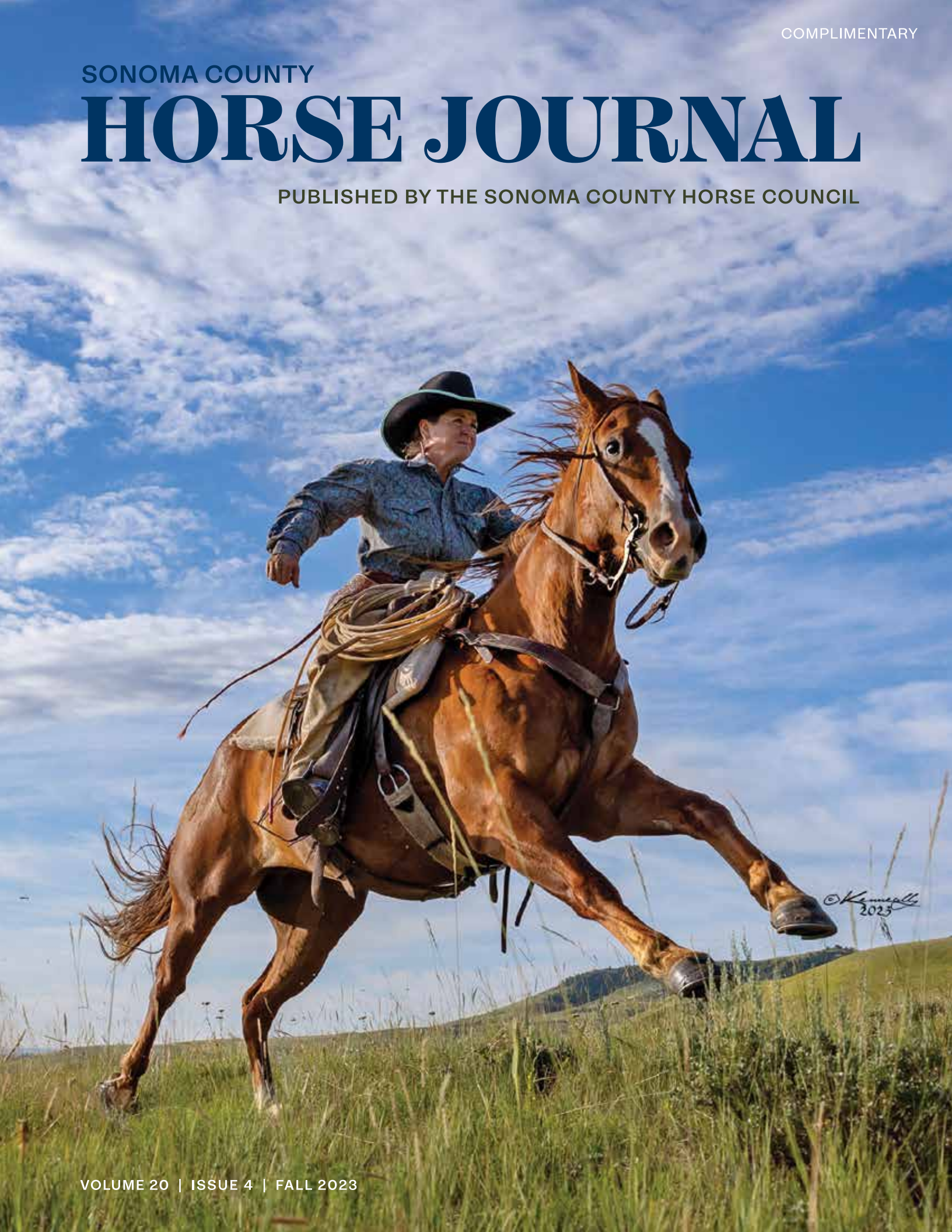


COMPLIMENTARY

SONOMA COUNTY

# HORSE JOURNAL

PUBLISHED BY THE SONOMA COUNTY HORSE COUNCIL



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2023





Jennifer Knef approaches luxury real estate marketing from an investor's perspective even if her clients are buying or selling their primary residence. She helps homeowners sell at the highest possible price in the least amount of time and also helps buyers uncover hidden opportunities for upside potential. With a professional career that spans over 30+ years in Real Estate, Banking and Finance, Jennifer's focus is representing the most distinctive wine country, rural and equestrian estates of Sonoma, Napa and Marin Counties.



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SONOMA COUNTY

**HORSE JOURNAL**

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**ON THE COVER**

Professional photographer Kelly Kenneally of Rohnert Park took a holiday in Montana, and of course, her camera went with her everywhere.

Jessica Hahn, along with her husband Jake, are head cowboys at the Dryhead Ranch, a working cattle and guest ranch located on the Crow Reservation on the slopes of the Pryor Mountains. She rides CJ, a Quarter Horse she raised on the Dryhead Ranch.

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## CONTRIBUTORS



**ONDINE RANGELL** has dedicated many years to understanding and communicating with animals with a special affinity for horses. From a multicultural and international upbringing, she developed an intuitive understanding and can bridge communication

beyond words. Through liberty training, she helps horses and humans find the vocabulary to understand each other and create a common ground of trust and respect. As a licensed equine bodyworker focusing on biomechanics, she looks to create healthy movement. Offering liberty lessons and clinics in the Bay Area, she hopes to contribute to a more compassionate and interconnected world for animals and humans.



**KELLY KENNEALLY** is a lifelong Arabian horse owner and breeder. She has been a professional equine photographer and videographer since 2009. Her specialty is turning equestrian life into art. She is based in Sonoma County; Kelly provides horse show coverage,

equine portraiture, sales photos and videos, and equine fine art. She works throughout the San Francisco Bay Area and is available for sessions and horse shows in California and beyond.



**MICHELLE BEKO, DVM** has been an equine veterinarian since 1991. She enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter as well as doing dressage and jumping with her horse Ranger. You can reach her at Empire Equine at 707-545-3909, empire-equine.com



**TARA GOOD-YOUNG** is a 30-year Sonoma County resident, healthcare operations specialist, and passionate returning equestrian. Introduced in the last three years to riding and showing American Saddlebreds in saddle seat English pleasure classes, she

advocates for the breed as vice president of the Northern California American Saddlebred Association, as well as an owner and future breeder of these magnificent animals. Her love of caring for and riding horses began at an early age, raised on western trail and employing gentling techniques with Mustangs in rural northern Nevada where she grew up.



