

Registration Worthy?

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I recently encountered a situation that enlightened me as to how many mules are not registered and in fact, many owners do not even know the actual age of their equine because they are not papered.

I went to buy a mule off of Equine Now for the purposes of racing. I chose a nice little 3-year-old gaited molly that looked to have potential. As I was gathering information on this mule, I pressed for a pedigree or even the names of the jack and mare. The owner came back to me with the comment “if you want a pedigreed mule you should breed one yourself or not own a mule. Most mules are sold on the basis of confirmation and gait”. I was really taken aback. It seemed so demeaning to the mule. My first reaction was, “how can you not feel a mule worthy of being registered?” Now I grew up around mules all my life. In our barn, we always had registration papers on all of our animals. I guess I just believed that by in large; most owners were registering their mules and donkeys. Upon further exploration, I quickly discovered that I was wrong. One merely needs to browse the web sites where mules are offered for sale and in many cases, they are not registered and their age is listed as “N/A” or not available.

There are far more reasons as to why one should register their mule/donkey than there are to not register. They include but are not limited to the following:

-Age verification. It is a lot cheaper to register your animal and have a paper showing its age then to have to call a vet out to do age verification, if requested by a specific buyer.

-Registration exemplifies that the mule has earned papers through the excellence of breeding.

-It enables your farm/ranch name to be carried forward and promoted on the papers with each owner as the mule travels throughout its life. It is a terrific way to advertise your business!

-In many states brand inspections are required. The registration papers provide a document to the brand inspector to assist with issuing a certificate. Registration certificates provide a definitive descriptive tool in terms of identifying the animal.

I spoke to Mary Malloy, Idaho State Brand Inspector on this specific subject. She said, “Brand inspectors are expected to find and identify brands on livestock without the benefit of description on papers, however I do my physical inspection prior to looking at registrations, and occasionally I have to clip an area to see a brand, clearly. In many cases, animals are branded but it is not listed on the registration papers. While the state of Idaho does not

recognize registration papers as proof of ownership, I do utilize them as a tool to more closely identify animals. The more information I can include in an inspection, the more thorough identification we can provide, especially since most mules are solid colored without white markings.”

According to Frances Hathaway from California, where brand inspections are no longer required, she registers hers through the American Mule Association “for proof of ownership, proof of age, and for year end points.”

-Knowing the pedigree. With all the various curriculums mules are involved in these days, a pedigree will help you determine if the mule will excel in various areas. An example would be in racing. Sweetwater Sterling, now deceased, has produced offspring that have brought in more race winnings than any other jack. His mules are known to excel both on the flat track as well as in the show arena. If you own a Sterling mule, you are all but guaranteed a premium price when offering one of his offspring for sale. Wouldn't you, as an owner, want to know the jack and its personality before you purchased a mule? Contrary to this...there was a jack that used to produce some of the finest racing animals, but they did not necessarily produce the best pleasure and trail animals. I was aware of this jack and would not utilize his services for breeding an all-around mule.

-Registration costs less than \$50 per animal. It is a relatively cheap and easy way to accomplish and benefit from what has been outlined above.

-In the case of a racing animal registration is a requirement.

With all these reasons noted...it is up to us to educate the buyer on why they should request registration papers on an animal. When I spoke to Pam Fournier, Rafter F Mule Company about registration and how important it is to their business, she was quick to note that the majority of their customers don't ask for registration papers. She said “however, we are trying to sell all our foals with registration papers now. For the buyer, registration papers are a reliable source of accurate information about prospective mules, such as age and bloodlines of the mare and jack”.

I also spoke to Katie Bageant. Her company, Rocking EK Ranch, is known for selling top quality registered mules. She shared the following about her business. “Although I am a firm believer in the old saying, ‘You can't ride the papers,’ I prefer to see an animal registered for the mere purpose of being identified and traced. There are still many more reasons that are advantageous for registering an animal I feel. At Rocking EK Ranch all foals that are sold from our ranch are registered stock”.

Ray Woodside, Potomac Mules had this to share. “I have bought some mules that have been registered, but have never looked at the papers after I bought the mules.

I look for the kind of mule I want, not what the pedigree is. The one good thing about papers is that you know the true age of the animal. However I usually buy young animals, so the age isn't so important to me".

As you can see, there are many differing views on whether registration is important. I hope the above cited reasons will enable you to make educated decisions on registering your animals.

Registration can be accomplished by going to the American Mule and Donkey Society website, www.love-longears.com, the American Mule Association website, www.americammuleassociation.org, or the North American Saddle Mule Association website, www.nasma.org.

Your mule or donkey IS indeed 'worthy of being registered.'



GLENDA IRWIN and Alice at Ya Ha Tinda in Alberta, Canada



BETH DAVIS riding at Caney Mountain Horse Camp



"This spring, Haywire Stock Farm, Oakdale, Calif., welcomed an appaloosa mule colt out of Cascadian Crystal, a dark palomino baby is out of Sugar, a quarter horse, and a filly out of a great buckskin quarter horse Bunny Bell. They are all sired by World Champion Double C's Hat Trick"--Diane Grimes