsh Pony to drive in harness. It was quite a treat to munch on someone else's grass while watching a shorteared dropkick being worked.

I had to do a Palm Sunday appearance at a local church which I do every year. The kids love me and swarm all over me and one of them always leads me down the road to the church service. This year the priest gave the human a bottle of plonk (altar wine?) for bringing me. Just what he doesn't need because he is silly enough already.

I was the star of the show at an Italian Festival early in April. I have my own booth inside and I am issued with an Italian flag to wear around my neck. I always have to do a radio interview each day of the festival. Unfortunately, I have to designate this duty to the human each time and I am always worried about what drivel he will say which of course will be attributed to me. Every year at my booth I raise money for the Brooke Foundation which is an organisation founded just after World War 1 by a Mrs Brooke to look after abandoned war horses in Egypt. Today the Brooke is in many third world countries looking after our hard-working brothers as well as mules and shortears. Last year we collected nearly \$900 but the results from this year have not been counted yet. People are always amazed that I stand in the one spot for two days and hardly move a muscle while hundreds of children hug me and have selfies taken



Me doing a radio interview at Italian Week.



I got to look after the Good Samaritan stall at the Heavy Horse Field Days.



As usual, me starring as a trick donkey.



Me & the shortears doing tricks at the show.

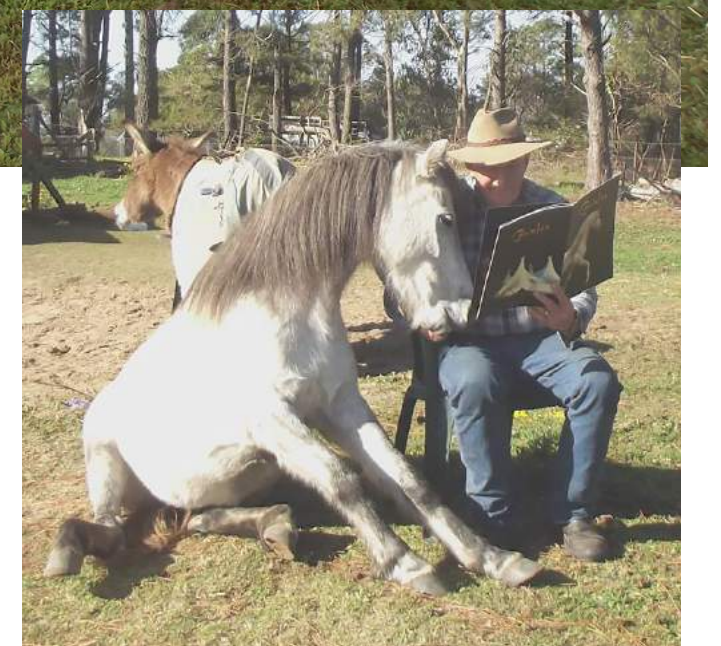
with me. Don't they realise that I am a donkey (and a handsome one at that) and if I don't have to do anything I don't do anything. After all, why wear yourself out by unnecessary moving.

In May I attended the Heavy Horse Field Days at St Heliers Correctional Centre which I have done for nearly 10 years. This year I had a small yard (with no fence) next to the Good Samaritan Donkey stall where I spent the whole two days being a trick donkey. It was exhausting as I probably did about five tricks over the two days. The stupid shortears, Araluen, who accompanied me to the show must have done about two hundred tricks, she is such a goof she just shows off all day which is alright by me. A couple of small girls took us from the human and looked after us each day; he showed them how to cue the dropkick to do some tricks with the shortears so that is all they did for two days. He did not bother showing them how to cue me because he can't get me to do anything anyway. I checked up on the Good Samaritan stand and they were doing a good job. They had two donkeys at the show which I got to know but they had this annoying sound they made now and again, it sounded a bit like EEEYAAW EEEYAAWW EEYAAWWW. Why they make such a stupid annoying sound I will never know, I just hope I never sound like that!!!

Do you know why I had my own small yard? Because the giant, hairy legged shortears are frightened of me so I am not allowed to go down where they are showing anymore because I MIGHT SCARE THEM. Boo Hoo. This is good for me as I don't have to do any sulky work, log snigging or sled work and of course I hardly raised a sweat over two days doing tricks so it was a good weekend for me.

