

## How to Use Meredith's Products

By Meredith Hodges



Our DVD training series, available at [www.LuckyThreeRanch.com](http://www.LuckyThreeRanch.com), was developed to help you to train your own animal with resistance-free techniques. This is important, especially in the case of mules and donkeys that actually bond to the person who trains them. In order for our program to work, it is important to use it correctly. Regardless of the age or experience of the animal, you need to begin with DVD #1 and take the training in sequence. Each DVD poses different tasks to help facilitate a good working relationship with the trainer and helps to strengthen the muscles at each stage to prepare the animal for things to come. We are preparing the animal physically, mentally, and emotionally. This is why it is important not to proceed too quickly and to do things in their natural order.

Each DVD should take six months to a year to complete, depending upon the individuals involved. Though you can buy the DVDs one at a time, there are benefits to purchasing the entire series. In addition to substantial discounts, you are able to look ahead and understand the purpose in what you are doing at the time.

Our program is like grade school for equines, and lays a good solid foundation for versatility and optimum performance. We begin with simple tasks that build on each other. This not only teaches the animal to do what we ask, but it also teaches us to become more prompt and appropriate in rewarding positive behaviors to get the best results. We do not use the reward system (crimped oats) to bribe or coerce. The oats are

given only after a positive task has been completed. When you do this correctly, there are little to no resistive behaviors. When we do this correctly, the animal learns to want to please, enjoys his time with you, and actually looks forward to each training session. The result is an obedient, submissive, dependable companion and athlete, capable of performing English, Western, Gymkhana, Driving, or any other equine activity that you would prefer.

We developed this program to encourage people to form their own relationships with their animals, so they can get the best from their animals. The DVDs give you a lot of detail about what to do from day to day in your training sessions, which is virtually impossible to do with clinics or from sending your animal to a trainer. I am available by phone or mail should you have difficulties along the way, and I am prompt in getting back to you, so problems can be dealt with when they arise. Imagine! Your trainer is only a phone call or e-mail away! The cost is also considerably less than sending your animal to a trainer.

Mules and donkeys bond to the people who train them, so we encourage owners to do the training with the help of our resistance free DVD training series, which provides a solid base for any equine activity. This series will help you get the best from your equine whether he is large or small, a donkey, a mule, or even a horse. It is designed like grade school is for children, where you and your equine will learn together in a natural and logical order.

Whether your equine is a foal, an animal with partial training, or an animal that is new to you, you would begin with **DVD #1 (and with DVD #8)**. In this DVD, you will not only teach simple things like haltering, tying and leading, but you will learn to employ a reward system of training called behavior modification. You will learn to recognize and reward good behaviors in your animal and set up situations that can be rewarded. We also begin your equine's athletic conditioning with appropriate exercises that begin to develop the muscles and strengthen the tendons and ligaments that are closest to the bone. This will help your equine to grow and develop properly through his training. When he feels good and clearly understand the demands that are to be put on him during training, he will perform better.

No training program can work if your equine is not fed and maintained properly. In **DVD #8**, we address the components of good equine management with special attention to the needs of donkeys and mules. We also include a section on perfecting your showmanship techniques, whether they are actually for a show or just good ground manners for general handling.

**DVDs #1 through #7** are techniques to be used for all equines. DVD #8 is essential information on feeding, nutrition, and advanced leading training to set the stage for successful training.

When your equine has learned to lead easily, to follow at your shoulder and negotiate the obstacles set before him with ease, coordination (no stumbling), and balance, and you

have learned to dispense rewards promptly and appropriately, you are ready to proceed to **DVD #2**. In this DVD, he will be introduced to the saddle, bridle, and other tack you will use, and will begin more active exercises in the round pen. You will learn how to make sure that he is developing muscle in the proper frame and will begin to learn how your own body language affects his responses during grooming, tacking, and in the round pen. Your equine will learn all the preparatory cues he can from the ground, so that when you finally ride him, the only new cues would be from your legs. He will also be better prepared to begin harness training. It is at this stage that you would decide whether your equine is a candidate for driving and whether to proceed to DVD #3 on driving, or to skip it and go directly to saddle training in DVD #4.

Driving is a potentially hazardous activity and should not be taken lightly. **DVD #3** will take you through the exercises necessary for your equine to become a quiet and dependable driving animal. You will learn the correct sequential process of training, all about fitting harness, reinsmanship, how to select the right vehicle, and about the many uses for driving equines. Be aware that you should spend at least two years in a controlled area before driving your equine on public roads and in parades to minimize danger.

Saddle training seems simple enough, but if not taken slowly and in a logical order, you can cause all kinds of problems for you and your equine with loss of balance, ill-fitting equipment, and a lack of sufficient communication. In **DVD #4**, you will learn how to get your equine and you started off on the right foot. By this time he should be able to perform longer in between rewards. You will learn how to school your equine to avoid adverse behaviors like running off, bucking, and other negative avoidance behaviors.

