
Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by cheiro1 - 2008/06/15 08:46

i have recently come to be riding a french mule. a 15hh mare. she is lovely and she does both english and western, she jumps, has hunted. i took her on the wansdyke downland ride, my first fun ride with her, and i was warned before i set off, that if people "complained" about me being on course, i could be thrown out! apparently people have an objection to seeing a mule?? she is a TB X mule, just because the other half is a donkey, not a ID or something similar, why do so many people have such predujice towards them??? i think this is wrong, she has just as much right to be there as the horses, surely??

these animals were highly valued in the wars as working animals, i want to know where this respect for them has gone?? i would like to know every one elses opinions on this subject!!!

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by elkay - 2008/06/15 10:27

Hello,

As a fellow mule owner..... the reactions you have described from people is just due them being prejudiced, (and I don't mean that nastily at all) - they were probably genuinely worried that horses may be worried by/scared of your mule and envisaged large heaps of earth-bound riders being unsteated by spooked "short ears".

As you will hopefully have discovered, it would not have taken very long to see that whilst horses are often mesmerised by mules, they just don't seem to be afraid of them. (I am sure there will always be exceptions, of course, but then there are horses who go nuts at the sound of a rustling waterproof)

The staff at the livery yard I use, and I think my trainer, and in fact me too, were all a little worried when I first imported my mule, as to what the horses would think when they saw their first mule. We needn't have been concerned - so far, without exception (she has now met in excess of 70 horses in the UK) not one has been afraid, about two thirds have been very curious indeed, and a handful have been totally obsessed, calling and gawping at her. Including my QH, which was very funny, who seems to forget he is in fact a gelding and gets hugely excited when he sees her.

So yes, horses DO know there is something a bit different about mules; some horses ARE afraid of donkeys, and it is a perfectly natural concern for people who are aware of this to be a little concerned about how horses might react to their first mule (perhaps the organisers of the fun ride may have been worrying about their insurance premiums if every horse spooked at the mule, not realising that wasn't likely to happen at all).

Now that saddle mules are so rare in the UK, so is mule experience.

So, it is up to people like you - and me when mine is ready to go out in public (she's only just had her 3rd birthday so will be a while) - and Laura, also on this forum, and has a saddle mule that competes, and jinglejoys, who has a Spanish import she is now riding, and anyone else lurking with a mule hidden away - to be sensitive to people's perfectly valid initial concerns; reassure them that, although reasonable, those fears are in fact unfounded, because even known donkey-phobic horses don't seem to have a problem with mules... and get them out into the public arena and show them off.

Word will soon spread that actually, a mule doesn't upset the horses, and hopefully as there used to be a well-known mule competing at WES shows a few years ago (sadly the owner has now passed away and I never got to meet her) you will find more automatic acceptance of your mule amongst western riding circles.

Good luck and best wishes, and have you signed up to mulesuk yet?
<http://mulesuk.freeforums.org/index.php>

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by laura - 2008/06/15 11:29

cheiro1 - Please do join us on the forum, we are a bit quiet but it would be lovely to see photos of your new longear and hear how you are getting on. I have never had a bad reaction to my mule out in public (though I did get asked if she could get foot and mouth, Treacle was MOST offended!!) Mostly Treacle gets old army veterans telling her how wonderful she is, little old ladies feeding her mints (she does a good line in "sad eyes, starving mule impression") and

people wanting to stroke her ears.

Treacle is a mouse dun and not a typical mule colour, so often I get a lot of really odd looks before people work out what she is! The only slightly negative reaction was when Treacle won an in-hand class (judged on turnout and manners) the owners in second in third complained!! The secretary laughed at them!! :P

I've never met a horse that didn't like her, and like Elkay said some get infatuated with her. I do think it is polite if I'm taking her to an event where there may be small children competing that I do ask if she can come, just incase she did scare a small pony. Nobody has ever refused and most are thrilled.

