

# DONKEY DIGEST

The Magazine of the Affiliated Donkey Owners of Australia

JUNE 2020



# DONKEY DIGEST

is produced by the  
**Affiliated Donkey Societies of Australia**



*Four issues are published per year in March, June, September and December respectively.*

Distributed to society members

## **EDITOR**

Christine Thelander  
199 Rosia Road  
Park Ridge South  
Queensland 4125 Australia

**Email:** c.thelander@bigpond.com  
Phone: 07-3802 1127, 0419 026 782

*Please send items to the editor for inclusion in the magazine.*

**NEXT DEADLINE - 1st SEPTEMBER  
FOR THE SEPTEMBER 2020 EDITION**

## **Annual overseas subscriptions**

Colour electronic copy - \$20 AUD  
Black & white posted copy -\$30 AUD  
Email c.thelander@bigpond.com for postage costs

Please contact the Administrator, Christine Trotter, for details on payment by direct bank deposit.

Copyright. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced without written permission from the editor.

The views expressed in this magazine are those of the individuals concerned and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editor or the officers of the Affiliated Donkey Societies of Australia.



**Affiliated Donkey Societies Australia**  
Find us on the web – [www.donkeysadsa.org](http://www.donkeysadsa.org)

## **OFFICERS OF THE AFFILIATION**

### **Registrar**

**Kerrie Haynes-Lovell**  
104 Luthers Road  
Halfway Creek, NSW 2460  
Ph: 0416 167 453  
Email: lotsodogs@iinet.net.au

### **Administrator**

**Christine Trotter**  
80 Noels Lane  
Gherang, VIC 3240  
Ph: 03-5288 7460 evening, 0417 348 819 day  
Email: cljgypsy20@gmail.com

## **AUSTRALIAN DONKEY SOCIETIES**

### **Donkey & Mule Society of South Australia**

[www.donkeysocietysa.org](http://www.donkeysocietysa.org)  
**Secretary: Leanne Christie**  
PO Box 1170  
Aldinga Beach, SA 5173  
Ph: 0404 442 949  
Email: lchristie@aussiebb.com.au

### **Donkey Society of Queensland**

[www.donkeysocietyqld.org](http://www.donkeysocietyqld.org)  
**Secretary: Julia Byatte**  
178 Blantyre Road,  
Blantyre, Qld 4310  
Ph: 0419 995 534  
Email: jbyatte@ozemail.com.au

### **Donkey Society of Victoria**

[www.donkey.org.au](http://www.donkey.org.au)  
**Secretary: Pat Streefkerk**  
725 Dickins Road  
Freshwater Creek, VIC 3217  
Ph: 0409 962 660, 03-5264 5235  
Email: pstreef@bigpond.com

### **Donkey Society of Western Australia**

[www.donkeywa.org.au](http://www.donkeywa.org.au)  
**Secretary: Helen McIntyre**  
80 Mills Rd West  
Martin, WA 6110  
Ph: 08 9398 5525  
Email jaspol@iinet.net.au



### FROM THE EDITOR

Who could have predicted the events of the last three months would escalate in such a dramatic fashion? All of a sudden, the well-worn paths of daily life disappeared and our vocabulary became littered with the words 'hand sanitiser, social distancing, masks, toilet paper, lockdowns, home schooling, welfare queues, work at home'. As the familiar crumbled, we all reacted to the new world of Covid-19 differently according to individual circumstances. I suspect many of us found solace in our animals and many of us are lucky enough to live on acreage which is a joy when you feel the four walls of a house closing in. And, of course, once outside the donkeys are always enthusiastically waiting to help you with any jobs that need doing. After they have been fed, that is.

With most social activities cancelled, there is still much to enjoy. This Donkey Digest concentrates on popular lockdown reading themes – escapism, nostalgia and advice. For those who dream of donkey trekking, there's no better time than right now to start putting a plan into action. To this end we are delighted to welcome Tim Daniel to the Donkey Digest. Tim runs the world-acclaimed Wilderness Expeditions based at Herberton, inland from Cairns, Queensland. He is an army survival expert and has decades of experience in adventure holidays in the Territory and Queensland. He is also the Far North Queensland Section Co-ordinator for the Bicentennial National Trail. Tim has agreed to write a series of articles for Donkey Digest on the complexities of trekking with pack donkeys. The first one outlines the background of packing, principles, considerations and preparation needed to undertake a successful trip. Having the luxury of reading Tim's story before you do, I can't help but think if I was determined to go trekking, I would 'try it out' and go on a Wilderness Expeditions trekking trip first. It would be a fantastic holiday and you could learn so much from being in the thick of it. Checkout [www.wildex.com.au](http://www.wildex.com.au) to see the range of activities on offer.

At the other end of the longears spectrum is the art of riding sidesaddle. Jacquelynn Holly from Idaho, USA gives us a fascinating look into her life with riding mules aside. And doesn't she have mules to drool over? Jacquelynn's main mule Rosy was forced to take a lengthy break after surgical fusion for high ringbone. Green mule Roxy was brought in and made her demonstration debut at the Western Idaho Fair. This is a first-time story we can all learn from. We also look at where riding sidesaddle started way back. It's a trip down memory lane with a few surprises along the way.

There are plenty of other interesting bits and pieces of donkey and mule news to catch up on, too. I hope you enjoy them.

Happy Trails

*Christine*

# inside

ADSA REGISTRATIONS	2
OVERSEAS NEWS	3
AUSTRALIAN NEWS	5
MURPHY IN THE MOVIES	6
ROXY'S SIDESADDLE DEBUT	10
RIDING ASIDE: A HISTORY	13
PACKING YOUR DONKEY OR MULE	16
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ROUND-UP	21
FROM THE RIDGE	22
OUT & ABOUT WITH OLIVER	24
ASSVERTISEMENTS	25

### COVER PHOTO:

Lights, camera, action: Partying at a speakeasy in the Roaring Twenties, Linda Jay's donkey Murphy is all ears during a film shoot for Shaun Micallef's Mad As Hell comedy show screened on ABC TV.

Read more on Page 6..

# Registrar's Roundup

with Kerrie Haynes-Lovell



Registrations	Registration no.	Owner
WattleWoods Wee Shad (100% Australian Min.)	19/011GE/Aumin	Joanna Shore
WattleWoods Wee Sassi (100% Australian Min.)	19/007JE/Aumin	Hazel Knight
Western Downs Jackson	19/01/74 (colt appendix Due 11/2021)	Kim Dalton
Western Downs Tucson	19/02/75 Colt appendix Due 12/2021	Kim Dalton
Iron Brook Squizzly Taylor	20/001JA/Aus. Min.	Kim Dalton
Western Downs Phoenix	20/001JE/Aus. Min	Kim Dalton
Eagle Rock Finlayson	19/03/75 (colt App.)	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Will	20/001GE	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Monty	20/002GE	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Cobber	20/003GE	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Rupert (transfer from Colt Appendix)	20/004GE	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Chloe	20/002JE	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Rey	20/003JE	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Sydney	20/005GE (transfer from Colt appendix)	Jen Dalitz
Eagle Rock Atlas	20/006GE (transfer from Colt appendix)	Jen Dalitz

Transfer #	Name	Registration #	From	To
19/021	WattleWoods Wee Shad (100% Australian Min.)	19/011GE/Aumin	Hazel Knight	Joanna Shore
20/001	Crofters Brae Isador	18/041JE/EI	Stella Wakil	Sharron Moore
20/002	Hawaiki Topaz (molly mule)	14/007MO	Fiona Mottram	Catherine Brady
20/003	Keysoe Sage	19/008JE	Ruth Walker	Peter Micallef
20/004	Eagle Rock Finlayson	19/03/75 (colt App.)	Jen Dalitz	Ross May
20/005	Eagle Rock Cobber	20/003GE	Jen Dalitz	Holly Brown
20/006	Eagle Rock Rupert	20/004GE	Jen Dalitz	Holly Brown
20/007	Eagle Rock Chloe	20/002JE	Jen Dalitz	Mark Edwards
20/008	Eagle Rock Rey	20/003JE	Jen Dalitz	Mark Edwards
20/009	Eagle Rock Sydney	20/005GE	Jen Dalitz	Kerrie Burry
20/010	Eagle Rock Eugenie	18/0335JE	Jen Dalitz	Kerrie Burry
20/011	Eagle Rock Sapphire	18/032JE	Jen Dalitz	Ross & Renata Ramsay
20/012	Eagle Rock Sandy	18/024GE	Jen Dalitz	Ross & Renata Ramsay
20/013	Eagle Rock Atlas	20/006GE	Jen Dalitz	M & W Sandblom
20/014	Eagle Rock AVA	18/033JE	Jen Dalitz	M & W Sandblom
20/015	Eagle Rock Roxie	12/019JE	Jen Dalitz	M & W Sandblom

# Hong Kong Customs seize biggest haul of donkey skins

**ACCORDING TO** the Hong Kong Standard and the South China Morning Post, April 20, Hong Kong customs officers seized 16 tonnes of donkey skins, 500kg of sea cucumbers, 2kg of fish maws and one tonne of dried shark fins from smugglers in a consignment worth HK\$1.45 million (US\$187,000).

The Customs and Excise Department uncovered the haul after a spot check of a cargo container originating from Egypt.

"Officers selected and inspected a container declared to be carrying table salt that arrived in Hong Kong from Egypt. The suspected smuggled goods including donkey skins were seized," the department said in a statement.

An investigation is under way.

Smuggling is a serious offence in Hong Kong and carries a maximum penalty of seven years in prison and a HK\$2 million fine.

Hong Kong, one of the world's busiest



Some of the smuggled donkey skins, sea cucumbers and fish maws seized. Photo: Hong Kong Customs

air and sea cargo hubs, is a hotspot for smuggling, helping fuel the wildlife trade, especially in elephant tusks and shark fin.

