

What's In A Web Site?

By Helen T. Hertz

What did we do before the Internet? It's a rhetorical question posed time and again by folks reveling in the sheer volume of information now literally at our fingertips. Whatever your interest, whatever your need, chances are that a lot of like-minded people on this planet have thrown just the thing you're looking for onto the World Wide Web. These days the challenge isn't finding information, it's sorting through an avalanche of almost-what-you're-looking-for to find the thing exactly.

Meredith Hodges and Lucky Three Ranch have had a web site for more than a decade now. Over the years it's grown in scope and size to become one of the most comprehensive equine sites in existence – certainly the most thorough when it comes to information about mules and donkeys. Anyone searching for information about longears is likely to find just what they need at Luckythreeranch.com.

Say you want to know the difference between a mule and a hinny. That's easy. Just go to the "Mule Facts" page. Or what if your mule is inclined to jump the fence? The solution awaits on the "Ask Meredith" page. Need the RFD-TV show schedule? Go to "Television." Wish to receive the Lucky Three Ranch quarterly newsletter? Just fill out the simple form on the "Mailing List" page.

And the list goes on. Luckythreeranch.com is much more than a marketplace. While many of the thousands of monthly visitors come to buy or sell through the "Classifieds" page and or purchase products through the online store, many also come with questions. Providing them with prompt, sensible, useful answers and information has been the site's primary function since its inception.

Take the "Ask Meredith" page for example. The page is divided into ten categories such as Behavior, Diet, Training, etc., and each category includes dozens of related questions posed by mule and donkey owners, along with Meredith's personalized answers. This section of the site represents decades of training and years of regular communication between Meredith and her students. However, if you don't find an answer to your question, simply submit it via e-mail and Meredith will respond.

Other pages bursting with nuts and bolts information include the "History" page—a summary of Meredith's experience as trainer, competitor, author and educator; the "Mule Facts" page; and the "Mule Crossing" page, which includes dozens of columns Meredith has written for the ADMS publication *The Brayer* and many others. The site also includes a thoroughly researched listing of mule and donkey-related events—if you don't see yours there, please send it in—as well as a listing of mule clubs, links to other longears and equine sites and one of the most popular classified ad pages going.

It didn't take long for the Lucky Three site to prove its worth, so when Meredith launched her Jasper the Mule children's series, she immediately created www.jasperthemule.com as well. The Jasper site offers fans a little history on the series, synopses of the books and a behind-the-scenes look at the making of *Jasper: The Story of a Mule* animated DVD. As Meredith expands the series, watch for new features on this site, including more interactive games and activities for kids.

Information is only useful if it's being shared, and Meredith Hodges has tapped every major venue to get hers out. The Internet, books, tapes, DVDs and television—each complements the others and all play an integral role in Meredith's effort to help people understand and enjoy their animals. The fact that the Web offers an almost unfathomable amount of information from an astounding number of sources is both a blessing and a curse. But for longears lovers, luckythreeranch.com makes the job of finding answers a whole lot easier.

For more information, please visit www.luckythreeranch.com and www.jasperthemule.com, or call 800-816-7566.