

Sonoma County  
*HORSE JOURNAL*

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Volume 17 • Issue 4 • Fall 2020 | *Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council*



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**Managing Editor**

Patti Schofler  
editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

**Graphic Design**

Lynn Newton  
newton5@sonic.net

**Copy Editor**

Eileen O'Farrell

**Photography**

Marcie Lewis  
marcie@marcielewisphotography.com

William T. Stacy

wtstacy@gmail.com

**Distribution Diva**

Sandra Van Voorhis

**Printing**

AD-Vantage Marketing, Inc.  
ad-vantagemarketing.com

*Contact Us*

Sonoma County Horse Council  
PO Box 7157  
Santa Rosa, CA 95407  
www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org



**Sonoma County**

**HORSE JOURNAL**

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**Cover Photo: Emory Winship**  
Dusty Blackwood of Full Circle Farm with her horse of a lifetime, Irish Paint Cochise. Follow the story on page 12.

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# CONTRIBUTORS



**Wendee Walker** lives in Napa County with her husband Mike Fisher, three horses, and two spoiled rescue cats. She practices and teaches Animal Reiki Source Let Animals Lead® method of Reiki with Animals, Positive Reinforcement Training, and leads a writers workshop called: Write with the Herd. She is a USDF Dressage Bronze

Medalist, trail rider, horse camper, and animal lover. [wendeeandfriends.com](http://wendeeandfriends.com), YouTube channel Wendee & Friends.



**Patty Barnhart** of Southern Oregon has a varied background that has included breeding and showing Arabian horses, owning and managing a guest ranch on the cattle ranch she and husband Keith own, and serving as a counselor for at-risk youth for 18 years. As a professional writer, her work has appeared in major horse magazines. She

is also the author of two cookbooks, one volume of poetry, six collections of short stories, and one novel, all available on Amazon.com.



**Susie Weaver Banta** is a transplant from the East Coast, making Petaluma her home two years ago. She is a life-long amateur hunter-jumper rider with a career in human resources, including 17 years at PricewaterhouseCoopers. For many years she was fortunate to be a pioneer of working remotely, allowing her to

compete in Florida and the northeast. Now retired, she rides, writes, and is a volunteer mediator with Recourse Mediation Services at the Sonoma Superior Court.



**Richard Merchán** is an accomplished artist and lives in Sonoma County part of the year. While he doesn't own a horse and has limited experience with horses he has been enamored with the equine from a very early age. Merchán spends time with friends who have horses and occasionally gets to ride. For him, observing

these majestic creatures is where he finds the value of his horse paintings. <https://richardmerchan.com/press-exhibits/>



**Sher Bell Boatman** grew up riding horses weekends and holidays at the Yosemite Valley Stables. First owning and showing horses as an amateur, Sher eventually started training professionally. She trains, utilizing a straightening and balancing technique created by Klaus Schonëich, at her facility, Campana Ranch Training Stables in Windsor.

If you are interested in writing for the *Horse Journal*, please contact Editor Patti Schofler [editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org)



**Patti Schofler** is the managing editor of the *Horse Journal*, a publicist and freelance writer for national equestrian sports magazines. She began her writing career as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* and is author of the Lyons Press book on Arabian horses *Flight Without Wings*. Passionate about journalism and dressage, art and travel,

she is a graduate of the USDF L Judges Education Program and trains her eight-year-old PRE Toledano.



**Michelle Beko, DVM**, has been an equine veterinarian since 1991. She enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, eventing her horse Zeke, hiking and traveling. She can be reached at Empire Equine, (707) 545-3903.

[www.empire-equine.com](http://www.empire-equine.com)



**Mary Taft-McPhee** is a farrier based in Port Orchard, Washington, who works part time in Sonoma County. Prior to entering the trade, she worked in San Francisco as a data scientist and in New York as a bond trader. She enjoys spending time with her retired polo ponies, Frenchie and Bayita.



**Sam Durham, CJF, DWCF**, (Durham Farrier Service, Hoof Pathology and Therapeutic Shoeing) has been a farrier for nearly 25 years. He spent several years training with seven-time world champion and 5th generation farrier Bob Marshall. Sam participates in continuing education programs and competitions. He was one of the first ten farriers

in the United States to test with the UK's Worshipful Company of Farriers and achieved his DWCF designation from the 700 year old organization.



Riding has been a passion for **Emily Eyles** since she was 9 years old. She began taking lessons at a 3-day eventing barn and hasn't looked back since.

Throughout her equestrian career she has branched out into hunter/jumpers, dressage, fox hunting, western, barrels, gymkhana, and saddle seat. She has had her own training businesses and has worked for many FEI level dressage and eventing riders.

In 2014 Emily expanded her professional interests and became a certified saddle fitter with JRD Saddlery. Finding her passion for saddle fitting, Emily created Eyles Saddle Service.

[ee.saddles@gmail.com](mailto:ee.saddles@gmail.com), (707) 694-1145, [www.jrd-tack.com](http://www.jrd-tack.com)



**Wanda Smith** is an engineer, the Executive Director of CEPEC ([www.cepec.us](http://www.cepec.us)), and a Board Member of the California Horse Council. She has Quarter Horses, showed cutting horses, and authored several books including *Horses of the Wine Country*. She designed the 2017 exhibit at the History Museum of Sonoma County: *Equine Epochs, The History of Sonoma County Horses*. [www.cepec.us/EquineEpochs.htm](http://www.cepec.us/EquineEpochs.htm)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## HOLY SMOKE!