With the help of intelligence gathering and sharing of information among law-enforcement agencies worldwide, customs officers identify goods from high-risk countries.

# Donkeys step up to take on vital Welsh rail maintenance during lockdown



**AS MOST EMPLOYEES** at Talylyn Railway have been furloughed during the coronavirus lockdown, some of the work has been taken on by new staff – two donkeys.

Hamish and Lady Maude have stepped up to the mark to help the historic steam railway in southern Snowdonia, Wales.

The new and dedicated equine recruits are carrying out vital horticultural management work alongside the seven-mile track and at stations – grazing grass that might otherwise grow out of control and keeping other growth in its place.

"The line's closure may be bad news for the team running the world's first preserved railway, but Hamish and Lady Maude are enjoying the absence of trains to fill their bellies," said a spokesman for the railway.

Talylyn was opened in 1865 and after the death of its owner Sir Haydn Jones in 1951, a preservation society was formed to take over the

line's management. General manager Stuart Williams said this is the first spring the railway has not run trains since its preservation.

"Usually a combination of regular steam trains and our army of outdoor volunteers who trim, flail and tend to the line side keeps the vegetation under control," he said. "Without these people, the line side is reversing quickly to nature and becoming akin to a closed railway.

"We were pleased to be asked about the possibility of allowing a couple of local donkeys to graze the line side at Rhydyronen, so Hamish and Lady Maude moved in and have been given their own part of the railway to maintain."



Above: Lady Maude & Hamish doing their bit to keep the foliage under control alongside the historic Talylyn Steam Railway track in Snowdonia, Wales.

Above Left: While the regular human steam train enthusiasts have been forced into isolation, the donkeys have taken over line maintenance clearing & are enjoying the absence of trains as they get on with their munching 'work'.

## Polo-playing donkeys buried with Chinese noblewoman



The skeletal remains of a donkey recovered from the tomb. S. Hu et al., 2020/*Antiquity*

**A NOBLEWOMAN** from Imperial China enjoyed playing polo on donkeys so much she had her mounts buried with her so she could keep doing it in the afterlife, according to archaeologists.

New research provides the first physical evidence of donkey polo in Imperial China, which previously was known only from historical texts. It also sheds light on the role of donkeys in the lives of high-status women in that period.

Researchers found donkey bones in the tomb of Cui Shi, a noblewoman who died in 878 AD in Xi'an, China.

The presence of work animals in a wealthy woman's tomb was unexpected, the researchers report in the journal *Antiquity*.

"Donkeys were the first pack animal, the steam engines of their day in Africa and western Eurasia, but we know almost nothing about their use in eastern Asia," said Fiona Marshall, an archaeologist in the Department of Anthropology at Washington University in St Louis. Marshall helped study the animal bones found in Cui Shi's tomb for the research.

"Donkey skeletons just have not been found — this is probably because they died along trade routes and were not preserved.

"The donkeys buried in the Tang Dynasty noble tomb in Xian provided a first opportunity — and a very rare one — to understand donkeys' roles in East Asian societies."

Lead author Songmei Hu, from the Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology, said there was no reason for a woman such as Cui Shi to use a donkey, let alone sacrifice it for her afterlife. "This is the first time such a burial has been found."

Polo is thought to have its origins in Iran. However, the sport flourished during the Tang Dynasty, which ruled China from AD 618 to 907.

During this time, polo became a favorite sport of the royal and noble families, to the point where an emperor used a polo competition to pick generals. This included Cui Shi's husband, Bao Gao, who was promoted to general by Emperor Xizong for winning a match.

However, the sport was dangerous when played on large horses, with one emperor killed during a game. As such, some nobles preferred to play Lvju, or donkey polo.

Although both forms of polo are mentioned in the historical literature, horse polo is the only form depicted in art and artifacts.

The researchers conducted radiocarbon dating and analyzed the size and patterns of stresses and strains on the donkey bones from Cui Shi's tomb. Their findings suggest that these small and active donkeys were being used for Lvju.

Given that animals were typically included in burials for use in the afterlife, the donkeys' presence with Cui Shi allowed the researchers to conclude that she wanted to keep playing her favorite sport after death.

This research provides the first physical evidence of donkeys being used by elite women and of donkey polo in Imperial China, the researchers said. As the first donkey skeletons from eastern Asia to be thoroughly studied, they also broaden the understanding of the role of donkeys in the past.

Hu, S., Hu, Y., Yang, J., Yang, M., Wei, P., Hou, Y., & Marshall, F. (n.d.). From pack animals to polo: Donkeys from the ninth-century Tang tomb of an elite lady in Xi'an, China. *Antiquity*, 1-18. doi:10.15184/aq.2020.6

## Firefighters in Britain rescue donkey in hot water

**A DONKEY** was left with a long face after getting its hoof stuck in a kettle. The animal, named Daniel, stepped into the pot and ended up with the object stuck on his hoof, resulting in his owner calling emergency services.

North Yorkshire Fire Services said a crew stationed in Whitby responded to help Daniel the donkey free his hoof from the kettle. Crews used pliers to release Daniel's hoof.

A fire services representative said Daniel was not injured and was able to trot over to rejoin his fellow donkeys.

It was not clear how Daniel ended up with his foot trapped in the kettle to begin with. He probably did so ass-identally. (Sorry.)

Firefighters in Britain came to the rescue of a donkey that wound up with a kettle stuck on its hoof. Photo courtesy of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.





## Run Forrest Run

By Judy Wright, Victoria

Life might be like a box of chocolates for us humans at the moment but be assured it's fun times as usual for resident donkey Forrest at the Wagga Wagga Botanic Gardens Zoo and Aviary. Wagga Wagga City Council staff are working every day to ensure the health and wellbeing of all the animals at the zoo despite it being closed to the public amid the pandemic situation. Forrest who delights so many visitors to the zoo, and all the other animals are receiving 100 per cent attention and care from Council staff during the shutdown.

"All the animals are doing just fine," zoo curator Kieralee Tori said. "We are giving them plenty of attention - visiting the enclosures, feeding and watering them, and taking them on walks to ensure they still have that human contact."

For those who may not know the Zoo were taking applications looking for Forrest's forever home. As the successful applicant, we were so happy to hear that Forrest was going to join our herd in East Gippsland and we organised him to be castrated prior to him joining us. We currently have four other donkeys and a Quarterhorse whom are all gelded. As restrictions had closed the borders, we were unable to pick him up but have been so grateful for the care he is receiving. Kieralee has also taken this time to float train Forrest and he has mastered this quite well.

Forrest, (born 15 Oct 2014) came from a hobby farm in Tamworth and earned his name after the Wagga Wagga City Council conducted a competition and received more than 120 submissions. I'm sure he will hear 'run Forrest, run!' called out by many over the coming years.

## Waylaid in Warrnambool: Janet and Jack forced to change plans



Who would have thought Animal Aid Abroad's Walk Across Australia fund-raising effort would run straight into Covid-19 shutdowns? But that's exactly what happened to AAA founder Janet Thomas and her dog Jack who set off from Federation Square, Melbourne in late March and walked to Warrnambool before being halted. While the pair could not go forward, they continued clocking up kilometres around the coastal city.

Luckily, the authorities eventually granted an Essential Traveller Notice which allowed travel through South Australia at the end of May. Janet and Jack are heading to Robe, SA, at the time of printing. Total walked to date is 815.89kms with a fantastic \$65,560.21 raised so far.

Janet has been struggling with sore heels and a nasty blister so has taken a couple of days' rest in the hope of improvement. We wish the pair the best in their walk for working animals overseas. Follow their progress on Facebook and donate if you can on their website [www.animalaidabroad.org/walk-across-aus](http://www.animalaidabroad.org/walk-across-aus)



# SHAUN MICALLEF'S MAD AS HELL



## Murphy in the Movies

Above: Murphy entertains flappers & gangsters in a Roaring Twenties speakeasy.

**Story:** Linda Jay,  
Iron Brook Donkey Farm, Victoria

It is 3.30am and my alarm cuts through the darkness. What a ridiculous time to get out of bed, but we must get going as there is a big day ahead of us. We are going to a Melbourne location to shoot a skit for the ABC TV show Shaun Micallef's Mad as Hell.

With my torch assisting my bleary eyes, I get about the farm and feed all the animals, before bringing out my special donkey for today. Murphy was all brushed and trimmed yesterday to make my morning a little easier. The rug has kept him clean, but will also protect him on the long float ride ahead.

The float is already hooked up to the ute and everything we need is already packed. I am grateful for his lack of hesitation in getting straight on, and we are on the road in moments. Today we are heading out to Brighton, on the other side of Melbourne city, and a long way from our mountain home at East Warburton. Fortunately, we are early enough to beat the worst of the peak hour traffic and we get to Brighton without any troubles. Melbourne's inner-city roads are already cluttered with people and traffic, and not really designed for a float and trailer, but we find the address, go past it, and park in a larger carpark area behind the shops.

The film crew meet us there, and help me to bring in any bits and pieces we might need for the day. As Murphy and I walk through the car park, the busy area is going about its business with many a crack and bang, punctuated by exclamations of people running towards Murphy to catch an experience of meeting and touching a donkey in the city.

The location for today's film shoot is a tiny little café down a cobblestone

lane. A little doorway next to a train station. Busy people rush past us to catch their morning train.

Murphy is calm and quiet as I lead him up the step and into the tiny little room. The floor is covered with shiny black plastic to protect the boards, but it is an unusual surface to stand on. Murphy doesn't second guess it at all, stepping up to exactly where I ask him. The room is already cluttered with crew. Lighting, Make-up, Stage Management, Sound and Cameras. I introduce Murphy to everyone he is likely to meet. Especially the actress he will be working with.

