



Donkey and Mule Protection Trust NZ

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Newsletter No. 9

December, 2011

From your Editor

Christmas is almost here, a time of the year greatly anticipated. It brings summer and hopefully good weather, the time of year when we are getting ready to buy our hay and straw. It is good if we can buy it straight from the paddock as it is usually cheaper than waiting until it has been carted into a shed and stored. I always feel great when my winter feed is safely in the hay barn ready for the cold weather. It is also the time of year to check covers for mending — not the day they are needed — and reproof them so they remain waterproof in the heaviest downpours. You might get a surprise if you put your hand underneath a cover after a really wet spell. Some covers are not actually waterproof and it is worse for a mule or donkey to have a sodden cover on than no cover. In really heavy rain if the equine has a cover that will not keep out all rain, you may need to double rug to stop rain working its way through to the lining. The top one can be an unlined sheet.

The Protection Trust now has a formal agreement with the four established rehoming/rescue Centres in New Zealand. They are Mamaku (Bay of Plenty); Ikaroa (lower North Island); Canterbury; and Fernhill (Southland). These centres rescue and rehome many donkeys between them every year. Because of this close working agreement we will now be featuring Rehoming/Rescue Centre articles in the newsletter as well so you can hear about what they have been doing.

Andrea Thomson

Rosie and Reg

Spring has been fantastic for grass growth and at the moment we have too much grass, so with laminitis in mind, the donkeys and horse are being strip-grazed much to their disgust. In another month however, we will probably be complaining that it is too dry.

The donkeys have had a busy month starting with a visit from the Dentist. Reg didn't take too kindly to the sedating syringe and took off, looking like a dart board before the sedation could be administered.

This was followed by a visit from the students at Ambury Park Centre for Riding Therapy (where I work), who took it in turns to groom the donkeys and give them treats, which of course, they thoroughly enjoyed.

Reg has now been christened 'Reg the Rascal'. You cannot leave a cover on the fence or he pulls it off, tosses it around and then walks all over it. Buckets are tossed in the air then trodden on and his last trick was to chew the tips off my riding gloves which I foolishly left on the fence. He thinks a cell phone in your pocket is food, so tries his best to get it out – he does make us laugh. Rosie is much more of a 'lady' and cunning. If Reg annoys her, she crosses the little stream and he won't follow, as he does not like the water!

We are very lucky to have them both.



above: Rosie in the front with Reg behind

below: Reg



From the Chairman

In the last two Newsletters I have talked about the Trust's revised relationship with the Rescue and Rehoming Centres. These are the people who, along with our Area Representatives and Trustees, do most of the ground work involved in the actual recovery of donkeys and mules in need of assistance. It was obvious that there was a need for some structured financial support from the Trust towards these efforts, especially as the market for middle aged donkeys decreased in the current tighter monetary conditions.

In the past eight months the Trust has spent around \$2,500 on gelding, worming, dentistry, feed and farriers for rescued and Trust animals and we anticipate expansion of these costs. Dentistry costs for Trust donkeys were planned and budgeted for earlier, but our costs for donkey and mule rescues are going to increase. Fortunately we are in a sound financial state thanks to your donations, input from raffles etc at the AGM, and your annual Supporter Fees, but those reserves are very necessary when I look at my own recent dentist bill of \$500 for fairly routine work on 5 of my donkeys, wormers that cost me \$170 per year and another \$400 at least if a gelding was needed.

I'm not trying to scare anyone off having a donkey! I know people who spend \$1000 a year on vet fees and registration for one dog, without counting the cost of feed!

What I am highlighting is the fact that as the Trust's rescue work extends so will our costs and so will the importance of your contributions.

I know that if we paid mileage and other actual costs to the people who drive hundreds of kilometres to rehome animals we would have been broke long ago. To those people the Trust owes a real debt of gratitude. Sure, many get real satisfaction out of their rescue achievements, but that balances the time they donate; also at no cost.

As Trust treasurer this is NOT a begging letter. It is a heartfelt THANK YOU to you as our donors for your support and the same to the rescuers for their great work.

The above was triggered in part by the fact that our financial year ends in a couple of weeks and the results then need to be audited and presented to the AGM in early May, so my (treasurer's) head has been in the figures.

The other reason for my comments is that (as Chairman) I believe that our costs associated with restoring the health and wellbeing of rescued animals will increase fairly significantly in 2012 and we need to be prepared for that.

In the meantime, have a great Christmas and New Year!

Neil Cook Chairman

Lucretia of the Trust

It seems a while now, since Lucretia and her jenny foal, as well as her mother, sister, and brother, were rescued off the Rimutaka Hills near Wellington. This little family of donkeys had been roaming way up on these hills for several years. They had been left to their own devices on their owner's property, to 'clear up the gorse problem', and this is basically all they had been surviving on, as well as having to endure a very hard lifestyle comprising little shelter, sometimes no water until the owner arrived to fill the trough, virtually nil attention to hooves, and also a history of live and dead foals sired by a son over mother and sisters.

