

MAINTENANCE & GROOMING WITH MULES & DONKEYS

MEREDITH HODGES - LUCKY THREE RANCH

- Use Grooming Tools that are Comfortable for your Mules and Donkeys
- Expensive Horse/Equine Grooming Tools are not Necessary
- Insect Control around the Barn - What Really Works
- If Showing: When & How to Body Clip
- Treating Sores/Scabs
- Group Grooming
- Paste Worming is Effective in Controlling Insects and Flies - What to Use!

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Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

The mules are in the corral. Welcome to Mule Talk, and I'm Cindy K. Roberts, your host. And our author, TV personality and world-renowned mule trainer, Meredith Hodges of the Lucky Three Ranch. And we are gonna be talking about, well, I call it playing beauty school dropout with your mules. (laughing) And Meredith calls it a... She has a different name for it. So, Meredith, what are we talking about today? (laughs)

Meredith:

Today, we will be talking about maintenance and grooming and doing it in a *Cost-Effective* way. You've heard the old saying, *Horse poor*. I don't think there's anyone poorer than we *Equestrians* on the planet. We have a very expensive *hobby* if you want to call it a *hobby*. It's very difficult to make any kind of *profit* from what we do. A lot of people now are taking up breeding and selling these ***Extraordinary Longears***. The quality has increased exponentially from what it was when I first began breeding for mules. If you're going to *Breed and Sell* an equine, he has to look good so you can get that *Top Dollar* for him.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith:

When we're talking about ***Maintenance and Grooming*** we're looking for a way that's ***Cost-Effective and Efficient*** to do things to keep your *Over-Head* manageable. I found that putting up *board fencing* and *wire fencing* was eating me alive in *maintenance costs* because equines like to chew wood and sit on wire fences. *Hot-wire fencing* will sometimes work, but equines even figure out how to short-out those fences and get out. All of a sudden, you obtain the cost of replacing the fence and even veterinary expenses from injuries when they get tangled up in the wires. Your neighbors get mad when they eat up their yard, destroy their plants and a variety of other problems can arise with just owning a equine. Longears multiply the multiple issues that can arise due their *superior intelligence and creativity*.

My neighbors have cattle on the north side where my property has *white Vinyl fencing*. I found the *Vinyl* was very expensive to put up. At first my mules were very polite and respected the *Vinyl fencing* with a top board *Hotwire*. They found out quickly that it doesn't taste very good and they couldn't really chew on it. It doesn't erode like a wooden fence (laughing) and they can't really sculpt it. We were doing really well until my neighbors put the cattle on the other side of the fence. The cattle just broke the boards to get into our grass pasture. The mules were delighted when they thought we had given them a *GIANT set of Tinker Toys* and spent their days taking out the *horizontal boards*! They would break a lot of them and things got pretty expensive to keep replacing those boards at \$45.00 a piece! We finally decided to go ahead and spend the extra money to put up a new four-rail high, half mile of *Welded Pipe Fencing*.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Sure.

Meredith:

The steel pipe fencing may initially be expensive, but ***we managed to completely eliminate all the Maintenance Cost for the next 50 years! We always try to minimize the cost of Maintenance and Training and maximize Efficiency at all times. We are constantly challenged and find solutions every day.*** With as many animals as we have, we not only groom *efficiently* and keep it *routine*, but we also buy tools that are fairly *inexpensive* but are *heartly enough* do the jobs. I learned that as soon as they put the stamp on it ***For Equine Use*** the price goes up.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, yeah.

Meredith:

With all the **Marketing and Advertising** they do, you find yourself collecting all kinds of **Grooming Tools** that you really don't need and that your animal really doesn't like. They may be tough animals, but their skin's not tough. **Metal Grooming Tools** may get off the mud, but they will also damage your equine's skin and hair. They twitch when a fly lands on them and that tells me they're very sensitive.

In order for the hair coat to work the way it was designed, it has to have good, healthy skin at the base so that the healthy hair coat can stand on end. It can't do that in scar tissue. You may not even think about that, but it makes a huge difference. So, when I'm thinking about grooming, I want to be able to groom the equines *routinely for healthy hair* and adequate protection from the weather and insects.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

(laughs) Sure.

Meredith:

In order to keep the flies and other insects under control, all the stalls, runs and pens need to be kept free of manure and debris daily. You'll find that if you do the cleaning daily, it doesn't take as long. ***If you let it build up, it will take a much longer time to clean and it will be collecting insects, drawing flies and providing a nesting ground for germs.*** Fields and pastures need to be harrowed in the spring and the fall and in between hay cuttings. You'll find that some animals have *Sensitive Skin* around the eyes, on their lower legs and will need *Fly Masks* that cover their eyes and ears, but most do not have sensitive skin and won't need *Fly Masks*, just *routine good hygiene*.