Today, Murphy will be expected to stand still for the scene with no halter or lead rope. I have already taught him hand signals which I can show him from the wings for instruction. Very close around him people are running cables and setting up stands, boxes and reflective screens for lighting. He has seen cameras and lights before, but we investigate them again, just to make sure there are no surprises. While this is happening, a train pulls into the station with a puff and a hiss and a loud honk of the whistle. These trains continued to arrive and depart throughout the shoot. People scoot past fast on the cobblestones. With each new sound or experience, I give him a cuddle of reassurance, and he quickly relaxes and understands these things are OK.

The next new experience was the smoke machine. Not only does it produce clouds of smoke, but it huffs puffs and hisses as it does so. In the beginning it was set in front of us, but later they determined that the smoke would be more effective if set on the ground near



his rear quarter. So now he has a continuous, huffing, puffing dragon behind him. The smoke wasn't coming into the shot well enough, so a couple of crew members waved boards up and down like fans behind him to bring the fog into shot. The scene was in a 1920s bar, and the action was loud laughter and carry on, like a big night out. One of the actresses was to behave as if she was in love with Murphy, and the actors were to behave as if Murphy was telling funny jokes. For the best footage, they decided to place two of the actresses directly behind him, where they would laugh and carry on loudly. Murphy's ears rolled around to listen to them, but he wasn't threatened at all. He stood quietly and relaxed in the bar, regardless of all that was happening around him.

Between each take, people would rush out to tweak make-up or costume. Sometimes the director would ask Murphy to take a single step forward, back or sideways, to be in just the right position. This was usually done with a single command or hand signal, and then he had to stand still. I am enjoying that the more of this work we do, the easier it is to make these adjustments with the smallest instruction. The more we do together, the stronger the trust, and the more we are able to achieve.

Murphy has been in quite a few film and TV shoots now. His last one before this was for a yet to be screened Bunnings commercial, where he had to stand next to a deck, with no-one holding him, while many things happened around him, such as balloons, children running etc. Several of my other donkeys have also had roles, including my miniature jack, Banjo being on set for a week as a pack saddle donkey. The location of Banjo's shoot was muddy, and the vehicles were getting bogged. They actually used Banjo to carry some of the equipment up and down the steep slope!

But Murphy is definitely my hardest working and most experienced donkey. This is his second time on Shaun Micallef's Mad As Hell, and Billy-Bob has had a scene in the same show too (they must like donkeys). One thing that I am really proud of is that while each piece of footage requires many takes, they have always been for camera angle, actor's direction or artistic alterations. We have never had to do additional takes for the behaviour of the donkey. These donkeys are such a pleasure to work with.

So, the scene is shot, and then Murphy is hugged by every person in the building as they pose for their latest Facebook profile picture. Everyone loves him, and he receives much attention. We make our way back over the cobblestones, much to the surprise of rushing, homeward-bound commuters, and into the carpark. Murphy loads straight onto the float, and before we know it, we are back on the road to the farm at home.

To do these shoots is a bit more complex than how it appears on the day. Murphy's calmness is partly due to his natural, gentle nature, but it is also desensitisation and experience.

He has been exposed to such a broad diversity of things and environments that he has now come to expect the unexpected. He seems to know now that there is nothing to fear when we are working together. Training with love and reassurance and never force or fear helps him to be relaxed in every situation we encounter.

Much paperwork is also involved, with risk assessments, policies and procedures around having an animal on set. The insurance is also a big one, and I have to check in with my insurer for each location to see if any additional cover-note is required for the requests involved... even a request for the donkey to be led by a stilt-walker! The insurance company is getting used to those odd requests and are getting to know Murphy and the fabulous potential of donkeys.

The more I do with these donkeys, the more I feel that we can do.... It is such a rewarding pleasure.

**Murphy lives it up at a Roaring Twenties party in a skit on Shaun Micallef's 'Mad as Hell' TV show screened on ABC. Follow Murphy's adventures on Facebook at The Donkey Shop.**



## About Linda Jay

“ I was born in the Adelaide Hills where we lived on a self-sufficiency farm. We also bred and trained Australian Standard donkeys (and one little Irish donkey called Jessie). My peers were all into horses, but I always preferred to stick with the donkeys, and developed a connection with them from very young. From 16 years' old I worked back stage in entertainment in a variety of roles including rigging, lighting, set building and stage management, in everything from Rock and Roll to Musical Theatre and Circus. I worked in this field for many years. Once I bought my own property in Victoria I soon filled it with donkeys and returned to that passion. I have a combination of miniatures, right through to large Australian Standards. I do a wide variety of things with the donkeys here, from rides to therapy work... and movies. I never imagined that my previous skills of entertainment and stage management and my passion for donkeys would combine in this way, but they have come together to enable us to do things that are unique and rewarding. ”



# BEST FRIENDS FOREVER

Only in Australia would you see a sight like this, a kangaroo resting with a donkey. The photo from 2007 shows Stella Gallack's jack Dougal, then aged 16, lying in the house yard with Pollyanna the hand-reared donkey who was then aged 12 years.

Stella lives on a hobby farm at Boddington, south of Perth, Western Australia. She got her jack Dougal – better known as Doo Doo – in 1999 and bred 14 foals with him, the first two foals are still with Stella. At 29 years' old Doo Doo is still a valued member of the Gallack's longlong stud, so named because it took Stella a 'longlong' time to find her first donkey, donkeys have 'longlong' ears, they are pregnant for a 'longlong' time, they live for a 'longlong' time and Stella could talk about donkeys for a 'longlong' time.

Even though Pollyanna the kangaroo was hand-reared from a tiny baby, Stella said she was always free to return to the wild but she chose to stay and particularly loved



hanging with the donkeys. Kangaroos generally bolt when frightened but Pollyanna learned to stay calm taking her cue from the donkeys. Pollyanna died aged 20 which is a good innings for a 'roo. RIP Pollyanna.

## Iron Brook Donkey Farm East Warburton, Victoria

- Home of The Donkey Shop and Murphy's Magical Donkey Rides.
- Breeder of prize winning miniature donkeys as well as Australian Standards.
- Bred for temperament and conformation, and trained with love.
- Farm Stay Accommodation, Day Trips and Holidays with donkeys.
- Learn more about these wonderful creatures and experience their affection.



**Contact Linda Jay**

0409 664 074

[info@thedonkeyshop.com.au](mailto:info@thedonkeyshop.com.au)

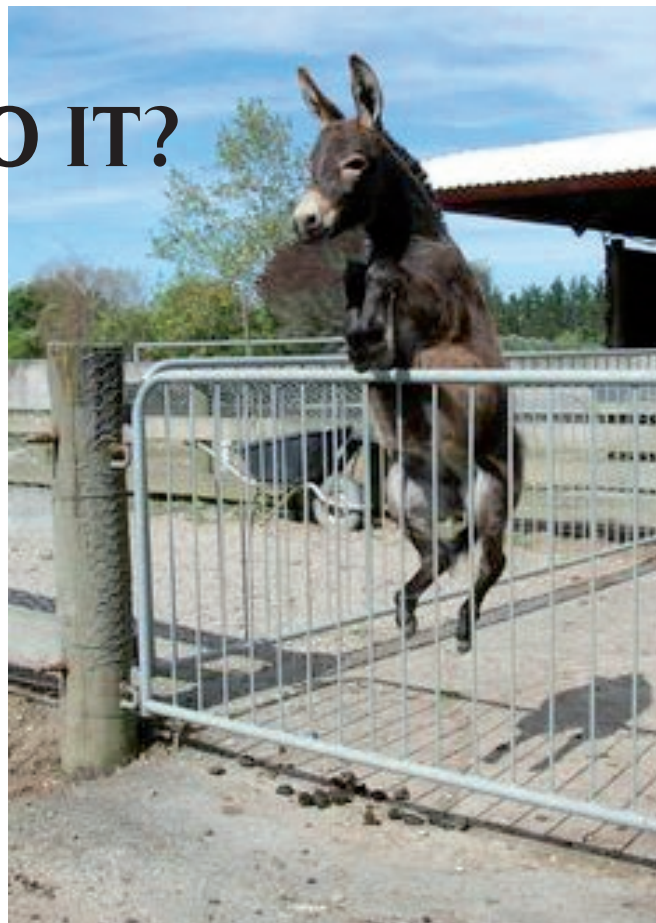
Find us on the Web & Facebook

# HOW DO THEY DO IT?

It's anatomical, I am told, that gives donkeys and mules the wondrous ability to jump from a standstill. I remember our sweet little jenny. Confinement in a vet crush and heavy sedation didn't stop her from leaping up and sailing gracefully out to freedom, despite me hanging on to the halter and being lifted up in the air like Mary Poppins. I know many of you have experienced this leaping from a standstill behaviour. You go out in the morning and your donkey is mysteriously in another paddock or is out of his night stable with the door still closed and the latch fastened with no sign of tampering. What the ....?

The answer lies in the donkey's smoother muscling which allows for more range of motion than does the bulk muscling in a horse. This gives donkeys and mules the ability to jump from a standstill. The angles of the joints also play a part in the longear's ability to jump like this. It is also why horses can only kick backwards while mules and donkeys can kick backwards, forwards and even sideways.

The unique muscling and angle of joints enable an individual mule in particular to have a range of versatility and compete in multiple events such as English and Western pleasure, trail, driving, dressage, combined training, jumping, reining and cutting – all with the same animal. Though there are some horses that exhibit similar versatility it is not as predominant as it is with mules.



## PLAN TO PROTECT

### Water Resistant BARRIER Cream



Find out more at [nrgteam.com.au](http://nrgteam.com.au)

All **NRG** products available from your local horse shop



Find us on  [facebook.](#)

Hoofbeats artwork



# Roxy's Debut

Jacquelynn Holly writes from America to share her green mule's sidesaddle debut at the Western Idaho Fair.

