



BREED REGISTRATION RULES

Ponui Island Donkey

OVERVIEW

This register is for donkeys with 100% Ponui Island bloodlines only. The reason for establishing this register is to record as many pure Ponui Island Donkeys as possible. These donkeys are a rare breed and many of the donkeys are now scattered throughout the country. The number of donkeys remaining on Ponui Island are few and those leaving the Island do not appear to breed readily. There is a real possibility the Ponui Island Donkey will die out within a few decades.

A Ponui Island Donkey is generally light dun/white colour with a darker brown dorsal stripe. They can be chocolate. Broken coloured donkeys are not accepted. Ponui Island Donkey's stand approximately 9hh to 10.2hh high.

HISTORY

Donkeys were brought to Ponui Island in the 1850's after the Chamberlin family gained title to the island in 1854. Ponui Island is in the Hauraki Gulf, just south of Waiheke Island. Peter Chamberlin's great, great grandfather imported the donkeys from Australia, and they were the English type of donkey, not Australian Teamster donkeys. The earliest record of donkeys being imported into New Zealand was just over ten years earlier around 1841-42 when Mr. Aberdeen took some cattle and donkeys to Kawau Island.

There are three farms on Ponui Island, in the north, centre and south. Originally all three farms had donkeys on them and were owned by the Chamberlin family. Today there are two separate and distinct herds; one on the south farm, still maintained by the original Chamberlin family; and one on the north farm owned by Canadian John Spencer.

A farm manager runs Mr. Spencer's farm and his herd grew to nearly 100. In 1998 the farm manager decided to clear the farm of donkeys without telling Mr. Spencer, and only three or four donkeys that escaped the muster were left. On 2 February 1998 around 80 wild donkeys were sold at the Tuakau sale yards. Unfortunately, the sale notice was the first the donkey community knew about it and there was a great scrambling by Donkey Society members to gather information and provide it to prospective buyers at the sale. With so many donkeys flooding the market so quickly there was no time to do much. Members gave advice where they could but people thought they were buying sweet little donkeys, when they were actually buying wild unhandled equines. Many of the jacks went for bull donkeys or the meat works. Brian & Jenny Clausen bought quite a few jennies and a jack, and Peter & Marion van Dijk bought a jenny and foal. Following the virtual clearance in 1998 Mr. Spencer decided he wanted some donkeys on the farm and bought a jack from Mr. Chamberlin to start building up numbers again. The most recent large sale of Mr. Spencer's donkeys was in late 2003 when 17 donkeys were auctioned.

In the past there were also donkeys on the centre farm owned by Chamberlin cousins. Unfortunately they did not value the donkey. There are no longer any donkeys on that farm as in the 1950's they mustered every donkey and sold them for lion food.

David Chamberlin and his family manage the southern farm and donkey herd. In the 1950's they had up to 200 donkeys but today only 12 to 15 donkeys remain. David said there has not been any new bloodlines since the original herd was established in the 1850's and his father Peter Chamberlin agreed. Peter said that in about 2002 he bought a jack from the northern herd, but he did not like it so sold it on.

Peter Chamberlin said there is no profit in keeping the donkeys and the demand for them goes in waves. He sells most of his donkeys privately but sometimes puts them in the Tuakau sale yards. There may be 2 to 3 years when there is no demand. In the 1930's his father sold 12 donkeys to Dunedin for giving rides on St Kilda Beach and sent another 12 the following year. Peter Chamberlin sells some of the jacks for bull donkeys, a practice the Donkey & Mule Society does not support as bulls are on lush feed and the jacks are liable to founder.

The Donkey & Mule Society recognises the Ponui Island Donkey as a separate breed, and maintains a pure-bred register for them. This donkey is distinctive and can be recognised as a definite type. The southern Ponui Island Donkeys are usually slightly larger, finer, quality donkeys and would not be out of place in a show line up; whereas the northern donkeys are a bit smaller and stockier, reminiscent of the old New Zealand donkey.

Ponui Island Donkeys are mostly light grey or off white with a light belly and a dark dorsal stripe, although occasionally a brown and dark grey donkey is born. Peter Chamberlin said the donkeys breed true and today they stand 9hh to 10hh. They are very neatly put together and in good proportion. There are no skewbald Ponui Island Donkeys. There was a black line years ago, with white muzzles but Peter Chamberlin's father did not like them because they did not have a dorsal stripe and he culled them. There is also a chocolate-coloured strain with a white muzzle and dorsal stripe but they are rarely born now.

The Ponui Island Donkeys have had genetic problems in the past, some being born with hunch backs. But those foals were put down and the problem did not recur. Recently they've found a number of donkeys have had holes in their hearts. The Ponui Island Donkeys also appear to have fertility problems due to inbreeding over so many years and many jennies are unable to breed due to trauma from being removed from their semi wild environment.

The Donkey & Mule Society is concerned with trying to record these donkeys when they come off Ponui Island, and when they are registered they are given the prefix 'Ponui Island'. Unfortunately few are registered as most people who buy pure Ponui Island Donkeys do not register them and the bloodlines are being lost.

Ponui Island Donkeys are sometimes sold at the Tuakau sale yards in small numbers. The problem is that they are wild unhandled donkeys often bought by people with no experience in handling such animals. Many of them end up being rescued by the Rehoming Centres.

There is a mystique about donkeys; they do make wonderful pets and can be easy to handle – provided they are bred in a controlled environment by experienced breeders. Unfortunately Ponui Island Donkeys are bred in a semi wild environment and many end up in bad circumstances because they are not handled or gelded before being sold.

BLOODLINE REQUIREMENTS

- Verifiable as a Ponui Island Donkey (i.e. proven to have been born on Ponui Island)

OR

- Progeny of two registered or verifiable 100% Ponui Island Donkeys

A pure Ponui Island Donkey must *not* be broken coloured and it must *not* have known infusion of any other blood.

ACCREDITATION

Ponui Island foals born in New Zealand off Ponui Island must be sired by an accredited jack to be eligible for registration as a Pure Ponui Island Donkey.

PERMANENT IDENTIFICATION

Permanent identification in the form of microchipping is required for registration of a Ponui Island Donkey.