

MY MULE IS BETTER THAN YOUR MULE

*By Tim Doud
Diamond Creek Mules
Cody, Wyoming*



Being a breeder and trainer of mules I receive many questions during the year. One question I am asked a lot is, “Which mule is better, a john or molly?” We all know people who will only ride a john mule, or will only ride a molly mule. So, which mule is better?

A molly mule generally will have a little more refinement in her conformation. Usually this will show up in a smaller, more petite head. The mule’s dam will have something to do with this, but the jack normally will have more. A jack with a large head will normally throw a mule with a larger head; jacks with smaller more refined

heads will pass this along to their offspring.

Molly mules will also show heat like a mare although usually not as bad. Many times you cannot detect when the mule is in heat. I have seen molly mules that show heat and act just like a mare in heat.

John mules must be gelded or they will act and breed, like a stallion. John mules are sterile. If not gelded like a horse they will mount and breed mares and molly mules. We geld all our john mules when they reach three months of age; some people will geld earlier and some later. Follow your veterinarian’s

recommendation.

John mules are also more playful than a molly mule. They always seem to be ‘looking for trouble’. I will turn all of my young mules out together in groups of mules of the same age. The john mules are constantly running around the pasture, rearing up and playing. You will see them walk up to a fence and pick on the mules in the next pasture. They always seem to have little marks and scraps on them from rough-housing with each other.

Another question I receive a lot is, “What type of mule should I buy or breed my mare for?” Mules come in many different colors, sizes, conformations and dispositions. Color is a personal preference and a question only you can answer. To some people, color is the most important thing, and others it is the least important.

When breeding a mare to a jack, most jacks will have a lot of influence in the color of your foal. In 1993 I started a search for a mammoth jack to start my breeding program. I spent two years and looked at over 200 jacks before purchasing my jack, ‘Diamond Creek Major’. He is a black jack with white points. Many of the old time jack breeders told me that many black jacks carry a dominant sorrel gene. I purchased ‘Major’ for his conformation and it did not matter what color foals he threw. As it turns out, ‘Major’ throws black and bay colored foals, the color I wanted. Personally, color is the last thing I look at when evaluating a mule.

The size of a mule is another personal preference, but your size will have some influence in your decision. A large framed person will not want a small mule. At the same time if you are shorter in size you may get tired of always looking for a rock in order to mount your 16 hand mule.



COLOR OF A MULE is a personal preference

I always look for a mule with good conformation, no matter what I intend to do with the mule. Even if I am riding down the trail, I want people to look at my mule and say, "That's a good looking mule". Not only does it make for a nice looking mule, but it also allows the mule to have a healthier life. It creates less stress on their body and allows them to perform without creating potential foot, hock, leg, neck, etc. problems.

Disposition is what I look at next. A mule with a good disposition usually is easier to train. They will meet you at the gate when you go to catch them and they just like to be around people. This does not mean mules with bad dispositions will not make a good mount. The mule is telling you that it is going to take more of a commitment by you or a trainer to train the mule.

You will also need to look at the sire and dam of the mule or the jack

and your mare you are breeding. We all know of a thoroughbred mule that someone has trained to cut cattle or a draft mule that excels in Dressage. These are mules that someone has spent thousands of hours of training.

It is much easier to breed or buy a mule from a jack and mare that is suited to the discipline you intend to use the mule in. Draft mares for heavy work, quarter horse and paint mares for ranch work, western pleasure and trail riding and warm blood mares for Dressage, English and hunter jumping.

So, what type of mule should you purchase or breed for? John or Molly mule? Sorrel or black mule? Draft or quarter type mule?

You must first decide what you will use the mule for and what 'type' of mule you are looking for. Then you must look at each mule as an individual. Don't get caught up in stereo typing

mules. There are good and bad in all types of mules. It is no different than the person that will only ride a quarter horse or paint, or would never ride a mule.

Tim Doud can be reached at www.diamondcreekmules.com, or by phone at 307/899-1089 or by email at bliss@wavecom.net.