As I sit here composing this message in late August, the smoke is so thick outside the window it looks like fog. Just as we were all trying to find some equilibrium within the chaos imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, mother nature treated us to a spectacular summer thunderstorm that rattled our back teeth and sent dogs into hiding under the beds and horses to kicking up dust in the paddocks. When the excitement of the storm died down, we discovered how many fires had been sparked by that magnificent display of lightning. Thankfully, we did not have high winds to drive the fires at the speed we all experienced in 2017.

It didn't take long, however, to understand the magnitude of the threat to all in western Sonoma and Marin as well as for our friends in northern Napa, eastern Lake, and Solano counties. On a moment's notice, horse owners were thrust into an emergency situation as we all got the Nixle notifications and we tried to figure out what zone 1F2 or 4D3 translated to in practical terms. We got a chance to look through the lenses of an amazing array of video cameras scattered across hilltops that some of us didn't even know existed and use that visual information to help make assessments of the threat. And we struggled to look at the online fire maps bogged down by so many users logged in simultaneously as we made evacuation plans.

Then it was time for action. Lessons learned after the Tubbs, Nelligan, and Partric fires from a couple of years ago gave us a sense of how to prepare and get into motion. The tireless efforts of the HALTER project and Sonoma CART (Community Animal Response Team) as well as Sonoma County Animal Control

suddenly came into play. All of the training in situational awareness, trailering animals in an emergency, and animal care in a communal shelter (and under COVID conditions) gave people greater assurance that they were going to get through this conflagration. Owners were getting their animals loaded and heading off for Santa Rosa and Petaluma fairgrounds and other shelter locations in advance of sheer panic-driven need. And they were greeted at the shelters by volunteers who were less affected and could offer a calming environment to help their fellow animal lovers through the adrenaline-fueled evacuation process.

So, thanks are in order to all those who took the time to learn the lessons from the recent past, avail themselves of the many educational opportunities mentioned above and bring them into play for themselves and their neighbors. Our hearts go out to those who suffered losses and, while things are still in motion at this moment, it appears that the collective efforts of all involved are leading to a successful response to a natural occurrence and that we will have very few casualties in the end as a result.

The dog days of summer usually beckon us to reap the harvests from our vegetable gardens, sip a lemonade, and enjoy some time in the saddle exploring our beautiful chosen spot on this earth. Let's hope that we can all get back to that sense of serenity that we crave.

Happy Trails!  
Henry Beaumont  
President, Sonoma County Horse Council



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# News & Newsworthy



## ROPER

### CELEBRATES DECADES

Champion roper **Red Rightsell** of Windsor celebrated his 92nd birthday, where else, but on the back of a roping horse. "He wanted to rope, so we put together a little practice. He was truly touched," said Becky McCully Moore, who organized the birthday party at her and husband Rich's farm. "He rode for probably 45 minutes and roped about 10

steers. And he only missed one. We ate lunch and read his cards to him and he got a little teary-eyed listening to the touching words from all of us. Such a wonderful human being."

The secret to his robust longevity is that "he quit drinking, smoking, and being bad about 30 years ago," Becky reported. "That probably helped, but bottom line is that he is stubborn. He said he will just keep living and riding as long as the good Lord lets him."

## SONOMA COUNTY HORSE COUNCIL COVID-19 ECONOMIC IMPACT SURVEY *Key Findings About the Local Community*

This past May and June, the Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) conducted a survey of members and non-members, focusing on their experiences with the Covid-19 pandemic. The intent of the survey was to reveal the needs of the county's horse community and, in turn, for the Horse Council to develop means to fill those needs.

The following is a condensed version of the survey results. A

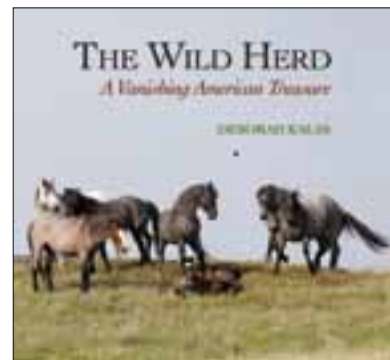
more comprehensive version can be found on the SCHC website, [www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org). Furthermore, the website features resources for local support networks during the pandemic.

Of the respondents, the survey showed the following:

- 49% have had their employment impacted by COVID-19
- 55% have experienced reduced income
- 13% lost their jobs
- 11% have closed their personal business temporarily
- 62% have a plan in place for their horse(s) care should they or their family members fall ill
- 28% do not have a plan in place for their horse(s) care should they or their family members fall ill
- 87% have the proper support network to get them through this crisis
- 3% do not have the proper support network to get them through this crisis
- 10% are unsure
- 20% have the ability to offer resources to others in need