**W**e arrived at the Western Idaho Fair around 3:30 for the Idaho Sidesaddle Association's scheduled 30-minute evening demonstration. It was 95 degrees with absolutely no breeze.

Roxy stood quietly at the trailer (which is a big deal right now, because we are still practising patience). We could hear the announcers, crowds, music, whinnies and brays in the distance. She tacked up great and was patient while I reluctantly got dressed in over 20 pounds of upholstery fabric.

Around 4:15, two other members and I began the half mile trek to the barn on the other side of the racetrack.

We walked briskly past show attendants and contestants, thanking them briefly for their compliments until we reached the shade of the barn. "Are we going to stand in the breezeway?" I asked. That was a dumb question, where else were we going to go? There was no sign of shade anywhere else on the grounds. Here I was with a green equine,

with limited mobility in an historic costume, and yet, we both exuded calmness and comfort in our awkward placement in the breezeway.

To one side of us, the horses were clearly fed up with their weeklong stay at the fair and were obnoxiously trying to bite Roxy's rump and lip my top hat. To the other side, countless strollers and wagons cruised on by at an alarmingly close distance. Roxy stood perfectly with visiting children and adults alike. She had half a dozen individuals come directly behind her and start petting her rump. Similarly, several individuals came up and immediately reached for her ears without ever asking permission to pet (a year ago today she would have whiplashed them with her head if they'd tried that). This little mule soaked in all the attention like everyone was there specifically to love on her.

Things got more exciting when we were called to the arena (after an hour of waiting). I failed to gather my whole skirt and Roxy accidentally stepped on it. Rip! "Oh no!" I heard the ladies behind me gasp. Let's just say I'm glad I had an entire period correct wardrobe on under the dress, including pantaloons! The ladies quickly fastened the skirt back on and we walked as quickly as my garb would allow.

In the arena, Roxy was once again in her element and a little rockstar. She stood perfectly square and still, modeling my 1904 Mayhew sidesaddle.

After our demo was abruptly and unexpectedly cut short by the show officials (unfortunately the fair's scheduling and organization proved to be less than ideal for our entire experience), we headed out of the arena at which point I realized my boot was filling with sand. Ha! The sole had nearly completely come off!! Wardrobe malfunction #2 was underway.

At this point drafts and wagons and jingling, jangling harnesses were headed straight for us... and I was walking like a chicken with my sole folded in half, kicking up sand everywhere, wondering what was going on in Roxy's little brain. Were we going to be the unplanned fair entertainment? Were we going to have a mule on the loose at the fairgrounds in 3, 2, 1? Were my feet going to fall out of my boots entirely? The possibilities of what could go wrong were endless. Who knew my imagination could formulate so many scenarios in two seconds? The drafts were right behind us.

Roxy's ears flipped back and she raised her head. We turned around and the driver shouted "Sorry! I don't know anything about mules!" and shrugged as he rolled by us. Roxy watched alert and intrigued, but stayed calm. After the drafts had cleared the pathway, we dodged a few feet down the road and joined up with friends before several new draft teams were headed towards us. Out of the blue a horse next to Roxy decided he'd rather fly out of the situation as the teams drove by. He went straight backwards into Roxy's right side. She took a quick step out of the way but hung in there with me.

We timed our exit out of the chaos and walked through the costume class lineup. Had the situation been different, I may have just lined up with them!



**All dressed up in period costume ready for their debut demonstration of riding aside at Western Idaho Fair are Roxy & Jacquelynn Holly. Photo: Kathi Arbitr.**

We made it back to the truck before my sole completely detached from my boot, untacked, changed and loaded up to come home.

Roxy's debut at a public event was an absolute success! We have been a team for 21 months now – a stark contrast with my other mule who I have ridden for over 21 years. It is incredible what we take for granted with our "bombproof" forever mules. It isn't until we start all over that we can truly appreciate all the stimulation and desensitization that goes into years and years of work, trust and bonding.

For everyone who is starting over, or starting for the first time ever, remember patience is a virtue for both you and your mule. Last year, I had anticipated entering Roxy in numerous other events, but my gut didn't tell me it was go-time until the Western Idaho Fair. We all have to start somewhere, but don't let that starting point ever pressure you. You and your mule will feel it when the time is right.

*Reprinted from the Mule Journal.*

# About Jacquelynn's Mules



**ROXY:** Bred at the renowned Heart B Ranch, Idaho, Roxy is by Heart B Starbuck out of Semi Sweet Fleet, an APHA registered mare. According to Jacquelynn, this is where she gets her white star, her socks and other random paint marks. The dun facto was inherited from the jack. Roxy changed hands three times before Jacquelynn bought her in Oregon. That gorgeous little baby pictured here has grown to be 14.2hh and is now a ten-year-old.



**ROSY:** Jacquelynn has owned Rosy for over 20 years and the mule is very much a part of the Holly family. She is now a 24-year-old and is an unflappable 'been there, done that' riding mule, a veteran of parades and competitions who has seen everything you can imagine. Sadly, Rosy had to take a lengthy paddock break after extensive and invasive surgery for fusion of her high ringbone.



**MAYA:** Equally as experienced and bombproof as Rosy, Maya is a spotted mule out of a Halflinger mare by a spotted jack. During the emotional roller coaster that Jacquelynn went through with Rosy's surgery, Maya took over the parades and performance commitments with her usual unflappable reliability. Jacquelynn also used the time to bond with the inexperienced Roxy over many, many miles of trail rides.



# Idaho Sidesaddle Association

**A**fter moving from California to Idaho, Jacquelynn and her friend Lois Murphy formed the Idaho Sidesaddle Association as a registered club in 2019, just in time for their first invitation to demonstrate at the Idaho Horse Fair. The group is one of a dozen or so regional affiliates to the American Sidesaddle Association and comprises approximately 20 members who get together for practice days, clinics, parades, competitions, demonstrations and, of course, the all-important socialising with like-minded people. “All ride horses except me,” said Jacquelynn. “Members’ horses vary tremendously. We have a few Tennessee Walking horses, Quarter Horses, a Quarter pony and one member is training her mustang to be ridden aside. Our youngest member is 13 and our oldest is in her mid 60s.”



## A Business Born From Passion

**J**acquelynn’s sidesaddle obsession started when she was a member of the Victorian Roses Ladies Riding Society in California.

“We had very strict period-accurate rules for our clothing, yet everyone rode in a Western astride saddle,” said Jacquelynn. “I could not understand why we went to such extremes with our habits when our tack was not period correct.”

Taking the bit by the teeth, Jacquelynn hunted down a sidesaddle and began riding in it. She then went to a two-day clinic to learn more, not knowing this was to be the start of a long and interesting journey. Her collection of sidesaddles grew exponentially and before long she was doing her own repairs.

“That’s how Holly Saddlery started. I welcome other riders to send me their sidesaddles for restoration and repair. I recently finished my own personal Western sidesaddle using all the original skirts. The tree was a match made in heaven for my mule Rosy, however the rebuild came to an abrupt halt when Rosy went in for surgery.”

In the last year, Jacquelynn has purchased an industrial sewing machine and an antique embossing machine which is a godsend because she used to do all the saddle rebuild stitching by hand.

“I also feel I have an obligation to the Idaho Sidesaddle Association by trying to fit our members and their horses with the correct sidesaddle,” said Jacquelynn. “The modern, cheap, imported sidesaddles are dangerous and poorly manufactured which leaves the sidesaddle community with limited options. The vintage trees are well balanced and as long as they fit a horse and rider, it’s just a matter of making sure the rigging and horns are secure as well. Currently, I have restored four of our members’ sidesaddles.”



# Riding Aside: a history

## Sidesaddle in times gone by

Many people trace the history of the side saddle back only a few hundred years, and so they treat it as a relatively modern invention. However, the sidesaddle appears in ancient art, such as a 6th century depiction on a vase of Hephaestus riding sidesaddle on a mule. Hephaestus, the male god of blacksmiths, demonstrated that a sidesaddle form of riding occurred from ancient to modern times, especially with donkeys and mules.

### Early pillion pads



Riding with one's knees together was historically considered more modest and therefore more appropriate for women. In the earliest depictions, sidesaddle riding was limited to female pillion passengers behind a male rider. A blanket or cushion would be affixed to the back of the saddle to accommodate a female passenger.

From about the 13th to early 20th century, even women riding alone often rode with both legs to one side of the horse. In the same time periods, especially with the upper classes and nobility, it was deemed important that a bride be anatomically clearly a virgin. This made riding astride a risky behaviour.

### Why women used sidesaddles



There were also a number of other (somewhat ridiculous) reasons given for having women not ride astride, such as that their thighs were too

rounded for this position or that the position was "physically unhygienic".

However, across all historical periods women were portrayed both side saddle and astride, suggesting both methods were in widespread use. And a number of prominent women refused to ride sidesaddle including Catherine the Great of Russia. And women who rode considerable distances were inclined to opt for comfort over propriety.

### Later designs



The sidesaddle was considerably improved over the years, especially during the Victorian period. The first specifically designed sidesaddle accommodated a woman sitting fully sideways in a "planchette" saddle which was like a chair with a footrest.

Women riding alone probably began by riding in a standard saddle with one horn such as shown in the photo. But specially-designed sidesaddles were soon developed.

Various arrangements of single or double stirrups and pommels were in use, with the women still sitting to the side with both feet side by side in one or two stirrups or on a shelf.

In some cases, the woman would hook her leg over the pommel at the front of the saddle causing her to turn slightly forwards. Queen Catherine de Medici is credited with developing this position. Around this time saddles were designed that had a second pommel further down to the side and supported a more secure position.