If you clip the hair on their ears, ***only clip the backs of the ears*** and leave the hair inside of the ears. I use the **Farnam Super Masks** without the ear covering and most of them fit my *mules'* heads just fine. I don't have to use them on all the mules and I *never* put them on my *donkeys*. ***When the hair coats are healthy they don't smell bad and attract numerous insects.***

The easiest way to keep the flies and insects out of the environment is with good Hygiene Practices for your equines AND their Environment. We paste worm our equines in *January, March, May, July and September* with *Farnam Ivermectin* and then break the cycle with *Strongid* in *November* to prevent the propagation of internal worms and parasites. This insures that your animals are safe despite what your neighbors may be doing with their livestock. **Fields and Pastures should be harrowed in the spring and fall, and between hay cuttings.** Keep all *Tack and Equipment* clean so it does not attract flies to your *Tack Room and Grooming Area*. ***Spray the Tack Room when you leave with a household flying insect spray for any residual flies.***

- 1) First and foremost, a ***Regular Grooming Schedule*** preferably every week is essential for the ***Good Hygiene and Health*** of your equines. ***Regular Grooming*** once a week to remove excess hair, mud, etc. will eliminate places on the animal, including legs that would be subject to insects laying eggs. If certain body areas begin to get sores, scabs, or bumps, use ***Neosporin***, or if they are severe. ***Panalog***, also called ***Animax*** or ***Dermalone*** (by prescription from your vet). Clean the eyes, ears and nostrils with a damp hand towel every time during grooming and ***Fly Spray*** the hairs inside the ears for the best *bug-block* after cleaning.
- 2) We use ***Tri-Tech 14 by Farnam Fly Spray*** weekly for bugs and insects that can pester your equine. This seems to be the best and longest lasting spray (***Herbal Remedies and Fly Predators do not work as well!***). Scrape flies and eggs from the legs, cover with ***Neosporin*** and then spray for flies during grooming. Using ***Johnson's Baby Oil*** in the manes and tails will help to keep the flies at bay and will also discourage other animals from chewing on them.
- 3) Use ***Fly Masks*** for those mules and donkeys that have sensitive skin. ***Farnam Super Masks*** will usually fit most equines. If you groom regularly and clean and spray the ear hairs, the ***Eared Masks*** may not be necessary (I have never had to use the ones with *ears*). You can find them in most ***Tack and Vet Stores***. Just make sure when you put them on that they will come off easily if they were to get caught on anything.
- 4) Feed the right kinds of feed for mules and donkeys. ***Animals that are sweating toxins are more apt to attract insects.***

5) In order to keep flies and other insects under control, all stalls, runs and pens need to be kept free of manure and debris daily. Barns should be cleaned periodically with disinfectant. Keep all stalls, pens and sheds free of urine and manure (clean at least once a day, every day!). This includes larger *Dirt Pen Turnout Areas* weekly. ***You shouldn't need to use any PDZ or chemicals at all if your equine areas are cleaned properly.***

6) For ***Good Drainage*** in stalls, we drill a 2' x 4' deep hole in the middle of the stall and fill it with 1 ½" rock. Then put down 4" of *Pea Gravel* throughout the whole stall and cover with rubber mats.

7) ***Keep manure collection piles well away from the house and barns*** (We put manure into a dumpster behind our *Hay Barn* and have it hauled away weekly). ***Contrary to popular belief, the manure is NOT suitable for fertilizer unless it is properly composted and used for appropriate crops.*** Equines consume weeds and poop seeds that will propagate weeds anywhere that the manure is used.

8) ***Keep water sources clean.*** Check them daily, or clean as needed.

9) Clean any manure from shed or stall walls daily. ***Power wash stall walls and alleyways as needed.***

10) ***Ceiling Fans*** in the barn will also help a lot. Pointed them toward specific stalls and along the top of your barn alleyways! Just be sure to check them regularly and clean them as needed to prevent any spontaneous fires from dust gathering in them. ***Keep them running so birds will not build nests on them!***

11) ***Do not ever clip the hair inside the ears or muzzle hairs of the equines!*** Body clip only if you are showing. Use blankets and fly sheets as needed. Their hair coats will insulate them from the heat, cold and protect them from insects.

12) ***Do not clip the hair on the legs unless you absolutely must for showing!*** Lots of times, you can get a clean look by using the clippers by clipping *with* the hair rather than *against* the hair on the legs to maintain protection.

13) ***Keeping your fence lines free of weeds will also help enormously!*** Bugs and insects like to live in those areas!

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Wow.