## NAPA PUBLISHER SALUTES WILD HORSES

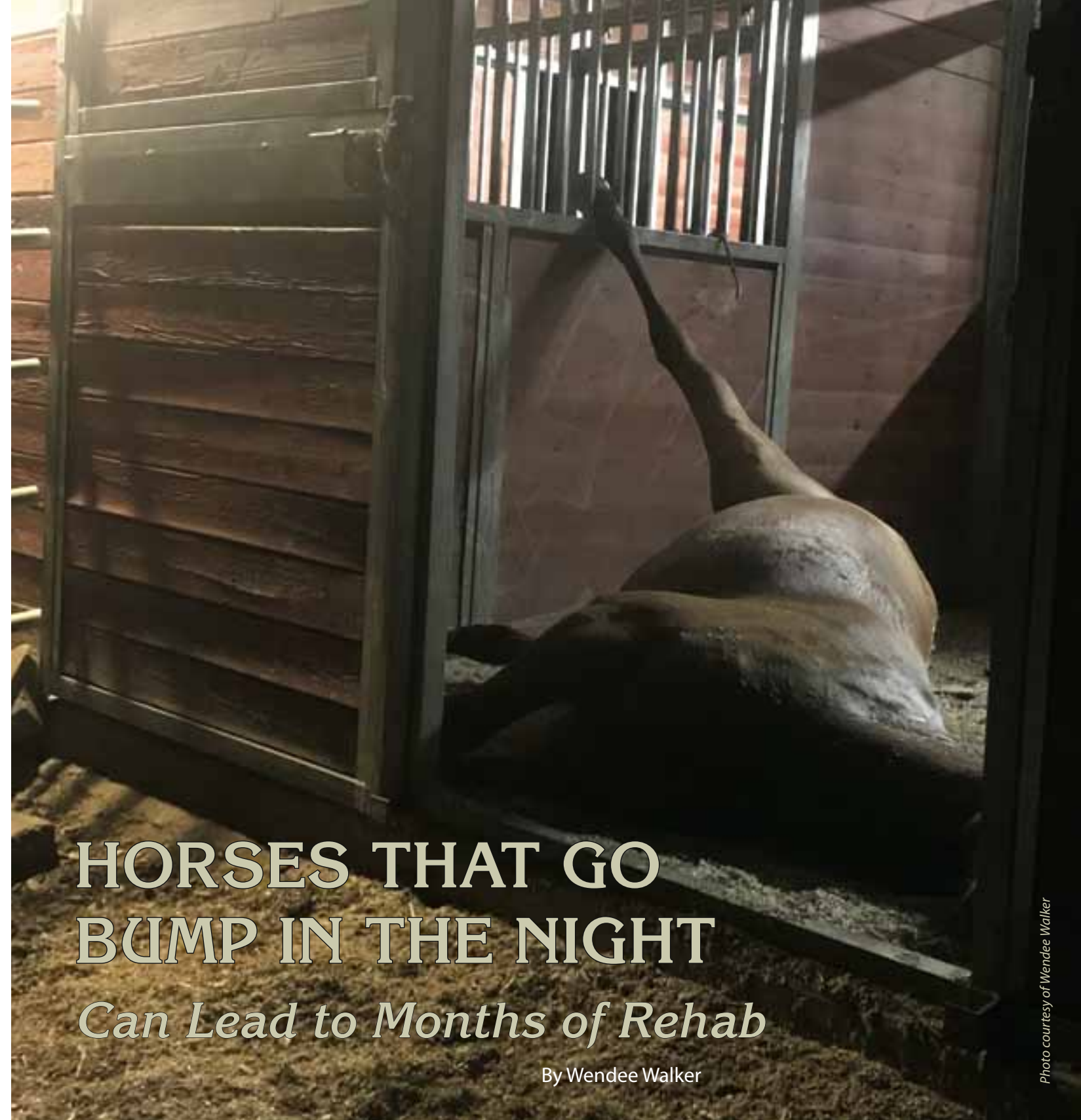
**Val de Grâce Books**, headquartered in the Napa Valley, has published a tribute to the American wild horse as documented by photographer Deborah Kalas. *The Wild Herd, A Vanishing American Treasure* has garnered several prestigious awards including the Independent Publishers Bronze Award, three Benjamin Franklin Silver Book Awards, and an Eric Hoffer Awards Honorable Mention.



*The Wild Herd* portrays the life of the horses in North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt National Park, their habits and interactions as they move through the seasons and colors of the year and their lives. Deborah wrote, "My photographing turned into a life mission: to help all of us understand the essence and spirit of these magnificent animals and to encourage us to protect this unique part of the American heritage." [www.valdegracebooks.com](http://www.valdegracebooks.com)

## TRAINER MOVES ACROSS COUNTY

**Josh Barnacle Eventing** has relocated to Lavigna Farm on 1250 San Antonio Rd., Petaluma. The 200-acre farm includes an indoor arena, an outdoor dressage court, and trails traveling into the hills with Bay views. Josh has plans for a gallop track and a jump field with cross-country and show jumps.



# HORSES THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT *Can Lead to Months of Rehab*

By Wendee Walker

**A**t 2:15 a.m. on April 20, a violent banging woke me. Then all was quiet and I drifted back to sleep. Staccato bangs and kicks again startled me awake and I rushed down to the stable, expecting to see a cast horse.

Instead, my four-year-old Lusitano Arquivo lay collapsed on the floor with his hind leg trapped up high, through the bars of the divider. His solid 1100-pound body was hanging by his delicate hind fetlock.



This made no sense. His hoof was bigger than the space it had squeezed through. With tremendous force, he must have kicked up with a pointed toe, then tilted and rotated the foot with just the right momentum for it to slide through the bars.