**AMY YOUNG** is the equine outreach manager at the University of California, Davis, (UCD), Center for Equine Health. After completing her master of science in genetics at UCD, she spent several years researching genetics and health of companion animals, horses, and

livestock at the UCD School of Veterinary Medicine and Department of Animal Science. She is a hunter rider and a judge for the Sacramento Area Hunter Jumper Association, Interscholastic Equestrian Association and Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association. Information about the Center for Equine Health is available at: [ceh.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/](http://ceh.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/)



**CATHERINE ANNE HELD, Ph.D.** A depth psychologist, Catherine hangs out with Primo, a thirty-something Peruvian Paso. The Petaluma author's forthcoming book is *Called by the Horse: Women, Horses and Consciousness*. Find out more at [www.catherineheld.com](http://www.catherineheld.com)

### DO YOU WANT TO WRITE FOR THE HORSE JOURNAL? OR SEE YOUR PHOTOS IN PRINT?

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## President's Message



JOHN O'HARA PHOTOGRAPHY

**FALL HOLDS PROMISE** What an incredibly successful rainy season and a fabulous summer. Unlike much of the country, we had only a few periods of intense heat, with most of the weather being incredibly temperate. A reminder of how things used to be around here, the rain and sun brought high growth to pastures which was certainly a welcome change. Now we head

into our traditionally mild autumn with the water tables recharged and wells producing as they should. Life is good in the North Bay, as Luther Burbank wrote: "I firmly believe, from what I have seen, that this is the chosen spot of all this earth as far as nature is concerned."

It was nice to see group trail rides edging back up to pre-pandemic levels. Both club and casual events on private property and public access lands seem to have increased, with more people trailering out and enjoying their horses and friends. Furthermore, my very unscientific poll seems to indicate more instances of horse camping and horse showing and competitions.

The Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) stepped up this summer and brought horses back to the Sonoma County Fair with the production of "Horseplay at the Fair." In conjunction with the fair's exhibits coordinator Hope Marshall, we provided fairgoers with a wide variety of

equine demonstrations and entertainment. In two-hour daily events for eight days, these happenings elevated equine life in the minds of the public.

We were given our own arena and a free hand in developing the program. The success of our undertaking is attributable to the fantastic leadership of board members Sahar Bartlett, Tracy Underwood, and Sarah de Sanz. We look forward to even greater events at the fair next year. Yes, Sonoma County is all about horses.

Further, your horse council again participated in sponsorship of the Sonoma County Fair Youth and Open Horse Show in the Chris Beck Arena, where over 60 participants vied for six high-point buckles and an embroidered blanket that went to the overall high-point winner. We should all take pride in supporting this show and the fair in general.

The Equus Awards committee has begun planning next year's biennial tribute to the efforts and successes of local equestrian leaders. Give some thought to eligible candidates to receive this recognition. In November, we will send out a request to active SCHC members for suggested nominations. This is a fun process and event designed to honor those among us who have dedicated time and energy to the support and growth of equine activity in the North Bay area while at the same time raising funds to power the Sonoma County Horse Council in its endeavors that serve our community.

Happy Trails,  
Henry Beaumont  
SCHC President

### Cotati Large Animal Hospital

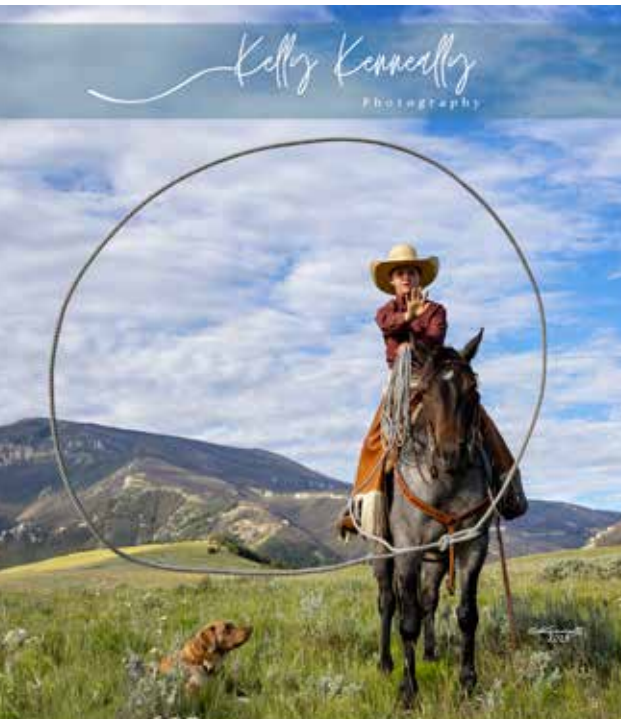
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## PETALUMA PONY CLUBBER MEGHAN HILL WINS SCHOLARSHIP

The Anson W.H. Taylor Memorial Scholarship of \$1500, sponsored by United States Pony Clubs, Inc. (USPC) and Equine Land Conservation Resource, is awarded to a current Pony Club member who has been actively committed to land conservation efforts. These exceptional recipients all demonstrated outstanding academic achievements, sportsmanship, and leadership through horsemanship.

Recipient **Meghan Hill** is a C-1 dressage and C-2 horse management certified member of Sonoma Coastal Equestrian Training Center Pony Club Riding Center in the Sierra Pacific Region. She is majoring in sustainability and management at Royal Holloway University, University of London.



## CONGRATS TO THE 2023 GRANT WINNERS

Bay Area Barns and Trails continues its mission to preserve and protect public access to stables and trails in the Bay Area with these funding awards.

- **Marin Stables & Trails:** Flood mitigation repairs.
- **Mounted Patrol Foundation-Sheriff's Activity League:** three sessions of youth riding activities.
- **Mounted Patrol Foundation-Pescadero Creek County Park:** Storm-related repairs enabling equestrians to ride from Jack Brooks to other trails in the park.
- **Point Reyes National Seashore Mounted Patrol:** Funding to send two rangers and their horses to the Western States Mounted Patrol Officer training in Norco, California.
- **Ridge to Bridge 2023:** Funding to help support the Ridge Trail's annual event.
- **V-O-Cal:** Funding for two multi-use trail improvement projects.



## HORSE TRAILS OF AMERICA LAUNCHES NEWSLETTER

Horse Trails of America (HTA) announces the launch of its free monthly newsletter. Trail riders and those who travel with horses can receive this resource free when they sign up for an HTA free access membership or take advantage of the six-month free trial of the HTA Trail & Travel membership. [www.horsetrailsofamerica.com/start-membership](http://www.horsetrailsofamerica.com/start-membership).

## HOLIDAY SHOPPING FROM LOCAL ARTISANS

Join local artisans and vendors for holiday shopping and cheer at the Chocolate Cloud Holiday Fair. From home decor to holiday cards and ceramics to culinary treats something for everyone on your list.

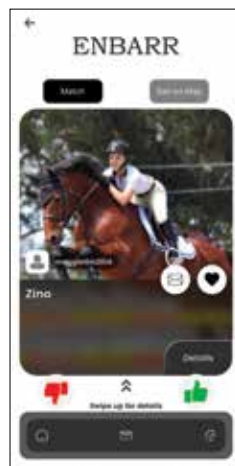
**Chocolate Cloud Holiday Fair**  
**Saturday, December 2 from 11:00-3:00**  
**Flying Cloud Farm, 1200 Jacobsen Lane, Petaluma**

## HORSE MARKETING APP

**Maggie Clancy** of Strides Riding Academy and Equus Springs in Petaluma has designed and developed an app to streamline the process of buying and selling horses.

The ENBARR app works like a dating app.