Now that your equine is beginning to understand how to move in good posture with a rider on his back, it is time to not only attend his balance and coordination, but the rider's as well. In **DVD #5**, we give you exercises to develop the harmony between equine and rider, and to further strengthen and improve coordination in both. This will promote good balance and strong forward motion in preparation for more advanced movements later.

Now your equine should be responsive to subtle cues from your body with very little support from the reins. In **DVD #6**, you will learn how negotiate more advanced movements that will further condition your equine, and perfect balance and coordination through the use of lateral movements and changes of direction at all three gaits. Whether riding English or Western, the principles of good horsemanship are the same. In this tape you will see how balance, coordination, and good communication makes it possible to perform well in any equine discipline, including Dressage, Reining, Western Riding and Jumping.

By this time, you will notice that you and your equine are becoming more confident as a result of the work in the preceding videos. As balance and coordination develop properly, so does confidence, motivation and competency. You might even decide that jumping would be fun to pursue. **DVD #7** will help make your jumping experience safe and enjoyable. You will learn about balancing and conditioning your equine to help him jump

safely and efficiently. You will learn all about the different kinds of jumping, how to construct jumps and evaluate courses. Jumping is a wonderful way to get your equine in peak condition.

Sometimes, donkeys respond just a little differently than mules and horses to certain training techniques. In **DVD #9**, we cover the basics of groundwork with modified techniques for donkeys. **This DVD is designed to be used in conjunction with DVD #1.** You will learn how to measure your equine for athletic aptitude and how to assess your equine's trainability. In addition, it covers raising jacks, teaching them to breed mares, and related issues. **DVD #10** addresses training the donkey under saddle to be a quiet, responsive, and dependable mount. Again, sometimes donkeys like to do things just a little differently than horses and mules, and we familiarize you with these modified techniques. DVD #10 is to be used in conjunction with DVDs #4 through #7, covering everything from round pen work and patterns, lateral work, to jumping your donkey. As an athlete, your equine can experience stiffness and soreness just like humans do. This DVD also covers the benefits of massage for your equine.

**DVDs #9 and #10** deal with training techniques that are slightly different and particular to donkeys. All these products compliment each other with detailed information on donkeys and mules, though they are perfectly suitable for training other types of equines, including zebras and hybrids. We employ techniques that address the general well-being of your equine mentally, emotionally and physically throughout the training process. We address issues with both the owner and the equine in mind. When you use these techniques, training becomes easy, enjoyable and productive for both you and your animal.

**Our books** are abbreviated outlines of the DVD series. They are good for general and some training information concerning mules and donkeys, but do not possess the detail offered by the DVD training series. ***Training Mules and Donkeys: A Logical Approach to Long Ears*** (Hardbound) is a general approach for all equines and should be used in conjunction with the DVD series.

***Donkey Training*** (Hardbound) is to be used in conjunction with the first book and the DVD training series when training donkeys.

***Training without Resistance*** (manual) is a collection of the workbooks from DVDs #1 through #7 and ***Equine Management and Donkey Training*** is a collection of the workbooks from DVDs #8 through #10. These manuals are helpful for those who cannot afford the DVD resistance-free training series. These two manuals are also translated into French, German, and Spanish for those who don't speak English, so they can follow along with the DVD training series. The DVD training series contains the most detail, and is designed to begin with DVD #1 (and DVD #8) and take the training in sequence no matter the age or experience of the animal. New owners should go through this series to develop their own personal relationship with each new animal.

Be sure to check our website for the newest supplement to our resistance free DVD training series, *Equus Revisited: A Complete Approach to Athletic Conditioning*. This four-part DVD and companion manual explain why it is so important to spend plenty of time on groundwork and development of the core strength of your equine. It covers multiple aspects of your equine's care in great detail with a team of experts and explains why you are doing the exercises in the original resistance-free DVD training series. The manual and DVD contain different information and it is advisable to use them both together.

We also offer an endearing and entertaining series of children's books and DVDs, beginning with *Jasper: The Story of a Mule*. This series is intended to introduce children to the redeeming qualities of mules at a very young age, and teaches them how to relate to these animals in a kind and productive way. The book adventures with Jasper continue with *Jasper: A Christmas Caper*, *Jasper: A Precious Valentine*, *Jasper: A Fabulous Fourth*, *Jasper: A Turkey Tale*, and coloring book *Jasper Goes To Bishop*. Jasper's DVDs include *Jasper: The Story of a Mule*, *Jasper Goes To Bishop*, *Jasper: A Christmas Caper*, and coming in 2011, the DVD from the remaining sequel books. Jasper's website at [www.JasperTheMule.com](http://www.JasperTheMule.com) includes a lot of fun and educational videos and games for the kids...and even adults!

For more information about Meredith Hodges and her comprehensive correspondence training program, *Training Mules and Donkeys*, please visit [www.LuckyThreeRanch.com](http://www.LuckyThreeRanch.com) or call **1-800-816-7566**. Also, find Meredith Hodges and Lucky Three Ranch on Facebook and Twitter. And don't forget to check out her children's website at [JasperTheMule.com](http://JasperTheMule.com).

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