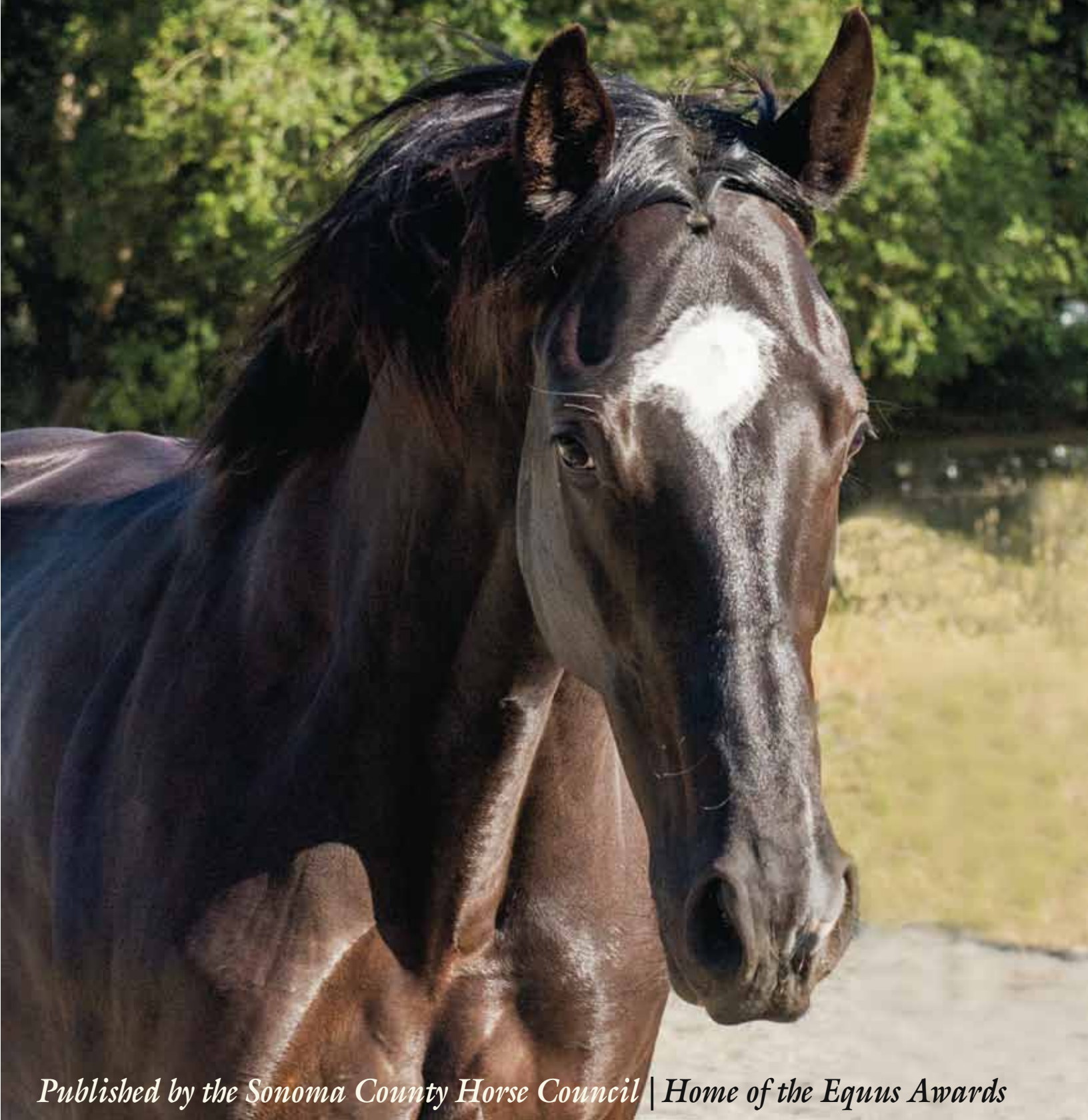


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Horse Journal

Volume 9 • Issue • Fall 2013



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Horse Journal

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Many thanks to Joan Rasmussen and Jessica Boyd for guest editing the Fall Issue of the Horse Journal during JoDean Nicolette’s sabbatical!



Cover Photo: Marcie Lewis

Summer In Dublin, a 5-year old gelding, had limited success at the racetrack. He has blossomed into the supermodel you see here with the help of Thoroughbred rescue organization Neigh Savers, who found him his forever home.

This issue celebrates the Thoroughbred horse breed, particularly the Off-Track version as represented by “Dublin.” Read about our readers’ experiences with and love of Thoroughbreds in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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A Message from the President



Dear Sonoma County Equestrians –

I am happy to report that your Horse Council, in conjunction with the Sonoma State Economics Department and Professor Rob Eyster, is very close to launching its much-needed, updated economic impact survey of the horse industry in Sonoma County. Virtually every equestrian discipline and every breed can be found within our borders. We have trail riders, working cowboys and cowgirls, hunter jumpers, stadium jumpers, dressage riders, three day eventers, parade and drill team riders, barrel racers, team penners, cutters, reiners, draft horses and pack horses, mules, and racehorses, and more. The thousands of horses and horse owners in this county are supported by, and we support, dozens of associated businesses such as feed stores, tack and apparel stores, veterinarians and other health care professionals, lawyers, accountants, farriers, training facilities, boarding facilities, show facilities, therapeutic riding centers, rescue facilities, summer camps, and truck and trailer dealers, which together employ thousands of

people. In short, the horse industry makes a huge contribution to the economy of this county and your Horse Council is dedicated to keeping this industry strong and growing and to protecting the equestrian way of life that is so precious to us.

We all know that these tough economic times and the growing urbanization of the county present challenges to the entire equine community. Whether we face health issues, natural disasters, access to trails, or parks, or show facilities, legislative or regulatory issues, or the like, we can and will be much more effective if we organize ourselves, gather the ammunition that we need, and speak with a powerful and united voice. The information that this economic impact study will gather is the kind of ammunition that we need in order to get our fair share of the resources and governmental support that we need to protect and grow our horse industry and to preserve our equestrian way of life.

So if you value the equestrian way of life and our vibrant, robust and diverse local horse industry, please support this economic impact survey in any way you can. For starters, when it comes on line, please take the few minutes it will take to fill out the short questionnaire, the results of which will be totally confidential. Encourage your friends and associates to do the same thing. Volunteer to help with the data collection and encourage your friends and associates to join you. It will be fun and the effort will be worth your while. If you are willing to help, please send me an email using the contact information on the website.

Ron Malone, President



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Sonoma County Horse Council at Work Horse Cabinet Update

Written by Greg Harder, Vice President

"Well it's another fine mess you got me into Ollie," Stanley would utter. That was the way of the last meeting. We hosted once again our friend from the CHP, Officer David Jurichich with the Golden Gate Commercial division. Our question to him was, "What type of California Drivers License do I need to haul my trailer?" Easy enough, right, maybe a little clarification about number of horses? Way wrong!!!!



Our driving regulations have erupted into a quagmire of rules that seem to be very obtuse. Several times Officer Jurichich had to remind us that all the officers are trained the same way. As the night progressed, all of the "what if's" and "I got a ticket for" proceeded to unveil a clear understanding that there are no clear rules and that all are open for officer and driver interpretation. The only one in the room at the end of the night with a clear understanding was the lawyer that used license restrictions.

As near as I could decipher, the main takeaways were that if the trailer rating was 10,000 lbs or more, a Commercial Class A is required, regardless of the actual weight. The number that is important is the one which is on the placard installed by the manufacturer. From that placard, the officer may then issue a ticket, and have the rig parked if you are driving with the incorrect license.

Quite quickly the volume in the room increased because of the "exemption" for recreational vehicles. Apparently we can register our trailers as "Recreational Vehicles" if they contain living quarters. This bumps up the weight needed for a Commercial Class A license to 15,000 lbs. The change was the result of a very successful lobbying effort of the RV community. So if you have a trailer stating 12,000 lbs and don't have a commode, you need a Commercial Class A.

Then the whole issue of personal vs. commercial sprang up. Meaning, the commercial aspect of hauling our trailers if, in fact, you do need the Commercial Class A. Oopppsi, now the whole subject of identification numbers on the trailers, insurance needed, and "for Profit," (are we taking a tax deduction) status came up. There are apparently rules about sponsorships on the trailers and what is for profit and governed as Commercial.

It is safe to say that by the end of the night, what was clear is that one should go to the DMV, get the inspector to look at the rig and determine what license is needed, and be sure to get the documentation and name of the inspector. Carry this with you. When or if you get pulled over, be polite, produce the documentation, and if the Officer writes the ticket, sign it and fight it in court; the roadside battle has little chance of success.

As you can read, I am not a lawyer, and obviously do not have a crystal clear understanding of the law. No one should read this and consider it an accurate interpretation of the law, or construe the information as legal advice. Find someone that can give the answers and back it up with the vehicle code.

Trying to Help,
Greg Harder

p.s. apparently horses do not fall under any of the old agricultural exemptions either.



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More info? Appointments?

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MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING

*Readers Write***Trailer Tips**From the *Ted Draper Training Stables February 2013 Newsletter*—the tips are good any time of year!

Spring is just around the corner and we are all thinking about going to clinics, shows and lessons. The trailer has grass growing around the wheels and you want to pull it out and get it ready to go. Here are few suggestions.

Check air pressure on all the tires and make sure the spare tire is inflated and in good shape. If any of the tires show wear or the tread is very thin or there are cracks in the side walls, it's time to replace. If the tires look squashed or are low, check with an air pressure gauge and fill before a trip. Keep a tire gauge in your trailer's tool box. If a tire is losing air slowly, get it repaired. I believe everyone should have an air compressor in the barn or in the garage for tire emergencies.

Check for the desired air pressure on the side of the tire. An air compressor can do many jobs around the barn. It can clean and dust and knock down cobwebs. There are other uses and I'm not going to elaborate.

Check clearance lights, brake lights, turn signals and brakes and make sure they work. Replace burned out light bulbs and if that doesn't work, then maybe the ground at the 'light fixture' is bad. A bad 'ground' at the hitch can cause the lights and the brakes not to work. To test the trailer brakes, hook up the truck and trailer and on flat ground, let the truck move forward at an idle. Apply just the hand brake to the trailer. It should stop the truck, if it doesn't, get them fixed.

Check the emergency break-away system. It is suppose to stop the trailer if the trailer breaks away from the truck. If you are stopped by the CHP, they will check the 'break-away system' and if it does not work, you will get a fix-it ticket.

Older trailers will have a small 12 volt battery that will last maybe a year and a half. The battery will be located in the tack compartment or under the tongue of the trailer. Replace and make sure the system works. How to test the unit: pull the pin, with the cable attached, out of the front of the control unit. The control unit will be either under the tongue of the trailer or on the side about two feet back from the hitch. Once you pull the pin it should activate the brakes. If nothing happens and the trailer still moves, then it would likely be a dead battery, but first, check connections and wires.

