



To get an idea of the Poitou's size, James Graham stands 6-ft. in his stocking feet.

"MOST UNUSUAL BREED IN THE WORLD"

Rare Poitou Donkeys

If you've never seen donkeys like these giant, eye-catching "Poitou's", you're not alone. The unusual breed is considered by many to be the rarest donkey in the world.

James W.A. Graham, of England, and Don Shadow, of Tennessee, have what are believed to be the two largest herds of pure Poitou donkeys outside of France, home of the ancient breed.

Graham and Shadow each have five of the big animals, which are known for their long-haired, mangy coats. Each man's herd consists of two males, or jacks, and three females, or jennies. Altogether, there are perhaps as few as 100 pure Poitoux left in the world.

"There are no Poitoux available as breeding stock in the U.S. at this time," notes Shadow.

"Getting 100% pure Poitoux is extremely difficult because the French are very reluctant to let them go into the outside world," says Graham.

Possibly developed by the Romans, the Poitou was first described in southwestern France 2,000 years ago, according to the American Livestock Breeds Conservancy (ALBC) at Pittsboro, N. C. The Poitou was not bred for work itself, rather it was used solely for breeding draft mules with the Poitevin horse, ALBC says.

The Poitou is a giant compared to other donkey breeds. It stands 14.5 to 16.5 hands (58 to 66 in.) high at the shoulder and has a

large head and powerfully built, bulky body. When not combed, the Poitou's long, prolific hair often falls in thick mats to the ground.

In 1984, a Poitou jenny named Sonnette gained national attention in the U.S. when she was unable to pass import tests. The USDA ordered the animal destroyed, but she was saved by public outcry. Owned by California veterinarians Jack and Sharon Vanderlip, Sonnette eventually spent a few months at the San Diego Zoo before joining three other Poitoux in the Vanderlips' breeding program. She foaled in 1988.

Sonnette, her first foal Lafayette, and three other Poitoux now belong to Shadow. Shadow's Poitoux, which he's owned for about three years, are featured in an upcoming book on the breed by a French journalist.

Likewise, Graham, and his partner Robert Briscoe, have had their Poitoux for about two years. They became fascinated with the breed after reading a French magazine article about them.

Graham and Shadow emphasize that no Poitou breeding stock is available in the U.S.

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'Tis The Season

*Tax his cow, tax his goat.
Tax his pants, tax his coat.
Tax his tires, tax his shirt.
Tax his work, tax his dirt.*

*Tax his chew, tax his smoke.
Teach him taxes are no joke.
Tax his land, tax his wages.
Tax the bed in which he lays.*

*Tax his tractor, tax his mule.
Teach him taxes are the rule.
Tax his tobacco, tax his drink.
Tax him if he tries to think.*

*If he hollers, tax him more.
Tax him 'till he's good and sore.
Tax his coffin, tax his grave.
Tax the sod in which he lays.*

*Put these words upon his tomb:
"Taxes drove me to my doom."
And when he's gone we won't relax.
We'll still be after his inheritance tax.*

(Anonymous)

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This horse, impaled by a sharpened stick, was back to normal in four weeks.

BEAVER-SHARPENED STICK WENT ALL THE WAY THROUGH HER

Horse Survives After Being Impaled By Stick

"We call her the stick horse. We didn't think she could possibly survive, but she did," says Mel Towell, who recently sent FARM SHOW photos of a horse impaled by a long wooden stick. Towell was able to pull the stick out after the horse was tranquilized. Within four weeks, the horse was back to normal.

Towell's fiancée, Marcia Hillard, is a veterinarian. She called him early one morning asking him to help her with a client's horse.

"The horse was in a pasture coming up a path to get feed when it happened," says Towell. "A beaver had sharpened and debarked the stick, and evidently the horse stepped on one end of it with her front foot. Her forward movement caused the stick to go up through her underside, near her milk bag, and out the top of her hip. She was able to walk only about 10 ft. before she had to stop because of the pain.

"I tried pulling the stick out from the top, but the horse clamped down with her muscles so hard that the stick wouldn't budge. So I cut off part of the stick next to the stomach and Marcia tranquilized the horse and laid her down on her side. Once the horse was asleep I pulled the stick out from the bottom. It came out easily. After the horse woke up and was standing up



Sharp stick went up through the horse's underside and out top of hip.

again, Marcia poured lotion into the wound on the hip. The liquid medicine ran right out the bottom of the wound. Marcia also gave the horse a Tetanus shot and medication to keep her quiet. Every day after that the horse's owner dressed the wound with anti-septic lotion and also put medication in her feed. Now you can hardly see any sign of the injury - just a spot on top of her hip about as big as the end of your finger where the hair didn't grow back.

"Marcia said she had pulled a lot of sticks out of horses in the past, but never one like this that went all the way through."

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