

MULES AND HINNIES



**THE DONKEY
SANCTUARY**

MULES ARE INTELLIGENT AND SENSITIVE

A mule is the result of breeding between a female horse and a male donkey.

A mule is said to have the body of the horse with extremities of a donkey. Mules have smaller ears than their donkey fathers but larger, although the same shape, as their horse mothers. Their manes and tails are not as thick as that of a horse. If they try to bray it usually starts out with a horse's whinny and ends with a donkey's distinctive bray.

Mules can range in height from less than 36 inches up to 17 hands, depending on the size of the mare and stallion used. In Britain larger mules are less common than in the USA where they have been used as draft and riding animals since America was colonised. These larger mules from North America were extremely popular with the British army and were used in both World Wars and during campaigns in India and Asia.



MALE MULE

The correct name for a male mule is a Horse Mule, but they are sometimes referred to as a John or Jack Mule.

FEMALE MULE

The correct name for a female mule is a Mare Mule, sometimes females are informally called Molly Mules.

Mule Colt or Mule Filly refers to a mule that is less than 3 years of age.

HINNIES

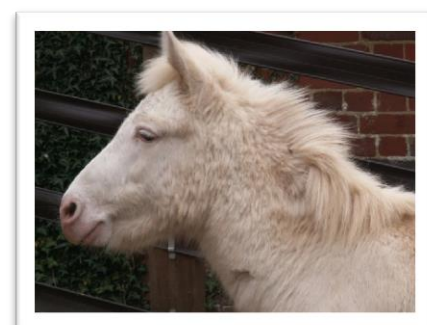
A hinny is the result of breeding between a female donkey and a male horse. A hinny is said to have the body of a donkey and the extremities of a horse. Their ears are shorter than a mule's, the mane and tail longer and thicker than that of a mule.

Because a donkey mare is smaller than most horses, hinnies are generally smaller than mules and are less common than mules. It is extremely difficult to tell the difference between a mule and hinny, therefore hinnies are often mistaken for mules and sometimes for small native type ponies.

Male and female hinnies are generally referred to in the same way as male and female mules

Male mules and male hinnies are anatomically normal and retain the drive to breed with mares. They are extremely difficult to handle and to help with their temperament and make them safer to manage they should always be castrated.

Mules and hinnies come in a wide range of colours depending on their parents: from plain solid colours to paint and appaloosa markings.



“CUM MULA PEPERIT” OR “ONCE IN A BLUE MOON”

As donkeys have 62 chromosomes and horses have 64 chromosomes the result of their inter-breeding, a mule or hinny, has 63 chromosomes. This odd number of chromosomes makes it extremely rare for a mule to breed. Reports of mules giving birth occur in ancient Greece and Rome over 200 years ago, and since 1527 there have only been 60 or so reported cases of mules giving birth, with only a handful of these cases being scientifically proven as mules actually giving birth .

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Mules have many of the best traits of their parents. They can withstand extremes of climate, perhaps due to the origins of the donkey from Africa. They have the calm, stoic nature of their donkey father and the more energetic, flighty reactions of their horse mother. Faced with a fearful situation mules will choose either to use a flight or fight response depending on individual circumstances compared with a horse that would normally prefer to run away. This tends to make a well trained mule very calm and steady which is why they were so popular with the armed forces for carrying explosives and ammunition or for tourist destinations such as the Grand Canyon . They were less likely, than horses, to panic in dangerous situations and could carry much more weight than donkeys. However, in common with their horse parent mules and hinnies can be more “flighty” than donkeys.

CARE OF THE MULE

In most aspects of their care mules can be treated and cared for in a similar way to other equines. However, there are a few extra considerations.

Mules are intelligent and sensitive and therefore do not settle well during long periods of being stabled. They need the companionship of other mules or equines, generally mules choose other mules or horses as their companions and hinnies will prefer the company of donkeys. Mules and hinnies should have as much time out in the paddock, where they can keep active and as mentally stimulated as possible.

Just like donkeys and horses, mules need fresh water and feed. Our experience shows that mules should be fed as one would feed a donkey, the majority of the diet should comprise straw, and limited hay and or limited grazing. Concentrates should only be fed when required and should be fibre based with low starch and sugar levels, feeding grain to mules is not recommended. For more guidance on feeding see The Donkey Sanctuary ‘What should I Feed My Donkey’ factsheet

Due to their hybrid vigour mules are often less prone to ailments than their parents, however they can suffer from the same illnesses and are still prone to laminitis.

Mule feet are a ‘half way house’ of their parents and tend to be more upright and cylindrical in shape than the horse foot. Mules rarely need shoes to work as their feet are very hard wearing. Mules, just like donkeys and horses, should have their feet trimmed every 6-10 weeks. Mules and hinnies need an understanding farrier as they can be nervous of having their feet trimmed if they have not been properly trained.

Mules and Hinnies need space to exercise at will, and suitable fencing to keep them contained, as they do have an ability to jump a standard fence from a standstill. Mules 125cms at the wither have been known to clear jumps of 178cms.

ARE MULES FOR YOU?

Depending on their size and conformation mules can do anything a horse or donkey can do and in some cases do them better. Mules can be used for riding and events such as dressage, show jumping, endurance, driving and agility competitions. They are suitable for farms and smallholdings where they can be used as pack animals or for draft work.

“If someone says a mule is stubborn it is probable that they have just been outsmarted by one.”

The common conception that mules are stubborn is not true. The mule's instinct for self-preservation means they will not put themselves in danger, or be over worked without extreme provocation which has led to the misconception of stubbornness. Mules are intelligent and very trainable, however they are careful and their increased sense of self-preservation means they prefer to think things through before acting and are unwilling to put themselves at risk.

As a consequence of their behaviour mules require a sympathetic, patient trainer that understands the behaviour of mules and their different needs. Mules are very quick to learn and will learn from good or bad training equally, so when training a mule the trainer should be very clear in what they are asking for. As a mule trainer or owner you will need to enjoy the challenge of working with a thinking animal that needs to be negotiated with rather than forced to cooperate. Mules need to be trained calmly, patiently and with a great deal of understanding. A mule's long memory means that if they experience frightening or painful training they will not forget and they take a long time to forgive bad handling.

It is important to understand and accept that mules are not like horses, they are much more of a challenge to understand and work with and owning a mule is not for everyone!

If you want more information on mules or are interested in fostering a mule please contact The Donkey Sanctuary Welfare Advice Line - 01395 578222

Other sources of mule information in the UK can be found at <http://www.britishmulesociety.co.uk>

THE DONKEY SANCTUARY

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The Donkey Sanctuary was founded by Dr Elisabeth Svendsen MBE in 1969.

The Donkey Sanctuary (registered charity number 264818) and its sole corporate trustee, The Donkey Sanctuary Trustee Limited (Company number 07328588) both have their registered office at Slade House Farm, Sidmouth, EX10 0NU.

Incorporating: The Elisabeth Svendsen Trust for Children and Donkeys (EST); The International Donkey Protection Trust (IDPT).

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WORKING WORLDWIDE