Newer trailers will have a car type 12 volt battery that is hook up to the break-away system and is kept charged by a wire that is



connected to the truck. Check the water level in the battery once or twice a year. Add distilled water if necessary.

When pulling the trailer always keep one end of the cable attached to the truck. Better safe than sorry.

A few tips to keep you trailer ready to go:

1. Clean out your trailer, Power wash the sides and roof and under the wheel wells
 2. Stop any leaks: roof leaks can rot the floor boards
 3. Address rust: Take time to remove rust and repaint.
 4. Coat the ball (trailer hitch) with grease, makes for good electrical contact and reduces wear
 5. Check and tighten lug nuts if loose. Keep the lug nut wrench in the trailer.
 6. Keep a 'Trailer Aid' in your trailer. It is the quick and easy way to change a flat trailer tire. No jack is needed. Also keep road flares and or Emergency Triangles in your truck.
 7. Lubricate door hinges and latches with a 'spray lubricant' or WD40.
 8. Pack (grease) the wheel bearings regularly.
 9. You should have two chains from the trailer hooked with 'spring hooks' onto the truck.
 10. Keep a magnetic note pad attached to the inside of your trailer tack door and keep dates of maintenance and repairs.
 11. If you have any questions, go to a trailer professional for advice or repair.
 12. Change oil and oil filter in your truck.
- Once your horse is loaded and you are ready to leave, make sure all doors are secure, the electrical cord is connected and the hitch is locked down on the ball.

There is stress involved in getting to and from shows or lessons. Don't let the trailer add to the stress.

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Readers Write

Olympic Horse Park CEPEC Clears Hurdles

Written by Wanda Smith



The California Equestrian Park and Event Center (CEPEC) is continuing its development as a world class facility to provide recreation, education, and entertainment for the public. CEPEC will have facilities to host all the Olympic equestrian events (dressage, cross country, stadium jumping) as well as provide venues for general equitation, cutting, reining, barrel racing, gymkhana, polo, carriage driving, vaulting, and trail riding.

To accommodate these venues, CEPEC has started negotiations to acquire at least 1,000 acres in Sonoma County with approximately 700 acres dedicated to open space and trail riding and driving. CEPEC's facilities will include custom arenas, polo fields, carriage driving and eventing courses, a track. Custom arenas are necessary because riding events require different types and depths of footing. For example, dressage requires shallow footing of two inches whereas cutting required deep footing of four to eight inches. CEPEC will also have a referral service veterinary hospital, an education and conference center, and a museum. CEPEC's facilities will allow it to meet the needs of Sonoma County's 30,000 equestrians and 22,000 horses.

CEPEC is unique among U.S. equestrian centers because of the amount of time taken to carefully plan and design it for optimum convenience, access, and safety. CEPEC's development team includes over 60 professionals with backgrounds in engineering, architecture, contracting, geology, hydrology, business and finance, academic, ecology, project management, marketing, funding, events, planning, and permitting. The CEPEC team has donated their services to help create a plan that will optimize the efficient hosting of different events as well as traffic flow of people, horses, and vehicles. For example, public parking will be separated from stabling by arenas which will reduce the public presence in barn areas; each riding center will have an adjacent public parking area which will minimize walking distance to reach desired event locations. There will be separate areas for English, Western, polo, and driving events which will allow one discipline to focus on hosting events without interruptions from others. Separate centers will also allow simultaneous hosting of different events across CEPEC.

CEPEC has completed its pre-development phase activities. These included studies of potential sites and economic and environmental impact; a pre-permit review with the County Permit Department; and, federal approval as a 501c3 non-profit organization.

CEPEC also initiated several partnerships. It will be partnering with Junior Achievement to provide job shadowing programs, the Sonoma County Museum to display the county's rich equine history and art, and the Red Cross to provide emergency sheltering. CEPEC is partnering with the Sonoma State University Business School to create academic degreed programs in equine management and science and will provide venues for instruction and intramural competitions. In November 2012, CEPEC co-hosted a gala with the SSU Equestrian Team at the Green Music Center to showcase this exciting partnership. CEPEC's international polo advisor, Dan Carr,

came from Florida for the event and announced that he frequently heard people talking about CEPEC while attending many of the social events at the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in England.



CEPEC International Polo Advisor, Dan Carr speaking at the 2012 CEPEC/SSU Gala

This is not too surprising as CEPEC has been attracting the attention of national and international equine organizations such as the American Quarter Horse Association, US Polo Association, and the International Equestrian Federation. In fact, CEPEC is now being discussed as a possible venue for the equestrian events of the 2024 Summer Olympic Games. San Francisco and Sacramento have been invited to bid on hosting the 2024 Olympics; if one of their bids is accepted, CEPEC will have the opportunity to host the Equestrian Olympics.

CEPEC will be the biggest equestrian facility in the Western United States. The quality, quantity, and breadth of its services, facilities, and venues will be a major attraction. Locating CEPEC in Sonoma County which has a temperate climate, international reputation for its fine wines, restaurants and recreational activities offers advantages like no other equestrian park. The result will be a unique experience for both equestrians and spectators. In addition to these advantages, CEPEC is expected to be able to generate annual revenue for Sonoma County of between \$65 million to \$250 million. This estimate is based on the revenue from horse parks across the US that are similar in function and size to CEPEC.

CEPEC is projected to cost \$200 million to build out, will take between five to seven years to complete, and create over 1,000 jobs during construction and more than 300 on-site jobs when fully operational.

CEPEC is planned to be constructed in three phases (see graph) as funding permits, starting with the infrastructure and riding centers, to service centers (veterinarian hospital and education/conference facilities), and lastly entertainment centers (coliseum and museum). Funding sources include: private and corporate donations and sponsorships, federal, state and local grants, endowments, funding events, and self generated revenue. Since CEPEC's launch, almost \$1 million has been donated in services and facilities and almost \$100,000 in funding.



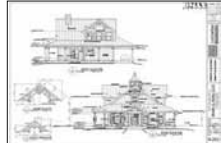
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**2016 – 2020
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**2018 – 2020
Phase 3
Entertainment Centers**



Coliseum and museum

CEPEC has just launched its capital funding campaign to purchase its site and begin design and engineering. Its initial funding requirements include \$150,000 for operations, \$5 million for land acquisition and \$5 million for design, permitting, and initial construction. Funding opportunities will include naming rights (such as buildings, roads, trails, and arenas), memorials monuments, advertising, membership, and VIP opportunities.

Anyone interested in becoming involved in helping CEPEC can contact the CEPEC Board. Assistance is needed for several activities including: grant research and writing, database management, as well as community outreach. For additional information, go to the CEPEC web site at: www.cepec.us

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Readers Write

Thoroughbred Classic Horse Show Series Recap

Written by Sara Parriott



Stopping to smell the roses

As Thoroughbreds come off the track and into new careers in the show ring, they are often side by side with other breeds. They hold their own much of the time but there is a growing number of Thoroughbred-only shows where those passionate about the breed can get together and showcase their horses in an environment more hospitable and supportive of their favorite breed. There are many shows in the mid-Atlantic area, like the recent Total Thoroughbred Horse Show at Pimlico, but California is getting in on the fun, too. The Thoroughbred Classic Horse Shows (TCHS) debuted earlier this year in Southern California and have been a great success story for California Off-Track Thoroughbreds (OTTBs).

This write-up from Sara Parriott highlights the reasons Thoroughbred lovers and OTTB fans—from beginners to expert-levels—continue to tout the breed as wonderful riding horses and viable show horses.

While this is not yet a local event, the TCHS highlights the versatility of the Thoroughbred. All Northern California Thoroughbred owners need is a venue—they already have the passion and the horses to show.

— Jessica Boyd, Director, Neigh Savers Foundation, Inc.

The Thoroughbred is making a comeback in the sport horse world, thanks in part, to The Siegal CARMA foundation. On April 20th-21st, in the first of a series of three Thoroughbred Classic Horse Shows (TCHS), more than seventy-five horses, most off the track, demonstrated the heart, intelligence and beauty of the Thoroughbred horse. Undervalued and overlooked, the Thoroughbred has taken a back seat to European Warmbloods in the show arenas for many years. But the tide is beginning to turn as riders and trainers are remembering that the best horse stories are about longshots and second chances.

Coming to San Juan Capistrano, California from as far away as Las Vegas, the horses competed in a variety of classes such as Hunters, Jumpers, Dressage, Combined Training, Conformation, In Hand, and Western Dressage—all designed to demonstrate the capacity of Thoroughbreds to excel in a new career. Liberian Freighter, owned and ridden by Kristen Hardin, was one of the notable winners over the weekend. Having completed a successful racing career with total winnings of \$759,090 and just seven months off the track, he was winning over fences and under saddle.

There is a misperception that off the track horses have been ruined—that they are too hot or injured and unsuitable for the average rider. But Hardin found that Liberian Freighter, who raced a total of thirty-three times, was sound, sane, and quiet over jumps. "Racing doesn't hurt every horse. Owners do responsibly retire their horses," stated Hardin. She has decided to take on another famous race horse, Bourbon Bay, hoping to promote the versatility of the breed. "There is nothing more suited for hunter/jumpers than a Thoroughbred."

"Our long term goal for TCHS is to develop relationships with racing breeders and owners, encouraging them to participate and promote the successful transition from racehorse to sporthorse," said Nicole Schwartz, Event Director of TCHS. The Siegal CARMA



Thoroughbreds transition enthusiastically to the show ring

Foundation was formed to help fund charitable organizations who work to transition Off-Track Thoroughbreds (OTTBs) into second careers. By also sponsoring this series the foundation enables these horses to compete, some for the first time, in a supportive environment.

Hardin talked about her experience, "I find that at breed shows people are more passionate, more forgiving, and show that they have a love for that particular animal." Harden, along with other skilled trainers, provides another important part to the transition equation.

Known for her skill at assessing, rehabilitating and training young horses, trainer Shauna Pennell was asked by Schwartz a few years ago to help with some of the Thoroughbred rescues from Neigh Savers. Soon Pennell had a barn full of Thoroughbreds. "I'd start working with a horse and think, 'Damn! We should keep this one.' I'd throw a client on to see if it was a match and they'd fall in love. Now I have a whole barn aisle of Thoroughbreds." Pennell brought four OTTBs to the competition, including Stone Cold Angel, Schwarz's own OTTB. An unsuccessful racehorse, "Noah" excelled in the jumper ring, capturing the Jockey Club's Thoroughbred Incentive Program (TIP) High Point Champion in three divisions. "From dead last on the track to first in the show ring, it's so great to see these horses competing successfully," said Karin Wagner, founder of Neigh Savers Foundation, Inc.

Another retired racehorse who came through Pennell's barn and stayed was Thrust, bred in Kentucky with blue blood parents, AP Indy and Miss Lodi. "He must have been a big disappointment," said Sara Graham, his new owner. "But I bought him without getting off after he jumped a course and then sauntered through the orchard without batting an eye." Ferdinand, his new name, found his niche as a hunter after bombing out as an eventer. "I'm the only thing that limits Ferdi. If I ride well he wins. And when Shauna rides him he wins prize money!" Happily, Sara rode well and Shauna took second in the Hess Hunter Derby on Ferdinand.