Named after an Irish mythical creature, it allows buyers to view horses that are listed for sale, customize search criteria, like and save horse profiles in their favorites tab, and contact sellers. Sellers create horse profiles, message buyers, view likes



for their horses, and manage horse profiles from the app or website, adding videos, photos, and information directly from their phones.

"One cool ENBARR feature is that sellers can view the number of times their horse's profile has

been liked. Not getting enough likes? Edit your listing, pictures, and videos to attract more interest," says Maggie. "Also, ENBARR users can message directly through the app. No need to exchange contact info or fear your email will end up in a spam box."

ENBARR will remain free for sellers until 100,000 horses are listed on the site. The app is available on Android, IOS, and online and found on Google Play and Apple stores.

Sonoma, Marin, and Napa were well represented at the **California Dressage Society's State Championship/U.S. Dressage Federation Region 7 Finals** held at Murieta Equestrian Center in September. Among the successful competitors were: Kristin Aggers, Madelynne Colteaux, Linda Donahue, Maya Dalla Valle, Eleni Econopouly, Kirstin Jorgensen, Kari Ontko, Jaclyn Pepper-Millard, and Jordan Rohanna.

## FUN TIMES WITH THE SONOMA COUNTY HORSE COUNCIL



Polo, drill team, barbecue, and friends brought out a crowd to celebrate the Sonoma County Horse Council's 30th anniversary at the Wild Oak Saddle Club in Santa Rosa on July 1.



Sonoma County Horse Council brought horses back to the Sonoma County Fair this past summer with eight days featuring a variety of horse and discipline exhibitions from August 3-13.





# LIBERTY TRAINING can Enhance a Horse's Life

BY ONDINE RANGEL

Photos by Cassidy Cooper

Horses at liberty bring to mind the stunning show *Cavalia*, the first onstage production to make free horses their stars. Envision beautiful horses on stage running free, confident, and excited, clearly enjoying themselves and following soft, quiet prompts from a nearby person. Spectators witnessed at each performance an authentic encounter filled with complicity and emotion based on patience, respect, and trust.

The person behind that idea was Frederic Pignon, who grew up in southern France, where he and his brother Jean-Francois worked on liberty training in a backfield with a horse named Gazelle. They didn't know that they were doing something exceptional. They were just playing, working with what the horse would offer.

Simply defined, in liberty training we work with a horse without tack, allowing it to leave at any time. We create a safe space that is engaging and prompts the horse's natural curiosity and desire to bond. Our most powerful tool is the connection with the horse, and that is what makes liberty training so rewarding.

Most horses will wander off when we free them of their tack. Most humans have no idea how to ask for things without physical control and physical boundaries.

In truth, physical control is an illusion. Horses are so much stronger and faster

Ondine Rangel takes her four-year-old Mustang Kitty through exercises while at liberty.

than we are. They think in movement. They can rip a rope out of our hands faster than we can blink an eye. They know where we will be at any time. They are so tuned into body language that they notice the moment we lose our focus.

## AGREEMENT BETWEEN HORSE AND HUMAN

What keeps them with us is an agreement that we will make reasonable requests and offer a safe place. That doesn't change when the horse is loose. Yet, in order to make that agreement, we need a common language to communicate.

Most horses have never been listened to and, in turn, have learned to ignore us. The more sensitive ones struggle because it's harder for them to tune us out. We make confusing movements and randomly pressure them with our posture and attention. It's only when we're shaking the rope and raising our voices that they join the conversation.



TROTTING IN PARTNERSHIP

For the conversation to happen, the human side needs to think and speak differently. Compared to horses, we speak a sophisticated language of words that can communicate complex notions. Horses, on the other hand, speak physically. Everything they do is communication, and they are always listening. Their language is simple and subtle. They communicate with ears, eyes, nose, and tail but also with alignment, patterns, breath, posture, energy, and timing. A tail swish can express irritation, or it can be an invitation to come closer, depending on how much energy it carries. Looking away can be a concern about something on the horizon or asking whether or not we are paying attention. We have to stay attentive to pick up on what they are saying. In liberty training, we try to create a vocabulary that human and horse can agree on based on their language.

To start with liberty training, we ask the horse to stay focused on us. They should have us as the center of their reality. We need to catch every distracted moment and redirect them back to us. The point is to let them know that we are offering to be their protector, and that they need to follow our lead. Simply walking around with the horse tuned in is one of the most basic and important exercises in liberty training.

## WHAT THE WHIP MEANS

When I point at my horse Kitty's hind end and put energy towards it, she knows I mean for her to move that part, not for her to leave. This is where the whip comes in handy. We can use it similar to how a horse uses its tail. It will express boundaries, intention, and

energy. If we use the whip well, the horse will appreciate the clarity. If I drop the whip during a session, Kitty will point to it. She prefers for me to use it. She can read me more easily with it.

When we first shake a whip in front of them, most horses will struggle to see that as an invitation. We must build up their sense of safety and explain that the whip is just asking.

Eventually, we can snap and zip the whip wildly through the air, and the horse will tear towards us. That is by far one of the most thrilling parts of doing liberty training. That much power rushing to me only to become a soft, gentle thing when the horse reaches me melts my heart every time.

Making circles is one of the most difficult exercises to do. Horses will quickly get bored with putting in effort without really going anywhere. If the horse understands the exercise, don't say, "just one more time." Let the horse rest. Pick it up again later in the session or the next day. Most horses have a low tolerance for repetition.

Horses are very visual and have excellent memories. I imagine that when they nap, they replay our session in their minds. I imagine they explore different outcomes and review what we did, trying to make sense of it. I've seen horses struggle with a cue on one day and not only figure it out by the next day but do it with pride and a whinny when they accomplish it. They literally knew what I was going to ask and were ready and proud of themselves for delivering. That's usually when someone walks by, wondering why I'm making such a fuss and laughing so loud.



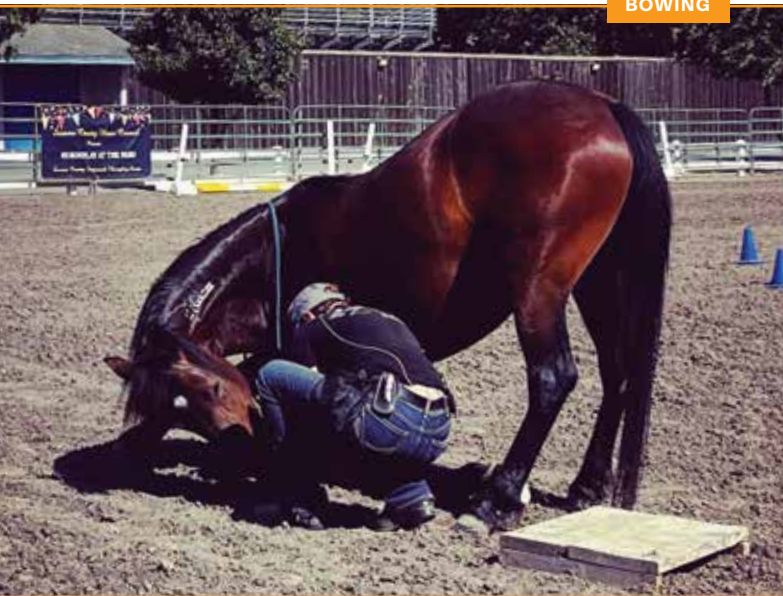
SHARING A MOMENT



SPANISH WALK



**BOWING**



**UNIQUE CUES**

Think your cues through. At some point, they will clash. If I point at something, Kitty will go around it. If I want her to knock it over, I must change my gesture to be clear.

