

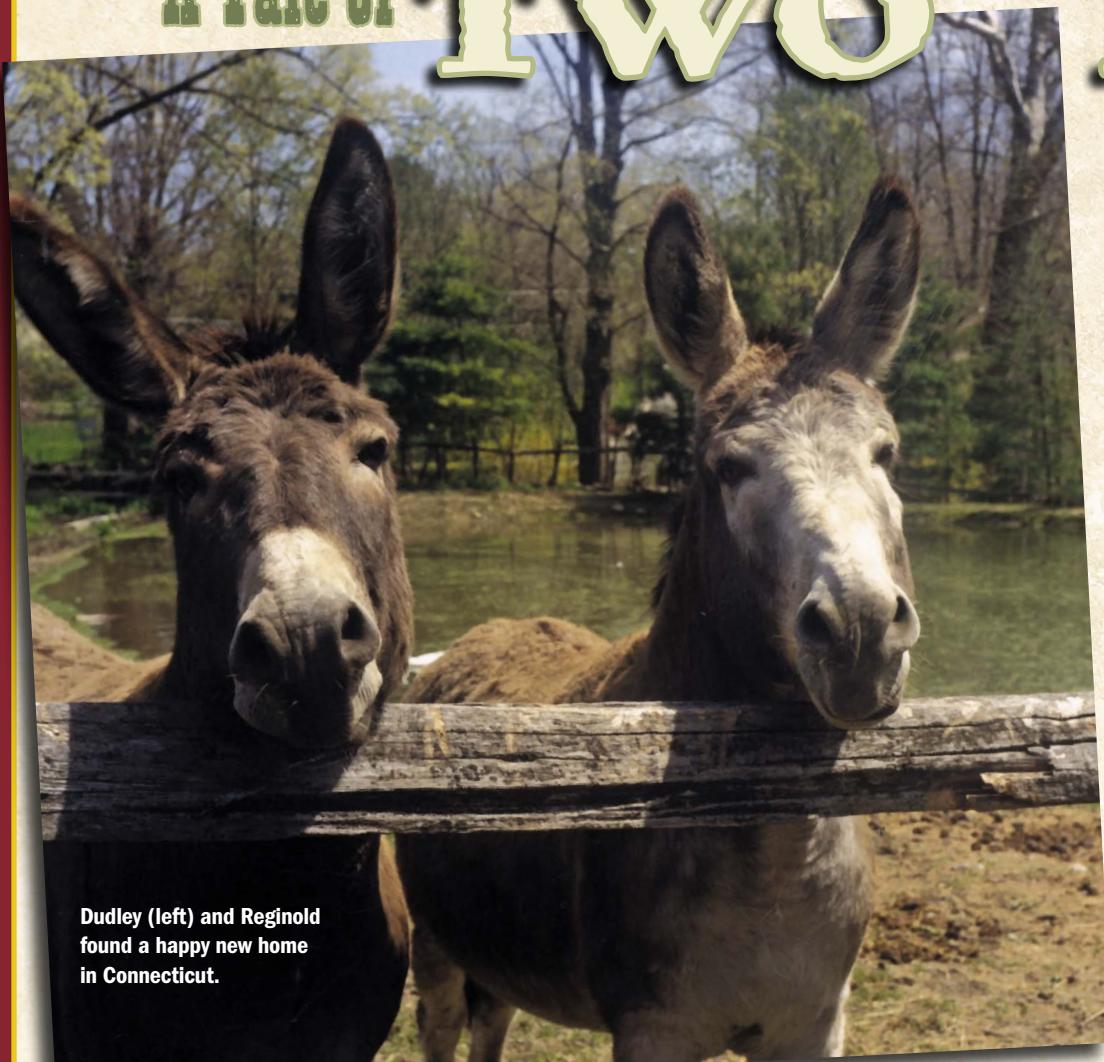
- ◆ A male burro is a **JACK**.
- ◆ A female burro is a **JENNY**.

HEEE-HAWW...



hat's the bray of a burro, or wild donkey. At 5 o'clock each morning at a farm in Connecticut, two burros sound off. Their raucous blasts mean, "We're hungry, feed us!" Owner Aldo Biagiotti does exactly that.

Aldo's two adopted burros arrived in a horse



Dudley (left) and Reginold found a happy new home in Connecticut.

A Tale of **TWO**

trailer. Scrawny and scared, they were at the end of a long journey from Death Valley, California. When Aldo lowered the trailer's tailgate, the burros balked at descending. With a little urging, they stepped slowly down the ramp. Then, tails switching and long ears twitching, the burros moved cautiously into their new surroundings. Soon they drifted about leisurely and nibbled idly on the grass.

Aldo named the donkeys **Reginold** and **Dudley**. Reginold is the aggressive, trusting, dominant burro. Dudley is gentle, quiet, and shy. Each one stands about 48 inches (12 hands) tall and weighs 400 pounds.

BURROS

How Burros Went Wild—and Then Into Homes

During the California gold rush, many prospectors transported their gear and grub to the goldfields on the backs of domestic donkeys. When the gold rush ended around 1855 and the prospectors had no need for their donkeys, they released them. During the same period, many donkeys belonging to the U.S. Cavalry, ranchers, explorers, and Native Americans escaped or were set free. All of these animals headed for the deserts, hills, and mountains and eventually became wild.