Copyright 2013 John Chun
Lava Man, racehorse to show horse and pony horse of champions in between

Designed to offer something for everyone, TCHS encourages entry level riders and green horses as well as top trainers with more seasoned horses. The second show in the series went off as planned on July 27-28 with special guest star, Lava Man—a California-Bred racing icon. The show again included the competitive \$1,500 Hess Hunter Derby, \$1,500 Santa Anita Park Jumper Stakes, and the \$1,500 Schroeder Farms Dressage Challenge. But one of the favorite classes was The Spirit of a Champion which featured horses who were unable to compete in show careers. Horses and handlers were honored for their spirit, love and bond. Susie Harris said about her horse, “Although Blaze will never be a show horse, I don’t mind. Just being able to lead him into the ring at a trot was a great accomplishment that might not have been possible if not for his previous owner and wonderful trainer who gave him a second chance.”

Those who participated agreed that the Thoroughbred Classic Horse show was the best kind of show, full of the best kind of horse stories.



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Readers Write

News from Circle Oak Equine

Written by Joan Rasmussen

Circle Oak Equine, a specialty veterinary practice in Petaluma focusing on sports medicine, lameness, and professional rehabilitation for performance horses, announces their upcoming Equine Health Fair, and some exciting new plans!

Equine Health Fair

Circle Oak's third annual Equine Health Fair will be held on Saturday, October 5. This free educational event is open to the public and offers opportunities for both hands-on and spectator learning.

The theme this year is fitness and will feature over 20 presenters talking about a huge range of fitness topics. Some of the topics on the agenda include the Equiband system for core strength and conditioning, and the CrossFit method of cross-training.

Equinology will be on hand again this year with their popular Painted Horse. This demonstration provides eye-opening evidence of how much the back and upper legs move, emphasizing the importance of proper saddle fit and conditioning of the back. Demonstrations will feature several disciplines, including Western, Dressage and Jumping. Check out Circle Oak's YouTube channel for a video of last year's Painted Horse demonstration (<http://www.youtube.com/user/CircleOakRanch>).

Attendees can sign up for hands-on education in a variety of techniques and topics geared toward keeping your horse fit. Among the opportunities to gain first-hand knowledge will be palpation for back pain, massage for fitness, lower leg anatomy, and use of cold laser.

As this is strictly an educational event, there will be no products available for sale during the day. However, vendors will be present to provide information on horse health and fitness products. More information can be found at www.circleoakequine.com.

New veterinary clinic in the works!

Circle Oak Equine has set the wheels in motion for a state-of-the-art veterinary clinic. The new building, with a 5000 square foot footprint, will include a fully equipped surgical suite, standing MRI and other imaging tools. At this writing, ground has been broken and they hope to be up and running in early 2014, according to their Medical Director, Dr. Carrie Schlachter. The additional of the surgical suite and advanced imaging tools will enhance Circle Oak's already impressive resources for diagnosis, therapy, and rehabilitation.

Circle Oak will be partnering with Dr. Jack Snyder, UC Davis professor emeritus of Surgical and Radiological Sciences and Olympic veterinarian since 1988 (he and his wife, Dr. Sharon Spier, headed the veterinary team at the 2010 Hong Kong Olympics). Also joining the team will be Dr. Sarah Puchalski, professor emeritus of Surgical and Radiological Sciences at UC Davis. Dr. Snyder and Dr. Puchalski, together with Circle Oak's current Medical Director and rehabilitation specialist Dr. Carrie Schlachter, will direct the care of the equine athletes who come to Circle Oak. Assisting the veterinarians is an outstanding team of veterinary technicians, assistants, and interns who will assist with surgery and imaging in addition to carrying out the rehab and fitness programs.

Circle Oak will be a one-stop shop for equine sports medicine, handling all aspects of lameness and performance issues. Having a fully integrated range of specialized services under one roof will allow



Phil Tresenrider lower leg demo

the staff, in cooperation with the horse's trainer and primary veterinarian, to provide an individualized program for each horse, from diagnosis to full function.

Circle Oak already has an impressive array of diagnostic and therapeutic tools at their disposal, including ultrasound and radiology, shockwave treatments, IRAP joint therapy, and regenerative medicine such as stem-cell therapy. Acupuncture and chiropractic adjustments are available, as are an underwater treadmill, a cold saltwater spa, and a free flow exerciser. The new facility will add the surgical suite and advanced imaging equipment, as well as the services of Dr. Snyder and Dr. Puchalski. A full lab is also in the plans and a CT scanner is on the wish list.

Dr. Schlachter estimates that the staff at the clinic will be seeing about 50-70 horses each week, and that 2-3 new horses per week will be admitted to the on-site rehabilitation program. Horses that stay at Circle Oak stay in roomy rehab stalls or in paddocks, depending on their individual needs. Supervised turnout is provided 3-4 times a day, again depending on the horse's individual rehabilitation program. Dr. Schlachter believes that controlled exercise is the core of a horse's progress during rehabilitation.

The new facility will bump up Circle Oak, already a widely respected facility, into a world-class veterinary practice, incorporating the experience and training of an excellent staff with the latest in technology.

Background of Circle Oak Equine

Circle Oak Equine, located on Ron and Sara Malone's beautiful Petaluma property, got its start as a facility for Ron's cutting horses. When some of the horses sustained injuries, Ron became very interested in the process of bringing them back to peak performance. Circle Oak started as a rehabilitation facility. When the Malones had the chance to partner with Dr. Carrie Schlachter, the operation expanded to include first-class veterinary care.

Not only is this a top-notch veterinary and rehabilitation facility, but visitors can enjoy the meticulous landscaping, created under the eye of avid gardener Sara Malone.

Circle Oak Equine is located at 909 Mustang Court in Petaluma. More information about the facility and about the Equine Horse Fair can be found at their website at www.circleoakequine.com or by calling 707-766-8760.

Spitting Sand

Column Editor Jessica Boyd

When is it Time?

One of the biggest challenges for any organization involved in transitioning horses from one life to another is knowing when it's time to move a horse along. Regardless of what at-risk group of horses we work with—mustangs, auction horses, off-track Thoroughbreds—the tie that binds us is the responsibility to properly rehome the horses that come through our doors. This can be perplexing for many reasons, the least of which is finding an adopter, let alone an appropriate adopter. Before we can even assess if the person interested in the horse is the right person, we need to know the horse and know it well enough to tell it's ready to go to a new home. With the horses coming off the track, the number of factors that determine readiness can go from zero to more than you can count as fast as the horse in question can hit top speed.

Over the last year and a half, with the many OTTBs I've met, the only constant is that the process always begins with figuring out who each horse really is once they're away from the only life they've ever known. A racehorse has a Routine. Yes, capital "R" Routine. The same thing happens every day at the same time always and the same people show up to do it. They know this horse gets worked on that day and then it's their turn. Clockwork might be an understatement. Race people tell me they stick to that routine above all else, especially with a horse that is nervous or excitable, to give the horses structure and a level of confidence about what to expect.

This is good for racehorses but it means we, as racehorse re-trainers, have our work cut out for us from the beginning. We have to teach them how to be "normal" horses, how to be handled by people who don't live and breathe the backside and might have slightly different ideas about the "R" word. It is not to take the fire out of these exquisite and sensitive athletes, it is to teach them that change is not bad and in fact can lead to other fun things like trail rides and jumping—adventures beyond the adrenaline rush of galloping full tilt around the big oval.

I can personally tell you it is not only possible, it is an amazing transformation to watch.

The very first thing we do is nothing. Well, sort of nothing. Whenever possible, we put a horse in a paddock and let them settle in and breathe, meet the neighbors, and watch the world go by with a 360 degree view. We feed them. We clean paddocks and talk to them. We watch them to see if they need extra food, if they are bored, if they are anxious or worried. We take care of any medical issues that come up and ease them into this new routine, this new phase of their life. We groom and talk to them about our days. We give treats and establish personal space rules and boundaries.



Dixie and her new human partner, ready to rumble at her first gymkhana

We are unhurried and calm, asking only for basic courtesies—no running over the person picking up your poop—offering a place for them to step into as the horse they are, without expectations of what we think they should be. (Barring rudeness or dangerous behavior, of course, when correction is absolutely necessary.)

Through it all, we watch and see what horse emerges. Sometimes it is a confident horse, a horse that watches and waits to see what's next with a soft eye. Sometimes it's a horse who is a little nervous until he realizes his neighbors (and handlers) are completely unfazed by the pigeons landing on the roof of the shelter or horses galloping in the pasture.

It takes a little time for each horse and each horse is on a different schedule, their own schedule. We can help. We can provide the right support and experiences to get them there faster, but above all else, we must listen to the horse. The two most recent Neigh Savers graduates, Clyde and Dixie, were about as different as night and day and

travelled very different paths to their new homes.

Dixie came to us with a hairline fracture and had to be in a stall for a few months as she healed. She only had a tiny view unless I took her for a walk and a graze. This was very hard for her to understand and while she tried to be good, a horse is made for motion and not getting enough of it makes for grumpy company some days. We had pinned ears and nips along the way until she could finally move into a paddock. The move transformed her from a tense little ex-racehorse into a curious and muddy little ranch pony with a soft eye, a love of belly rubs and a work ethic. That Dixie was the real Dixie and once she emerged, we could start working and retraining her. Finding the right owner from there was fairly easy. They met the horse she really is—affectionate, confident, athletic, careful of herself—and fell in love on the spot.

Clyde came to us well-healed from tearing a tendon sheath over his hock, physically ready for work. He's big, he's beautiful. He's also not as confident a horse as Dixie is and was also in need of more manners. His anxiety level also increased



Clyde-inspired smiles are big smiles

Cont. on page 12



Cont. from page 11

exponentially when asked to work so while he was in great physical shape, his mind needed some time. We had to help him learn to focus and pay attention and maybe even have a little fun before he could relax and be trustworthy under saddle. Clyde is still growing up but he is playful and eager to please. His person loves unlocking him piece by piece and showing him new ways to look at things.

Knowing the right time to re-home a horse means knowing them well enough to match them up to the right person and that rarely happens in a day or a week or even a month. Both Clyde and Dixie have found owners well-suited to take them further on down the road. Dixie has a young and very competent rider who is patient and talented enough to tap into Dixie's competitive nature and channel it into fun for both of them. Clyde has an owner who is not in a hurry for him to do anything but learn to enjoy his job, whatever that turns out to be.

I am not an expert, far from it. What I am is a student and the horses are my teachers. Every one of them offers me new experiences and new moments where I say, "Well that didn't go as expected, what should I do next?" Thoroughbreds offer it tenfold and with a face that tells you exactly what they think of your technique—it ranges from "THAT WAS TERRIFYING!" to "You MUST be joking." You have to be flexible and creative. You have to be paying attention. You must be listening.