As he had fought to free his hoof, his fetlock must have slid down to the base of the divider and wedged in solid. He must have toppled to the floor and struggled to free himself, pushing and kicking with his other three legs. Each attempt drew more blood from the growing wound. Sweat darkened his golden neck, puddling on the stall floor as he went into shock. As I approached, I smelled his dank sour fear. I wanted to rush in to help, but I knew to stay well back from his thrashing legs, and to keep my face away from his powerful head, even as he rested. At any moment he could lurch up into the air for another struggle.

Arteiro groaned and twisted his head, looking at me, vulnerable, pleading for help. Blood trickled from his mouth as he writhed on the floor. I slathered his foot with Vaseline and tried pushing it through from the other side, but it was so jammed in, I couldn't do anything. I was sure the leg was broken.

On the phone, I begged the vet, "Please come quick. You may have to euthanize." But the wait for the vet to arrive at our remote ranch took all I had to ground my anxiety. Within an hour Peter Ahern, DVM of Kenwood arrived and administered a sedative.

After Dr. Ahern and my husband Mike Fisher tried several things, finally, with a sheer burst of determination, Dr. Ahern hoisted a sledgehammer and swung it into the bars trapping the hoof. I flinched with each slam, sure if entrapment didn't break his leg, the heavy sledgehammer would. The bars vibrated and spread just a little, so I pushed his hoof free, blood dripping from my wrists. His hoof thunked to the floor, and we held our breaths as we watched Arteiro lie still. After a few very long minutes, he pushed out a gigantic grunt and stood up. We exhaled.

Three humans stood by observing his primal instinct to survive as he balanced with one hoof lifted. Dr. Ahern palpated the ravaged and swollen fetlock, then gave me some relief with his assessment that no bones were broken. He left me with bute, antibiotics, and directions to confine, cold hose and wrap in an ice boot for 10 days.

From that moment on, Arteiro, his support team, and I took a detour from training and began our rehabilitation journey.

By sharing excerpts from my journal about what I have experienced, so far, I hope other horse guardians will find getting through the anguish and disappointment caused by a sick or injured horse a little bit easier.

### Week One and Two: Extra shavings, Ice Boots, Epsom Salt Baths, and Advice

I'm taking one breath at a time.

Arteiro has been quiet, almost sheepish. He has to be sore.



Arteiro wears the Bemer blanket for 30 to 45 minutes daily, sometimes with his cat Benjamin, and sometimes without.

He's eating, drinking, and making manure, but he seems stiffer each day. As I walk him out of the stall for cold hosing, I wince when I look at the smile-shaped hoof crack below the coronet band and at the heel bulb. The cracks squish open and closed with each step. The medial fetlock/pastern wound is like a rug burn, and it looks angrier. Today it started oozing. I had sent pictures to doctors Ahern and Sonders. One vet said to keep everything clean and moist. The other recommended keeping the hoof trauma clean and dry. I opt for moisture and keeping hoof covered in triple antibiotic and Corona paste with lanolin. The fetlock blister is covered in Alushield spray but not wrapped.

The good news is I don't have to euthanize my horse. The bad is he's got deep bone bruising, and he must lose weight while not exercising. This could be a six to twelve-month rehab. Fingers crossed that the swelling will be down enough for radiographs and ultrasound at our ten-day check-up.

With mail deliveries slowed during the pandemic, anything I order for his care will not arrive for at least five days. And, I need to keep Arteiro's leg, poll, and sacroiliac joint of his back iced, now, immediately. After posting on Facebook a plea for ice leg boots and other supplies, I am inundated with help from our equine community. Friends remind me that post trauma, a horse needs electrolytes. Others say to slather on and feed the homeopathic Arnica Montana. Another recommends Manuca honey for the wound. One friend brings by ice boots. Anne Snowball of Calling All Animals delivers a Bemer (bio-electro-magnetic-energy-regulation) blanket to increase blood circulation, get the inflammation down, and support healing.

### Weeks Three and Four: Barn Aisle Spa Days Continued

For the first four years of life, Arteiro was in a pasture with his dam, sisters, brothers, and cousins. His sire lived across the driveway. This 24/7 stall time is hard on both of us. I have to be a lot more creative now that he feels well enough to dismantle his

stall. I've opened the back door and put up a gate, giving him a 12' x 24' space.

It's challenging to cover the oozing fetlock/pastern wound with Manuca honey and keep it wrapped. Arteiro tears off the maxi pad/vet wrap bandages overnight. He has destroyed the bell boots used to cover the wrap, and two water buckets.

I sleep better now that a welder added bars to the stall divider where the hoof was trapped. The bars originally had three and a half inch spaces between them. The manufacturer said this was a freak accident and it's never happened before.

I'm disappointed the swelling is not down enough to radiograph at our ten-day recheck. But he is less lame and is enjoying the Epsom salt essential oil baths, finished off with a roll in the sand pile. He still rolls all the way over, and I know that's a good sign. He goes into the zone for Frankincense and lavender. He blows out and relaxes with peppermint. He's such a happy guy, and he wants to do more than walk to the mailbox and back. I vary our routes, but I set the timer to make sure we only walk for ten minutes.

He is wearing the Bemer blanket and I'm practicing Reiki meditation each morning.

