

## Foreword

Although mules and donkeys have been around for centuries, they have only been used in modern recreational equine activities for a relatively short time. Those of us who began raising and training mules in the United States in the early seventies were reduced to studying horse training books to help us to train our mules and donkeys. With the increased intelligence of the mule, most horse books could not adequately prepare one for the journey with a mule until you found yourself in the arena or on the trail with a problem that seemed unsolvable. Buying and selling mules was even more confusing because very few people really understood the plight of the mule and he was often written off as a generally stubborn and a difficult animal to handle. Horse traders had been dealing in equines for much longer and knew how to keep the secrets of their trade from the general public as did horse trainers. Horse traders had the perfect setup for a very long time...until mules became a popular recreational riding and driving animal.

Those of us who engage with mules know the feeling of complete humiliation when a mule let's us know that our horse training techniques will not work. Their affectionate attitudes lead the unsuspecting buyer to think they are a lot like dogs, but in my experience, they are more like six year old children with the intelligence and attitude to rebut the things that you do that they feel is hazardous to their health, an undoubtedly strong sense of self preservation. This can put the uneducated buyer at great risk. Cindy Roberts put this quite nicely, "If you don't have the skill set or knowledge to take on a new mule in your life, then don't buy it." Be willing to spend the time educating yourself about these animals through the numerous books and videos by a wide variety of authors that are now available about these much maligned creatures so you know what you are getting yourself into.

Those of us who have struggled with our Longears through the past half century know the importance of documenting and sharing what we learned about these animals so that the Longears industry would be able to positively grow and prosper as has our horse and pony industry counterpart. As Cindy says, "Mule people are like family. They love to show them off (their mules) and gather with other mule riders to share stories and learn new ideas." Making *educated* choices about what you would like to do with your new mule will help you with sound judgement in deciding what type of mule you will need. Management and training is no longer secret and the general public is now better able to learn and train their equines with the support from professionals like Cindy Roberts that have the practical knowledge and experience to guide you safely through the process.

This book is particularly valuable as the trade secrets of many "horse traders" have yet to be exposed to the general public, but in this book, I think Cindy has finally covered nearly every aspect of negotiations and considerations in the buying and selling of mules. Salesmen will always be salesman, but that doesn't mean that you cannot become an educated buyer and participate in the process such that the outcome is safe and positive for all involved.

Thank you, Cindy Roberts, for yet another important contribution to our ever-growing *Longears Library* of information for the *Longears Lovers* of today and for future generations yet to come! Your kind and thoughtful efforts are truly appreciated!

**Meredith Hodges**

**Lucky Three Ranch, Inc.**