The wild donkeys multiplied and became too numerous for the government and private landowners to tend. Many ended up being slaughtered, which made a lot of people angry.

In 1973, the U.S. government started the Adopt-a-Burro program. Wild burros are rounded up and examined and treated by veterinarians. Healthy burros are placed with responsible citizens. Since the program began, more than 35,000 burros have been placed throughout the United States.



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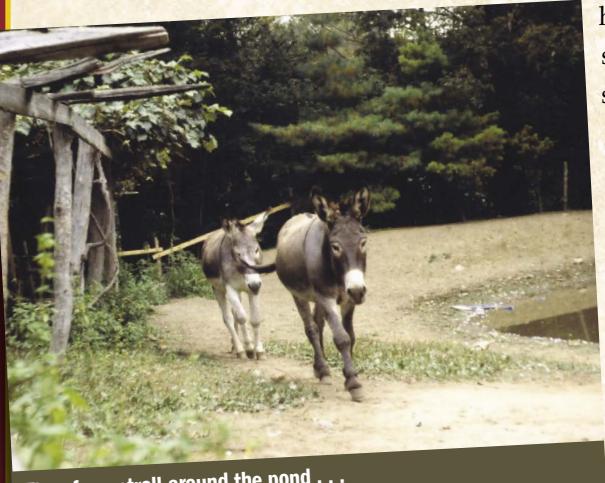
Once you earn their trust, burros like to be



Reginold and Dudley arrive at
Casa di Campagna farm.

with his free hand, scratches between its long ears. The burro nuzzles him like a small child would. However, when a strong wind blows, the burros become jittery, defensive, and unpredictable, and he is careful around them.

Aldo speaks Italian to the burros. Now they understand that language as well as English. *"Buon giorno* [Good day], Reginold; *buon giorno*, Dudley," he says in the morning. On



Time for a stroll around the pond . . .

As Aldo and the burros became acquainted, he learned how to behave around them. For example, on the second day, he opened the metal gate to the corral and let the donkeys out. Then, with an empty plastic bucket in hand, he walked behind them down to the pond. Suddenly, on hearing a noise, Reginold kicked his hind hooves backward and sent the bucket flying. Now, Aldo never walks close behind the burros.

Once you earn their trust, burros like to be hugged, petted, and talked to. Aldo sometimes wraps one arm around a donkey's neck and,



Aldo gives Dudley a hug.

hearing him, the donkeys step out of the wooden shed. *"Andiamo* [Let's go]," he says, while opening the metal gate. Slowly, the burros come out and wander down to the pond, where they graze, drink, and rest.

Later, he claps his hands and calls out, "Reginold! Dudley!" They approach the split-rail fence with

hugged, petted, and talked to.

Hands Up!

- ◆ A burro's height is measured in "hands." One hand equals 4 inches. The measurement is taken at the withers, the highest point of a burro's shoulder. Wild burros are 11 hands tall, on average.

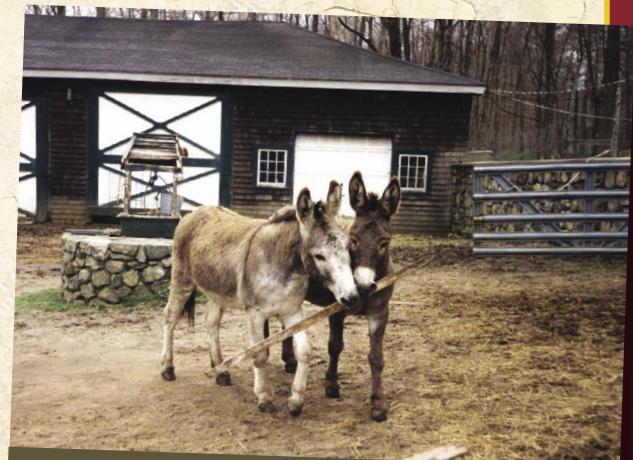
hopes for a snack—and he has one: a sugar lump in the flat of his hand. (If he doesn't hold his hand flat, they nip his fingertips. Ouch!) One bite, and the sugar's gone.

When the burros are tired, they lie down in the dirt at the edge of the pond. Sometimes they roll back and forth, getting dusty and crushing bothersome flies and insects. The dust in the burros' fur discourages other flies and insects and insulates them from summer heat and winter cold.

In one day, Reginold and Dudley together eat a 40-pound bale of hay that contains alfalfa, timothy grass, and clover. Between them, they drink from 10 to 15 gallons of water. Twice a day, Aldo measures a coffee can full of a molasses and corn mixture for each burro. Occasionally, he tosses in cornstalks, which they love, and treats them to saltine crackers and carrots.

Burros enjoy being useful. Reginold and Dudley pull small wagons and carriages. In summer, they "cut" the lawn better than a lawn mower by eating the fresh grass.

As the Sun sets, Aldo opens the metal gate to the corral and the burros come up from the paddock for the night. Soon, they disappear into the shed. *"Buona notte* [Good night]," he says to each one. Walking back to the farmhouse, he thinks of how lucky he is.



. . . and time to play for a while.