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by cheiro1 - 2008/06/15 12:41

thank you for your encouraging comments!!

we did indeed find that most people on the fun ride thought she was ok, a couple asked why a would want to ride a donkey (does she look like a donkey?? er no!)but apart from that most people were happy to see her.

i have now joined the forum, didnt know it existed so nice to hear about it!!

she isn't actually mine, she is on long term loan to a friend of mine, i ride her and have a play. its also lovely to know im not the only longears rider around!! :)

Laura-what competition do you do with your mule? she sounds gorgeous!! :)

Post edited by: cheiro1, at: 2008/06/15 13:42

Post edited by: cheiro1, at: 2008/06/16 11:02

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by laura - 2008/06/15 12:57

We have had a brief brush with "western"

<http://inlinethumb54.webshots.com/14197/2203242400075128712S425x425Q85.jpg>

We showjump over HUGE fences...

<http://inlinethumb17.webshots.com/8464/2733554870075128712S425x425Q85.jpg>

(don't be fooled, she can jump 4ft, its the turning thats not too clever!!)

<http://inlinethumb15.webshots.com/18190/2987819830075128712S425x425Q85.jpg>

See, manages better without mum!

She can snig, but finds it demeaning.

<http://inlinethumb22.webshots.com/3349/2272065970075128712S425x425Q85.jpg>

and can take "granny" driving

<http://inlinethumb07.webshots.com/21126/2892964170075128712S425x425Q85.jpg>

we've shown english in hand (rather limited for classes though!)

<http://inlinethumb27.webshots.com/602/2802981580075128712S425x425Q85.jpg>

I am struggling to find the time for her at the moment, so there is a teeny bit of me that is concidering putting her on loan.

Does your mules name begin with W or am I thinking of a totally different mule?!!

Post edited by: laura, at: 2008/06/15 13:59

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by cheiro1 - 2008/06/15 13:01

yes, she is called Widget. Widget does drive too, like your mule, but we dont have a suitable carriage to take her out in at the moment.

wow, your mule is a little allrounder then!! she looks good doing all of that! :)

widge has a really scopey jump, dont have any pics, hehe.

how big is your mule? where are you based?

Post edited by: cheiro1, at: 2008/06/16 11:03

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by laura - 2008/06/15 13:08

Widget has always looked like a very cool mule!!!

Treacle is about 14.3 and we are based in Scotland but about twenty minutes from Carlisle.

Are you going to hunt Widget? I wanted to take Treacle out but she's a bit fierce with hounds!!! :unsure:

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by cheiro1 - 2008/06/15 13:13

that probably wouldn't go down to well with the hunt master!! hehe.

Widget is indeed, a very cool mule, but i am probs slightly biased to that one! :P mind you, your mule looks very cool too!! got a lovely jump!

urm, im not sure if i will hunt her or not, i wont this season, but will get out to a few fun rides over the summer, and then see how things go. i have never been hunting myself, but would like to try it at some point, so you never know!! ;)

do you BDS driving with your mule then?

Post edited by: cheiro1, at: 2008/06/15 14:15

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by shaza - 2008/06/15 13:49

We named are foal Widget,cool name:woohoo:

I love the things you guys are doing with your Mules.I love them and the fact they are competing aswell great.

Thats it guys you go a show your guys off and sod what anyone else says.

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by elkay - 2008/06/15 16:56

Well, based upon Widget and Treacle there is hope that one day Moon will jump under saddle.... she can certainly jump (like most mules) - over her stable door if she thinks she's getting left behind - so we decided that a spot of loose jumping was in order to see just what jumping ability she has.

So into the indoor school, set up the jumping lane, problem 1 - mules don't have the same flight instinct of a horse. So you can't chase them anywhere. Never mind, let's lead her down the lane. Then add some trotting poles, no problem. Then add a little cross pole, no problem - so long as mum jumps too.

By the end of the session we wondered who the hell was training who. Moon the mule looking delighted and fresh as a daisy, myself and instructor puffing panting and knackered, having been training to run down the jumping lane leaping over the cross poles pursued by said mule.... they're not daft....

Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by laura - 2008/06/15 17:14

And why is this not on youtube I ask myself?!!!!!! :)

Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by shaza - 2008/06/15 17:33

Hmmm i wonder why:whistle:

Training Mule style

Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by elkay - 2008/06/15 17:45

Re youtube.... must confess it would make a cracker... we did actually try to video the 2nd session (we then discovered that if said mule is addicted to a certain brand of horse treats she will trot thru jumping lane WITHOUT any poles of cross-poles in it) but we were, I am sorry to say, practically wetting ourselves laughing.

