

1. **Environment:** Where is the mule kept? Is he kept in a pasture, stall or paddock? Is he used to being with other horses/mules? How does the mule rank in the pecking order? This is good Information to know. If you intend to purchase a mule and change his environment and/or social order, you need to be confident that it will work out for the animal. Has the mule been exposed to barbed wire or an electric fence? These are all important issues to consider for your new mule purchase. A new animal should be introduced into his new surroundings during daylight.
2. **Activity level:** Ask about his activity level. How long has the mule been “unemployed?” Mules need time to get back into a “schooling” frame of mind, which usually takes about three weeks. During that time, there will be a change to their “mindset.” Remember as a child, returning to school after a long summer? If you are skilled rider, this will not be a problem for you.
3. **Health history:** Is he up to date on all shots, paste worming, teeth floating and are his feet kept up? Vaccinations should be given twice a year, in the spring and fall. When you see an ad that claims the animal is “up to date on shots, paste-worming” ask to see the schedule. Paste-worming schedules that are allowed to go past 8 weeks can cause health issues in the animal. Has the animal had any illness or injury that required veterinary attention? You need to know this to determine if there may be a potential ongoing problem. Ask for the medical history on the mule.
4. **Job skills:** What are the mule’s job skills? What can he do? (Cross water? Cross bridges? Ride safely and calmly around traffic? Load into the trailer? Stand quietly for the farrier? Come when he is called? Ride English/Western or Hunter/Jumper? Work cows? Trail ride with confidence alone or in a group? Stand tied quietly to the trailer? Is he traffic safe? Is he able to camp on a picket line? Does the mule hobble?) These are just a few things to think about when purchasing a mule.
5. **Your expectations:** What do you want the mule to do? Is he suited for what you expect of him? How is the mule’s disposition? A mule that requires being safe and confident while riding on the trail, should have a quiet disposition that is not easily spooked or show signs of nervousness. A performance mule that is expected to have athletic ability and speed should possess those same qualities.
6. **Age of the mule:** Does the seller have paperwork to back up the age of the mule? A qualified veterinarian can age a mule by overall physical examination. Actual breeder certificates will also endorse the physical age on the mule. Since mules are hybrids, they have longevity and their physical age cannot be compared to the horse. This is another factor where the mule has the advantage over the horse, if properly cared for he will be sound and may be in service until the day he dies.
7. **Ownership:** How many owners has the mule had? Is he a “foster” mule going from