### Weeks Five and Six: The Six Foundation Clicker Games

By our 30-day recheck, Arteiro is sound at the walk. Radiographs and ultrasound show "no overt findings." To support his joints and help reduce inflammation, he's on a strict diet and has been started on Legend® and Adequan®. We walk for up to fifteen minutes now.



The Ace bandages are tied around chest, belly, and haunches to improve his awareness of his body and movement.

For a deep dive into positive reinforcement training, I have signed up for Alexandra Kurland's class through theclickercenter.com. Doing the homework helps us both stay sane. A few times a day I load my treat pouch with low carb grass hay and alfalfa pellets and head out for short homework sessions. Arteiro does not want these sessions to ever end.

We do a little each day and aim for good posture. I ask him to walk over a pole without clunking it, mark with a cluck, reinforce with just one alfalfa pellet. I have to laugh. Today he broke a ground pole by putting his whole weight on it. I think he thought that's what he was supposed to do because we had been practicing standing on a mat and stepping up onto the balance beam.

### Weeks Seven and Eight:

#### A Scare and Adding Complementary Therapies

Today we were simply on our short walk when Arteiro braced his entire body and tipped forward -- then almost fell over sideways. Was he having a seizure? I glanced back to see his right hind sticking straight out behind him. Grabbing the lead line near the snap, I pushed his weight backwards. His leg went back to where it belonged.

Of course, this was a Sunday. I called the emergency vet and was assured that although frightening as it is to see, a "locking stifle" is not an emergency, and can be caused by muscles getting weak from stall rest.

I chose some unsanctioned but monitored pasture turn out so he's be able to move around more. For more exercise I am now every other day ponying him from my Mustang Yogi.

Our veterinarians gave their nod for me to pursue cranial sacral, acupuncture, TTOUCH, and chiropractic body work for him.

### Weeks Nine and Ten: Riding from The Ground

The heal bulb hoof crack fell off.

I can see the leathery exterior of the hoof capsule, and Arteiro couldn't care less. The smile shaped crack at the front of the hoof is growing down towards the ground. It's still flexible but does not seem to bother him. We have not had another locking stifle episode. I've added Linda Tellington-Jones "promise wraps" to our walks. It's a gentle core strength building system. It seems to help him know where his feet are.

Today, we add long reining to our walking. I joined "A Course About Straightness" through ArtisticDressage.com to learn this. We are walking figure eights and he's learning to have balanced walk-halt-walk transitions. Given that he will have weakness in his right hind leg, it's imperative for him to maintain good posture. For variety, each day I move a tarp and ground poles to different spots. By the time this rehab is over, he will be a trained horse.

### Weeks Eleven and Twelve; Using All the Tools

Three months. Each morning Arteiro wears the Bemer blanket, and I do chores and practice Reiki. At the 90-day post-entrapment recheck, I am reminded that Arteiro has to lose weight. I'm still dividing one flake of low carb hay into four slow-feed bags, and rationing hay pellets into the boredom toy. Other than still being chunky, I'm thrilled that everything has improved. He walks sound, and after being flexed, is only slightly lame. The ultrasound shows improved fiber pattern in the injury, as well as less swelling. There will be scar tissue, but it has not irritated the fetlock/pastern sheath or joint capsule.

Arteiro is a tough horse, and he dodged a bullet. If this progress continues, we will be cleared for more turnout, trotting, and even riding shortly after his fifth birthday this fall. My heart is filled with abundant gratitude for my Reiki practice, the outpouring of support from our horse community, and some luck, too, for getting us to where we are now.

In Portuguese, Arteiro means mischievous. Arteiro, the mischievous one, has proven to be the resilient one.



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# When I Am An Old Horsewoman

When I am an old horsewoman  
I shall wear turquoise and diamonds,  
And a straw hat that doesn't suit me  
And I shall spend my social security on  
white wine and carrots,  
And sit in my alleyway of my barn  
And listen to my horses breathe.

I will sneak out in the middle of a summer night  
And ride the old bay gelding,  
Across the moonstruck meadow  
If my old bones will allow  
And when people come to call, I will smile and nod  
As I walk past the gardens to the barn  
and show instead the flowers growing  
inside stalls fresh-lined with straw.



I will shovel and sweat and wear hay in my hair  
as if it were a jewel  
And I will be an embarrassment to all  
Who will not yet have found the peace in being free  
to have a horse as a best friend  
A friend who waits at midnight hour  
With muzzle and nicker and patient eyes  
For the kind of woman I will be  
When I am old.

– Author Patty Barnhart

If you'd told me back in 1992 when I sold this poem to Arabian Horse World that it would still be popular 28 years later, I wouldn't have believed you. Somehow this poem struck a nerve and seems to resonate. For a good decade it took on a life of its own and haunted the internet under the authorship of "Anonymous". For a while I considered having my name officially changed. And now, nearly three decades later all I can feel is awe and pride. – Patty Barnhart

Photo: Patti Scholler

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# A Horse Is a Horse, *Of Course*

By Susie Weaver Banta

A horse is a horse, of course. Yet we ask them to perform many different jobs that require different attributes, from plowing fields to running races, jumping, dancing, and spinning: one equine athletic type likely would not excel in all disciplines. In the world of human athletes, a body builder isn't the fastest runner. A gymnast won't be the best basketball or football player.