Also, the mule at session 2 developed an unhealthy interest in fiddling with the stereo and the fire extinguisher in the arena (the damn things have got prehensile lips like donkeys and mine certainly loves to fiddle with things) so our attempted designated camera person had to guard the equipment from a maurading mule.... and then she was advancing upon the bar of the fire door with intent....

Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by qhrider - 2008/06/16 15:22

KD sure misses Moon! Can't wait to see her in the show ring - next year?

Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by elkay - 2008/06/16 15:35

I very much hope Moon will be out at shows next year! :-)

She has a field full of adoring horse mates at the moment, but term starts again for her in about 3 weeks, back to Bruces for the next stage!

:)

Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by K.T - 2008/06/17 21:11

Hi Laura
Your Mule is really cool!!B)

Great photos.

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by rodeoange - 2008/06/20 22:40

:) I was really impressed with the mule piccies!

I have a friend in Canada who has Multiple Sclerosis. She was finding it tougher to ride horses due to not having very good reflex actions when they spooked etc. She got herself a mule and never looked back! Its as sound as a pound and looks after her well on the trails. I'm told mules will always stand up to danger and don't have the flight instinct.

Indeed another friend in Canada who is a trainer/farrier took me to a farm in the mountains and they hadwell I couldn't believe my eyes a mule who was 17hh! A big grey thing. I was told he was used to guard the herd of Peruvians they had from bears etc out on the mountains. By all accounts at foaling time, an unwitting cougar got more than it bargained for and ended up falling foul of the front and rear of the mule and did not live to tell the tale!

I'm intrigued by them and must admit, i'd love one but just don't know how you get hold of them.

:)

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by elkay - 2008/06/21 08:14

Getting hold of a riding sized mule (i.e. 14.2hh plus?)

Basically, they are pretty rare in the UK, as the vast majority of donkeys here are only little; and mules have so far fallen from fashion that very few people will consider breeding their mare to a donkey deliberately. (tho there are rumours of a nice large donkey at stud to mares in the North of England; and a lady in South Wales has bred some nice mules out of both draft and warmblood mares)

Which is why most people import (although you can also import frozen mammoth donkey jack semen to cover a good sized mare) - Spain and USA probably the best places.

Spanish mules seem to be out of a variety of breeds of mare and I *think* usually bred as working animals, they do seem of very variable appearance; American mules often out of QH mares (helps balance the weak-looking but actually very strong and mechanically efficient hindquarters of the donkey) for riding mules, draft mares for heavier draft-type/dual purpose mules or TB for showy or racing mules. Personally I think the American mules *generally* much better looking. (there are some pretty Spanish mules in UK tho)

Import costs - about £3500 from USA (2007) and I am sure someone told me about £1200 from Spain (may be wrong - check that out with John Parker if you are toying with it)

Cheapest way to do it if you had facilities and were happy to wait would be to import a really nice QH mare in foal to a proven mule sire, keep the baby, sell the mare.

Check out www.longearsmall.com

:)

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by wyomingpat - 2008/06/25 23:02

Hi - In Wyoming here mules are very common - I personally prefer a horse but everyone I knows who rides one would not ride anything else. The rule I was told was "if it is a good one, it is a great one - If it is a bad one , shoot it!"

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by midnightgeorgia - 2008/07/01 22:32

Oh my, what lovely pics of mules. When I was looking for my new horse 3 yrs ago I was also ready to consider getting a mule however could find no one in my county that had one.. I live in Buckinghamshire. I'm sure I have a photo of a mule at the horse of the year show back in the 50's jumping a big clear round. Good luck with yours, be lovely to see you at the wes championships at moreton morrell.. what are the rules about mules and WES, does anyone know?

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Re:Mules-what is so awful??

Posted by elkay - 2008/07/01 23:44

Must admit I just assumed when the time comes my muley will be off to WES just like any other part-bred Quarter Horse!

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