An 1830 development added a small third pommel over the lower thigh allowed sidesaddle riders to remain stable while racing and jumping.

### Alternative designs

Most women ride with their legs on the horse's left side (called the "near" side). But "off side"

versions are made where the woman sits with her legs to the right. Historically and in the present day these sidesaddles are usually made for riders with injuries that make the conventional position uncomfortable.

### Feats of sidesaddle riding



Some women achieved amazing manoeuvres using a sidesaddle. For example, the photo shown here was taken at the 1915 Sydney Royal and shows Mrs Esther Stace and Emu Plains clearing a 6'6" jump. This record was held until 2013.

It is amazing to see women in this contorted position jumping tall fences. Women in sidesaddles rode on battle fields, in the Olympics, and on treks of thousands of miles.

### Belle Starr



American Belle Starr (1848-1889) was a notorious female outlaw who managed to forge a reputation as the female equivalent of Jesse James, all while wearing velvet and riding sidesaddle.

### Injuries

The combination of sidesaddle and long skirts



meant that female riders could not fall clear of the horse in the event of an accident. That made them more likely to be seriously injured.

The uneven placement of the saddle was also potentially damaging to the horse, as it could put an asymmetrical pressure on the horse's body

## Sidesaddle for men

**HORSE EXERCISE AT HOME.**  
*Vigor's Horse-Action Saddle*

PERSONALLY ORDERED BY  
**H.R.H. THE PRINCESS OF WALES.**  
*Her Excellency the Governor of Australia*  
*and that the public has given her complete satisfaction.*

The ADVANTAGES of this UNIQUE SUBSTITUTE for Horse-Riding are:

- It promotes health in the same degree that Horse-Riding does.
- It invigorates the system by bringing all the VITAL ORGANS into INSPIRING ACTION.
- It acts directly upon the CIRCULATION, and prevents STAGNATION OF THE LIVER.
- It is a complete cure for OBESITY, HYSTERIA, and GOUT.

**LANCET**—“Both the exercise and delight afforded by it are such as to be beneficial in every respect.”

**PUBLIC**—“It is the only method of exercising all the muscles of the body, and of increasing the circulation of the blood, and of promoting the action of the bowels, and of giving the system a complete and healthy tone.”

**WORLD**—“It is ideal for the Army, and for the Navy, and especially good for the invalid, and for the aged.”

TROT, CANTER, GALLOP.  
**VIGOR LONDON**

Historically women were often taught riding by men, more effectively if they were also competent with riding in this manner and so had a real understanding of the technique. Perhaps they had practiced at home on their 'Vigor's Horse-Action Saddle'.

Men would also occasionally ride sidesaddle when exercising a lady's mount. It was also sometimes used by men who had lost a leg or for activities when heavy equipment was mounted on one side of the horse, like cable laying

## The end of sidesaddle?

Between 1900 and 1950 sidesaddles fell out of use as it became acceptable for women to ride astride and to wear trousers while riding. They lasted the longest for ceremonial uses such as when Queen Elizabeth rode for the trooping of the colours.

Victorian-era horsewoman Alice Hayes spoke of the contraption that is the sidesaddle by writing that men ride the horse, but women ride the saddle. “It forms a considerable obstacle between the rider and the mount. And if one's goal is to simply ride the horse, for transportation or pleasure, it is something we are very much better off without.”

## The modern sidesaddle

During the 1970s riding aside experienced a modest return to fashion in historical reenactment, sport or an appreciation of its perceived elegance. There are now groups around the world dedicated to preserving the art of riding sidesaddle and interest continues to grow. Pictured is Jade Weaver riding Irish Coffee aside at London's New Year's Day Parade last year.



These days we also know a lot more about correctly building and fitting a sidesaddle to suit different-sized animals.



## Not just for horses

Riding aside was commonplace using a number of species apart from horses. As well as donkeys and mules there is photographic

evidence of ostriches, camels, zebras being ridden sidesaddle. Another bit of trivia: Sidesaddle pillion motorcycle riding is still mandated in some parts of Indonesia.



# Spinifex

Available for lease to the right person.

14hh 4 year old Molly Mule Red Bay



Beautiful eye, sweet nature, always well handled, shown by Kitty Byrnes as a youngster. Has had last three months of consistent ground work and one month under saddle with Flinders Greentree.

Groundwork skills include lunging on light contact, yield shoulders and hindquarters, side pass, back up, jump up on a pedestal with all four feet, and she is showing quite a jumping ability.

Under saddle, Flinders has been riding out on the trail, as well as schooling her working on a natural outline and beginning to engage her hindquarters through the transitions. Our aim is to have consistent, light responses.

Contact **Netti Byrnes, Maldon, Victoria. 03 5475 1184**

# Packing Your Donkey or Mule

By Tim Daniel

*This is the first in a series of articles for Donkey Digest concerning aspects of packing donkeys and mules. The experience I have gained is with packing donkeys on walking camping treks. However, the techniques and principles remain the same for any animal employed in carrying cargos on its back without a drawn vehicle.*



Jack & Albert departing Tabo Village during the journey to retrace Edmund Kennedy's Expedition to Cape York.

Carrying baggage and cargo on animals has been conducted by humans for probably thousands of years. It seems that the taming of horses, camels and donkeys may have started in the Far East and with successive contacts, invasions and exchanges along the Silk Route, packing techniques were imported into Eastern Europe and North Africa. Certainly, the Romans introduced Donkeys and Mules into Northern Europe and Britain as components of their army's baggage trains. Mules and donkeys and packing techniques were introduced into Spain via North Africa by the Moors. Consequently Northern, Eastern



Trekking with trained pack donkeys to carry your food and home comforts across the roughest terrain is the ultimate adventure for many bush walkers. Do it right and you will reap the rewards. But what's involved? Tim Daniel from Wilderness Expeditions operates a range of short, medium or extended walks, treks and expeditions out of Herberton in Far North Queensland. Who better to ask about the intricacies of packing and trekking?

Tim is the Far North Queensland co-ordinator for the Bicentennial National Trail (BNT) and has a solid background as instructor in the Army's Survival School, Darwin. He has a great love of the outdoors and bushwalking and has been tour guide for Russell Willis's Walkabouts in the Kimberley and Kakadu, among many other experiences.

Tim acquired his first donkey, Joseph, a brown jack, 11hh in 1998. After some 18 months searching for pack saddles and exploring around Herberton leading Joseph "with me carrying our lunches etc", the discovery of Brian Beck's book on building a donkey pack saddle turned on a lightbulb. The next year five more donkeys were acquired, plus another 10 feral donkeys from Banka Banka Station in the Territory. Wilderness Expeditions was born, running its first pack trip in 2001. Tim currently has 26 donkeys, including a breeding jack and a molly mule. A number of Tim's original donkeys, including Joseph, are now enjoying retirement having provided over 20 years of service. When it comes to packing and trekking, there's not much Tim doesn't know and we are delighted to share his wisdom and knowledge with Donkey Digest readers.

and Western Europe have developed different breeds of donkey, together with many different designs of pack saddles. According to Wikipedia there are at least 175 different breeds of donkey around the world, including several breeds that have been pronounced extinct. Most of these donkey breeds and many distinctive breeds of mule were bred for packing.

Donkeys were introduced into Australia commencing with the First Fleet although it is unclear of what became of those animals. Donkeys were

later imported for breeding mules and as pack and draught animals particularly in Western Australia, northern South Australia and the Northern Territory, as alternatives to horses that suffered badly from the arid conditions and toxic plants that caused "Walkabout Disease". Donkeys were able to withstand working in the heat and arid conditions and were not as susceptible to eating the toxic plants. Mules do not seem to have become popular as draught animals in Australia, despite the breeding of thousands of mules in North Queensland as remounts for the Indian and Japanese armies before WWII. I suspect that this is because of the Irish influence on the social status and availability of horses in Australia, and that the tendency was to use lesser quality of mares to breed mules resulting in mules that were more temperamental, restive and consequently more difficult to train and employ. Mules were however used in the Australian Army, and thousands of mules laboured throughout North Queensland maintaining the quickly developing mining fields, mining towns and industries, carrying supplies up the steep coastal ranges and across the hills and gullies of the hinterland, returning to the coastal ports with loads of stream tin and ingots of silver, copper, lead and tin, some animals carrying up to 300kg.

Ludwig Leichhardt, the Prussian Explorer having carried his supplies during his successful traverse of northern Australia in 1844-45 on bullocks, employed mules on his third and final attempt to cross Australia from East to West in 1848. He and his party disappeared despite extensive searches and tantalising scraps of evidence that have been attributed to his party. Both donkeys and mules seem to be making a return to popularity, as does packing, having virtually been lost in Australia with the demise of pack teams and packhorse droving plants at the advent of trains, motor trucks and more recently cattle trucking in the 1960s. In North Queensland mule pack teams were the fastest form of transport after Cobb & Co coaches, and the most expensive, so good packers earned good livings with teams of up to 40 mules carrying up to ten tons of loading.

reopened limited routes through some national parks to equines, but Queensland National Parks are maintaining a ban on equines. Some sections of the BNT traverse national parks on dedicated roads or stock routes, but pet dogs are not permitted on these sections. There are of course many kilometres of Rail Trails, stock routes and country roads available.



Ivo leading Charlie, Wild River, Herberton.



A mule team waiting to depart Port Douglas for the hinterland in 1911 when the Cairns railway was closed due to landslides.

## So, what is packing and what does it involve?

*Packing requires several skill sets, determination, preparation, and lots of hard work!*

If you are considering packing an animal then probably the first question to ask yourself is what are your intentions? Do you wish to walk/ ride the Tasmanian Trail, The Bicentennial National Trail (BNT) or parts thereof, do you want to explore your local area, using your pack animal to transport picnics and camping gear to your favourite haunts? Note of Caution: most state national parks do not permit entry of domestic animals including equines, so many iconic bushwalks such as the Australian Alpine Track that traverses the high alpine regions of Victoria and NSW are not available. Victorian and NSW National Parks have

“Incidentally, the group noun for a team of pack donkeys or mules is a “pace”. A string is normally the term for a team of camels.”