Meredith:

14) Keep your equines in Dirt Pens most of the time so you can monitor Weight and Turnout times. The mules can be exposed to their pastures starting with *an hour at a time in the spring* and building up to *five hours maximum every day*. You would be surprised at how much this will limit the exposure to insects that will create sores on your animal. You find that the only ones that really need to wear *Fly Masks* are the ones that have sensitive skin around the eyes.

15) If you have one that is a light colored mule, the Fly Mask and Turnout Time will limit exposure and **Sunburn**. I haven't had to use any **Sunscreen** on any of my mules because of the limited exposure on pasture.

16) The insects live in that grass and they don't like it when an animal comes along and disrupts their environment, so they attack them. That's how come your equine will get such horrible sores on their legs. **You shouldn't turn them out with Leg Wraps on because that smashes down the hair and compromises the normal function of the hair coat.**

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Great.

Meredith:

I discovered something new when *Sadie* retired from **Hearts and Horses Therapeutic Riding Center** and came to live here. I don't suspect that they wormed with *Ivermectin* every other month like we do. We put her in the *Dirt Pen* with our **South Barn Mules**. We do that so we don't have as many stalls to clean during good weather. When I put her in there, she got loaded up with flies. They were so thick that she looked like she had *fly boots* on her legs and underneath her belly. There was a band of flies 5" wide underneath her belly from her front legs to her back legs. We gave her *Ivermectin* and sprayed her with **Farnam Tri-Tec 14 Fly Spray**. It will kill a fly instantly and knock it right out of the air. if you're in there and the flies are buzzing around you, you can use it as *General Fly Spray* for your **Tack Room**.

Ivermectin received awards from the FDA for being one of the safest drugs available. *Ivermectin* is a *prescription medication* used to *treat human infections caused by specific parasites and worms*. It is approved to treat intestinal *strongyloidiasis* and *onchocerciasis* (river blindness) as oral tablets, and external conditions like *head lice* and *rosacea* using topical creams or lotions.

Signs that *Ivermectin* is working include a gradual reduction in specific infection symptoms. For *scabies or skin parasites*, you will notice a slow decrease in new skin lesions and less intense crawling sensations, though itching can persist for 1 to 2 weeks as dead *mites* clear. For *intestinal parasites*, *digestive discomfort* and bloating fade over several days. *Ivermectin* is *not proven or approved to treat viral infections in humans*. ***While laboratory (in vitro) studies show that it can stop viral replication for certain viruses like COVID-19, those results do not translate to safe or effective treatments in human patients.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
All right.

Meredith:

I treated *Sadie* and the next month she didn't have the flies on her anymore. I suspect that the equine body retains a certain amount of *Ivermectin*. People seem to think that with frequent use the parasites will become immune to the *Ivermectin*. ***I contend that that it stays in their system and continues to repel the insects and the worms.*** That appears to be why we don't have many flies and insects around. The environment and the equines are all kept *hygienically clean* all the time! I routinely *fly spray* them once a week, which is kind of cool because now we're talking about something that is not going to take up all your time.

Sadie now has only a few flies buzzing around her, but I still *Fly Spray* my entire herd once a week even when they don't need *Grooming*. I used to bring all the animals into the ***Tack Barn Individually or in Groups*** and go through the whole ***Grooming Process*** until I discovered that I really didn't need to do all every time. In the winter, for instance, they need the hair on them to keep warm. There are no insects during the winter and their hair coats are self-groomed. What they do instead we find deplorable. (laughs)

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith:

When it rains or snows, they get into the *mud* and they *roll*. This is why I decided not to take them off the turnout pastures for the whole winter. Rather, we take them off the **Turnout Pastures** in *March* and keep them in **Dry Lots** until *June* to allow the *Spring Grass* to grow. If you can get them on the grass for limited time, they look forward to the *Turnout* to grass and they won't spend so much time being active in the *Dirt Pen mud*. When they do get into the *Grass Turnout*, they will be more apt to do their rolling. ***That is how they get the mud off all by themselves!***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yeah. Wow. (laughs)

Meredith:

If you want to ride and they are covered in mud, just wait for a few days and you won't have to groom them. (laughing) They'll do it by themselves! If the pens are cleaned, they will be inclined to keep the pens as clean as they can. We put *Pea Gravel* on the ground of the *Pens and the Stalls*. When they do roll, the **Pea Gravel takes off the mud, too**. *Pea Gravel* drains well in the pens, so you won't have muddy spots. You don't have them getting muddy up to their knees.

When I first moved here, we had mud that was three feet deep everywhere. I just began putting *Pea Gravel* in the pens and driveway as often as I could afford it until it finally got hard and basically stayed that way. Now we keep a four-inch base on it. When you do that, you don't have to worry about dirty animals. You don't have to worry about their health being compromised because it's clean everywhere.