Instead, one athletic type may be more suited for a specific sport than another type. We explored why one excels over others in a specific discipline. Our experts included Sonoma County trainers of jumpers, hunters, cutting horses, and barrel racers.

## About the Jumper

Dusty Blackwood is the trainer at her own Full Circle Farm, a hunter-jumper business located at Sonoma Horse Park in Petaluma. She is a life-long horsewoman who grew up in Arizona riding her pony bareback, jumping sage brush and downed logs. She has worked with leading hunter-jumper trainers on both coasts.

Since Dusty often looks for horses for specific junior and amateur clients, Dusty's first criteria for jumpers is that they be safe with proven jumping ability and scope requiring little effort and great

For conformation, Dusty looks for a horse with a short neck, uphill carriage, short back, and short cannon bones, though a peek down her barn aisle will turn up more than one long, tall jumper who doesn't quite fit the ideal conformation, but who makes up for it in temperament.

Though most jumpers stand between 16.2 to 17+ hands, size is not too important. Dusty's students recently were successfully at showing in the 1.20 meter division, one on a 16 hand mare and another on a 18+ hand gelding.

## How Dusty's Personal Favorite Matches Her Criteria

"Cochise fit my criteria. Bought sight unseen, he arrived from Ireland in 2007 in the middle of a winter night as the only horse on the eleven-horse van. Out came this 17-hand brown and white Irish Paint, barefoot with a long shaggy coat. This six-year-old sale prospect had a kind eye, a very balanced canter, some impressive experience, but was unwilling to do lead changes. I was told I could get those lead changes fixed in two months. It took me two years. I fell in love with him. We were successful in many upper level classes. He died last year at age 18, still with me."

## About Cutting Horses

A drive to Sonoma Mountain in Santa Rosa leads to Chris Brown Cutting Horses. An import from Australia with an interest in the American Quarter Horse, Chris found his passion with cutting. He has been breeding, competing, and training horses and non-pro riders in Sonoma County for over 30 years. He has won many local awards as a top cutting horse trainer and has served as a National Cutting Horse Association

AAA-rated judge.

In looking for in a horse to excel in cutting, Chris first inspects the horse's pedigree. "They should look good on paper." Over the years Quarter Horses have been bred with either for racing (speed) blood or as working ranch horses. The sire that Chris says changed everything was Doc Bar (1956-1992), a horse bred to race who would not run. He became the sire of hundreds of cutting horse winners and many winning sires.

A good cutting horse is a well-built athlete who can stop and turn around hard. Most are 14 to 15 hands. Though they are small

and quick, they are also so strong and powerful. Chris looks for short coupling, a neck coming straight out of the wither, neither high or low set, intelligent eyes and ears, low tail set and broad hip.

In the end, attitude is most important. Chris admits, "I'd almost rather have an ill-bred horse that has a good attitude who takes to the training and likes to learn." "When I look for a prospect, if I can I'll be around them, at a ranch or a sale, and see how they move and how they react to things around them."

Attitude includes being "cowy," a horse that has above average instinct to work cattle. All horses have this to some degree, but more is better, providing you can tame it. Some cowy horses are even scared of the cow, but can be taught to work them and be very good.

"In the end, they have to learn to stay between the cow and the herd. And they have to learn to do it on their own. Once the cow has been separated from the herd, the rider cannot direct the horse at all. Most cowy horses just like it. They crave doing it."

## That Special Horse in Chris Brown's Life

"In the early 80's my father-in-law and a friend had too much to drink at an auction and bought a two-year-old filly for no reason that they could remember. A few days later a trailer pulls up

County barrel racing trainer David Lawson. David grew up in southeastern Iowa, rodeo country, and as a young boy worked two jobs so he could buy his first horse. He moved to Sonoma County 12 years ago.

"What you are looking for in a barrel horse is that explosive energy out of a turn and Quarter Horses are a fit for that. Breeding is important and is now a combination of racing blood and cow horse blood." In barrel racing, one of the top racing sires is Dash for Cash, the bloodline of David's own stallion Never Hit Seventeen. Dash for Cash bloodline includes Three Bars, a Thoroughbred who is also in the lineage of Doc Bar.

Conformationally, David wants a long muscle pattern, a lot of width through the stifle, a good forearm and gaskin, but overall balance, not "bunchy" like a halter Quarter Horse. They must have low set hocks and not a lot of knee action. They need long, flat, low and good quality movement. They can range in size from 14 to 16 hands, which produces different turning styles that require the rider to adjust according to the size horse.

They must be able to shorten and lengthen their stride. "People think of dressage horses as the ultimate in adjustability. Yet our horses have to do all those moves within 17 seconds and they



This horse tackles the type of big obstacles that challenge jumping horses. Photo courtesy of Shutterstock



Ned Glynn's daughter Avery competes on the hunter King of Hearts, who illustrates the elegance of a hunter.

Photo by Alden Corrigan Media



This barrel racing horse shows the long muscle patterns favored by trainer David Lawson. Photo courtesy of iStock



Cecelia Brown competes on cutting horse Flighty Nus. Photo courtesy of Chris Brown

and the guy says, 'I'll let her out, but she's never been caught.' Her name was Flighty Nus. She ended up being a great horse. She had so much talent. She was very scared of cattle and couldn't canter around without shying at footprints in the sand. Crazy but quiet to work around." She was of the Doc Bar bloodline. She won many competitions locally and in Arizona, Washington, and Oregon for Chris and his wife Cecelia.