It really does not matter how far you intend to travel, as you will need to master the skills required to

successfully pack your animal. It will probably influence your plan to train yourself and your animal if you are spurred on by aims and milestones such as start dates. You are more likely to gain the admiration and assistance of locals if your animal is well turned out and your load is correctly balanced and secured; observers may well have experience of working with horses or droving and will have a critical eye. Observers will quickly assess your lack of preparation if your rig is poorly presented and the news will precede your arrival along your route. So it is worth the effort to be thorough.

It should be mentioned at this stage that there are generally two styles of packing in Australia:

- The traditional Australian style that uses a distinctive style of pack saddle with padded quarter panels, pack bags and pack surcingles to secure the load, and
- North American styles that use either Crossback or Decker pack saddles, mantled or slung loads that are lashed down using diamond or other rope hitches.

The North American saddlery is gaining popularity as that style of saddlery is cheaper and more available by mail order than the equivalent Australian pack saddlery. In this series of articles I will concentrate on the Australian methods and styles of saddlery as I believe in promoting those Australian traditions. Pack saddles will be discussed in the next article.



A burro packed in the North American style with a mantled load secured with double diamond hitches.

## Packing Principles

The British Army Manual of Animal Transport stresses sound packing principles should be employed at all times. This is just as relevant today for the bush trekking animal as it is/was for military use.

### General Principles

Pack transport requires constant supervision and checking of loads and animals to maintain efficiency and animal well-being. Early detection of a defect will often prevent serious injuries to the animals and loss of time and other inconveniences caused by continually correcting loads. Injuries to animals are mainly caused by:

- Badly fitting saddles,
- Badly adjusted or unbalanced loads,
- Animals being loaded for too long.

Thorough training in packing, load planning, loading and load adjustment is necessary.

The **essential principles** are that the load:

- Is as compact as possible,
- Should not exceed the maximum weight, and
- Should be positioned and lashed as tightly as possible so that it is secure and does not rub or gall the animal.

**Loading considerations.** The methods for loading and securing pack loads vary with the type of loads. Loading is governed by three essential considerations:

- Balance,
- Stability, and
- Pressure.

### Balance

The correct balance of loads is paramount. Side loads should be balanced within half a kilogram. Top loads should be symmetrical and the centre of gravity central to the backline and in front of the rear arch (of saddle tree). Unbalanced loads will cause the saddle to cant over and even roll under the animal. Unbalanced loads may cause loss of items from the load and will cause undue stress on the animal that adds to fatigue, and increases the risk of saddle sores and girth galls. Loads require to be balanced not just by weight, but by bulk and density. For instance, if a heavy box is loaded on one side, and a roll of blankets (or large swag) on the other side, the centre of gravity (moment) of the blankets will be further away from the animal than for the heavy box despite being lighter. The larger, bulkier load will sag and tend to pull the saddle over to that side. This can be corrected by placing the bulky load higher up on the saddle to move the centre of gravity closer to the animal, and reduce the moment or leverage on the saddle.

### Stability

The stability of the load is achieved by tightly packaging components together in a pack bag, by roping together or use of adhesive tape. The load is to be positioned at the optimum height on the saddle and kept in place with the surcingle. If too high, the load will rock and loosen lashings, if too low, will press on the animal's sides causing discomfort to the animal. An unsteady load will:

- Tire the animal;
- Cause galls, even with well-fitting saddlery; and
- Loosen knots & lashings resulting in an unbalanced & unsteady load.

### Pressure

The weight of the load must be distributed across the weight bearing surface of the animal's back. Hard, lumpy loads should be adjusted to prevent lumps, sharp edges or corners from pressing into the animal. Additional padding should be added if necessary. Girth buckles should be positioned so that the load does not rest on them and press them into the animal's ribs. Care should be taken not to place the load too low over the lower ribs which are springy and thinly covered in muscle. Poorly distributed or lumpy loads will cause rubs and galls that will require medical treatment and may make the animal unsound.

### Prepare, Prepare, Prepare

As revealed above there is a lot of planning and preparation required to achieve a successful pack trip. The animal must be suitable and trained to accept the load, all manner of road conditions and obstacles, be fit with correctly trimmed feet. The pack saddlery must fit and be correctly adjusted, be appropriate for the load to be carried and be serviceable. The packer or trekker needs to understand the animal, have the animal's confidence, know how to best organise the load and lash the load down, where to go, thought out any contingencies needed, and organised any support or services required. The load, including food, camping gear, clothing, supplementary animal feed, communications and medical needs to be assembled, checked for serviceability and weighed. The load will then need to be thinned out to priorities, as weight and volume will always exceed the capacity available. All this takes time and effort. Add more time to rehearse and practise so that both you and your animal(s) understand the process and routines.

### Costs

Setting up a small pack team is comparatively inexpensive. One needs to budget to purchase the animals, for agistment, feed, veterinary care, pack saddlery and camping equipment. Once this is established, then perhaps consider the big-ticket items such as a horse float and car to tow it.

Pack saddles to suit a donkey may cost \$500-\$1000, felt pad \$120, canvas pack bags \$600 for a pair then add pack surcingle, pack covers, neck strap, hobbles etc and the total cost of kitting out one animal is probably \$1500-\$2500. A pack saddle with quarter panels may cost \$3000 new. You may be lucky to find a secondhand saddle in good condition for less. A saddle designed to fit a horse will be too big for a donkey or pony mule under 13hh and will require modification. A saddle imported from Canada, USA or India may cost \$2000 including customs duty and freight. Alternatively, one can make up the saddles and pack bags to save money but with the resulting trade for time and skills.

## Desirable Qualities for a Packing Animal

The item that will take the most time and preparation is your pack animal. You may already own the donkey, mule or horse(s) that you intend to take on your trek. So, will they fit the requirement? After 20 years of packing donkeys I have developed a few preferences:

- **Size.** A large standard donkey or equivalent sized mule is probably the best choice. If you intend to ride one or more of the animals then you may wish to obtain a larger animal. A donkey with good confirmation will carry 22% of its body weight. The larger the animal the more it will carry. A mule will carry 30% or more of its body weight due to "hybrid vigour". Animals over 14hh will be more difficult to load as all that weight has to be lifted up to the load hooks or on top of the saddle. An animal of regular size will be more easily fitted out as standard sized saddlery will not require modification and adjustment.
- **Broad Back.** Your pack animal should have a broad back so the saddle and load is more stable. A narrow back provides less support and it is more difficult to keep a saddle in position both laterally, and front to back, it will tend to cant over and to ride forward.
- **Good legs and conformation.** The animal needs to have well-proportioned, heavier legs to support the load. Good conformation will ensure that the animal does not suffer from poor gait and skeletal or soft tissue injuries during any long journey.
- **Age.** The animal needs to be not less than three years old and probably no older than 12 years old. Donkeys and mules' life spans are probably 35years (+) but their pack working age is probably no more than 25. They will be prone to injuries, lack endurance and more difficult to maintain weight after 15 years.
- **"Good Doers".** A good-doer is an animal that maintains weight even in situations where feed is scarce. Some donkeys require a bigger supplementary ration to maintain condition, additional feed is extra weight that has to be carried and costs.
- **Character and Demeanour.** Your animal needs to be friendly to you and the rest of the team and be able to work with the others. If you have a team, you need to identify the leader and the natural order of march so that you can place them in the correct order. This takes some simple observation of the donkeys in a field.
- **Good Feet.** Your animal needs to have hard, well-shaped feet. All feet will become harder with continuous work. It is important that the animal's feet are trimmed to the correct shape to prevent soft tissue injuries developing under load.
- **Geldings or mares?** Geldings are preferable, jennies and mollies are equally capable but hormones can have an effect on other animals. Jacks and John (mules) are generally not permitted on public roads by law as they can be very unpredictable if they encounter other horses, mules or donkeys, particularly jennies in season.

**How many animals?** The greater number of animals, the greater

organisation is required. Remember that the animals must be groomed, saddled and loaded, fed, watered and unloaded every day. Every extra mouth requires more money to buy feed and more room to graze. Practically, the most animals that can be led as a pace is three animals if on foot. More than three becomes a trial, as trailing animals have enough lead length to tangle around trees and bushes, guide posts and road signs causing damage to gear, themselves and endless frustration. Some states have laws that restrict the number of animals that may be led on public roads. Two donkeys do keep each other company, but can encourage each other to find mischief. It really depends on what you want to carry. A larger standard Australian donkey will carry about 65kg which is about four times the weight of the recommended 15kg rucksack load for a human.



Donkey school: Bernie Harte with Frankie at Kalinvale Farm.

## Training Pack Animals

Donkeys can be trained from wild caught to a tolerable pack animal in about a week, if time is available and determination and effort are expended. If you are lucky then your animal will be trained to be tied up, pick up feet for treatment and to lead. If not then you will need to start from scratch. You may find a suitable trainer to complete this for you or do it yourself. To achieve this a small yard or corral is required. This need not be expensive. A tolerable "round" yard can be made from hessian suspended from rope and star pickets- see image. The yard should be about 16m in diameter so that the animal has to acknowledge the trainer's presence and is accessible for catching. A "snubbing post" is useful to train the animal to be tied up. This is a stout post sunk into the ground. Stack some old car tyres around the post, topped with an old trail bike tyre. The car tyres provide a cushion to prevent the animal from hurting itself on the post. The animal is tethered to the cycle tyre that will rotate around the post preventing the tether rope from wrapping around the post. The tether rope is tied to the tyre with a quick release knot.

