

[Mule Training](#)
[Cowgirl Cooking](#)
[Store](#)
[Trail Rides](#)
[Lady Rhinestone](#)
[Conceal & Carry](#)
[Cowboy Code](#)
[Home](#)



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

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IS MY MULE CONDITIONED FOR THIS RIDE?

Hi! Got another mule question for you.

I ride my mule on Sundays, with the exception of a trial ride or two a month. I am planning on a ride in September where the first day trail is about 17-19 miles. How can I tell if my mule is in good condition for this? I don't want to hurt him in any way. He is kept in a pasture with 3 other mules, he is a big guy, over 1100 lbs. (10 yrs old). I have been trying to get some riding on him but the rains have kept a lot of our trails closed, although it does appear to be finally drying up.. Any advice on how to get him ready or should I not be worrying? I understand the trail is pretty flat most of the way... Thanks AGAIN, D

Hello D,

1100 lbs is a very nice size for a mule. Ten is young for a mule and keeping your mule on pasture is good for keeping them in condition - rather than keeping her in a stall or small paddock with little or no exercise. For this reason, I think your mule is very capable of handling 17-19 miles on your trail ride. I am assuming your mule is not overweight and has no prior injury. If you can, cold hose her legs after the ride and rub them down with liniment. Ideally you will want to put her in a corral or paddock so she can walk out any soreness...this will help to keep any possible swelling from developing. If this is not an option, wrap her legs with support bandages such as exercise/polo wraps. There is a correct way to wrapping/bandaging your mule's legs and that is always wrap for tendon support. I will elaborate on this: **Tendons** are fibrous cords of connective tissue attaching muscle to bone, cartilage or other muscle. The suspensory ligaments are between the two splint bones close to the back of the cannon bone. They start close to the knee and go down to the fetlock joint, where it divides into two branches. Each branch attaches to the corresponding sesamoid bone while some fibers combine with the common digital extensor tendon. The suspensory ligament provides support for the fetlock joint, preventing it from extending down too far towards the ground, which would increase the risk of strains. Under strenuous work or exercise, it would be best to wrap your mule's legs to aid in the support of the suspensory ligaments. Always use even tension while wrapping and wrap in the direction of the ligament. If you wrap against the direction, this defeats your purpose. The way to remember this is, wrap the leg(s) from head to tail. If you are on the mule's near side (left) then you wrap left to right. If you are on the mule's off side (right) you should wrap right to left. Mule's are athletes and are prone to injuries and strains...you are smart to be aware of your mule's athletic condition.



Let me know how she did on the ride. Best wishes and thanks 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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