"When they're young, the good horses take so much to get that talent out. If you're not dedicated, not willing to go every day and throw a saddle on them, then it doesn't work out. A lot of people give up."

## About Barrel Racers

At the bottom of Sonoma Mountain not far from Chris's ranch you will find Hunter Lane Equestrian Center, home of Sonoma

have to do it naturally. You don't have time to tell them to do it."

To be successful at barrel racing a horse needs to just love it. "Although people seem to believe that barrel horses need to be hot, the opposite is true. They have to be very mellow to work around and to ride in order to contain and save that explosive energy."

## David's Horse of a Lifetime

"That is easy," David said, showing a tattoo on the inside of his right arm that read 'Maverick'. "I lost him just last year. He broke a leg, just loping around. It was rough.

"Back in Iowa, I bought a mare and won on her that day. Never won on her again. It wasn't a match. But I knew she would be a match for a friend of mine who had a three-year-old. We traded,



← sight unseen. When Maverick walked off the trailer, I wondered what I had done. The mare was beautiful and here was this scrawny, ugly, little guy. But the minute I got on him, we just clicked. We even have the same birthday. When I moved to Sonoma, he was so easy and good that he really helped me be known. For 16 years he never let me down and won many competitions with me and my students. He loved to be on the road. He was a horse of a lifetime."

#### About Hunters

Ned Glynn of Sonoma Valley Show Stables, a native of Petaluma, began his career in eventing and bought his first horse from an ad in the Press Democrat. Ned established Petaluma's Sonoma Valley Show Stables in 1997 with his former wife Hope and is recognized nationally as a top hunter and jumper trainer.

In evaluating hunters, Ned said, "they need to be put together well because good confirmation leads to good soundness long term. Yes, softer edges than a jumper, a neck that is put on well, a head with a good expression. An elegant look. Although the headset and way of going is a flatter look, an uphill build is still important, perhaps even more important because a downhill horse stretched out a bit, as a hunter is, becomes a horse on its forehand and less athletic.

"They must have good movement and they must have scope. If we are going to be asking them to do something that is difficult for them, then it isn't going to work out so well. Can you find a horse that has the flatter movement, athleticism, and engaged jump? That is the trick with hunters."

Ned also looks for willing temperament. "Do they like the game, the sport? If they have an affinity for what we are asking

them to do, then our success level goes way up. And, there is the hidden quality, does he have heart? That je ne sais quoi. That certain something.

"Because we are normally buying horses that are already competing, breeding is less important. However, it can give us insight into longevity. Past performance is critical. Although I may hope that I can improve a horse's performance that can be a trap. I always ask, can I live with the horse as it is today? And I hope that I can improve it through my training program.

"Cost is also important. It is an expensive sport and the more a client can spend, the more you can look for brilliance or take a chance that you can improve the horse. If a client can have only one horse, then you need to be willing to live with that horse as is."

#### Ned's Favorite Hunter

"My favorite hunter was Central Park who was very successful and won the last Open Hunter Championship offered at Spruce Meadows, Canada, one of the premiere shows in North America."

A horse is a horse, of course, but there are subtle and not so subtle differences in breeding, conformation, movement and temperament that are necessary for success in any horse sport. Perhaps more importantly, to excel in any sport they need that certain something. We can call it heart. 🐾

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# CONNECT WITH YOUR HORSE THROUGH CANVAS

# AND A BRUSH *How do I do it?*

By Richard Merchán

You probably have taken hundreds of pictures of your horse. Maybe you have even framed some photos as art for your home. But have you considered immortalizing your beautiful horse by painting a portrait in an artistic style that only comes from you?

As one who has been painting for many years, I believe anyone with a deep connection with their horse can do this and enjoy the process. To help you get started, I have outlined some basic steps along with a few painting principles to help you with your masterpiece. Give it a try. You can do it.



**OBSERVING** Set up either your computer or a printed photograph to observe as you compose, draw and paint your subject.

## Step 1 Observe your horse

Once you've identified your subject, a critical part of the process is the art of observation. It's easy to snap a picture, but I think that sometimes cameras can make one lazy. While it is an essential tool for a visual artist, a camera can prevent you from critically observing and documenting the information that needs to be captured by your brain. Invest time in purposefully observing your horse in order to identify what you want to convey with your painting. For example, do you want to show the viewer that the horse is grazing or sleeping or drinking, or mingling with other horses? Once you have decided on what you want to convey, then you can use a camera as a resource or tool.

Another useful observation strategy is to casually sketch your chosen gesture. Think of how the notes you took in school helped you later to remember a little more information.

Observe and research. How do horses extend their necks to visit another horse over the fence? How do they curl their lip? How does their tail flip?

Research horses in art created throughout history, but in particular note how the Impressionists defined the horse. You will notice that details are less important than the gesture of the horse.

## Step 2 Narrate your story

Now for the plot of your story. Think about the elements that tell that story. For instance, if your story is about your horse grazing, what tells the viewer that the horse is grazing: the grass, the fields, the way the light comes through the field? What is the time of the day? If your horse normally grazes late in the afternoon, that means the sun hangs low and creates long shadows.