The *Pea Gravel* is not a sharp rock. It's a small round rock so that it won't chip their feet, but it's hard enough to keep their feet hard. People are using *Hoof Products* that actually damage the hooves by making them too hard or too soft. When they are too soft, they can begin to collapse and not bear the equine's weight efficiently. If they become too hard, they will chip easily and wear unevenly.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Oh, wow.

Meredith:

When you **sprinkle Johnson's Baby Oil** in the manes and tails, it helps keep flies and insects at bay. It will keep equines from chewing on each other's manes and tails. They like to do that during **Mutual Grooming**. **Johnson's Baby Oil** will help keep a *Show Mule's* mane and tail *healthy and full*. When they engage in **Mutual Grooming**, they will be more careful about it. If they don't have any *itchy spots*, they won't get *crabby* and don't bite and kick each other. **They will warn each other when they're taught good manners and treated right.**

What you feed your equines is all related to **Healthy Management**. When you feed the new researched feeds to put weight on them, it can often make them *obese*. **Feeds that are tested in a laboratory are not as accurate as field-testing on live animals.** By the time the feeds get to the actual animals, you find them colicky or even founder because the feeds are too rich, especially with our **Longears**.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith:

It's the same way with horses. They try to manufacture for convenience too. We feed *Grass Hay*, *Crimped Oats*, mixed with *Sho-Glo Vitamins* and *Mazola Corn Oil for Hoof and Hair* growth and for *Digestive Tract* regularity. **Never feed Alfalfa Hay to equines; it's too rich.** A lot of the *Artificial Hays* are not good for them either. They're *artificial* and are like eating food with *preservatives* in them. There are also a lot of *dehydrated feeds* out there. They've got *pellets* and *hay cubes*. People will tell you to just add water when using them. Those things get inside the animal, **dehydrate the digestive tract and they actually will cause colic, choking and other problems. You cannot provide enough water to supplement what the Digestive Tract can produce.** If you try, you will then have the vet coming and more money *down the tubes*.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith:

You need to think about these kinds of things. There is nothing healthier for equines than *Grass Hay* and *oats*. They will come off any pasture to get oats. That's number one. They love oats! **You can be the most popular person on the planet if you have a Fanny Pack full of oats. My mules have proven that.**

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
(laughs) Oh, yeah.

Meredith:

If you have to collect your mule manure piles on your place, keep them well away from the barns in the house. Personally, we have ours hauled away weekly to the dump and just take it off the property entirely. People like to use the manure for their gardens. They used to tell me to put the manure on my *Hay Field*, but when I did that, I had nothing but weeds throughout the *Hay Field*. When I put it in my garden, I had to weed often. It just wasn't real healthy to do that. It's better to go ahead and research the chemicals that are safe for your animals to put on your crops. There are a limited number of chemicals that are the best and they've been around for a long time. That's your first indication that they are probably safe to use. If you go organic, you're ground will be infested with insects that can do horrible things to your crops.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Sure.

Meredith:

All chemicals are not bad. Get off the mindset that anything that is a chemical is bad. ***Maintenance and Management issues are all related to each other.*** Clean all the manure from your sheds, stalls and pens *regularly and daily in the smaller areas.* ***Keep your water sources clean.*** Large water sources are just another place for unwanted germs and things that could cause problems with your animals' health. During that weekly grooming, you will discover any *scabs, bumps or cuts*. If they're not too deep, just use ***Neosporin*** and they should go away. People talk about ***Jack Sores*** on the legs of their donkeys. ***With simple observance and immediate treatment they should not be a serious issue.*** My donkeys don't have ***Jack Sores*** on their legs. ***Jack Sores*** start as a small aggravated sore that gets worse when they get itchy and repetitively are bitten in certain areas. If you don't catch it right away, they will only get worse.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right. Right.

Meredith:

Donkeys tend to have **Runny Eyes** with *crust* caught in the corners. During weekly grooming, wipe out their eyes with a warm moist hand towel and at least Fly Spray around their face and ears once a week. Get the moist hand towel damp with *warm water* and wipe the crust from their eyes as often as needed.

With that simple practice donkeys don't get those really **Runny Eyes** anymore. With **Regular Grooming** the incidence of **Respiratory Disease** is greatly reduced, especially in the spring when dust and allergies are at their worst. We haven't had anything like that since. We've been doing all this **Regular Maintenance** of the facilities, of the animals and with our feeding practices.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Sure.