Wendy and Neal, Lucretia's caregivers report as follows:

Lucretia so enjoys her daily feed of chaff, and nutrients. She also has straw 'on tap' in her bin in her part of the stables, which she always shares with her sister. They are never locked in, but have the freedom to come and go whenever they desire shelter. She also enjoys the benefit of a nice warm cover throughout the winter months. If something upsets her, Lucretia reverts back to her feral 'scary donkey' behaviour very fast. Having lived with us for 5 years now, we do not envisage this will ever change. Feral donkey behaviour is just imprinted too deep into her mind, and it's obviously there to stay for the long haul. She will only accept Wendy's attention for haltering, and initial handling, and because she scares so easily, and cannot be rushed, we need to ensure she is tied up ready for the farrier or for veterinary attention. She obviously considers the yard by the stables to be her 'safe place', and it is here Wendy can give her cuddles and halter her for handling. She will never allow herself to be caught while out in the paddock, but once in the yard, she usually comes up to be haltered of her own accord.



Photo: Lucretia (foreground) sister Bianca (background)

One thing about Lucretia we need to watch out for very closely, is when she comes into season. She suddenly takes on Jack (Stallion) tendencies, and runs about the paddock, braying very loudly, and grabbing the other donkeys over the neck and hauling them around. She is a very large donkey (12 hh), and she can become quite dangerous if we don't take care. For some time now, we have included magnesium and Chaste Berry in her daily feed. Chaste Berry is a herb which has been used for centuries to help modulate female hormones, and it has been reported by users in the equestrian world that it works well for mares that are having problems with their breeding cycles. Magnesium is known to help settle the nervous system and also with muscle tenseness. The addition of these supplements has helped, but not alleviated the issue completely.

Ned and Cracker of the Trust

Wendy and Neal also care for Ned and Cracker.

They report on these two boys as follows:

Ned and Cracker are progressing very well. Most of the time they understand what is required of them, but being big strong donkeys, who can move fast under some circumstances, care needs to be taken when handling them.

Cracker sometimes requires a 'kind, calm, firm hand' to settle and help him feel confident with what he is being asked to do. They are both, however, very loveable donkeys. Cracker used to have quite an issue with fungal spots in his coat. This is a problem that seems to crop up with some donkeys, especially in Spring. We were recently approached by an aroma therapist who was keen for us to carry out a trial run for her on his spots with a Tea Tree Hydrosol. She was at the time organising an Aromatherapy conference for NZ and overseas people, and was very keen to include some information on the use of Tea Tree Hydrosol on bald/fungal spots on donkeys in the conference booklet.

A hydrosol comes about when plants are steam distilled to produce essential oils. Some of the drops of the essential oil as well as water soluble plant properties are left behind in the distillation water. The Tea Tree Hydrosol contains anti-fungal properties and is non-irritating for sensitive skins. In fact, my donkeys went crazy over the aroma, and wanted to eat it! We decided it would be best to rub the liquid into and around the spots every day for a week and then just leave it alone to see what would happen. Well, the pink skin gradually turned very dark which is a sure sign that the problem is sorted. There was also a fairly fast regeneration of hair growth. In the past we have cleared these spots up by sponging the problem area with a mixture of Zinc Sulphate in water. This also gives the same result. Ned has never really suffered too badly with fungal spots. He has a very thick white coat, and we think the thickness helps stop this problem.

We recently had our Vet visit to attend to annual dentistry check-ups. As far as we have been able to ascertain, Ned and Cracker have never ever received dentistry treatments. The outcome was, because of the presence of very sharp points which

required quite a bit of filing, both donkeys were suffering from severe ulceration along the insides of their mouths. While living with us, neither donkey has ever shown any indication of mouth issues.

For instance, (the obvious signs to most donkey owners), no quidding, dropping of food or slow eating. When we were invited to look in their mouths at the very sharp points and ulceration, I have to say, we felt pretty upset at the thought of the pain they must have been enduring.



Gary Winchombe, vet,
working on Ned's teeth

Because of this recent experience, we feel it very important to point out that, while we may think our donkeys teeth are OK, because they (to us) are perhaps not showing any signs of discomfort, please do be warned about the importance of dental check-ups for donkeys. It is also very important to use an equine vet who is qualified to do dentistry and can also apply sedation for this treatment. If the animal is not sedated, there is absolutely no way the back teeth in the mouth can be either examined or treated.

