



Celebrating the Jack Of All Trades!

by Laurie Wilson

When I was asked to write an article for the 32nd annual Jack issue of *Mules and More*, it really got me thinking about how important “donkey diversity” is to a mule’s exceptional hybrid vigor.

Most of us have read about or experienced firsthand the depths of the donkey’s diverse skills and abilities, but do we really recognize that the jack is key to transferring an amazing amount of talent into an even more amazing offspring, the mule!

The phrase “jack of all trades” was originally meant as a form of praise referring to one who is confident in many endeavors but today it is generally used disparagingly, with an emphasis (either implied or stated) as being a “master of none.” (Source Wiktionary.org). I believe that pos-

sessing a long list of super skill sets is more valuable than one super power when it comes to benefiting yourself and others.

For an illustration, let’s look at the male donkey. He is adept at tolerating prolonged and strenuous work loads, surviving and thriving in desolate living conditions, is highly resistant to parasites and diseases, navigates treacherous terrain with ease and possesses superior intelligence. Now let’s imagine we can only pick one of those wonderful skill sets that the jack could pass on to the mule. We might end up with a mule who could perfectly navigate the narrow paths of the Grand Canyon, but ultimately would pass out halfway down because he couldn’t tolerate the hot and arid temperatures. Or maybe we end up

with a super strong mule that can carry huge loads of supplies 12 hours a day, but gets sick so often that he spends most of his working life on stall rest or traveling to the vets office.

Wikipedia defines “hybrid vigor” (or heterosis) as the improved or increased function of any biological quality in a hybrid offspring. If we were to cross two parents who possess only one “super skill,” the result of the hybrid offspring would not be super sized but rather minimized.

This is why having a diverse skills portfolio is essential to producing even better hybrid offspring. Now let’s also imagine we offer each of those amazing offspring a top notch, diversified training program, the result would undoubtedly be nothing short of exceptional!

As I researched the title of this article, it came to my attention that the phrase most of us are familiar with, omits the original last line. The full phrase is: “A jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one.” I think every mule owner could agree on that one!

Laurie Wilson, Natural Leadership Horse & Mule Training, traded her marketing job to pursue training full time 20 years ago, and has since developed a variety of horse passions, including dressage, trick training, obstacle challenges, working equitation, and horse soccer. You can find more at naturalleadership.biz or on Facebook at ‘Mule Academy.’



Laurie’s own personal ‘jack of all trades,’ Toby Jack