Meredith:

I don't believe in clipping animals when you're not Showing your equines .I know that you have to Body Clip if you want to be placed at the top of your classes. Judges are not often that well-schooled and do not have the ability to see through a hair coat with a trained eye! They really don't even know what Good Movement in Good Posture is supposed to look like.

You need to keep all kinds of things in mind. Keep your facilities cleaned daily and practice a few simple things: keep your animals and the stalls clean with *Fly Spray* on the surfaces and with *Systemic Ivermectin* in their bodies. This will repel the insects that collect in your barn. If you put fans in the barn or fans in your sheds, it will keep the birds from nesting in there. Birds don't like getting hit by a fan, so they're not going to want to make a home there. ***Birds also carry disease such as Salmonella.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith:

The weather will change and you need to learn how to adapt. If you **Body Clip** your equines, you can't possibly monitor the blankets enough to keep your equine healthy. If you are going to blanket a clipped mule for show they will need 16 hours a day of light, or the hair coat will quickly grow back, You will be clipping again and again, and that will irritate your animal.

Equines can develop a really crabby attitude and really don't like being confined in stalls. **Longears are particularly claustrophobic**, although being confined in a stall will make *any* animal mentally unstable.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Sure.

Meredith:

*Quick fixes and gimmicks can perpetuate vices like, like Cribbing, Pacing and Kicking. **There are shortcuts to managing unwanted behaviors, but they will never work in the long term.*** If you want to have your animal grazing in the pasture for convenience, they do have *muzzles* you can put on them. However, would *YOU* like to run around with a muzzle on your face to control your eating? And if you did wear a *muzzle*, how long would you be *mentally stable*?

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right. Right.

Meredith:

I don't believe in using Cribbing Collars, Muzzles or anything like that. I do believe in managing your animals in a healthy way. ***Just MANAGE their TURNOUT TIME and don't let them out on pasture more than five hours a day.*** If you can't get there to let them out and bring them back in, get a friend to come over and do it for you. There are alternative ways to handle these things besides feeling that you have to do it all. ***If you exchange tasks and trade off with your friends, then it won't cost either of you as much time and effort.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Sure.

Meredith:

Use your own Common Sense! Farmers used to loan each other equipment to harvest their hay and they used to help each other in numerous ways. Their kids would help neighbors with chores and harvesting. ***If you think you can carry your whole brain in your back pocket and use it, how can THAT even work?***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
(laughs)

Meredith:

If you think you have to do everything by yourself it really keeps options and opportunities to a bare minimum. If you have a dirty facility and you throw the hay on top of the manure in a pen, your animal will ingest things that are not healthy. ***There WILL be consequences to taking short cuts!***

If you are thinking about ***Body Clipping*** your ***Show Mules***, there are a lot of responsibilities to consider. The weather will do what it darn well pleases so you will need to watch them very carefully when you ***Body Clip*** and blanket them. To keep the hair from growing back too quickly, they will need to be kept in an enclosed barn with *16 hours of light on them*. You need to be diligent about how to use the blankets, whether to use one or two blankets and when to put them on and take them off. You shouldn't just put them on and leave them on.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right. Sure.

Meredith:

If your animal becomes overheated, he can get sick from that too. One of the things they will do when they are getting sick is to sweat profusely on their neck and chest. If they get heated up like that, take a whiff of the way their body smells. If they are not getting the right kind of feed, the sweat will be yellowish and smell rancid. ***Take their temperature and call your veterinarian.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith:

Sweat should run clear if they are being fed correctly. The sweat runs clear and drops right off their body because there' are no toxins in it. When they are not being fed the right kind of feed, they start sweating profusely because *laboratory tested feeds* affect their internal organs and do not allow them to operate properly. ***Body functions are compromised as toxins go through their body. When they are healthy, it takes a lot to make them sweat and it's not yellowish, stinky and sticky***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith:

When you are at a show, think about your animal's exposure to other animals. Other animals may not be maintained properly. If you manage your animals properly you greatly enhance their immune system against disease from others. ***Don't allow them to drink from community water sources at a show.*** Bring your own buckets and take water from a faucet. Minimize their exposure to other animals. Don't let them get nose to nose with other animals. ***Make sure that your Vaccinations, Health Practices, your Coggins and Health Certificates are up-to-date.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith:

At any facility, keep an eye out for anything that could injure your animal and remove it or repair it. Proper treatment of disease and injuries depend on two very important factors: ***correct diagnosis and knowledge of the proper treatment.*** If you educate yourself by talking with your *Veterinarian* regularly, you'll educate yourself about the things that you can do. You will know the signs to look for and what you can do to help until the *Veterinarian* or *Farrier* can get there. It's pretty easy to learn to diagnose animals with a little bit of education.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yeah.

