

DRAFT HORSE AND MULE ASSOCIATION
Herald Citizen newspaper, Cookeville, TN: Monday, 9 July 2007

Draft Horse and Mule Association keeps old-time methods alive.

KNOXVILLE: (AP) The field was next to a busy highway, and throughout the day, dozens of motorists pulled over to get a better look at the draft horse and mules.

This was no enactment. This was real work. After the dew dried, members of the East Tennessee Draft Horse and Mule Association hitched their teams to a couple of antique combines and began cutting 6-foot-wide swathes through the oats, which stood waist high.



“Some people play golf, and some people quilt,” said Susan Davis club president. “this is our hobby. It’s different than what most of us do in real life.”

About 150 people belong to the East Tennessee Draft Horse and Mule Association. The club includes lawyers, teachers and medical professionals as well as farmers. Older, more experienced members teach younger members the ropes and the club schedules several workdays throughout the year where members socialize and put their mule or horse teams through their paces.

On a recent weekday, they met just outside the Knoxville city limits to work and oat filed the club has been plowing, planting and cutting for the last five days.

As to the age-old question or which is better, a draft horse or mule, most club members remained diplomatic, calling it a coin toss.

Joe Long of Clinton is a die-hard mule man. His father ran a sawmill and logged exclusively with mules until the early 1970s. Long said mules are hardworking but hardheaded too.

They don’t forget anything, but you can’t let them get away with anything, either,” he said.

The day was hot and dry, and the combines kicked up clouds of dust as they circled the field. After cutting the oats, the combines separated the grain from the stalk, leaving

straw on the ground and oats in the hopper. The fresh-cut oats were poured into burlap bags and distributed among the club members for livestock feed.

Pulling one of the combines was a team of four draft horses named Tiny, Tim, Beauty and Pearl. Their owner is Bill Jones, a longtime member of the East Tennessee Draft Horse and Mule Association who supplies the club with antique farming equipment.

Driving the team was Shorty McClure, who lives in Anderson County and is himself the proud owner of two Belgian draft horses named Jack and Jill. This summer, McClure has used only his horses to work his hay.

“If a man didn’t enjoy all this, it would be too much work,” he said.

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