A "calf collar" can be made up from a hessian bag that is folded up with a strong length of rope tied through holes made in the ends of the bag. An eye is made in one end of the rope and the running end is passed through the ends of the bag, through the eye to close the collar then through the lead ring of the halter (see image). The animal is handled using this rope rather than a lead rope attached to the halter. The calf collar will relieve pressure on the axis and atlas vertebrae of the animal's neck if the animal rears and will be stronger than the halter or head collar.

To train the animal to walk on and face up a "Bum rope" is made up from

a length of strong with an eye formed in one end. The running end is passed through the eye and the resultant loop placed over the animal's rump, extending down to the hollow below the dock, with eye placed at the leading edge of the hind quarters (see image), The running end is passed through the side ring of the halter and handled with the rope from the calf collar. A pull on the bum rope is to assist persuading the animal to step forward.

Teaching the animal to pick up feet has the greatest risk as the trainer is exposed to being bitten or kicked. A length of fencing wire or stick is fitted with a strip of cloth or some gum leaves. The animal is tied up short and the cloth strip moved up and down the animal's legs to accustom the animal to the sensation and that there is no threat of being bitten by the intrusion. When the trainer is confident, then get in close to the animal, and a hand is used to run down the leg and pick up the foot by the fetlock. This will take some time to achieve, particularly the rear feet.

Once the animal has learned the rudiments of being tied up, to lead and pick up feet then it is time to teach the animal to accept the saddle and associated rigging. Really, again this is a matter of starting slowly and progressing from placing a blanket on the animal's back to a saddle less girths then a saddle with girths done up, then saddle with breeching and breastplate. Once the animal has accepted the saddle then you can progress with pack bags then light loading. I suggest that initial saddling be achieved in the round yard so if a buckjumper show occurs you can retrieve the saddlery and the animal. Once confident that the animal is accepting of the pack saddle then progress to a larger paddock or field before going bush. Another routine that requires training is that of hobbling. Again, this is best completed in a small yard or paddock under supervision. The animal must be trained to pick up feet and be desensitized from having hobbles applied. Fitting hobbles is always risky as one is working close to feet when bending down. I will deal with hobbling later.

Once all this has been achieved, then progress to overcoming obstacles such as rickety bridges and water crossings. It may be prudent to attempt obstacle crossings leading the animal unloaded until confidence is gained by the animals. A bum rope may be useful to persuade walking on in these situations.



Crossing Historic Village Herberton suspension bridge with Joseph & Pumpjack, Jasper (dog) leading during the Pioneer Weekend. Photo: Duncan Ray.

### Training yourself

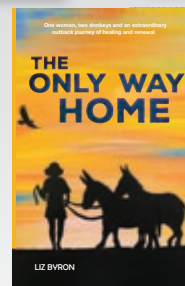
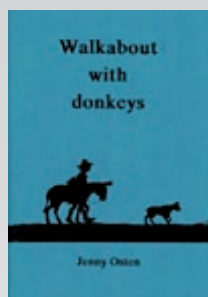
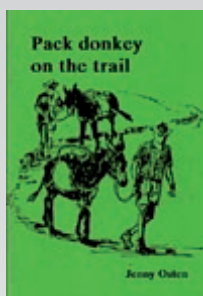
The trekker will need to have a knowledge and experience of cross-country navigation, lightweight camping, saddling and loading the animals, including knots and lashings, hoof care, elementary animal first aid, bush cooking, most of which is beyond the scope of these articles.

### NEXT TIME: We'll talk about pack saddles.



**WILDERNESS EXPEDITIONS**  
**Web:** wildex.com.au  
**Facebook:** Wilderness Expeditions

### MORE READING... Buy or borrow from the library



# South Australia

with Leanne Christie



ROUND UP

## Alice Springs Donkey Rescue

In February, I received an email from Jayne from Alice Springs who had taken on two very neglected donkeys three months earlier. She was looking to rehome them in SA as no suitable home could be found in Alice Springs. This initial contact from Jayne evolved over a few months into a mammoth team effort to get the donkeys to a new home, made much more difficult with the impending border closures due to coronavirus!

Back in December Jayne and her friend Nicky were on a road trip about three hours north of Alice Springs and stopped at a roadhouse. They were shocked to discover two very emaciated donkeys in a paddock with no food or water and just the fence posts to chew on. On speaking to the roadhouse owners it turned out the roadhouse had recently changed hands and the new owners had no idea how to care for the donkeys. They willingly surrendered the donkeys to Jayne and Nicky who promptly returned to Alice Springs to pick up a float and collect the donkeys.

They took the donkeys to Nicky's property in Alice Springs and set out to get them back to good health, give them basic training and find them a loving home where they could stay together. With regular vet visits, good nutrition and hoof care over the summer they slowly improved to the point where it was felt they were well enough to travel to a new home. The vet estimated them to be in their late teens and Jayne named them Jenny and Shaggy. It's thought that Shaggy is possibly Jenny's son. The donkeys won the hearts of both Nicky and Jayne's families but the plan all along was to rehome them.

After chatting to Jayne I contacted Peter and Barbara from the Adelaide Hills who had been looking for a pair of donkeys for many months. When they heard Jenny and Shaggy's story they were very keen to adopt them. Barbara and Jayne had many phone conversations about the donkeys and although this would be Peter and Barbara's first foray into donkey ownership they have a good network of experienced people to help them with any issues that might crop up. I decided to enlist



From roadhouse neglect to an interim home with Nicky at Alice Springs, Shaggy & Jenny enjoy a change of fortune

Lyn-Ann Mitchell's help with the logistics of transporting the donkeys. It would be a very long 15 hour journey by truck to Adelaide so Lyn-Ann offered to pick up the donkeys from the northern Adelaide transport depot and keep them at her place for a week or two to recover and in this time Barbara and Peter could visit and get to know them. But then came the pandemic....

Jayne had organized for Jenny and Shaggy to be picked up from Alice Springs on 26th March; the journey would be done over two days. Jayne and her husband were going to follow the truck so they could help settle the donkeys after the long trip. Unfortunately the South Australian borders were scheduled to close at 4pm on the 25th March! After many frantic calls and messages between everyone involved the donkeys were picked up and over the border into SA just in time. Sadly, Jayne couldn't make the trip as they would have had to quarantine for 14 days and needed to be back at work in the Northern Territory. Here in SA we were also facing lockdown so it was decided to get the donkeys straight to Barbara's ASAP. Lyn-Ann kindly met the truck at the depot in the wee hours of Thursday morning, moved the donkeys from truck to float and took them straight to Peter and Barbara's property.

Newly named Muriel and Albert have hit the jackpot and have a long and happy future ahead with Barbara and Peter. They have a new yard and shelter, 75 acres to roam and plenty of love and care. Their personalities are blossoming and Albert loves helping Peter with chores around the farm. Hopefully Jayne will be able to fly down to Adelaide in the near future and visit the donkeys and meet everybody involved in giving them a chance at a new life.



ABOVE: After an adventure-filled drive from Alice Springs to Adelaide, Shaggy & Jenny, now renamed Albert & Muriel, are loving the pampering they are receiving at their new Adelaide Hills home with first-time donkey owners Peter & Barbara.

RIGHT: Peter now has a new maintenance supervisor. Albert helps Peter fix pipes.





# FROM THE RIDGE

With Fiona Mottram



**Regular heavy rain has made lots of mud at Half Moon Ridge – L-R Tambo & Shane in foreground, Milo in background.**

In mid-March, the day before Covid-19 lockdown restrictions were announced but after social distancing had been recommended, I enjoyed a fabulous Southern Cross Harness Club camp weekend with mule pair Yurrah UpsaDaisy and Yurrah Milo, and my three dogs in bush and pine plantation at Stradbroke West. It was a particular thrill to have DSV member Nina Sampson join the club and bring her mule Yurrah Possum. Despite little recent practice, he behaved beautifully in harness and calmly negotiated some very challenging spots due to lots of trees blown down by the wind and some extremely steep slopes. Unfortunately, I forgot to take my phone out with me so didn't get a photo of them together. The harness club has gone out for the first time today (17 May) as restrictions ease, however I was unable to attend because I am still recovering from a nasty disintegrated appendix and perforated bowel.

With continuing regular heavy rainfalls, the \$50 round bales that I buy have been literally heating up, growing mould and composting after we've put them out in the hay rings. This means they become unsafe for the donkeys to eat and at least half of the bale is being wasted. Very frustrating when one bale normally feeds my herd for a week in winter, saving lots of trips up the hill with haynets in slippery, mucky and cold conditions. The mules don't mind the rain the way donkeys do, and simply revel in mud rolling. Currently they look disgustingly grotty most of the time and something only their 'mother' could love.

Despite the awful mud, the grass is still growing slowly. Keysoe Tambo went on a second round of Trimadene for his hoof, but his lameness returned after we had a few more days of rain. By changing to regular application of volcanic healing clay on the donkeys' hooves (underneath, on the heels and around the outer wall), the lameness that was plaguing him and two other donkeys has abated. What a relief!

When the vet visited to do the annual dental check and combined tetanus/strangles injections for Key, Tambo and Daisy, he was able to show me



**Tambo gets his annual dental care from vet Dr Tom Bayes – my crush is very handy for such jobs – Dr Denia Gilheaney in background.**

lice moving on Blithe Moon Key's (aka Kiewa) neck. This explained the rubbing to bare skin that Kiewa had been doing in a few places. Since I already possessed three canisters of Pestene powder, I rubbed that all over the coats of my five donkeys and four mules. In 14 days after the first dosing, I will apply Lice'N'Simple down their spines provided the weather is forecast to be dry for three days. I will also need to disinfect everyone's rugs so the equines don't get reinfested when they are next rugged. The vet explained that Pestene kills the adult pests but Lice'N'Simple kills both the adults (lice) and their eggs (nits). I knew that Pestene was a bit less nasty than Lice'N'Simple but I also had it on hand because it can be used to treat lice on poultry. After buying the Lice'N'Simple, I also discovered that it was almost three times the price of the Pestene.