That's my job. It includes cleaning up poop and dispensing treats



Clyde learning to slow down and smell the cookies

but it's all a part of the big picture—helping a horse figure out who they are so we can find that perfect person, that next job, that home that makes a horse happy and a horse re-homer all warm and fuzzy.

Jessica Boyd lives in Sonoma County and is a Director for Neigh Savers Foundation, Inc. (www.neighsavers.com). She also blogs with some regularity about her own herd at Spotty Horse News (www.spotty-horse.blogspot.com). You can reach Jessica and her herd at spotty-horse@gmail.com.


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*Readers Write***Cowboy Dressage**

Written by Susan Tomasini

Most competitive disciplines have numerous pages of rules, restrictions and regulations. These are established in Competitive Dressage, for instance, to ensure the humane treatment of the horse as well as to set a standard of excellence for the sport. Now there is a new competitive discipline that is governed by fewer pages—Cowboy Dressage. When two great disciplines come together, you can bet that the union will produce an irresistible entity.

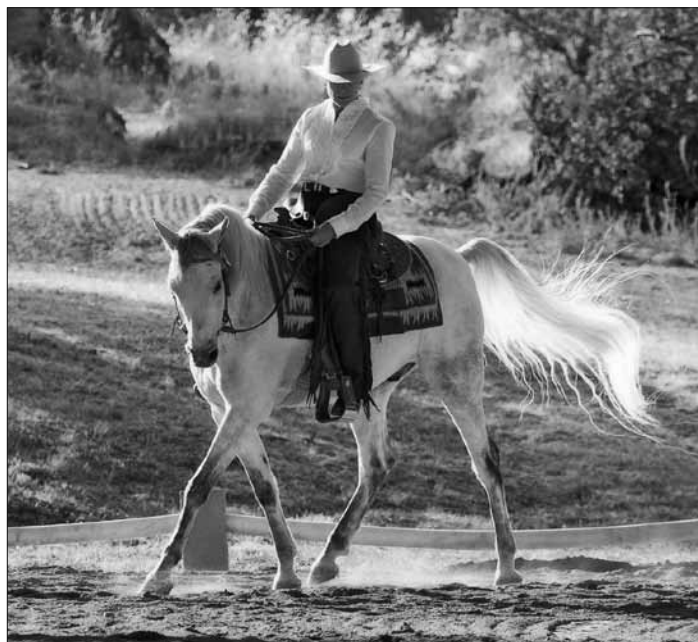
Cowboy Dressage®, a highly effective Western horse training and teaching discipline, will make any rider and their horse better! Combining the best of Western horsemanship, the Vaquero tradition (which is steeped in classical Dressage elements), and the “Soft Feel” taught by the likes of Tom Dorrance and Ray Hunt, Cowboy Dressage training is a structured, progressive and patient approach to developing the ultimate horse/rider relationship. Any horse, doing any discipline, will benefit from this training. You will be developing a sound, athletic and happy horse.

Cowboy Dressage® is defined by its founder Eitan Beth-Halachmy: “Soft Feel is the guiding principle of Cowboy Dressage®. The ‘Language of Lightness’ is the conversation between horse and rider, it is a wordless, intimate—and for some—a spiritual communication within the partnership between horse and rider. ‘Soft Feel’ is not only sending messages, but having the sensitivity and awareness to feel and receive the message the horse sends back. The timing and use of Release, Relaxation, Preparation and Execution are the basic fundamentals of ‘Soft Feel.’ Since ‘Soft Feel’ is the mission of Cowboy Dressage® it will be taught and scored with emphases on lightness, harmony, finesse and partnership as a priority. Balance, cadence, carriage, control, and performance are additional areas the horse and rider will be trained, judged and scored on.”

Take a look at the rules and court and goals of Cowboy Dressage. There is logic in the court design, balanced progression of tasks in the tests, and a notable absence of detailed rules and regulations. You can use a ring snaffle, a curb bit or even a bosal and mecate. You can wear blue chaps or a riding skirt, a pink saddle blanket or a felt pad. You can ride with one hand or two. The mane can be braided or flowing. The reins can be mohair or leather. But above all of these, when you read the mission statement of Cowboy Dressage, you find a goal that requires one’s heart in their hands, legs, seat and mind. It is the soft feel of the reins, and the harmony and partnership visible between horse and rider. The sport of horsemanship is driven by love for the horse. If that love is truly present, the study of Cowboy Dressage brings that harmony and partnership to life.

Eitan’s vision of the expression of Cowboy Dressage is harmony and partnership between horse and rider, evident in the performance of the tests. The lightness in the use of the aids by the rider is manifested in elegant self-carriage of the horse, engaged haunches, and elevated withers and poll. Experience the visual presence of soft feel, imperceptible use of legs, seat and hands by the rider, and noticeable lack of extreme tension on the reins.

This is why I practice and teach Cowboy Dressage. My students of all levels of ability and all ages have something of significance to work on. All breeds of horses benefit from the goals set forth in



Susan Tomasini demonstrates Cowboy Dressage

CD. What a delight to set our horsemanship goal to be a horse and rider in visible harmony and joy.

A founding partner of Cowboy Dressage® World, I started riding hunters and Jumpers in Chicago. At 18, I earned my British Horse Society Assistant Instructors Degree at Porlock Vale Riding School in Minehead, England under the supervision of Colonel Jamie Crawford. While attending UCLA, I trained and showed jumpers for clients at Mike Manesco’s stables in Los Angeles. After earning my Bachelor’s Degree in Spanish, I settled in Mexico City, and showed jumpers against Olympic team contenders. Returning to the US, I began training Arabians for Alison Arabians as well as private clients in Scottsdale, Arizona. Taking a 12 year break to raise two children, I returned to the horse world when given seven registered Arabians to start and market. The following years, I completed Levels 1-3 of Parelli Natural Horsemanship, an experience that prompted me to move into the Western saddle. When I met Eitan Beth-Halachmy, I



Susan Tomasini and Frisco Kid

knew I had found my destination in the horse world with Cowboy Dressage, and today I operate Tomasini Training Center where I teach the “Soft Feel” horsemanship techniques to my students and give clinics in Cowboy Dressage. I perform demonstrations in Cowboy Dressage on my horses Beh Jude, Frisco Kid and Diamond Lil.

Contact Susan Tomasini, Trainer/Clinician at 707.486.8050 or visit her website: www.TomasiniTrainingCenter.com

Feature Article

Bobby—My 21 Year Old Colt

Written by Karen MacDonald



Halograph wins one of many

I met Halograph as a 2yr. at Woodbine racetrack in Canada. I was a groom with 6 horses to take care of. He was a special and confident youngster with lots of quirks right from the get go. 16.2+ hh, dark bay with white socks, and a white blaze. You would definitely say, "Tall dark and handsome!"

He was always on his toes and nobody liked him because Halograph really liked his games. One very successful game for him was getting his rider off. More than once, a Pony Rider would hand me my horse and ten minutes later, a dirt-covered-worse-for-wear exercise rider would show up with some choice words for Halograph: "He dumped me in the field! I am never getting on that horse again!"

I, however, fell in love the moment I saw him. Somehow, I could see who he really was through the mischievous games he liked to play. He was a comedian and sometimes it got him in to trouble. I have many funny stories of Halograph, and many funny stories of Bobby.

One particular day after a hard work, I was preparing to poultice his legs. I was getting everything ready and setting it by the stall door: clay, water, wraps, and two rolled up pieces of paper—Halograph leg size. I headed back to the tack room to get some Saran wrap, my last supply needed for the job. On my way back, I noticed a curious white nose sniffing at the paper placed obviously too close to his stall door. He was reaching under his webbing vigorously trying to jostle at least one of the fun-looking items I set there. I stopped to watch, because everything he did made me laugh and I knew if I gave him a chance, he would support that theory. Sure enough, he got ahold of one of the pieces of paper and took it in his stall. I heard a bunch of commotion from inside the stall. It almost sounded as if he was fighting with the paper. I walked up to find a terrified young horse shivering in the corner of his stall snorting at this brown paper monster that he so had to have. I rescued him from the paper monster and he was quiet for about an hour.

Another Halograph game...

Every time it was time to halter up, the halter ended up in his mouth, mostly due to the wide open mouth welcoming it. He had this skill down! It would take ten minutes to put on his halter—EVERYTIME!!! The problem was, it made me laugh and he knew it. It was almost like he was playing Jaws (a happy Jaws) every time the halter came out. This particular incident happened after about the fifth time of me trying to get it over his head while avoiding the wide open mouth that had perfect target skills. The halter fell into the groove in his mouth, where the bit sits. This time I couldn't get the halter out of his mouth so easily because up went his head, along with the halter. Suddenly, I was out of the picture. In fact, the moment he realized that he was on his own for this round, he didn't know what else to do and fell completely over—almost like he fainted. When he was flat out in his stall, I walked over to him and calmly extracted the halter. The wide, white-eyed young boy was quiet again for oh...about an hour.

Ok, one more Halograph adventure...

So, I mentioned he was on his toes every time he was saddled up for his daily work. It was our routine; tack up in the stall and walk around the shedrow until the exercise rider gets there. We began our walk around the shedrow. He didn't walk though; he passaged around the shedrow, showing off his magnificent athletic build, all the while plotting the next involuntary dismount for his rider. Our next door neighbor's racing colors were red and white and we passaged past them all proud and ready for the day's feat. The trainer, who was wearing a Red jacket, noticed Halograph's fancy attitude and laughed at him. While we paraded by, the trainer slapped Halograph on his butt in a taunting manner. Halograph did not appreciate this gesture. We passaged by again waiting for our rider and Halograph decided he didn't like the color red! He double barreled at the trainer in the red jacket when he saw him again and then he double barreled at the red grooming cabinet on the wall which came crashing down. He made his point very clear! He continued to look for that trainer



Halograph in the Winner's Circle, author fourth from the left

every morning just waiting for the perfect moment. Thankfully no one was hurt, and the trainer learned not to tease him like that again.

More horses were coming in and more grooms were being hired. Horses got shifted around in the barn. Sadly, Halograph left my hands to one of the other grooms in the barn.

But not for long.

Brian was a seasoned horseman, stood at least 6'2", and had a strong stature. I knew right away that Halograph's antics would not be allowed. The very next morning, Brian brought Halograph around to me and said, "Take this (insert dirty word) horse from me, he won't do anything for me, I can't stand him!!!" It needed to be cleared with the boss first but before I could even open my mouth to say those exact words, Brian said, "He said it's fine! I already asked him! Just give me one of your other horses." A very worried looking Halograph was staring at me as I motioned to Brian which horse to take but as soon as I wrapped my hands around Halograph's lead shank and touched his neck, I heard the biggest sigh of relief from that horse's mouth. It brought a tear to my eye. He and I had a connection; I understood him.

He ended up being claimed by another trainer, which broke my heart. I left the racetrack after three years but continued to follow his very successful career and even went to watch his races. I would say hello to him when he passed by in the paddock and it always seemed like he was giving me a little wink.