The hardest part for the person is learning to tune in to body language or kinesics. We all express things physically and recognize when other people express things physically too. We aren't necessarily aware of what we see. We chalk it up to a feeling or a sense, not to someone's specific posture change or something different in their pattern of movements. Horses are more aware. They notice the slightest change in their environment and in our movements.

In liberty training, we need to control our kinesics and recognize what the horse expresses. In time you see when you are about to lose your horse's attention.



**TRUST**

You notice that pinch of the mouth and that glance that precedes when the horse takes off. You have a millisecond to change your ask before your horse is gone, and you have to start over.

Some of the less obvious tools we have are our tension and our breath. Just stiffening your body exhibits its amazing power. I once asked Zoey, the horse zebra cross or zorse, to give me a trot by adding the slightest tension to my body. She was gone in a flash. It was too much for her.

Breath is good for calming a horse and for asking for more energy. Since Kitty was weary of whips at first, I got in the habit of asking for faster by making sharp 'ha' sounds. It now makes it easy to ask for more in the middle of a trick, such as side passing where my whip is busy keeping her body straight.

**TRUST ON BOTH SIDES**

I got into liberty training two years ago when I got my Mustang Kitty at two years old and almost untouched. She was high-strung and unsure about people. As a very independent girl, she saw no reason to follow. It took a year for us to build a safe space for each other and trust each other. I needed to know that she wouldn't kick or bite, and she needed to know that I would be fair and kind.

In our early days, running her around was not an option as she had that Mustang endurance and a mind to jump fences. I didn't use treats or whips at first. She was reactive and didn't have the self-control to be reliable with treats. Our best reward method was praise, a pause, and my running off to pick grass for her. She taught me to be accurate with my body. It took patience and willingness to fail, but it also taught me to read her and to laugh often. Now a small step backward and a quick glance is all she needs to return to me. She enjoys what we do and likes to suggest her favorite tricks. Sometimes she invents one.

At this point, we can pretty much talk. She picks up new tricks immediately. Her favorites are the spin and the Spanish walk. She also has a cue she can use when she wants to be done with work. I always try to oblige. I'm still learning to recognize what she's telling me, but I'm picking up more and more, and it's a sweet thing to realize she is inviting me to "come check this out" or "stay with me."

Liberty training is all about connection and getting to a place where you and your horse can play. It's meeting them in their world.

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# 10 TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHING HORSES IN MOTION

BY KELLY KENNEALLY

**1) Equipment** – Digital single-lens reflex and mirrorless cameras are great for action and sports photography. The preferred lens for equine and sports photographers is the 70-200mm zoom lens. Fast memory cards are a must. Research which is best for your camera.

**2) Know Your Camera** – Learn to use your camera to its full capability. Many people always stay on autofocus. This might not be the best choice for capturing horses in motion. It tries its best to assume what you need: light, focus, etc. But many times, you will get blurry images. Experiment with shutter priority, aperture priority, and manual mode to get your desired image. I find that shutter priority is ideal for action photography. You can choose a speed over 1/800, which will freeze the movement of the horse and rider, giving you a sharp image.

**3) Timing** – Avoid continuous shooting or motor drive or machine-gunning. Learn to time the shot for the correct position and stride. This will take some time and practice to get it right. You might get lucky and get a photo or two correct if you use continuous focus. But if your timing is off, all the images will be off. Also, "machine gunning" is what it sounds like, and it is incredibly annoying to those around you. It may even spook the horses, depending on how loud your camera is. Last but not least, it will wear your camera's shutter out. Your shutter has a limited life and is expensive to replace. It is far better to get your timing correct with one shot, and you'll know you got the shot instead of hoping you got the shot.



Well-timed image of the jog      Poorly timed image at the jog

**4) Fast Shutter Speed** – Always use a shutter speed of 1/800 or more to freeze motion. If your settings are too slow, you will get motion blur.

**5) Continuous Autofocus** – Cameras need to be able to focus continually while the horse is in motion. This is the AI Servo setting for Canon cameras, and for Nikons, it is the AF-C.



Example of shooting high (birds-eye view) and at eye-level, same location



**6) Where to Photograph** – When photographing a horse, ensure you are in the best position to get your desired result. I prefer a clutter-free background with the sun on my back. You can also experiment here with levels of height. For example, you can get up high in the grandstands and shoot down on the subject. You can shoot standing at eye-level on the ground. You can also get low, crouching, or lying down. See which perspective you like best. With these different positions, safety must always be considered first for you, the photographer, and the horse and rider. I have seen some non-horse photographers do things that could cause wrecks, and I have had to intervene. Please always use your common and horse sense.



Examples of well-timed images for their discipline standard

**7) Know Your Breed/Discipline/Sport** – Dressage, jumping, reining, barrel racing, and breed shows all need to be photographed differently. You will need to research how your desired event is typically photographed. Know where the action is and place yourself accordingly. Working on your timing to capture what is essential. Where should the legs be placed during a particular maneuver? Are there breed and discipline standards?

## 8) Know your Gaits

**WALK** – Capture this gait when the foreleg is forward but has not touched the ground yet. For the show horses I photograph, choosing the leg that is away from you is customary. But know your breed and discipline preferences. You can still experiment, as well, to see which leg you prefer, but do know there might be certain expectations.



This



Not this

**TROT** – Once again, foreleg forward. I shoot with the knee bent and the other leg straight on the ground for my breed and discipline. But for dressage, it is the leg closest to you, not bent at the knee but extended.



Good examples of trot/jog images



**CANTER** – Horses at the canter or gallop should be moving forward with elevation and good propulsion from the hind end. The forelegs or knees should be in a forward motion.



This



Not this





Panning example

**9) Panning Technique** - We talked early about getting sharp images without motion blur; this is the exact opposite. You use this technique to intentionally show speed by creating a blur effect. While this technique can

be challenging to execute well, it is fun to experiment. There are tutorials on the internet to help you learn this technique.



**10) Break the Rules/Experiment**

- Now that you learned these tips, try them. Know the rules and know that rules are meant to be broken. Don't be afraid to experiment and have fun. Photography is art, and it's your art to create your way.