Meredith:

It's usually the big **Horse Farms** and the people in the **Big Corporate Equine Industry** that will get the best *Veterinarians*. Unfortunately, it is people like you and me that have to be satisfied with the *run-of-the-mill Veterinarians* and people who are *self-taught*. That's not necessarily bad. If you have a *Veterinarian* or a *Farrier* that enjoys increasing his knowledge, he can be even more valuable than the people that have been taught in colleges. They are less apt to be arrogant about **College Certification** and more willing to share with you. ***That's the kind of Veterinarian and Farrier you want to have. My Veterinarians, Farriers, Equine Chiropractor and Masseuse have shared a lot with me over the years.***

I've actually learned how to do a lot of the things that they know how to do just through practice with them. It's like being an *Apprentice*. ***I personally think that being an Apprentice is an excellent way to learn.*** When, when you do that, you are exposed to a lot of details. There are many resources available to help you to learn how to be better prepared. There are books, videos, shows and clinics. I strongly recommend attending these events to learn and find coaches to help you to increase your own knowledge, but don't let them become a crutch. ***Don't be the kind of person that needs to have someone by your side all the time to show you how to do everything, or to do it for you. You need to become independent.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith:

My vet told me everything I would need to have in a **First Aid Kit** so I could do simple things before he gets here. Some of these things require *prescriptions*, but when he thought I was ready, he would give me prescriptions to add to my **First Aid Kit**. Ask your vet what *immunizations* are preferred for your area. They can be different from one area to the other because of the difference in the insects, bugs and other things that infest those areas. Animals will generally be exposed across the country to *West Nile*. ***Most of us need to do West Nile vaccinations, but in some areas they're not needed. Check with your vet.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Wow.

Meredith:

There are products that people will recommend like *Show Sheen* or *Wonder Shampoo*. I realized that how I was feeding and maintaining the animals and their facility was really responsible for keeping them healthy. ***I didn't have to use any of those Artificial Products that are so high-priced.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right.

Meredith:

My animals all had shiny coats. ***Their hooves were healthy and hard. I used to use Hoof Shine paint, clear on the light hooves and black on the black hooves.*** As soon as we were home, I took it off because it does have a drying agent in it. You don't want to leave it on because their hooves will start chipping and fall apart if you leave it on and wait for it to wear off.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Yeah.

Meredith:

I didn't like using the facility where they Bathe animals at a show. I figured out a way to make my animals look really shiny at a show. Simply keep up your ***Basic Grooming and Maintenance Routine*** that I describe in my program. Before I start out for a show, I give them a bath at home with *TRESemmé shampoo*, a very cheap human shampoo. (laughs) The one that I use is for broken hair. It gets into the animal's hair coat and helps them to shine. I will go ahead and use the shampoo and *Aussie 3X Moisturizing Conditioner* on the manes and tails and plain water on their whole body.

Then I use my ***Electro-Groom Equine Vacuum Cleaner*** at the show. All I need to do is *vacuum* them quickly between the classes. I rough up their coat with a *Rubber Curry* to get all that dust to the surface, *vacuum* it off and apply a very light sprinkle of ***Johnson's Baby Oil*** on the manes and tails, just enough to get rid of the frizz. Then I will take a *Hand Towel* soaked in *Warm Water* and go over their whole body to take off the excess dust. Things that have *preservatives* in them will affect their skin and make them itch. ***They will start nipping at their bodies and create sores when they start to itch. Keep those things in mind when you're going to a show.***

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Okay.

Meredith:

It used to enrage me the way the ***National Western Stock Show*** cleaned the areas where all the stalls were set up. My biggest gripe was that they just *scraped* the manure with a *Skidsteer* and put all the stalls on a *concrete slab*. It doesn't do the job that you could do with a power washer and your equine has to stand on a concrete floor for four or five days straight. *No amount of bedding can insulate them from the damage that can do to their body*. This is totally unhealthy for their bones. ***Think about the salespeople that have to work in a Retail Store or Restaurant while standing on concrete all day long***. It does not feel good and it cannot be healthy. Think about how you would feel in that situation.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
All right.

Meredith:

You don't have to use Hoof Picks daily or weekly unless your animal is being shown or ridden frequently. Many people are concerned about the nails that go through the *Hoof Wall* and say they are not healthy for your animal. If you're only showing every six to eight weeks, the growth on that foot is going to come really close to eliminating the *nail holes* until the next time he gets trimmed.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith:

What you're doing and the surface you're riding on is really important. At many shows, they make the arena look good by harrowing it before classes. They will let a couple classes go by and then harrow the arena. If you walk into that arena and take some dirt into your hand, you'll see it's got a lot of rocks in it. ***Most Fairground Managers consider it too costly and don't want to resurface the arenas with sand as often as they should***. When they don't, your animal's out there showing on things that are chipping his feet. That's why it's important to know what you're going to do with your animal and shoe him appropriately. If you are going to be doing multiple ***Pleasure Classes***, put regular shoes on your equines for the show.