Several years later, he ended up with a trainer I used to work with and then I noticed he wasn't listed in the races for a long while. I called this trainer and asked about him. They told me, "You don't

want him Karen, he's crippled." "YES, I DO," I said with a booming voice. Halograph started racing at age two and ran until he was seven. He had 61 starts with 8 firsts, 8 seconds and 7 thirds—he was always earning money.

I was fresh out of college and didn't make a lot of money. What was I getting myself into? I just knew we were meant to be together. The owner of the barn I was managing at the time generously offered me a free stall at her place and we set a date to go pick him up. All the way there I was fretting about how I was going to pay for this horse, a horse who was "crippled." Ruth kept telling me, "Don't worry, it'll work out." She turned the radio up to ease my mind a bit and *Don't Worry Be Happy* by Bobby McFerrin was on. It was so fitting in that moment. Singing along with the song, I decided Halograph's barn name would be Bobby.

We pulled up at the shedrow and my heart raced, I didn't know what I was about to see. I met the groom and he pointed to the stall he was in. There was a cribbing sound coming from inside. I peeked in at him and he was anxiously cribbing on his already torn apart feed bin. My heart sank. He was very thin, and had lost a lot of his muscle. He looked exhausted and bitter. "Are you sure you want this horse? Let me show him to you," the groom grabbed a lead shank and unhooked his stall door and went in. Halograph lunged at him with ears pinned. I couldn't believe it. This was not the same horse I remembered. After ducking his attacks the groom got the shank on and trotted him down the shedrow for me. The first and only time I ever saw a 16 beat trot! I didn't care. I turned and walked straight back to the trailer and fetched the shipping boots. I walked right back in his stall, hearing in the background, "You don't want to go in there!" and kneeled down at his feet to put them on. He never once pinned his ears. What he did do—and I get teary eyed to this day when I talk about it—is gently put his nose to my head and gave me a big smell and a loving nudge, as if to say, "Where have you been all of my life?" And then he walked right on the trailer, not a peep all of the way home.

I had two vets come and take a look at him just to see what I had before me. "You have a very expensive lawn ornament!" one of them said. "You will never be able to ride this horse; this horse will never be sound." Bobby is the reason I went into equine rehabilitation and bodywork. He was my first patient ever. It took me 3 months to get him back and under saddle. I had the vet come back to give shots several months later and he couldn't believe it was the same horse. He asked me what I was doing with him and I told him, "Walk, trot, and canter."

Bobbo has been my biggest teacher in every way.

We have jumped over jumps, we have ridden the trails and we have danced together. We have even crossed borders (from Canada to California) together. He is now retired and still the soundest horse I own, living out his days with his soulmate Paris. 21 years old, going on four! If it wasn't for Halograph and Bobby, I wouldn't be who I am today. I am forever his faithful student.

Karen MacDonald is a lifelong student of the horses she's met. She uses body work, consideration of how feet affect the horse's body, and individualized physical training to help horses she works with become the best they can be. You can reach Karen at solisequine-massage@hotmail.com.

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The Vet's Office Off the Track

Column editor Michelle Beko, DVM



Michelle and her Thoroughbred Zeke

Let me start this article with a disclaimer; I am probably biased. Six of the seven horses I've owned in my lifetime have been thoroughbreds. I like thoroughbreds! They are particularly well suited to become hunters, jumpers, event horses, polo ponies or lower level dressage horses although there are people out there doing all sorts of other things with them as well. Many people acquire a thoroughbred after he/she has been retired from racing. Let us consider this.

Many are retired or not even taken to the track in the first place simply because they are too slow. This does not mean that they are not athletic enough for other disciplines. Some racehorses may not be well treated but some are treated very well. I don't believe that they are all mentally "ruined" at the racetrack.

It may be difficult to get an accurate history of what happened with a horse that came off the track. Did he race or was he just in training? Was she injured? Any horse that has raced in North America must have (the underside) of their upper lip tattooed. The first letter of the tattoo corresponds to the year they were born. A is 1997, B is 1998, etc. and the following numbers identify the individual. While a tattoo does not prove that a horse raced it usually means that they likely came close to being entered in one. If you can read the tattoo or know the horse's exact registered name you can usually find information on their bloodlines and race record on line (try www.equibase.com).

Many racehorses do retire due to injury. There are innumerable injuries that can lead to retirement but let's consider some of the more common ones. Any soft tissue (muscle, tendon, ligament) can be injured but superficial digital flexor tendon ("bowed" tendon) and suspensory ligament injuries are particularly common.

While significant healing of these tissues can occur, they do not tend to become as strong as they once were and are prone to reinjury. The more severe the original injury, the more likely they are to reinjure themselves again. Similarly, the harder they are worked, the more likely they are to suffer from reinjury. Thus a horse with a mildly bowed tendon might be suitable for some low level dressage or occasional jumping over low fences but not for polo or upper level eventing.

Joint and bone injuries are also common. Fetlock and carpal (knee) joints are commonly inflamed and subject to chip fractures. If these issues are treated expediently, the horse may be able to make a near complete recovery. If not, these insults can lead to arthritis and lameness down the road. Stress fractures are also fairly common. While these hairline fractures can make the horse severely lame initially, after a long (6-12 months) rest they can usually heal completely with no long term consequences.

Some characteristics are common to most thoroughbreds whether they raced or not. They are nearly all bred to race and are inclined to be "hot" horses. They are not usually suited to novice riders or people who want to ride once or twice a month. Most need regular exercise in order to be able to contain their energy. This is especially true of younger horses.

Horse coming off the track can become great equine companions under the right circumstances. It is best if you know exactly what you want from the horse performance wise and assess whether or not the individual in question is up to it or not. Most horses coming off the track are quite green and will take at least a year of training to be ready to show. I strongly recommend a prepurchase examination to evaluate the horse's soundness even if the horse is free. You may choose to do radiographs or ultrasound examinations if you wish but you should at least have a basic prepurchase examination performed. If you do become the owner of a former racehorse, enjoy!

Michelle Beko, DVM, has been an equine veterinarian since 1991. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter. Eventing her horse Zeke, hiking, and traveling. You can reach her at Empire Equine at 707-545-3909, check her website (www.empire-equine.com) or on Facebook.

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All Creatures Great and Small Up Close and Personal

Column editor Grant Miller, DVM

Written by Keli Hendricks

"I'm just going to warn you before I unload him, his penis is injured and it's pretty shocking to see."

This was the warning CHANGE Program director Katie Moore greeted me with after arriving at my ranch with the latest rescue horse I had agreed to foster. I nodded and almost yawned in response. I was a recently-retired horse trainer who had worked in equine surgical hospitals, race tracks, and huge cattle ranches, so not much was really going to . . . Wait! Good Lord! What the hell is THAT?

The poor gelding emerged from the trailer looking emaciated, which, sadly, is hardly uncommon in horse rescues. But his penis... well...that was . . . OUCH!

His muddy, matted coat clung over his protruding bones and his penis was horribly swollen and covered with large, crusty abrasions. In fact, it was so badly swollen that he could no longer retract it into the sheath, which left it exposed during a week in which the temperatures had been dipping well below freezing at night.

How the injury occurred could only be guessed at. Perhaps a horse he was pastured with kicked him in a fight over food, but there was really no way to know for sure. What we did know was that this particular rehab case could have a sad ending.

Despite his physical hardships, the gelding unloaded like a perfect gentleman and stood patiently looking at us, perhaps wondering if these new circumstances he found himself in meant regular meals might just be in his future.

There were signs of hope. He could pee normally and despite being a starved old man with a horrific injury, the look in his eye left no doubt in our minds that he was ready to fight for his life.

Soon the vet arrived and cleaned and wrapped Bob up, and then, in a nifty trick, rigged a sling for the penis using only rolled gauze. The gauze was wrapped around his body for support. The hope was that with the appendage no longer left dangling, it would give us a chance to get the swelling out instead of gravity complicating the situation. He was put on antibiotics and medications for the swelling and pain and I was left with instructions on how to recreate this entire bandaging scenario by myself the next day.

Secretly, I had little faith that I could recreate that gauze contraption. It reminded me of Cat's Cradle, the schoolyard game little girls play with string. I sucked at that, too. This appeared to require some of those same skill sets. Plus, in the past I had doctored injured sheaths on geldings that weren't nearly this bad and they never seemed all that appreciative of my efforts. In fact, I vividly recalled dodging cow kicks. How was this gelding going to deal with months of this treatment?

I quickly discovered that I had nothing to worry about. Bob, as I later came to call him, turned out to be a model patient, tolerating my initial clumsy bandaging attempts with a cheerful attitude. Soon I wasn't bothering to even halter him for his treatments. I could wash, debride and treat Bob's injury without him so much as glancing up from his meal. Drunk with success, I became obsessed over how well Bob was healing. I was photographing his sheath daily for comparisons. Did it look better than yesterday? Was it



Before and After

retracting farther up into the sheath? Would the other horses make fun of him in gym class?

Luckily, progress began to be made. After just 30 days, he had gained well over 100 pounds, and he was starting to really enjoy his life again.

Another 30 days and another 100 pounds were gained. His sheath continued to heal, his coat began to shed out, and the horse he must have been at one time, before he was thrown aside and forgotten, had begun to reemerge. And ever so slowly his injury continued to heal until eventually, just about the time we were worried it might not ever totally recover, his penis retracted completely into his sheath! Ahh, sweet victory!!

Successes like these are generally hard to brag about at dinner parties. "I just modified my investment portfolio," some perfectly normal person might say to me. "Oh really?" I imagine myself responding, "I just healed a horse's boy parts!"

So far, the accolades have been few. Oprah hasn't called, there has been no mention of a Congressional Medal, and thus far Animal Planet has shown zero interest in the show I pitched them called The Penis Whisperer.

The good news is, Bob clearly thinks I'm pretty special. Unlike my retired show horses who ignore me unless I have a bucket in hand, Bob will spot me from the other side of the ranch. He will lift his head and softly nicker as he lopes over to me, correct in the assumption that my life revolves around his daily grooming.

Seeing the happy, healthy and gorgeous horse that now stands before me, I know that our real work is done and Bob can now kick back and enjoy his golden years with someone who can appreciate him for the special horse that he is. Soon Bob will have a new human to train and show the ropes. He will teach them what brand of cookies are his favorites (any) his dislikes (running out of food) and how to spoil him without letting him act spoiled. All the important things. Mostly though, he will teach them how great it is to have a friend like him around.

Knowing Bob, he will consider the person who adopts him to be the lucky one. And knowing Bob, he will probably be right.

In June 2013, Bob found his forever home with a Sonoma woman. He joined her other horses at a beautiful equine retirement facility, where he enjoys pasture, the companionship of other horses, and daily love and attention.

The Sonoma County CHANGE Program wishes to thank foster mom and Board of Directors member Keli Hendricks, whose dedicated nursing efforts made it possible for Bob to be saved.