**Example of shooting on the ground with a wide-angle lens (perspective/experimenting)**

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# Our Horses Celebrate the Holidays



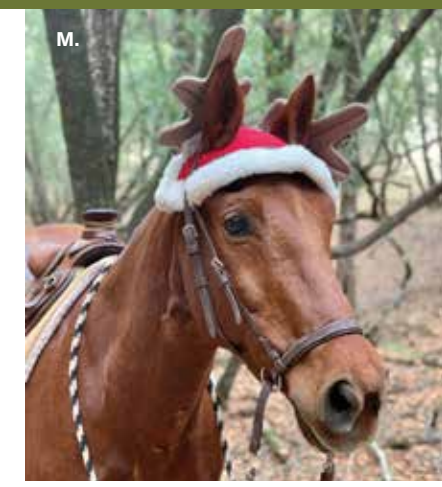
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- A. Aly Folkens' Jethro
- B. Shadow & Gini Griffin
- C. Pony Boy & Brooklyn
- D. Dino, Patti Schofler & Elvis
- E. Shonna Berk's Pinsappo
- F. Manual Soares & Quinton
- G. Entry to Tracy Underwood's tack room
- H. Michele Roger's Sky
- I. Michele Roger's EZ
- J. Monte & Debbie Weigmann
- K. Belle & Clara Lagos
- L. Lulu & Cecilia Lagos
- M. Carina DeVera's Jimeny
- N. Kari Ontko's Rudy
- O. Nancy Bundschu's Knickers





## Diary of a Future Foal

Over the next few issues, Tara Good-Young will share her adventures in what began as a lark to ride after a 30-year break and has become a journey to create new life—a foal of her own.



Tara Good-Young and Our Lady Valentine (top photo) Lady is showing her baby bump. As for knowing in advance the sex of the baby, Tara decided that they would like colt or filly to be the surprise at the end. (bottom photo)

As of our last vet check, all is well, and Our Lady Valentine (Lady) is still expecting. However, we are deeply saddened that WC Gothic Revival, the beloved sire of our foal-to-be, passed away suddenly. Our hearts go out to Melody Adler, his owner, her mom, Joan, who enjoyed several years and victories showing him, Gothic's pasture companion Travis the Burro, and everyone who loved this grand stallion who touched many hearts throughout the Saddlebred world.

I have promised to share information about the hard-to-breed mare regimen we adopted that helped us to get this far. We had Lady under lights, attempting to mimic longer spring days and cajole her body to come into heat. She just wasn't having it. We also tried to cycle her with a hormone injection, to which she only had a mild response because mother nature's wet winter was strong and trumped our efforts. So we paused, waiting for some real sun to get Lady outside and feeling her oats. We also cycled her again with an injection.

She came into season, but with only one ovary working—truly, all our eggs in one basket. She also had the potential for chronic uterine infection because her vagina was tilting a little the wrong way. Dr. Amber Bowen gave the word to order the "man in a can," sent the uterine fluid for culture to determine the best treatment, laid out a careful several-day regimen of oxytocin injections to stimulate contractions to move the fluid out, oral Banamine to reduce inflammation, and then, after the release of the semen, 60 days of estrus-suppressing Regu-mate to help hold the pregnancy.

Fortunately, Lady's culture came back negative, and the semen injection went off without a hitch. However, the barn was headed off to a show out of the area, and I needed to learn how to administer Lady's prescribed treatments. The orals didn't intimidate me, but it had been decades since I delivered injections to an animal. Luckily, with some text coaching and a great visual of where and how to inject into what I call the magic triangle, I did it.

So like any self-respecting newbie breeder and dreamer, I took my quest to Google. Equine-Reproduction.com, the University of Minnesota (<https://extension.umn.edu/horse-health/caring-your-mare-during-breeding-and-foaling>) and the University of Florida Large Animal Hospital's website (<https://largeanimal.vethospitals.ufl.edu>) provided excellent images and information to educate me about daily developments, critical mare vet-care landmarks, plus engaging sonogram images with easy-to-understand explanations of what I was seeing. They offered commonsense care advice such as keeping your mare's stress and exertion levels down during early pregnancy, distancing her from horses traveling off property to events, and when to vaccinate for best immunity protection. I learned to separate her from mares that are cycling into heat and not yet successfully bred, and not to let her eat tall fescue grass due to potential endophytic fungus

contamination that can cause complications or loss of the pregnancy.

Did you know that you can sex a foal as early as 55 to 75 days into pregnancy? I had no idea before I headed down this internet search rabbit hole. I also discovered that around days 53 to 58, the embryo—recently-turned-fetus (day 40 is the marker for the status change) becomes a very discernable tiny horse in a sonogram despite being only the size of a pecan.

### Milestones in Our Journey

**60 DAYS:** The 60-day development and heartbeat sonogram check also tested the nerves and patience of our barn family and vet when Lady's baby played hide and seek with the camera. But finally, there were signs of life, and lab work bore out that we were still pregnant, had good hormone levels, and could begin weaning Lady off Regu-mate. Baby had surpassed the size of a pecan and was now hamster size at 2.5" long and 1 ounce in weight.

**93 DAYS:** At ninety-three days, our foal fetus was between the size of a chipmunk and a kitten, approaching seven inches long and one pound.

### Six (or less) Degrees of Separation from Lady

It is a small, small world, and it seems as if nothing ties the twine that binds like horses. Once the fevered delirium of becoming a new horse owner broke, the lucidity of just how connected equestrians are started materializing. When word was out at my barn that I was buying Lady, a barn mate shared he once owned her half-sister, Coco. Brigitte Scholl, my trainer, knew Lady's sire and dam. And while I bought her in Arizona and she had been foaled by breeders at All Roses Farm in Versailles, Kentucky, the owners of All Roses Farm, where Lady was born, originated from Sonoma County and knew many people at my barn.

On my trip to Kentucky to meet WC Gothic Revival and Melody, his farm owner/ breeding manager, I also visited All Roses Farm to see where Lady originally hailed from. The drive onto the property was striking with grassy rolling knolls, a handsome new barn showcased in beautiful stonework, and Saddlebreds everywhere. As I pulled up to meet Andrea Smith, the owner, I was greeted by her parents. As we were exchanging introductions, Andrea's dad said to send his best to my husband, Marlon. What? Where did that connection come from? Turns out they had worked on a business matter together many years prior in Sonoma County.



Lady and her first foal Electric Lemonade

I flew home to do a quick one-day turnaround to attend the last show of the season, Jingle Bells, in San Juan Capistrano. On the first day of showing with Lady, as we made our way to the warm-up ring, I was concentrating hard on watching out for hazards and pedestrians, when suddenly I heard, "Is that Lady? I think that's Lady". Out of the corner of my eye, I detected a gentleman walking next to a handsome horse and well-decked-out woman rider, that had just exited the show ring after winning their class. It was Michelle McVey Haisch and her husband from whom I had bought Lady.

We got together, and I shared my plan to breed Lady to Gothic. She shared tips and history on Lady getting pregnant. Among the offspring she had from Lady was the horse I had seen Michelle ride by on — I'm Electric, barn name Edison. The kicker was that Edison is the progeny of Lady and WC Gothic Revival. And he's not the only one. Out of five foals Lady has had, two very handsome colts, Electric Lemonade and Desert Palm's I'm Electric, are by Gothic. To say I was a bit gob-smacked about that revelation and the many intersections of connections around Lady, would be hyperbole.


Seeing Lady's now young adult kids in photos and real life has me even more excited to meet our baby this coming foal season.



Tara's husband and now willing co-conspirator Marlon Young, Tara, and Our Lady Valentine.