Next stop is Mudjee Small Farms Field Days in July where I am again the star so I will tell you all about it next issue. In the meantime, keep out of trouble, don't do any unnecessary work and always remember

DONKEYS RULE.OK!!!



I was supposed to be watching and learning new tricks from the moronic human and Araluan, the brainless shortears. As you can see I completely ignored them. And the stupid human didn't even notice I'd gone.



Me & a couple of little fans.

Q & A

Fertility in female twins

Question:

A friend of mine has a jennet who was one of twins. The other twin was a jack who was born dead. Her jennet is eight years old and about 28" high.

Now she wants to breed from her, but can she? I have read that with horses if a colt and a filly twins are born, the hormones from the colt get into the filly and you can't breed from her. Is this an old wives' tale?

Answer:

Yes, in a way it is. It comes from people confusing equines with cattle. The twin problem in cattle is as described above. The female twin (called a freemartin) probably will not be able to breed because of placental crossover of hormones. However, this does not apply to other farm animals such as sheep, horses and donkeys.

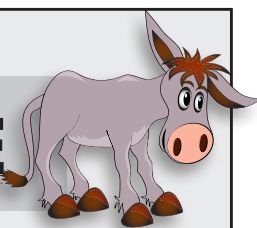
There are quite a few twin horse mares and donkey jennets who are fertile. Males are fertile with no problem, but not all twins are used at stud. No-one is quite sure if the twinning is hereditary or not, and if it is, if identical or fraternal (same egg or different) are more prevalent. Statistics seem to point to fraternal twins (two separate eggs) being more common. This means that the twins may be of different sexes (one male and one female), of different colours (for example, one brown and one spotted) or even, in VERY rare cases, one horse and one mule! In these cases, the horse mother was covered by both a stallion and a jack, when it was thought she had not taken to the stallion. In fact, she HAD taken, but was also covered by the jack and was carrying one of the rarest set of twins ever!

We have had cases of twin jennets becoming mothers. So far none have shown they are prone to having twins themselves.

The only problem with breeding from a jennet or a mare that has had twins is that she may do so again. You are always risking the death of one or both twins, as equine twins are not as rare as most people think, and have a high mortality rate. Many twins are reabsorbed as fetuses and only one foal or no foals are born that year. For those vets who always say they have never heard of such a thing as equine twins, they haven't dealt with mules or donkeys! Twins in donkeys and in mares carrying mule foals are about ten times more common than in horses. These twin pairs usually have a higher survival rate as well.

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2017 DONKEY SOCIETY OF VICTORIA CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW

Story : Jennifer McNab

Photos : Tracy Morris

Event: 8-9 April 2017

Shortly after the successful 2016 DSV Championship Show at Bunyip, planning commenced for the 2017 event. Ted and Mary Jones and Les Pratt, all from Alexandra, had volunteered to host the 2017 Show in their town. With no other offers forthcoming, the 2016 Show sub-committee, based in Gippsland, gladly accepted their offer and, in turn, promised organisational support.

In June 2016 Ann, Graham, Peter and I, had a preliminary trip to Alexandra to look over the Showgrounds and to book accommodation for the weekend of the 2017 event. We stayed two nights and had a lovely couple of days with Mary, Ted and Les. We were able to check out the great facilities at the Showgrounds, the lovely township of Alexandra as well as meet their donkeys and ponies. Ann and I even took some time for shopping while Peter engaged in some family history research.

The Gippsland team of Ann Berrett, Heather Bradbury, Hilary Dortmans, and the McNabs produced all paperwork, programme, show catalogue. They received entries, ordered ribbons, sashes and trophies, designed the courses, organised judges, sourced equipment, managed the finances and organised the shop and raffle. The Alexandra team took on the tasks of organising the catering for judges and workers, booking the grounds and large equipment, and borrowing the PA system, jumping equipment and stockyards from various local groups. Mary took on the onerous task of getting sponsorship and local publicity. The prizes she sourced for the raffle were fabulous and the local publicity wonderful. She even got a great article into the Murrindindi Guide, a glossy magazine

published by the council. Ted offered his beautiful vintage truck to use as a place from which to display prizes and make announcements. Les' personal connection with New Zealand judge, Diana Humphries, was a real bonus.

In March of this year, Peter and I had an extra trip to Alexandra for a Family History event. This gave us another opportunity to meet with Mary and Ted who arranged for us to do a full inventory of the available Pony Club equipment.