Readers Write

Concussion Survival Tips

Written by Lily Baker-Lubin

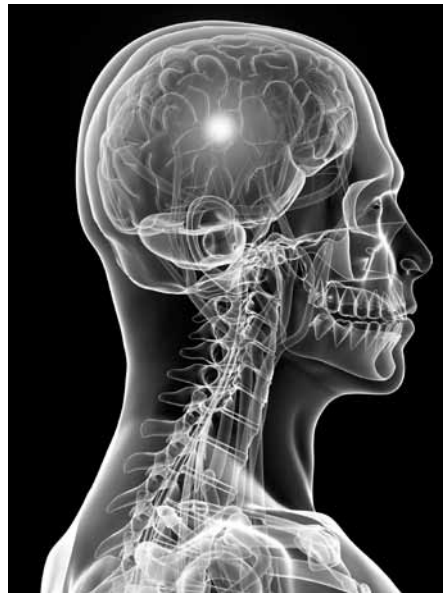
Ask your typical sports fan on Sunday afternoon if equestrian sports rank among America's top sports and the answer is a resounding "no." Ask a physician who sees sports-related traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and equestrian sports undoubtedly enter the ranks of football, basketball, baseball and hockey.

The big four are inherently more connected to the medical advancements in concussion management and return-to-play protocols. Equestrians also need access to that same critical information in order to better inform and equip trainers, riders and support staff to effectively deal with concussions. As I am motivated to help bolster athlete autonomy and capacity as it pertains to optimal performance and health, it's time to pull back the curtain on a controversial topic, shed some misconceptions and offer important concussion guidelines for the equestrian community. Athletes of all levels and sports have access to some incredible resources locally. I've teamed up with Daniel Vasquez MS, ATC, the concussion program manager at Revolution Athletic Performance, to outline important definitions, guidelines and action plans riders can utilize.

The current agenda encouraging and enforcing helmet safety has the ability to reduce serious trauma, but will not prevent all head injuries and probably won't prevent most concussions. Furthermore, the advice to riders to "just get back on the horse" after falling or being bucked off is dismissive and dangerous when it comes to critical evaluation and injury guidelines. A concussion, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, must be treated as a traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Whether caused by something as severe as falling on your head or as seemingly benign as getting bumped by a horse trying to itch, all concussions are potentially serious. Signs and symptoms can be variable and subtle changes in neurologic and cognitive function—including balance, coordination, memory, decision-making, and processing—often go unreported or undetected unless evaluated by a healthcare practitioner trained in the management of sport-related concussions. While most concussions resolve fully within a few weeks, some can lead to more severe injuries and long-term physical and cognitive impairment especially when mismanaged or unrecognized. Initial acknowledgment and awareness of a possible TBI by riders, trainers, show staff or first responders is a crucial first step. From there, proper identification or diagnosis can take place, followed by a specific treatment plan. Further referral may be recommended based on the severity of changes in signs, symptoms or neurocognitive function.

Proper management begins with education and recognizing when a concussion has been sustained. The common assumption



that someone has sustained a concussion when there has been a loss of consciousness is inaccurate. Research shows that loss of consciousness occurs in less than 10% of all concussions; therefore it is important to familiarize yourself with the common concussion signs and symptoms.

Symptoms are typically felt by the rider and generally show up soon after the injury. However the full-effect may not be noticeable initially and can take several minutes, hours or days to fully manifest. Signs are observable behaviors in an injured rider. Support staff needs to be aware of these symptoms riders can be resistant to asking for help. Additionally, the very nature of concussions can seem confusing to the injured rider. Due to the unpredictable nature of symptom onset, riders should be repeatedly

checked. Worsening of concussion signs or symptoms indicates a medical emergency.

COMMON CONCUSSION SIGNS (Check repeatedly)

- Appears dazed or stunned
- Forgets tasks or instructions
- Unsure of location
- Moves clumsily
- Answers questions slowly
- Loses consciousness (even briefly)
- Shows mood, behavior, or personality changes
- Can't recall events prior to or after hit or fall

COMMON SYMPTOMS (Riders might not be able to express)

- Headache or "pressure" in head
- Nausea or vomiting
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Double or blurry vision
- Sensitivity to light and/or noise
- Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy
- Concentration or memory problems
- Confusion
- Just "not feeling right" or "feeling down"

Regardless of situation, be it lesson, hack or the most important competition in their career, any rider with a suspected concussion should be immediately removed from riding for the day. They should not be allowed to return to riding until cleared by a qualified healthcare practitioner trained in treating sport-related concussions.

Here's a simple action plan that trainers, parents or witnesses can follow to help a fallen rider. You might consider posting this in a conspicuous location at your riding facility.

1. KEEP THE RIDER FROM RE-MOUNTING.

Look for signs and symptoms of a concussion if the rider has experienced a bump or blow to the head or body. When in doubt, sit it out!

2. ENSURE THAT THE RIDER IS EVALUATED BY AN APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL.

Do not try to judge the severity of the injury yourself. Health care professionals have a number of methods to assess the severity of concussions. If the rider is a minor, parents should be informed and instructed to have their child evaluated by a health-care provider.

3. KEEP THE RIDER OUT OF THE SADDLE.

A rider should avoid riding the day of the injury and until an appropriate health-care professional says they are symptom-free and cleared to resume riding.

As more information arises about patterns in symptoms and recovery, it is becoming evident that while most riders will heal quickly and fully following a concussion, some will have symptoms for weeks or longer. As concussion symptoms resolve, a graduated, stepwise return-to-activity program should be implemented with close monitoring of signs, symptoms and cognitive functioning from your healthcare provider.

The Return-to-Play Progression begins with a recovery stage of complete cognitive (this includes texting, homework, television, etc.) and physical rest. From there, the athlete moves through gradually increased levels of activity until fully recovered and ready to resume his/her sport. It is important to remember that return-

to-riding should be considered a progression. Gradual increases in intensity of physical and cognitive exertion are applied, being cautious to prevent exacerbation of or an increase in symptoms. Athletes should only progress to the next level of exertion if they are not experiencing symptoms at the current level. For example, tacking up and walking under saddle for 10-15 minutes might be an interim step that a rider needs to stick with for some time.

Concussion symptoms should not return during or after any of the exercises or activities during the return-to-ride progressions. It may take several days, weeks or months to complete the entire progression and return to the level of riding previously attained prior to injury. Athletes who return too soon without following proper progressions are at significantly increased risk of serious long-term injury or brain damage.

Being patient, flexible and diligent can actually create a more efficient process and prevent regression and frustration. It's important to remember that any head injury is serious and full recovery is critical to avoid permanent damage to the brain. As riders, we know our sport is inherently dangerous, but by being careful and knowing how to respond immediately in the event of a head injury, we can help ensure that we'll be back in the saddle again. For more information or access to cutting edge concussion management and prevention resources such as referrals, baseline neuro-cognitive testing, post concussive rehabilitation, genetic testing and consulting contact Daniel Vasquez, MS, ATC at dvasquez@revolution-sports.com.



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From an Interview with Marcie Lewis Horse Photography with Marcie

Written by Joan Rasmussen, Editor at Large, Board of Directors

Readers of the Sonoma County Horse Journal have probably noticed the many excellent cover shots and other photos taken by local equine photographer Marcie Lewis. Marcie was kind enough to share some of her knowledge to help our readers capture those special moments with their equine buddies in photographs. Here are some of her tips for getting better photos using a point-and-shoot camera or your phone's camera.

Marcie points out that most photos fall into one of two categories: spontaneous or planned. Spontaneous photos are un-posed and capture those fun or interesting moments that take place around your horse. Even though these photos are, by definition, spontaneous, they can still be improved by a little planning. When you know you are going to be taking photos, try for good, clean tack, and groom your horse. Outside shots tend to turn out better because there is more light—most simple cameras will try to compensate for low light but more light usually results in a better photo.

Look for a good environment or perspective. From horseback, you can shoot between your horse's ears to capture that sense of being on horseback. Get your friends in the photo to add some human interest. Anticipate what your horse will do and get him doing something cute. Most phones have a video function so you can even capture action. Put some thought into what you want. If action is important, you may need to sacrifice photo quality to record that special moment.

Planned photos are more "portrait" shots and require more thought and preparation. Both the horse and the tack should be as clean as possible. Use a good leather halter and lead or, alternatively, the horse's bridle.

The horse should be well groomed. Pay particular attention to the nostrils, eyes and ears. Using baby oil on the face is a common practice, but it can darken the horse and attract dirt, so it should only be used carefully. It can also promote sunburn on light-skinned horses, and some horses have an allergic reaction.

Should you trim the whiskers? Whiskers are part of the horse's navigation and feed-finding system, so the recommendation is to leave them!

Other grooming tips:

- If you're using fly spray or a grooming product, rub it in or apply it well in advance so it dries. Wet spots on your horse will appear as polka dots!
- If your horse is a light color, no grass-eating during the shoot (avoid the green slime!).



Pretty standard picture of Cowboy

- Avoid getting close to your horse's nose if you don't want your camera to get sneezed on.

It's best to have someone hold the horse for better control. Try to get a good expression (ears forward and alert). Some props you can use to achieve this are treats, candy wrappers that crinkle, throwing dirt in the air, or (my personal favorite) get a horse's neigh as a ringtone for your phone and set it off! I read of one photographer who carried around a box of paper clips to rattle to get a horse's attention.

The holidays are a favorite time to get horse pictures. Marcie recommends getting your Christmas shots in summer or early fall, before the horse gets its winter coat. See how comfortable your horse is with whatever props you may be using (wreaths, hats, reindeer antlers, etc). You may need to start a few days ahead of the shoot to get your horse desensitized to the props. Nothing like getting your camera all set up and discovering your horse won't tolerate a Santa hat draped over its ears! Remember, this is supposed to be fun for both you and your horse, so set it up for success.

What time of day should you photograph your horse? Morning light is more soft and blue and is flattering to grey horses. Evening light is more golden and works well for horses with red tones—bays, sorrels, etc. Mid-day light tends to be flat and create harsh shadows and it's best to avoid it for formal pictures. Be aware of shadows on and around your horse.

Scope out the setting and background for your photo. A round pen works OK, an arena is better as there is more space. Be sure you have permission to use the setting. Look for the area with the least clutter, and check out any props you may be able to use. Really be aware of the background—a common problem is getting a great classic shot of your horse but it appears to have a



Much better, using Marcie's tips

telephone pole growing out of its head! Try for a neutral or flattering backdrop.

Marcie notes that when photographing children around horses, safety first should be the rule! Be aware of your surroundings and what is happening from a safety standpoint.

If your camera lets you control the shutter speed, Marcie has some guidelines:

- For a stationary shot, a shutter speed of 200-250 is OK
- For a moving subject, a speed around 800 will work.
- For a fast-moving subject, a shutter speed of 1000 or better will capture the action.

(note: the faster the shutter speed, the more light you will need in your environment)

These tips will help the horse owner with basic equipment and skills to get a better photo of their horse.

So when should you call in a pro?

When you want a really special picture, a pro has the skills and equipment to create a portrait or capture a scene in a way that most amateurs can't. With better equipment, more training and more experience, they can more elegantly capture depth, color and emotion. In addition, the photos will likely be printed on better quality paper.

