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Answers To Your Mule Questions by Cindy K (McKinnon) Roberts

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Updated: 02/04/2009 02:26 PM

CANNOT touch hindquarters

Hi Cindy,

I have 2 mules and 10 horses. Both mules were rescues. One is 4 and we have had him for 3 years. He was almost impossible to handle when we first got him. He is a groundwork whiz now- he will back through barrels, side pass and do anything for you EXCEPT: you CANNOT touch his hind quarters. I am the only one he will allow to halter him although he doesn't seem all that fond of me! I wonder if he is a Hinny because he has shorter ears and looks a little different than most mules I have seen. Someone once told me that hinnies are much more difficult to work with. I have saddled him, he doesn't mind the saddle, but I am loathe to get on an animal I can't handle all over. I do lots of groundwork with my horses and they are a piece of cake compared to the mules!! Should I just let him be a lawn ornament? I don't think he would accept another person as a trainer. He won't let anyone else handle his head. Any insight you can provide will be welcome.

Thank you so much,
Sincerely - T.C. Wagner, Mansfield Missouri

T.C.,

Hinnies have more horse like features to them as compared to the mule. As far as their disposition, in my opinion, they are not difficult to train. Your mule/hinny was a rescue animal. That tells me the animal was either abused and/or neglected. It sounds like your mule/hinny was not handled very much and the little handling that he had was negative and put a lasting impression on him.

Abused/neglected animals require daily handling. More time is involved because you have to move slow and build up trust as you two get into a routine. You have to do repetitive grooming and handling to ask more from your mule about his hindquarter issues. You have come a long way with your mule - I wouldn't put him in the junk pile yet. Hybrids are extremely smart.

Reward the mule for every positive result. Set him up to make the right choices while working with him with instant reward of kind words and a stroke of the hand -- this will build his confidence. Thank you for your email, Cindy K. Roberts

Warning! Under Missouri law, an equine professional is not liable for an injury to or the death of a participant in equine activities resulting from the inherent risks of equine activities pursuant to the Revised Statutes of Missouri. Your participation in training your own mule or horse by following the advice given in this column and throughout Every Cowgirl's Dream web site is a risk that may result in permanent disability and even death to you and/or your animal. Advice in this column is given through 20 plus years of professional and private mule training experience. The unique personality of your animal and the individual reader's skill level will vary greatly. This column is not a substitute for a qualified mule trainer in your area. Always utilize a professional and knowledgeable trainer to assist you. The author asks each reader to evaluate his or her skill level, athletic ability and mule sense prior to attempting any training technique. By submitting your question, you agree to having your inquiry and answer posted on Every Cowgirl's Dream web site and possibly published in upcoming literature and books.

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