If you're going to be **Trail Riding** in the mountains, put shoes on them that are suitable for the terrain that you will encounter on your trail ride. If you're going to be doing **Reining Classes** and you'll be doing **Sliding Stops**, put **Slider Plates** on your animal. **Slider Plate** will absorb the concussion on the back feet and will allow them to *slide* more easily. **Regular Shoes will not slide. It would put undue pressure on the Pasterns and the Fetlocks when they try to sit down and slide with those kinds of shoes.** It will put undue stress on the animal's back legs and his back. He has to round his back and spine while tucking his hind legs underneath him to *slide*. **If you will be jumping, bear in mind that the landing can get kind of tricky.** You don't want **Regular Shoes** on your **Jumpers** either. **You might want to use shoes with Borium Beads on them to afford your equine a little bit of traction.** When he puts his feet on the ground, he can stop the front feet, let the back feet come in behind and gain traction on the ground before they propel him up and forward.

If you are showing your animal in a parade, the asphalt that you are riding on is slick. Your equine will be fighting with his balance all the way down the parade route. Put on shoes with **Borium Beads** on them. When you're done with the parade, take them off. I leave my animals barefooted most of the time until I encounter a situation that requires shoes. **This takes pre-planning. Plan how you'll handle your Daily Routines before you even get there. Develop your own routine to fit the daily things you like to do.** One of the most common excuses I hear from people is, “I don't have enough time to do what you're saying.”

My answer, “**Well, you then you don't have enough time NOT to do what I'm saying!**”

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Yeah, good point.

Meredith:

When you do all the things that I've told you about, including the workouts in the **Hourglass Pattern in the Elbow Pull** to develop **Good Posture and Core Strength**, it will keep your animal healthy. **You don't even need to ride them anymore to keep them fit. They can do that on their own in Turnout!** All you need to do to get ready for a show is start three months ahead and do **Bulk Muscle Training Exercises** because your **Core Muscle Strength** is will stay solid for a long time.

Core Muscles stick with them and are really easy to identify. You can watch your animals in *Turnout* and see who's not standing squarely at rest. That will be the one that needs to go through the **Hourglass Pattern** to be tuned up and *reminded* of his **Good Posture**.

Go into the **Hourglass Pattern** and practice *Under Saddle, Over and Through Obstacles, Halts and Sliding Stops*. Don't try to avoid doing a pattern because you're afraid he might get *pattern-trained*. He's already doing the **Hourglass Pattern**. More than that, your animal is learning to listen. **He has learned to listen to your aides both on the Lead Rope, Under Saddle and in the Drive Lines. He is attentive and listening to you.**

He's learned to jump. He's learned to stay in good posture. He is learned to listen to your aides and to you, he is learned to wait and not run off because he knows what you will tell him to do is the right thing to do. ***If you spend time doing all of the right kinds of things with your animal all the time, then he will ALWAYS behave.***

There are times when you don't have time for **Singular Grooming**. I have learned that seasonally there are certain things that require certain tools. Sometimes in the spring during shedding time, I don't need anything but my plastic human hairbrush, a shedding blade and a bottle of *Johnson's Baby Oil*. I use a damp towel to wipe off their eyes, their nostrils and their ears during weekly grooming.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Right.

Meredith:

At the point when the hair is coming out in clumps is when you will need to use the Shedding Blade and the Vacuum Cleaner. All those other tools are absolutely worthless. If you try to use a *Shedding Blade* to get off thick mud, you'll end up breaking their hair and causing split ends. If they have a little bit of mud on them when they're shedding, I pick a day when they've already rolled in the grass and gotten off most of it. I will go to them and get the areas that are *mud-caked* with the *Shedding Blade*. Then I do the rest of the body with the *Plastic Human Hairbrush*. That *brush* is the best thing I ever discovered and they're cheap.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
Yeah. Wow.

Meredith:

I keep my equines barefoot so I don't have to go through with the Hoof Pick. They can clean out their hooves by themselves in the Pea Gravel. I carry my ***Grooming Tools*** in a bucket and my ***Fanny Pack*** full of oats around my waist. I keep another bucket full of oats nearby so I can refill the ***Fanny Pack***. If the weather is bad outside, I will just groom them in the alleyway of the barn. I lead them all from their stalls and tie them all along one side. First I go down the line with the ***Damp Towel*** and wipe noses, eyes and ears. Then I go back to the front of the line again and get off all the mud spots and run the ***Plastic Hairbrush*** over their whole bodies.