You may want professional photographs to capture special occasions. You can welcome your new horse with a horse-warming party and get special photos at that time. Also farewell shots when a favorite horse moves on to its next adventure with a new owner. It's a good idea to get a professional photo of your horse every couple years as it ages.

Any firsts are photo-worthy. Your child's first horse, your first show or trail ride, any special event or significant moment are good opportunities for a professional photo. Since your horse is a big part of your everyday life, you can set up a "lifestyle" photo shoot to capture everyday moments with your horse. Foals and older horses make great subjects.

I've been taking pictures of my horses for years and have picked up a few other tips that may be helpful:

- If your camera lets you zoom in and out, it is usually more flattering to zoom in than to zoom out. A wide-angle lens tends to create some unflattering distortion.
- Try getting in close for a nice head shot. Focus on the eye.
- To get a good action shot, become familiar with a horse's stride, and try to catch them on the up-swing. Many

point-and-shoot digital cameras have a little lag between pressing the button and the actual shutter release, so try to figure out if this is true for your camera, and build that lag into the timing of your photo.

- See if your point-and-shoot camera has a "burst" mode, where you can take several photos in quick succession automatically. This can help insure you capture the shot you want.

I decided to try out some of the tips Marcie shared. I started by taking a pretty standard photo of my Quarter Horse gelding, Cowboy, standing in front of his shelter. The shot was taken mid-day in bright sunlight. Later that afternoon, I pulled the long-suffering horse away from his grazing time for a more well-thought-out photo shoot in a more carefully-selected setting. Cowboy got polished from his hooves to his nostrils and his mane and tail got combed out. I adorned him with a clean bridle and got a friend to hold him. Then, with the assistance of the horse neigh ringtone on my cell phone, I got his attention and snapped away, with markedly improved results. I just wish I had paid more attention to Cowboy's position relative to the fence, as he seems to have a fencepost dropping from his lower jaw and a board lying across his back!

I hope these tips help you get some great photos of your horse that will record some of your special moments!

Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten, and now enjoys trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy. Joan supports her horse hobby by providing bookkeeping services (In Balance Bookkeeping Service). She occasionally blogs about her horse experiences at cowdex.blogspot.com. To reach Joan, email her at joanras795@gmail.com.

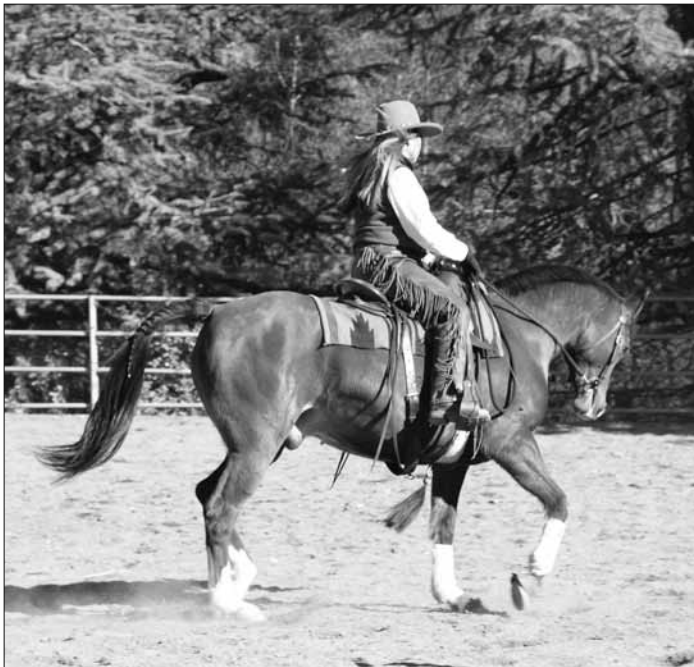


A Horseman's View

Column editor Toora Holan

The Thoroughbred Horse

Written by Julie Renfro-Cross



Julie and Jamboree V

When I think of the Thoroughbred horse, I remember the quote:
"Horses Run Faster and Jump Higher...
Out of Heart and Desire"

I can only talk about my personal experience about the horse breed. In 1997 I was gifted with a 5 yr old gelding that had been bred by a family friend who is from the original UPS shipping enterprise. "Ransom" is 22 yrs young and now retired.

Ransom is a wonderful example and quite a "typical" Thoroughbred horse. I can say that now that, over the years, folks have come for guidance on how to get along with these fabulous horses.

Many of these horses coming from the race track environment have been placed/rescued/rehabbed /sold to etc...considered "Track Trash."

This is more of what I see at barns than the horse that hasn't had the early "Track" experience.

I see close similarities in all these Thoroughbred horses, regardless of their early learning experience. They all have worn their "hearts on their sleeves"; in other words, they will do anything they can to please their "person" as long as the person meets them half way in the emotional and mental arena. Many of these horses are labeled as flighty/spooky/hard headed/mean. My experience is the Thoroughbred can be all these things if not approached with thought and leadership. I by no means say to "cookie bribe" them, although many horses would like that. All horses, especially the Thoroughbred, need to have a leader or some will happily be the herd leader even if it is only a herd of 2.

The post track horses I encounter have developed a different use

for people. In their unnatural training and boarding in the race track environment, they are treated as income (which they are). I am not saying anything bad about the track. These horses are there for income and entertainment and have been bred just for this. The horse is only out of the deeply bedded stall when they are being led to and from the track. Feed/grain and water are hand carried to their stalls. Sounds like full time room service to me. They aren't allowed to be horses because horse herds can play rough! So I believe the track horse has no real need for the human except to wait on them hand and hoof. 97% + of horses bred to run don't make it to the track. The nice thing about the horses from the track is that they have been exposed to a lot of environmental stimuli.

I fully believe in the psychology of the horse and human coming together. I especially feel the Thoroughbred is such a versatile breed. You find the breed in so many areas of competition, recreation and service.

I remember when I first saw Ransom run toward a something scary as the rest of the herd ran the other way. I thought, "What a brave horse!" He displayed such bravery when I would trail ride. I rode him through a 40 hr California P.O.S.T (Peace Officer Standards & Training) certified course in Penngrove, CA where he wouldn't have any problem with sirens, flashing lights, fire crackers and pushing into "bad guys." Ransom was such a star that he was in service as a patrol horse with the Park Police in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco for 2 years before coming back to me.

This horse breed can be so diverse due to their talent and forward drive. I especially see their talent used in Three-Day Eventing even though it is rare to see them exceptional in all three events, (Hmm... is it them or us?) There are exceptions. Ransom is especially talented in dressage, so elevated on his forehand, and is only a half good jumper in the Stadium Jumping (he often gets stuck over the pasture fence). In cross country he can fly when the fences are not too high. (Yes that was intentional).

I most admire the Heart of this breed and am amazed at their physical talent. So if you have chosen the Thoroughbred horse to be your partner, give them a job that both of you will love.

Julie has called Sonoma County home since 2003. As a Licensed Parelli Professional and level 4 Graduate of the Parelli Program, she fully appreciates the importance of a solid foundation and healthy relationship, based on respect and safety, between the horse and their person.

Julie and her Arabian horse, "Jamboree V" are now looking forward to specializing in "Cowboy Dressage"™

She has been studying the Parelli method for 14 years and is available for clinics/workshops/small group or private lessons at your barn or hers. She is at 433 Sanford Rd, Santa Rosa Ca where she has training and boarding available.

If you'd like to be on her mailing list for all information please contact Marian Taylor@juliesjuggler@comcast.com or www.JulieRenfro-Cross.com

*Readers Write***The Karen Chex Story**

Written by Ted Draper

Part I

The last horse had worked and the judges were filling out the judge's cards. The crowd was waiting for the decision in the Championship. This was the Working Cow Horse class, Junior to Ride. Junior riders from all over the western half of the United States competing at the Cow Palace. They were riding the best horses that money could buy. It is a great honor for a trainer to have the best junior rider and horse from his barn, and Bobby Ingersoll had his fingers crossed for Karen Chex and Kathleen. The grandstands were full with standing room only. The Bryant's daughter, Kathleen, had made the cut and had a great championship ride. She was riding Karen Chex, a 13 year old chestnut Quarter horse mare.

The announcer silenced the low roar of the crowd. The horses had come back into the arena and were lined up. Everyone in the stands was sitting on the edge of their seats, anxiously waiting for the results. "This year's Champion Working Cow Horse, ridden by a junior, goes to Karen Chex, ridden by Kathleen Bryant." There was a roar of approval but just a moderate round of applause. The second place winner received a thunderous roar from the crowd, for it was a great honor to be second behind Karen Chex. It was a foregone conclusion that Karen was going to win after her great performance. The win for Karen Chex would be her last time in the spot light. She would never again run a cow down the fence or circle the cow in the middle of the arena or to hear the sound of applause for her brilliant performance.

Karen Chex was born and raised in southern Oregon. She had been trained and shown, and after a few years of competition she was retired to become a broodmare. In that brief time, she had won championships in the working cow horse division. The owners wanted her bred to a top stallion. She had two very good foals. If she could produce horses like herself, her owners felt, she would be a very valuable asset to their breeding program. Karen was enjoying the leisure life of motherhood in a big pasture with green grass up to her knees.

The Bryants had two daughters. Debbie, the oldest, was a year and a half older than Kathleen. The two girls loved the Working Cow Horse class, Junior to Ride, but they could not both ride the same horse, who was getting older and slower. There was constant conflict. Debbie wanted a horse that was capable of performing at the top level in the junior competition. In other words, she wanted to win.

Two years before the championship competition at the Cow Palace, under pressure from Debbie, Mr. & Mrs. Bryant decided to look for a top level prospect. They wanted a horse young enough to serve both girls. They told their trainer, Bobby Ingersoll, to shop around for a horse that was already trained. He knew of several horses that fit the criteria. They studied the pedigrees and show records and decided Karen Chex was the horse they wanted to see. The Bryants and Bobby went to see her, and once they saw her, they knew she would be perfect for what they had in mind. They brought her and her foal and, and once the foal was weaned,

shipped them down to California. She was put into training. The Bryant's daughter Debbie had finally got her own show horse.

Karen Chex was by the stallion "King Fritz." The Chex line is famous for their cow sense, intelligence, and athletic ability. Some of the experts felt that the Chex line was superior to any other blood line at the time. Karen Chex had "cow sense" and quickness. Coming out of retirement, she needed conditioning and fine tuning before going back into competition. She had reached maturity, and was stronger and faster. After working with Karen, Bobby knew he had a horse with a very special talent. She had the mental and physical attributes to be a top working cow horse. That summer was devoted to training Debbie to understand Karen's mental strength, and it was not long before she was showing Karen Chex and they were working like a well-oiled machine. When Debbie turned 19, she no longer could compete in junior classes. Kathleen started riding Karen and the winning continued.

