

Chapter 3 Inaccuracies on Breeding

“Choose a suitable mare (depending on what kind of mule you wish to breed) and then find her a suitable jack. If both parents are chosen carefully and are well matched, the offspring will be superior to either parent. The most common mistake made in mule-breeding is to choose an ugly jack or one with too large a head or too short a neck. The best all-round breed of donkey for mule-breeding is the Catalonian, which is around 13-14.2h.h. and of medium weight, so making it suitable for crossing with either light or heavy horses as well as with cobs. A good jack should also have a good length of stride.”

Although this statement has some merit to it, there is more to the equation of breeding for a performance mule or donkey.

Negative issues surrounding the backyard breeder; the backyard breeder has been known to:

- Breed two horses together because they're available, not because the match is suited to produce a foal with improved conformation, or talent than the parents. (This could also be a trait/habit of animal hoarders.)
- Breeding genetically flawed, conformationally flawed, lame or otherwise knowingly inferior horses;
- Breeding horses at a financial loss;
- Breeding horses you are unable to appropriately care for (feed, farrier, vet);
- Breeding horses you are unable or unwilling to handle, train and promote;
- Breeding horses you are unable or unwilling to keep their entire life if they cannot be sold to appropriate homes.

These practices are not favorable for the performance bred saddle mule.

If you take on the responsibility to breed equines, take the responsibility seriously and think twice about what characteristics you are seeking to emphasize and deemphasize, by balancing the quest for novel or flashy traits with a solid basis in conformation and performance.

- Along with breed specific traits, all equine breeds should have good minds, feet, bones and general conformation. A beautiful coat or massive muscling doesn't mean anything if not supported by a strong foundation of foot, bone tendon and joint.
- Understand the principles of conformation and recognize and understand the basics of lameness.
- Do not breed horses/jacks that have not shown fitness in every way, whether from a lameness standpoint, general health, behavioral or breeding standpoint.
- Where available, use genetic tests to ensure that detectable diseases are not passed down.
- Focus on the actual performance and longevity of potential sire and dam rather than the relationship to a well-known horse.
- Similarly, select sires based on their performance record, not the fact that they have a familiar name on their pedigree or are a pretty color.

It is up to us to ensure a positive and outstanding future for the performance bred saddle mule.