Then I go down the line again with the ***Vacuum Cleaner*** to get out even more hair that's ready to come out. There are tiny hairs in there that are barely hanging on and the ***vacuum*** will pull those out. Having them all lined up like that, they each receive a reward of ***Crimped Oats*** as I go down the line for standing still. Then I go back to the head of the line and do the same thing with the ***Johnson's Baby Oil*** on the manes and tails.

Now, when I'm doing the vacuum cleaner, realize that there is an extension cord on that vacuum cleaner, because I have 10 mules lined up in the alleyway. I'm dragging the cord behind them. They also learn to move over as I groom each one. I just say, "Move over," And they step right over the cord upon command

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Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):
All right.

Meredith:

They all learned that the cord is not a spooky thing. When I do them in the barn instead of in the ***Tack Barn Work Station*** and they're all lined up on one side, dragging that cord behind them is not an issue. When I get to the end of the line, I have to roll it back up and of course, it's got an ***extension cord*** on the end. I roll up the ***extension cord*** to where it plugs into the ***vacuum cleaner*** cord and unplug it there. Then I roll up the cord on the ***vacuum cleaner***, put the cord over my shoulder and walk behind all my mules. I've got about a four or five foot walkway behind them, but ***nobody is spooking, nobody is kicking and , nobody even raises a leg to me.***

They received that kind of training in the **Tack Barn** when they were tied up on opposite sides. I had to walk down the middle between their behinds. If they so much as raised a foot, I would yell at them, say their name and say very firmly **"Put that down!"** And they learned to do it. It comes in handy everywhere, when they're out in the *Dirt Pen* and getting fed in the dishes along the fence and they start fighting with each other. **They ALWAYS listen and respond appropriately.**

Meredith:

I'll go, **"Sadie, you leave Guy alone."** (laughs) And they just stop what they're doing right then and there.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

You have eyes in the back of your head. (laughs)

Meredith:

THEY think I do.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right. (laughs)

Meredith:

I just watch them very carefully. (laughs) When you're doing things in a factory row fashion, doing everything exactly the same way with everybody down the line, everybody knows what's coming and everybody is really happy about it. The happiest thing is the fact is that they all stand still while I'm doing everything, so they can all get rewarded with a handful of oats for being so cooperative. Grooming goes really fast.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Right. Meredith, what kind of energy drinks are you drinking? You have so much energy, I need to know this. (laughs)

Meredith:

(laughs) **The answer is really very simple and it doesn't come in a can. It comes from being around mules and donkeys. When I see how happy they are, when I take the time to look at them and do what's best for them, it makes me happy! When I hear from others who are listening to our podcasts, using our books and videos and discover that they, too, are deriving the same kind of joy from their animals, that's what gives me energy.**

All of my energy and all of my joy comes from being around *Longears* and from teaching other people about them and sharing with them the things that I have learned. They are amazing animals and they have so much to share with us. It makes life so much easier and so much better when we go ahead and learn from them instead of fighting it. You just need to admit how stupid you are, (laughing) and go with it. That was one of the best lessons I ever learned.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

There you go.

Cindy Roberts (Interviewer):

Meredith's website is luckythreeranch.com and you can call her at +1 (800) 816-7566. And I can be reached through my website, everycowgirlsdream.com. Gotta go. My mule is looking for me.

Speaker 2:

Mule Talk is an Every Cowgirl's Dream production.

RESOURCES:

WEBSITE at www.LuckyThreeRanch.com /TRAINING:

- 1) Another Augie & Spuds Adventure
- 2) Chasity's Challenges
- 3) Longears Music Videos
- 4) Mule Crossing Articles
- 5) Mule Facts
- 6) Podcast Appearances
- 7) Training Tips
- 8) Rock & Roll: Diary of a Rescue
- 9) What's New with Roll?
- 10) Video On Demand
- 11) Wrangler's Donkey Diary

BOOKS/VIDEOS IN THE STORE:

- 1) Training Mules & Donkeys: A Logical Approach to Training
- 2) A Guide to Raising & Training Mules
- 3) Donkey Training
- 4) Training Without Resistance
- 5) Equine Management & Donkey Training

- 6) Equus Revisited Manual
- 7) Equus Revisited Video
- 8) Rock & Roll Documentary
- 9) Building the Jasper Carousel
- 10) LTR Hay Production
- 11) The Road to Bishop
- 12) The Bishop Experience
- 13) The Bishop All Stars
- 14) Walk On: Exploring Therapeutic Riding
- 15) Building of a Nation
- 16) Give Your Equine the Athletic Edge
- 17) For Children: www.JasperTheMule.com for books & videos