Karen Chex became part of the family. Even with her sour ears and menacing dark eyes, she loved all the attention bestowed on her. At one show, with Kathleen in the saddle, Karen was running a cow down the fence. The cow suddenly stopped and turned. Karen braked hard and turned so quickly that Kathleen kept going, hitting the dirt, Karen just stopped and waited for Kathleen to get back into the saddle, and before Kathleen could gather the reins, Karen was back in hot pursuit. She won the class. She had a determination that was unlike any other horse. The girls learned to let Karen have her head, and trust her judgment. Karen had been trained by one of the best professional trainers on the west coast who had instilled patience and knowledge. She had cow sense, and physical and mental toughness to boot. Karen could adjust to any cow that she faced. Her power, intelligence and quickness gave her an edge over other horses

After a good show season, Karen and Kathleen were aiming for the Championship at the Cow Palace in November. Several months before the Cow Palace, Karen came home from a show favoring the left front leg. She was not lame but something was not right with her. The veterinarian was called and performed a complete exam. Nothing was found to indicate the cause of the lameness. It was puzzling because Karen Chex was in excellent condition. She had perfect conformation in her legs and had no blemishes or weaknesses that anyone could see. She seemed indestructible. The Bryants toiled with this dilemma, talking with the vet and Bobby to find a solution. Kathleen wanted to compete against the top Junior riders and horses from all over the west.

The veterinarian wanted Karen Chex turned out for the winter. The Bryants, after much deliberation, decided to give Kathleen and Karen Chex a chance at winning the junior working cow horse championship at the Cow Palace--a decision they later regretted.

The Vet prescribed rest and bute (Phenylbutazone) for Karen. She didn't get any better with rest nor did she get any worse. She

Cont. on page 24



Cont. from page 23

worked without any lameness when she was given the bute. The Bryants took her to a show for a warm up to the Cow Palace. They wanted see how she would do on the bute, and she worked as if nothing was wrong. The Bryants consulted with the veterinarian and he agreed to write a note for the show officials at the Cow Palace. Mrs. Bryant was still worried and very emotional about their decision to show Karen at the Cow Palace. The daily training got back to normal for Karen. She was peaking at just the right time, although she still needed the bute night and morning.

The Cow Palace is cold and very unfriendly. When the band is playing, and the crowd noise is bouncing off the walls, and the announcer's voice is booming, the place is electrified. Some horses can't handle the energy and others love the excitement. Karen loved it and on the first go-round was one of top qualifier for the finals. Karen and three other horses had the top scores for the first go-round. Many times the cow determines the winner, and getting a cow that will show off the talents of the horse is important. The cows for the finals were aggressive, and they put horses to their test. Karen's cow was a rogue and immediately ran to get by Karen Chex. The big chestnut mare was ready and didn't give an inch, responding with her own quickness. With her ears laid back,

she cut the cow off, and it bolted in the other direction. Karen wheeled and stayed with the cow. She seemed to step up to a new level. Kathleen's hand had turned white from her grip on the horn. The cow wheeled quickly around and went the other direction with Karen in perfect position to cut her off. This cow was hot. With every turn and cut, Karen held her ground and got the crowd roaring with approval. Now, the run down the fence, and Karen took the cow down and made a perfect stop and turned the cow back. This cow was fast and determined, but Karen stayed with it and kept it under control. By this time the crowd was standing up and roaring. When the whistle blew, Karen had the cow completely subdued in the center of the arena. She was in her glory. She left the arena to wild applause.

After the Cow Palace, Karen Chex was turned out to pasture and had the easy life for awhile. One day after school Kathleen brought Karen Chex into be groomed and cleaned up. As she was cleaning out her left front hoof, the leg she favored, she dug out the dirt and uncovered a mass of maggots. The inter sole looked like it was rotting. Kathleen ran in horror to the house, screaming "Mother, Mother, come quick, Karen, Karen." The veterinarian was called and upon examination, the foot had very little circulation, gangrene had set in and the foot was rotting.

To be continued

Response to a letter written to Ted Stashak, DVM

about his article, *Horses and Artificially Fluoridated Water*, published in the Spring 2013 issue of the Sonoma County Horse Journal

Dear Mr. Matthews,

Thank you for taking the time to respond to my short/summary article on AFW in horses. Importantly, I was asked to address the effects in horses only, which I did and stated in my conclusion:

"Evidence to date indicates that F concentrations allowable in US public waters systems do not cause fluorosis. Most horses in our area drink from wells, and are not exposed to city water. For horses nationwide that drink AFW, fluorosis is a very rarely reported condition."

In response to your comments, I have heard anecdotal comments from forums on AFW regarding sodium fluoride (NaF) thus my statement in the conclusion:

"This said it would be prudent for any governing body responsible for making the decision to add F to the public water supply to consult experts in the field and have environmental assays done to identify any contributing sources of fluoride. The form of F added to the water supply may also be an important consideration (CDC 1993.)"

According to the CDC (1993), most fluorine added to drinking water in the United States is in the form of fluosilicic acid (fluorosilicic acid, H₂SiF₆) or the sodium salt (sodium fluosilicate, Na₂SiF₆), collectively referred to as fluorosilicates (CDC 1993); for some smaller water systems, fluoride is added as sodium fluoride (NaF). Also fluorine from any source (e.g. toothpaste, pesticides, ground and well water etc.), according to the EPA/PHS, is considered in the total fluorine intake.

If you are interested in becoming more informed regarding AFW in humans, I refer you to: www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11571&page=R1. *Fluoride in Drinking Water: A Scientific Review of EPA's Standards (2006)*. Table of contents. It is interesting reading.

Again thank you for taking the time to respond.

Sincerely –

Ted Stashak DVM, MS, DACVS, Professor Emeritus Surgery

Readers Write

Equi-Ed—Journey from the Heart

Written by Jessica Farber

In 2006 I started my journey with Equi-Ed, thanks to one of my friends who was a rider there. I have enjoyed my time and it has changed me for the better. Throughout my years there, I have seen new riders come in who are scared to get on the horse and by the third lesson they can't wait to get on. It is an amazing feeling seeing the riders' progress and to know inside that you were a part of that. I started off at Equi-Ed with no experience at all and now I have knowledge that allows me to connect with the rider and that feeling is beyond words. Volunteering at Equi-Ed not only allows me to help other people but also to help myself. I always hear that without the volunteers there would be no Equi-Ed but I think it also works both ways. I have been volunteering for six years and I can't picture my life without Equi-Ed. If they didn't exist I would not be the person I am today.

Volunteering has brought me compassion and patience. It has taught me to respect not only other people but also myself because I have the power to change someone's life. Over the years, I have been through some deaths of the horses I have worked with. When I would get the news that one of the horses had passed, it was very hard for me. I have become very attached to them over my time there and when something like that happens it feels like my own pet has died. I don't consider the horses I have worked with to be just animals. You get so attached and love them so much that it feels like they are human. Whenever I am having a hard time, I can go to see them and I feel fine.

When I am in a lesson leading a horse, I feel calm because of the connection between me and the horse. Even though there are tons of things to look out for, I know the horse so well that I can feel when something is wrong. I have loved horses my whole life, how they are so powerful and gentle at the same time. I thought it was beautiful and I knew that someday I would own a horse of my own. Then I started volunteering. Caring for a horse is a lot of work, but it is exactly what I picture it will be.

I have also known that I want to be an equine veterinarian. With the work I do, I not only help people but also learn about the horses and how their bodies work, diseases they can get, and other helpful information that not only helps me volunteer but also prepares me for my career choice. In short, volunteering at Equi-Ed isn't just about helping out with lessons and preparing the feed, it's about learning how to care for a horse and to recognize when there is something wrong with the horse. I have gained far more from the volunteering that I have given. I have been there for six years and still I learn more and more every day I'm there.

I have the most fun with the students I work with. I love leading a horse and looking back to see the student smiling; I can't help but smile myself because I know that I was a part of making the student happy. Interacting with the students and the horses makes all the work you have to do worth it. After all the time I have spent at Equi-Ed, I can't picture ever leaving. Some of the days I don't go there, I sit on my couch wishing I were at the barn.

I have devoted my Saturday mornings to going to the barn and working instead of sleeping in, but I wouldn't have it any other way because volunteering there has made me a better person as a whole. After a while you get so used to the work and the smell and the dirt on your hands. The first year that I volunteered there, I would go to lunch after work and watch the expressions on other people's faces when they smelled the dirt and leather, but I wouldn't notice it.

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Readers Write

Starting Over

Written by Chris Ellsworth

Wherever there is a horse there is a teacher. Humans are mostly concerned with what they can teach us but horses learn from horses, too. While this may seem obvious, we often overlook its importance. Social skills, starting with what colts learn from their dams and progressing to getting along with a herd, are best learned from peers. For this reason, my horses spend most of their lives turned out in big pastures with plenty of herd mates. Colts are raised by their dams in a natural environment complete with other mares and colts and a stallion. There is no substitute for it. Horses that don't get this from an early age are prone to multiple social inadequacies—either the misperception that life is a battle for self-preservation or an undeveloped awareness of the world around them.

Reactions of under-socialized horses run the spectrum from fear of other horses to hyper-aggressiveness. Such horses can be difficult to ride in a group, over-reacting in any number of ways to other horses. Often they are oblivious to boundaries and warnings from more dominant horses, bringing them unnecessary trouble. When introduced to the cavvy on a ranch, these horses are easy to spot and often referred to as "town horses" or "backyard horses." It's not a compliment.

I've had the great fortune to work with many Off-Track Thoroughbreds and they often come with limited social skills. Giving them time to learn to be a natural horse is crucial to later success as a

riding horse. The trick is to let other horses do the teaching. My core group of horses has done this many times and is welcoming but firm, though the beginning can seem a little brutal. The new horse may earn bite marks and a little ostracizing but will learn to get along in the real world. There is no timetable. As a general rule, the new guy gets three months with the other horses before I handle him much and it sometimes takes a full year for him to re-learn how to be a natural horse. The upside to this "readjustment" period is restarting a horse who has had the chance to come to terms with his place in the world and doesn't have to stress about that when we go to work.

There is another kind of horse-to-horse learning that humans often under-utilize: horses can learn much about riding and dealing with people from other horses. I do as much training as I can while riding another horse—including many groundwork exercises—and all trainees get ponied. My round pen is in the middle of my arena and I often leave a green horse in there while working with more advanced horses. He can see for himself that having a rider isn't a big deal. Even picking up a trot or a lope for the first time is best done by following the example of another horse. Matching the pace and emotional level of those around him is natural to a herd animal; doing it alone is less so.

There is another benefit to this horse-to-horse learning. When it's time for the student-horse to become the teacher, it puts meaning into the things we've been working on. Suddenly working off my legs gets really important. It has purpose. He gets to be the leader too, maybe for the first time in his life, and having a human on his back becomes a status symbol. Which is very cool if you're the human...

Chris Ellsworth has spent a lifetime learning from horses and sharing that knowledge with riders of all kinds. He will be conducting horsemanship and cow working clinics in Healdsburg on October 5-6 and Pleasanton on October 12-13. Please contact Sylvie Anacker at 415-309-0162 or asorges@gmail.com for more information, or visit www.chearthorses.com.



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