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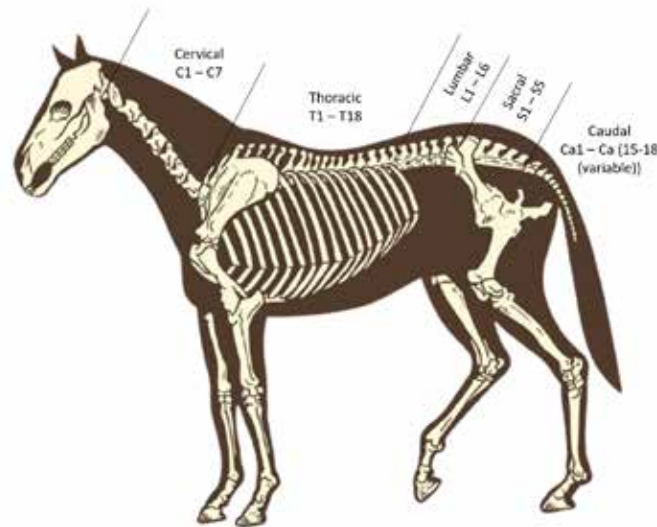


# WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT KISSING SPINES

BY AMY YOUNG

If you have experienced back pain (and as an equestrian, there is a good chance that you have), you know that the effects can range from frustrating to debilitating. Research has shown that back pain in people is largely a consequence of walking upright on two legs instead of four, which results in extra pressure on the lower back.

Although horses are quadrupeds, with their weight distributed across four limbs, some of the same variables influence back pain in both species. These include body weight, exercise, and genetics. One particular cause for equine back pain – kissing spines – has increasingly been a topic of conversation. The exact cause of overriding dorsal spinous processes (ORDSP), or “kissing spines,” is not clearly understood, and many horses with kissing spines do not show any clinical signs. In some cases, kissing spines are secondary to other health issues.



The five equine vertebral areas. Horse skeleton image from Vecteezy.com

## What are kissing spines?

Kissing spines occur when vertebrae in the spine are too close together rather than being spaced apart, as in a healthy spine. This results in the touching or

overlapping of two or more of the spinous processes. In some horses, this can cause consistent, low-grade pain, but many horses do not exhibit any clinical signs.

The locations and number of vertebrae involved can vary. Kissing spines most commonly occur between thoracic vertebrae (T) 13 and 18 (see figure), with T15 being the most often affected. This is where the angle of the dorsal spinal process changes orientation and is also the site directly under the saddle and the rider's seat. Kissing spines can also occur in the lumbar vertebrae, but this is less common.

The presence of kissing spines is not necessarily cause for concern, but it can be a predisposing factor for back pain. Thoroughbreds and other performance horses are the most commonly diagnosed breeds. Kissing spines are likely acquired and can be the result of a variety of factors, including poor saddle fit and improper training that allows the horse to carry itself with its head up, back hollow, and not engaging the muscles in its core. Genetic factors are possible, and recent research has suggested a genetic variant that may influence kissing spine severity in affected horses. However, additional research is needed to confirm the role of this risk variant and possibly identify additional variants that contribute to this condition.

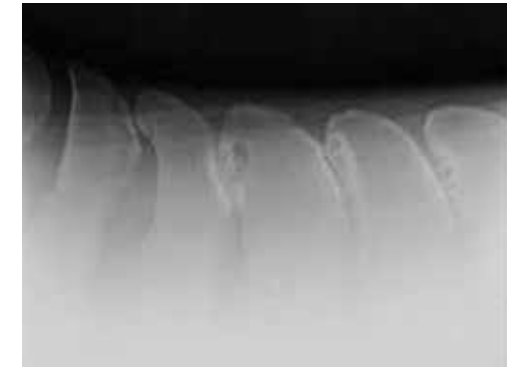
## How do I know if my horse has kissing spines?

Many horses with mild kissing spines do not exhibit any clinical signs. For those that do, the signs are highly variable and may include vague or overt lameness and overall poor performance. Affected horses can exhibit changes in behavior such as hypersensitivity to brushing, girthiness, bucking, rearing, head tossing, kicking out, hollowing the back, resisting the bit, trouble with transitions, cross-cantering, and refusing or rushing fences. Their backs are often sore to the touch.

A diagnosis of kissing spines can be challenging as it can be difficult to differentiate some of the clinical signs of kissing spines from behavioral or training issues, or medical conditions that are not related, or secondary, to the back. Radiographs are commonly used to diagnose kissing spines. However, it is important to perform a thorough clinical examination and not just rely on X-ray analysis. Thermography, which uses an



Mild case of kissing spine involves only two vertebrae (star). Image provided by Dr. Sarah le Jeune



Severe case of kissing spines involving at least four vertebrae. Image provided by Dr. Sarah le Jeune

infrared camera to detect heat patterns, is informative in some cases. Bone scans (nuclear scintigraphy) and ultrasound may also provide diagnostic information. Referral to a specialist may be warranted for an accurate diagnosis.

## What should I do if my horse is diagnosed with kissing spines?

Treatment for kissing spines begins with making the horse more comfortable through pain reduction, muscle relaxation, and exercises to stretch and strengthen back and abdominal muscles, stabilize posture, and improve mobility. Medical treatments may include shockwave therapy of the affected vertebrae and surrounding muscles, injections of anti-inflammatories in the region of the kissing spines (mesotherapy), and corticosteroid injections in the spaces between the vertebrae.

Physical therapy may include daily exercises that encourage the horse to move freely in a relaxed frame and may progress to poles and cavaletti once the horse is willing to stretch. A Pessoa Lunging System may encourage the horse to engage its core muscles. Exercise on an aqua treadmill may also be recommended. Saddle fit should be assessed, and necessary adjustments made to alleviate pressure points on the back. Chiropractic and acupuncture therapies, as well as therapeutic ultrasound, may be beneficial.

Surgical treatment is an option in severe cases. One approach is to remove about half (three inches) of the bone at the top of each of the dorsal spinous processes. This type of surgery is highly invasive and involves long recovery time. Alternatively, selected dorsal spinous processes may be removed, and the ligaments between the processes rejoined. Another option is to perform an interspinous ligament desmotomy (ISLD)

in which the interspinous ligament is cut to relieve tension. This can be performed on a standing, sedated horse. Although surgical intervention can produce positive results, these approaches can also destabilize the back and lead to future lameness.

The presence of kissing spines is not necessarily a cause for concern, but it may be considered as a predisposing factor for back pain. The majority of affected horses that exhibit clinical signs are able to return to work with medical or surgical treatment and physical therapy. Sustained results often necessitate a multifaceted approach, which requires time and commitment. The prognosis is poorer for horses five years old or younger, horses with five or more vertebrae involved, and cases where kissing spines are secondary to other spinal issues.

## Can kissing spines be prevented?

The exact cause of kissing spines is unknown but is thought to be related to conformation and development. It is important to first treat potential underlying issues, such as other causes of lameness or improper saddle fit, as these may prevent horses from using their backs properly.