We do not keep our twelve donkeys together, but run them in groups, according to their size and special feed requirements. Ned, Cracker, Lucretia and her sister Bianca have the run of a large tracked area which goes down to the back of our property to a couple of hills. We often see them all grazing together from down the front of the property where our house is situated. Their time clocks work wonders, and come late afternoon, they are always back again in the yard by the stables waiting for their daily feed of chaff and nutrients.



Cracker



Ned

Mamaku Donkey Rescue Centre

MILO – his story – my story

The story of Milo started in 2005. I had contacted the late Jenny Parker, the Area Rep for Rotorua, to say that I was ready to own a donkey.

Jenny contacted Susan Rogerson in Napier and asked her if she knew of any donkeys looking for a home. Well, it turned out that Susan did; she knew of Milo who was an entire jack whose feet she trimmed. However, Milo needed to go to someone who had experience with equines. Milo was originally bought as a little fluffy jack and was sold off to people who owned a lifestyle block. All was well when he was a little guy, but he grew and was unhandled and left in the back paddock. He was left on and off for five years, with many owners who bought the lifestyle block to discover there was a donkey in the back paddock.

Milo was very nervous and took off with the halter and lead rope attached to him. It took Susan and Steve some time to be able to catch him in this great big paddock to retrieve her halter. Susan said that Milo was really a “nightmare”. He was unhandled, antisocial, and she was worried that he would rear up and ‘land’ on her while she was trimming his hooves. All in all, Milo seemed like a hopeless case, that it was fate that Milo kept cropping up in Susan’s life and that it was right that she was able to find a home for him. Some time later, the last couple who took over the lifestyle block really did a lot for Milo. They took off a halter which at that stage had *grown* into his face; they got him gelded and tried to spend time with him and kept Susan in the loop. Then, they sold their lifestyle block and wanted to find a caring home for him.

My daughter Carly and myself took our horse float to Napier on the 13th November 2005 to pick up Milo. We had always had horses and this was my first donkey. Arriving at the lifestyle block we met Milo who was in a pen. As the owner did not like the idea of halters (because of Milo’s scars from leaving a halter on him) 4 men helped push him into our float, which was set up as a pen.

When the guys were loading him in, I looked at Carly and she looked at me and I thought “what the hell have I done?” However, Milo travelled really well. We stopped in Taupo to check on him and then kept on going. When we arrived home, we let the tailgate down on the float and Milo just took off to the very end of the paddock. He stayed there for three days, wild as could be and unapproachable. Slowly, I gained his confidence, got him into the pen and started the slow process of handling him.

Milo hated being brushed, he cringed and shrunk away. He didn’t know how to lead and he had the grumpy pout. I tried to feed him carrots but the noise of me breaking them into two frightened him. Slowly, he came round and began to trust me, but it was a slow process. I couldn’t pick up his feet; he would rear and one day even had a go at biting me. I just kept on slowly gaining his confidence.

I had told the late Massey Ihaia about Milo and he said he would come and help me with him. Well, Massey taught me heaps about donkeys and with his help we got Milo leading; then long reining; then pulling a sledge. We used one of my quiet donkeys to teach Milo. Massey had both donkeys long reined into the horse float so Milo would learn to go up into it.

Then we just practised Milo on his own. It worked. After the work out, Massey picked up Milo's hooves and said to me "I thought you couldn't pick his hooves up?" I was amazed; Massey just smiled and said, "all he needs is something to do and think about; keep him busy and he will be happy". Massey always said "no donkey is bad, they are just misunderstood". So, with Massey's help, we had Milo pulling a sledge, pulling a tandem wagon, and a single cart.

We took Milo to his first show in Tokoroa and I have taken him to many more. He has won ribbons and enjoys going out.

Milo is my favourite donkey, he is just lovely. We have bonded and I love him to bits. Thank you to the late Jenny Parker and to Susan Rogerson who enabled me to have the privilege of owning such a lovely donkey like Milo.

Pauline Sainsbury



Jake of the Trust

You will remember Jake who had the most enormous hooves curled up like Arabian slippers when he was rescued in January 2009. Well, only two and a half years later, his caregiver Elton Moore has had him gelded, got his feet into fantastic trim and trained him to harness.

Elton took him to the Royal Show at Waikato in October and won Reserve Champion Harness Donkey with him. A photo of Jake is shown below. Congratulations to Elton. We know that you do not have to win prizes to show that you love and have done well with your donkey, but it takes a lot of care, time and good training to get a donkey going well in a cart. So it is very pleasing to see and Jake looks as though he is enjoying pulling the cart.

Also note that Elton is using a *Zilco Empathy collar* on Jake. This is great as they are very suitable for donkeys because they have low set on necks. The conventional breastplate usually either cuts off their wind if high, or goes over the point of their shoulder if lower, so a donkey is pushing the joint against the weight of the cart to move forwards. It is much better using an empathy collar on a donkey who will appreciate the better spread of pressure and comfort.

Well done Elton!



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