

## **“The Great World of Showing Mules”**

**By Amy McLean**

*For almost fifteen years, I have had the great opportunity to be involved with the mule industry. One of my favorite activities has been attending mule shows all across the country. People are regularly discussing the difference in mule shows and horse shows, but to really understand the difference you must experience it yourself. I have attended many horse shows with my mules ranging from local 4-H shows to Southern Regional horse shows, and I know what people are talking about when they are comparing a mule show to a horse show. I really enjoy both types of shows, but not to take anything away from the horse showing industry, I really prefer the more laid back and friendly atmosphere found at mule shows.*

*I know this topic has been addressed more than once, but after attending a livestock show with pigs, sheep, horses, dairy, and beef cattle I was reminded of the difference. This show has been put on for the past 76 years at the University of Georgia by the College of Agriculture's Block and Bridle Club. Students are allowed to pick an animal or two to show. The show is suppose to allow students to learn about different species and how to show them. I choose to show a dairy calf named Punya, and a horse named J.J. By the end of the week I was ready to take the calf home with me and trade the horse back in for my mule! The calf led and stood great in the show but my horse was a little more impatient. Although it really wasn't my horse's fault but more the atmosphere he was in. The dairy calf's class was more similar to a mule show class everyone was having a good time, smiling, and everyone was friendly. The horse class on the other hand was much more serious, no smiles, and the majority of the people looked like they were out to kill. No wonder why my horse was frightened.*

*In the past couple of years, the mule show industry has tried to hard to mold our shows after a horse show. Many of the top show's atmospheres have started to resemble that of a horse show. People seem like that are out to kill or do what ever it takes to win. What happen to having fun, smiling, sharing showsheen and hoof black with the people in the stall next to you? Instead, people want to sue each other and run each other off and file protests about everything like wearing the wrong colored jacket or smiling to much when in the arena. Are we still showing mules? One of the greatest things the mule industry has going for itself is the unique animal and the people who love them!! We welcome people from the horse show industry who are burnt out with the stiffness to come show a mule but come to have fun and enjoy the people and the mules, but please leave behind the attitudes. This past weekend at the livestock show really made me realize how much more helpful all the other groups like the dairy and sheep people were to each other, just like mule people helping their fellow competitor out like family.*

*I wish everyone the best of luck this show season! Remember we are mule people so have fun, smile, and enjoy what you are a part of because there is nothing greater than a mule show! See you in March at the Houston Livestock Donkey and Mule Show. For more information call 706-342-1037, ask for Ray or Amy. This*

*article is dedicated to all the people who have so much fun at shows and sales. Two of these people we would like to send get well wishes to.*

*We would like to send a special get well wish to a very dear and close friend to everyone in the mule industry- Ricky Davidson, of McKee, Ky. Our family thinks of Ricky as one the greatest mule trainers in the country, and a great showman! We wish you a speedy recovery.*

*In addition, we would like to send a special get well wish to our good friend and mule advocate, Jerry Blevins of Elizabethton, Tn. We hope to see you at the sale soon!*