Although genetics may be a risk factor for kissing spines, the condition is likely multifactorial, influenced by a number of environmental factors, including tack fit, rider influence, type of exercise being performed, abdominal muscle strength, carriage of the head and neck, and lameness. Further genetic research is needed to produce tools that could aid breeding decisions to lessen or prevent the incidence of kissing spines.

*This information on kissing spines was originally published in the University of California Davis Center for Equine Health's Equine Health Topics.*





# Volunteers that Make Horse Rescue Possible

BY CATHERINE HELD, PhD

Some horses come into horse rescue having been severely abused or neglected. Others come into rescue programs deeply grieving the loss of a caring relationship with the human in their life, or of a treasured equine pasture pal. Whatever the case, volunteers make happy endings possible.

Since February 2023, Sunday afternoons have found me volunteering at Sonoma Equine Rescue, Rehabilitation and Adoption (SERRA) near the border of Petaluma and Cotati. I have been around horses for two decades, attending equine-assisted programs for mental health and personal development and spending many years visiting two elderly horses weekly. I did not, however, know much about the daily care of horses. When contemplating ownership, I found the SERRA website extremely instructive, especially their adoption application. It outlines the horse ownership expectations, including potential costs and considerations such as care for the horse under many circumstances.



The feed room at SERRA is organized to the max.

On my first day, after fumbling with the rope halters and bringing the horses in two at a time with another volunteer, I was relieved to be offered the task of cleaning the supplement buckets. I was at least qualified to wash dishes. I was amazed at the small but well-organized supplement room, surprised to see large containers of cinnamon, psyllium, and sunflower

seeds. Large metal garbage cans are filled with Senior Equine, timothy cubes, and other pelleted food. Smaller cans hold pre-measured supplements labeled for each horse.

Soon my horse management competence expanded to include watching for signs of colic and apportioning snacks and dinners for fourteen horses with different nutritional needs. Sunday and Romeo get two pumps of Gut-X on their supplements. Four horses need special mash. Some diets change weekly.

Among the SERRA volunteers, Jeff and Joanne occasionally bring their granddaughter Gemma with them, and they now have two horses of their own. I sometimes work with a young man doing community service, or Julio from American Canyon, a dad of three young daughters wanting to learn the ropes of horse care. Every Wednesday, Peri measures out a week's supplements for each horse. Dayna and Debbie drive weekly from Lake County to work in the barn as well as to create and implement volunteer training. Mark and Tom handle the heavy lifting on the ranch—fence repair, tractor work, supply runs, moving manure, and ongoing maintenance tasks.

SERRA trainer Billy Schnuerle evaluates each rescue horse for its rideability and assists in ensuring a good match with an adopter. He also trains volunteers in horsemanship.

Morgan Lance volunteers at SERRA when she is not working overseas, advocating for the welfare of animals and teaching animal care to humans. Working in Africa, Asia, and South America, she has tackled projects to improve the welfare of dogs, cats, and wildlife in Vietnam and China and to improve veterinary care for working equines around the globe. Approximately 200 million people worldwide depend on animals to haul wagons full of water, food, bricks, and other building supplies. Many cannot afford veterinary care or quality food and water for their equines.



Volunteer Morgan Lance of Fairfax and her horse Grace



Rio arrived at SERRA near death. Today he is transformed.

Morgan is on the board of SPANA, an international animal welfare organization established in 1923 to address the issues of working animals, including horses, camels, donkeys, elephants, and oxen. Morgan supports their three-pronged approach: treatment, training, and teaching. Some of their innovative work includes training paraprofessional farriers and para-veterinarians and providing direct veterinary care and humane education programs for schoolchildren. Many of these animals and the people who work with them live in harsh, impoverished conditions. She hopes that someday solar-powered carts may reduce the need for working animals to carry heavy loads.

Like other volunteers, she wants to help horses and loves spending time with them. She also noted the quality of SERRA's equine management, equating it with the best barns in the North Bay. Morgan recognizes the risk that food quality and veterinary care can decline when donations are sparse. However, she has been impressed with the quality of SERRA's feed program and the consistency of care, especially given the challenging post-COVID fundraising environment.

Carla daily visits SERRA since she rescued Rio from starvation. While at a stable to board her own two rescue horses, she discovered Rio, an emaciated paint in a tiny dark stall. When she approached him, he didn't even respond. Carla threatened to turn the owner of the horse into animal control.

She called Sahar Bartlett, a board member of SERRA, who helped get a vet out to see Rio and deftly negotiated the horse's surrender from the reluctant owner. Rio's labs showed that he was probably just a week away from needing to be euthanized. His liver and kidneys were almost shut down from starvation. Because of poor dental health, he could not eat the alfalfa

the owner provided. The once downcast, starving horse is now robust, though he will probably require mash for the rest of his life because of poor dental care.

As with most nonprofits, SERRA's executive director and co-founder Cathy Spratling finds ongoing funding and volunteer management as the most pressing challenges. SERRA currently has about 30 active volunteers who provide approximately 150 hours per week of donated labor. Their horse experience ranges from green to very experienced. Cathy keeps a short list of standby volunteers who can fill in during unexpected absences.

Cathy shares other behind-the-scenes duties with board members Teresa King and Sahar Bartlett, who also volunteer. The trio carefully vet potential adopters so the system runs smoothly and horses on the waitlist can come quickly into the program. They also provide daily horse care and fundraising.

Dreams for SERRA center around a future arena on the leased property to exercise the horses. The project will cost \$80,000 to \$100,000, even with some donated labor and materials.

For now, Cathy is grateful for the dedication of the volunteers and seeing horses like Rio and Koda blossom. Ten years after Koda's young owner had sold him, she learned that he was about to be sold at auction and slaughtered. In his prime, Koda earned \$200,000 at the racetrack, but he was emaciated and in poor condition. A few days later, after a successful GoFundMe campaign, Koda arrived in California, where he stayed at SERRA for many months before finding his forever home with Teresa King.

Personally, I enjoy interacting with many different horses and getting to know them. It has been hard to say goodbye to the horses, even when they find a loving home. Yet the cycle continues as I'm greeting the new ones and learning more about making their lives better.



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# ZOONOTIC DISEASE



PHOTO BY MARCIE LEWIS

## WHAT CAN WE CATCH FROM OUR HORSES? BY MICHELLE BEKO, DVM

We are usually careful not to expose healthy horses to sick horses so as not to spread diseases. Our horses, however, can give us infectious ailments, i.e., zoonotic diseases.

Horses and humans can both contract several of the same diseases, but they are not necessarily spread between the two species. West Nile virus, for example, can infect horses, people, and several other species. Yet we cannot catch West Nile from a horse or give it to one. This vector-borne disease is spread via mosquitoes and, therefore, not zoonotic.

Corona viruses fall somewhere in the unknown. They are known to mutate readily, enabling them to infect new species. SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19, has been identified in 26 different species of wild or domestic animals, including house cats. Fortunately, transmission from cats to people seems to be rare. In Canada, white-tailed deer, which appear to be highly susceptible to COVID-19, have been infected by people and have infected people. Horses are not likely to catch the disease.