All nine longears were wormed at the start of May. My local vet charges just over \$30 to check a manure sample for intestinal worms, so although this is now the recommended practice to minimize worming resistance, it is too expensive for me to get each animal's sample checked to see if they need worming. Because if they end up all needing worming, the total cost would be approximately \$500, four times per year. Being on two hectares, I also do not have enough paddock space to rest areas free from animal use for the recommended period. And no, I am not about to reduce my herd to two donkeys only!

While each of the longears receive some Dr Kohnke's Donkey Supreme and Farriers Formula Hoof Pellets a couple of times per week, both Kiewa and Keysoe Mathoura (aka Marlo) have a daily small feed of chaff and Coprice pellets. Kiewa is not a good "do-er" and needs the feed to maintain his weight, and Marlo is still growing. If Marlo looks nicely filled out at the age of four, I will stop hard feeding him. His pellets are for equines in the 'grow' stage. Twenty-five-year-old Yurrah Frosty has a feed of Gumnuts aged equine pellets once a week to keep him in good condition. It is amusing the way the herd know the daily routine. Kiewa and Marlo know to slip through the gate when I come to find them. They accompany me down to the barn where the feed bins and buckets live and watch me over a gate while I mix their feeds. The rest of the herd look wistful and occasionally Frosty tries to squeeze out uninvited through the gate in the belief that it must be his day for a feed. When they have emptied their bowls down near the barn, both donkeys walk back up to the gate where their mates are waiting. The boys are easy to return to the paddock - halters are not needed.

Finally, the best thing this quarter has been the erection of a new donkey shelter-cum-hay-shed. Ross did it almost entirely by himself. Since I was recently out of hospital, he only used me a tiny bit when he absolutely needed a second person to help hold or counterbalance something. The almost-new shed was given to us and now stands proudly next to the old shelter in the top paddock, so all donkeys can fit without argument under a roof when it rains. Ross added a brick floor and an internal 'kick wall' to the basic shed to suit our needs. In summer when the donkeys don't need rain shelter, we will use it to store new season small bales. The roller door will stop cheeky donkey thieves!





Wearing a mask, glasses & gloves for safe application of Pestene onto Tambo while Marlo watches on.  
At left: Blithe Moon Key: coat rubs from lice.



Above: Key helps Ross West send a text message.



Right: New shed & old: longears R-L are Frosty, Tambo, Milo, Shane & Key..

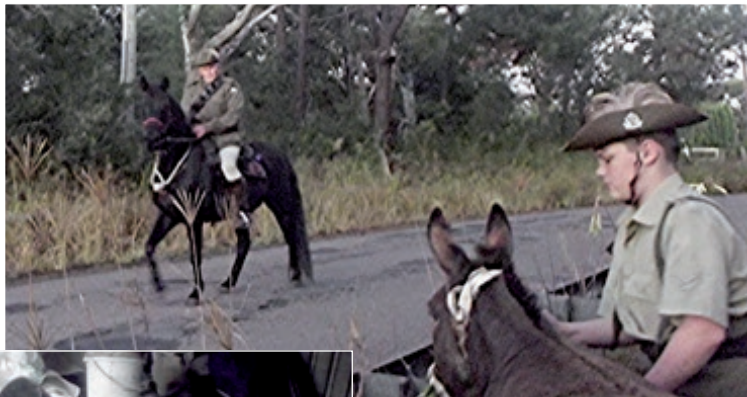


Curious donkeys often supervised Ross while he was building their new shed.

# OUT & ABOUT with Oliver



Captain Thunderstruck with his toilet paper loot 'obtained' from the local supermarket.



Although my celebrity appearances have been cancelled, we did manage to pay our respects on ANZAC Day by dressing up and standing guard on the bridge over the expressway.



"Ooh, that chaff tastes good" – Feed Shed IncurSION No 1.

"Who? Me?" – Feed Shed IncurSION No 2.



Dusty dressed in an AIF uniform while I dressed as Simpson's donkey for our dawn salute.



I'm stuck at home, used by the human to pick up rubbish.

## My fellow donkeys,

Life goes on up here at the Prickle Farm but with the Corrolla virus it is in lockdown. Unfortunately, my worst nightmare has come true; home schooling is being done (sometimes) and my tormentor Abbey has to come up to our place to do her schooling (yeah right!!!). As soon as she hits the place she is crawling all over me and doing unmentionable things to me. Sometimes I score an Arnotts Milk Arrowroot biscuit but she scoffs most of them herself.

All my jobs were cancelled due to the virus (which is spread by shorteared goobys). Gone are Palm Sunday services, Heavy Horse Days, Scone Horse Week parade, Million Paws Walk etc. However, on ANZAC Day I accompanied Dusty dressed in an AIF uniform and at 6am we walked to a bridge over the expressway and stood guard along with the human dressed in Australian Light Horse uniform. We got plenty of toots from the traffic passing below. We did our duty to the returned soldiers and to the thousands of animals that served Australia in wartime.

Because of the Corrolla virus (did I mention it's spread by dropkick horses?) there was a shortage of toilet paper so I had to once again don the disguise of Captain Thunderstruck (dadadadaaaaa - fanfare music) and drop in to the local supermarket and make a withdrawal of a few spare rolls for the humans. The supermarket staff needed a couple of rolls themselves when they saw Captain Thunderstruck and his gun.

You just can't win sometimes; take today for instance, someone (who won't be named) squeezed through the barrier into the feed shed and was scoffing chaff when he was disturbed. Luckily, he got away before he was recognised. The human fixed up the barrier and went away to do unfathomable stuff that humans do. I grabbed my chance and the pathetic barrier was breached in a nanosecond and I got into the chaff (again). Then suddenly the s+++ hit the fan and I was sprung bigtime by the human with a camera. After a couple of customary pictures which could not be used as evidence as the perpetrator is not clearly identified, the guilty donkey was turfed out and had to make his escape stage left. What a major bummer!

Well that is about all the excitement for the moment. Stay safe all you donkeys and be kind to your humans - they can't help being born humans.

**Always remember DONKEYS RULE.**

*Oliver's personal assistant is Bob Pankhurst, Celebrity Donkey Management, Somersby, NSW.*

# ASSVERTISEMENTS



## Donkey & Mule Society of New Zealand Inc.

[www.donkey-mule.org.nz](http://www.donkey-mule.org.nz)

Donkey & mule care, welfare & training. Membership includes quarterly magazine Donkey & Mule Dispatch. Overseas Subscription NZ \$50. Email: [secretary@donkey-mule.org.nz](mailto:secretary@donkey-mule.org.nz)



## National Miniature Donkey Association

[www.nmdaasset.com](http://www.nmdaasset.com)

ASSET Magazine – 4 issues annually

Overseas subscription US\$60

NMDA, 6450 Dewey Road, Rome, New York 13440 USA



## The BRAYER Magazine.

Newsletter of the American Donkey & Mule Society. [www.lovelongears.com](http://www.lovelongears.com)

Donkeys, minis, standards, mammoths, mules & zebra hybrids.

Overseas subscription US \$50. 6 issues per year. Email: [lovelongears@hotmail.com](mailto:lovelongears@hotmail.com)

ADMS, PO Box 1210, Lewisville TX 75067 USA



## British Mule Society

[www.britishmulesociety.co.uk](http://www.britishmulesociety.co.uk)

Overseas membership UK £25 + £1 Joining fee. The Mule journal is published 3 times per year.

Contact Helen Brodie, Little Paddocks, School Lane, Great Steeping, Spilsby, Lincs PE23 5PU, UK.

Email: [info@britishmulesociety.co.uk](mailto:info@britishmulesociety.co.uk)



## Canadian Donkey & Mule Association

[www.donkeyandmule.com](http://www.donkeyandmule.com)

Canadian Donkey & Mule News – 4 issues per year

Magazine only subscriptions available (no member benefits)

\$30 per year in Canadian funds. Order subscriptions online.



## Donkey Breed Society

[www.donkeybreedsociety.co.uk](http://www.donkeybreedsociety.co.uk)

Membership £40 4 magazines annually (3 x Bray Talk & 1 x The Donkey)

Email: [enquiries@donkeybreedsociety.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@donkeybreedsociety.co.uk)

Write to: Secretary Carol Morse, The Heritage, Pootings, Edenbridge, Kent TN8 6SD UK



## Animal Aid Abroad

[www.animalaidabroad.org](http://www.animalaidabroad.org) or Facebook Animal Aid Abroad

Australian-based charity dedicated to easing the relentless and traumatic suffering of working animals across the globe. Every donation dollar counts and there are many options available on the website.

Sign up to our digital newsletter.



## Interested in livestock?

We focus on the care and management of stock and pets, plus food and recipes, gardening, farming, self-sufficiency and more. It's all in Grass Roots magazine. From newsagents or subscribe for \$37.50. Grass Roots Publishing, phone 03-5792 4000. PO Box 117, Seymour, Victoria 3661.

# Autumn In The Adelaide Hills



**S**urrounded by sun, vineyards and apple orchards, donkeys Angus, Willow, Clementine, Polly, Tully, Lily and Maggie are blissfully unaware of how things could have been. December's ferocious Cudlee Creek bushfires almost decimated everything on the Lenswood property where Evelyn Hay and Valmai Douglass live with their families and animals. If you look closely you will see the burnt tree line on the third ridge. What you don't see is the eastern side of the property where the fire was licking at the boundary and was only extinguished on the other side of the bitumen road. Phew!