The big weekend arrived. The show was to start on Saturday, so the Gippsland team checked in on Thursday to get an early start. We brought with us large amounts of equipment, paperwork, and some home-cooked provisions.

Set-up day was Friday April 7. The Alexandra Pony Club gave us the key to their shed and free use of anything we chose. The Alexandra Pastural and Agricultural Association (P&A) gave us free use of the Showgrounds, yards and other equipment. The Showgrounds Caravan Park next door allowed the campers and public use of their toilets and shower. A P.A. system was lent by the local Rotary Club. All this equipment was supplemented with car loads of gear brought up by the Berretts and McNabs from Gippsland, as well as items from Mary, Ted and Les. We still had to make some last-minute purchases in Alexandra.

The judges and other helpers arrived on the Friday afternoon. Wine and nibbles on the 'patio' were enjoyed by the group staying at the Alexandra Motel.

Saturday – ShowTime! Ann acted as Chief Steward, while I took on the announcing. Graham was the duty photographer.

The Society shop and raffle sales were left in the capable hands of DSV Life-members, Pat Streefkerk and Jo Bond. Jan Murray helped as ring steward for Diana in the morning and for Peter in the afternoon, while Peter stewarded for Helen in the morning.

The Saturday programme ran well. Most people listened to announcements and progressed to their classes in a timely manner. The weather stayed pleasant even though it looked threatening at times. Judging started with the presentation classes where both judges worked together. Then, Helen Robertson (South Australia) judged the larger donkeys: Part-bred American mammoths, Australian/Teamsters and hybrids; while Diana Humphries (New Zealand) judged the smaller animals: Mediterranean Miniatures, Miniatures, English/Irish.

Saturday afternoon Peter McNab ran the novelties. The Fancy Dress and Ridden Costume were judged by Ann and myself.

The rain had been threatening all day on Saturday and in the evening. While most of us were enjoying a pub meal the weather broke. We had heavy rain and storms most of Saturday night. Sunday morning it was still wet but not nearly as bad, however there were storm warnings out for most of Victoria. Should we cancel Sunday? Many people had a long distance to travel towing floats and caravans. We were concerned for people getting home safely.

After conferring with competitors, we decided to go ahead with whatever we could do, particularly as several of the courses were ready to go. We made an early start with the Obstacle course, judged by Peter. Rachel Haslau then judged the Dressage, Ridden Trail, Show Jumping, Ridden classes, Packing, Harness and Cone Driving. We got through the whole programme without interruption from the weather. We were very pleased to have Jenny and Graham Martin available to present the 'Roja' Perpetual trophy for Champion Performance Donkey.

The 2017 DSV Championship Show Sub-committee would like to thank the judges, sponsors, competitors, and all those who lent equipment and who pitched in and helped. This Sub-committee has now finished its term and will be very happy to give any assistance to the next Championship Show sub-committee.

Peter and I feel that we have made some lovely friends from Alexandra and hope to keep this connection alive.



Molly the mule makes a sterling effort to carry all those ribbons for Tammy Griffin.



New Zealand judge Diana Humphries awards the blue ribbon to Mary Jones' yearling miniature jenny Caella Ruby.



Champion Performance Donkey Wendanjo Susannah, ridden by Kitty Byrnes faces off against Champion Performance Hybrid Molly ridden by Tammy Griffin.



Deb Hanton with her Champion Clovercrest Allegra.



Fiona Mottram's Tambo entertains spectators



Hawaiki Bruce showing Tammy Griffin how to jump in style.

2017 DONKEY SOCIETY OF VICTORIA CHAMPIONSHIP SHOW



Joy's Marco Polo & Hazel Knight compete in the obstacle classes



Up & over: Yurrah Spinifex makes easy work of the standing jump for Kitty Byrnes.



John Hanton's Clovercrest Loretta was the Champion AMMD jenny.



Hazel Knight & her consistent prizewinner Joy's Marco Polo.



Kim Dalton's youngster Western Downs Memphis went on to win Supreme Champion Led Irish/English Donkey.



Cathy Buerckner's Fiesta, Champion Miniature jenny & Supreme Led Miniature donkey.



Kitty Byrnes rides Wendanjo Susannah to claim the blue ribbon in the Donkey under Saddle class.