The most significant zoonotic disease worldwide is **rabies**, and the majority of mammals are susceptible to the rabies virus, which is considered to be a fatal infection. While it is uncommon in America, over 60,000 people, mostly from Asia or Africa, die of it annually.

Rabies survives in reservoir hosts, which pass it to other animals via a bite. In California, the main reservoir hosts are bats and skunks. Humans are most commonly infected by rabid dogs, which is why dogs are

required to be vaccinated in the U.S. Horses do get rabies but have never been shown to transmit it to other animals or people. Every year about 10 to 15 American horses or donkeys are confirmed to have died from rabies, although the actual number is probably much higher. Vaccination against rabies is available for horses.

**Salmonella** is a zoonotic bacterium that can infect horses, several other species of animals, and people. Infection is usually acquired from contaminated food or water and has caused outbreaks in equine veterinary hospitals that have required short-term closures in order to resolve the outbreak. *Salmonella* usually causes diarrhea, which can potentially be life-threatening.

We can definitely get *salmonella* from an infected horse. While I was on an internship in southern California, we had a very sick mare come into the clinic with bloody diarrhea. I warned our hard-working technician to be very careful about washing her hands after treating this mare. Unfortunately, she called in sick before our *salmonella*-positive culture results came back from the lab.

**Clostridia difficile** bacteria also can cause diarrhea in horses and humans, and we can potentially get it from our horses. This very serious infection is fatal in over 40 percent of infected horses. Both horses and people are more susceptible to it if they've been on antibiotics.

The zoonotic disease **Hendra virus** has only been found in Australia. It normally lives in fruit bats and is transmitted to horses via bat urine. While horses don't

seem to transmit it to other horses, they have given it to people exposed to their body fluids. Four of the first seven people to get it, who were horse trainers or veterinarians, died. Prevention involves keeping horses away from fruit trees where the bats forage.

**Influenza** (aka "flu") is a common viral upper respiratory infection of horses, swine, birds, and people. Horses and humans get different types of flu viruses and shouldn't be able to infect each other. At one time, dogs did not get influenza. Then in 1994, an equine strain of flu was found in racing greyhounds in Florida. It has since spread throughout the country.

**Coccidiomyces immitis** (aka "Valley fever") is a fungus that lives in the soil in arid parts of the western U.S., including California. By inhaling spores from the soil, numerous species, including horses, dogs, and people, can become infected. It usually causes respiratory disease but can infect a variety of organs.

The fungus takes on a different non-infectious form once it enters an animal, so it is not contagious from one individual to another. However, when I was in

veterinary school, an equine surgery resident became infected when doing an autopsy on a horse that died from this disease. Sadly, he eventually died as well.

Because things do change, like dogs getting the flu, and not all organisms behave as we think they will, it makes sense to be cautious around sick animals. Avoid inhaling nasal discharge from a coughing horse, and be very careful around any horse with diarrhea. Washing our hands and clothing well should help us protect ourselves. Stay healthy.



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## HORSE JOURNAL AD SPECS AND RATES

Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council, the *Horse Journal* is a quarterly publication designed to reach the North Bay's equestrian community through direct mail to individuals, organizations, horse clubs, and with distribution to Sonoma and Marin feed stores and equestrian businesses. Ads also appear in the *Journal* online on the SCHC website - [sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org)

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## THOUGHTS ON WINE AND HORSES

How perfect that the estate wine from Toyon Farm in Napa is bottled under the label Cavalli e Vigne, Italian for horse and vine. After all, the owners of Toyon are passionate about both. The director of winemaking for this family-owned vineyard and winery, Natalia Bonavito, is a lifelong horse rider as is her sister Danielle, and Toyon Farm is a premier equestrian facility. One has to wonder about a winemaker's thoughts on how grapes and horses relate.

"Growing grapes and producing wine, you are always learning, and with horse riding, you are always learning. To succeed in either, you would do well to have the attitude that you don't know everything and every day is an opportunity to learn something new."

"The beautiful art of creating a wine and that of developing a horse



are very similar. Wine transforms like a horse. The ultimate goal is creating harmony between horse and rider

while in winemaking, we are trying to find the perfect balance."

"The journeys when you start a vineyard and when you start a horse's training are amazing. You're starting as a farmer with a vine and taking the long journey to wine in the bottle. In the horse world, you teach a horse and then show and actually execute it in the ring. The number of hours and effort you put in behind the scenes in both worlds are huge."

"To be a winemaker, you truly need a passion for the process, not just enjoying the wine at the end of the day. It's similar to riding. Some people prefer a fully trained horse that knows everything and teaches them. But I have great admiration for people who start the horses and learn with the horses. That way might take longer, but it's a very meaningful process."



## Fall in love with Sonoma County

As the leaves turn colors, and warm sunny days give way to crisp autumn nights, Sonoma County bustles with activity in the vineyards and farmers markets. For horse lovers, it's an ideal time for us to get out and explore coastal parks and private ranches that offer spectacular views.

If you're thinking of listing your country property, now is also a wonderful time to showcase its color and charm. Fall tends to attract more serious buyers, which can mean a quicker sale as both parties are typically trying to close and move before the new year.

For buyers (especially those coming in from the Bay Area), shopping for a home during the holidays will really give you a sense of the beauty, tranquility and community that has drawn so many people to our area. Whether you're looking to buy, sell or just curious about your property's worth, reach out to me! I would love to share a more personalized update on our market and help you develop a smart plan to meet your real estate goals now and into 2024.



Pam Buda is a Realtor who specializes in Wine Country and Equestrian Property with 20+ years living and working in Sonoma County.

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[sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org)

Your \$30 annual membership entitles you to quarterly issues of the award-winning *Horse Journal* delivered to you. Support your horse community!

OUR CENTRAL MISSION IS TO PROMOTE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF HORSES AND ALL ASPECTS OF THE HORSE INDUSTRY IN SONOMA COUNTY:

- Promote and preserve horse agriculture, industry and recreation in Sonoma County
- Communicate to members on horse-related issues
- Inform the public about horse community goals and projects
- Support private and public equestrian facilities and local clubs
- Promote all aspects of the equine industry

WHEN WE EQUINE ENTHUSIASTS SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE, WE ARE VERY POWERFUL. JOIN THE MOVEMENT.



Sonoma County Horse Council

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PREMIER HOMES &  
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### HAWKWOOD HILL STABLES - PETALUMA, CA

Incredible equestrian and recreational compound consisting of 148 acres, lies about 45 minutes from San Francisco in idyllic west Sonoma County. It has a beautiful equestrian complex with indoor and outdoor arenas, barns, paddocks, pastures, a cross country course and miles of riding trails. Plentiful water, a stunning POND, charming clubhouse with three bedrooms and manager housing. In addition, there are two lovely gardens that have been the site of weddings, clinics and other events. In addition to the marvelous opportunity for equestrian and outdoor activities, Hawkwood Hill includes 30 acres suitable for planting grape vines. The cool evenings and moderate days are perfect for a number of popular varietals. Agricultural property in the Williamson Act gives reduced taxes for the new owners. \$5,5950,000 (Courtesy of Lisa Thomas, Compass)



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