## Step 3 Create your composition

Don't worry about colors yet. Concentrate on the blueprint of



**COMPOSITION** Without stressing too much about a perfect drawing, this step is to establish where all the elements in the composition will stand and their relative scale to one another.

your painting. What are the elements you want to include? Maybe a fence or a tree. What are the props you need to support your story? With the photo in front of you or perhaps some sketch notes, map out the composition by painting softly and very loosely right on the canvas.

After I have laid out the structure, I like to use boxes to give some definition to the composition. For example, a rectangle could define the torso, perhaps a long triangular shape for the neck, a smaller triangle for the head. The position of the legs and knowing how they fold are key.

I won't want the boxes to show. I use them as guides to simply define anatomy of the horse and its place in the final painting. They serve more as a blueprint. I also use a wire perspective, as if the figures and setting were made of wire, to place the horse on the field. This helps me and the viewer to understand where the horse stands in the field. I draw with a dry brush in any color knowing that it will be covered later with an opaque acrylic paint.

## Step 4 Select your tools

You can spend a fortune on tools, but for your first try a hobby or arts and crafts store will provide everything you need. Even more advanced art supply stores offer materials for entry level artists.

### Here is a basic and inexpensive list of materials I use:

- Surface: Canvas (medium size, e.g., 16x20 inch, pre-stretched or canvas board). Sometimes I use a piece of cardboard.
- Paint: Acrylic paints (student level). I find that watercolors require more skill. And if you want fast results, oils may take too long to dry.
- Colors: For now, keep it basic and stick to primary colors (red, blue, yellow), secondary or earth colors (yellow, ochre, browns, green), and black and white.



**TOOLS** Three different size brushes will work: wide for broad strokes creating the background; medium for the anatomy; and small fine point for filling in details including eyes, ears, hoofs and tail.

- Brushes: Small and medium size brushes for acrylic. Sometimes I use a larger wider brush to cover a big sky or a field quickly.
- Mixing: For blending colors get a pad of disposable palettes, or even white paper plates. You can also use plastic or paper cups for mixing a large amount of paint for skies, grass, barns, etc. I collect jars and frozen food containers, and reuse them.
- Water: I use a big jar or large containers. I like to have two containers at hand.
- Rag: An old t-shirt or paper towel.
- To paint inside your home, protect your floor with house painter's plastic or a tarp large enough to cover your work station.
- Protect you: Expect your clothes and shoes will get paint on them, and once acrylic paint dries on fabric, it won't come off. When the paint dries, you can wash your painting outfit with other clothes. I find there is something ceremonial about my "painting" clothes.



**UNDERPAINTING** Populate your composition with paint and refine the drawing.

## Step 5 Execute your painting

Establish a palette with colors going from warm to cool, earth tones and black and white, or any way that makes sense to you. In the middle of doing a painting you may want to know where you placed the colors on your palette. I organize my palette in a way that makes logical sense to me in case I have to remix a color. Acrylics dry fast. I recommend covering your palette or jars with tinfoil or using containers with covers. Mix a little more paint (25% more) when you mix an unusual color in case you have to reuse it.

Start with the background and surroundings (sky, horizon, the field, maybe a barn or fence) and keep in mind that the horse will become the focal point very much like when you focus a camera so that the background is soft and subject is sharp.

By this point, you will be fine tuning the elements in your preliminary composition. You will use the position of the sun or light source to inform you of where to place the shadows.

I tend to paint the main element, the horse, last. I typically use one darker color to define the silhouette of the horse before I get into any details. Mix a color that is drastically lighter than the rest of the colors in the background and the field are completed before I start highlighting the sunlight on the entire horse. That way the brilliance of the light is the last layer of paint that makes the horse



**PAINTING** Before the final execution, adjust darks and lights (intensity of light) and separate the main subject from its environment, like focusing with a camera. Blend colors as one picture.

pop from its environment. Details such as eyes and ears should be the last stage.

## Step 6 Revise

Walk away from your painting and come back with fresh eyes. You can always revise it.

Don't give up or get discouraged if your first painting didn't turn out to your expectations. Even advanced artists make revisions or start a new painting of the same exact subject.

Even if you are unfamiliar with art tools, materials and how to use them, your instinctual knowledge about horses, not to mention your own horse(s), will be manifested in whatever you paint. There isn't a right or a wrong way - it's an expression of how you perceive reality.



**GRAND FINALE** Saving the most fun for last, this is when you work decisively on the details (eyes, ears, tail, shadow, shrubs) and sharpen with dark and light strokes.

Think of this process as an experience and an exciting journey that you embark on for yourself. No one knows your horse like you do and no one can capture its essence the way you will. Whatever you create it will be unique and special. An original painting by (your name). 🐾

# Understanding What Ambidextrous Feels Like

By Sher Bell Boatman

No matter what discipline or career path a horse takes, straightness and balance are the key to a healthier, longer career and life for the horse. Ground training is a system used to lay down a solid foundation for a young horse to learn straightness before going under saddle, and for older horses to learn straightness at any age. This straightness technique was created by Klaus and Gabriele Schöneich in Germany.

Let's look at an example of a right dominant horse, one who wants to lean on the right front shoulder and limb. Likely this horse places most of his weight on his forehead. In the wild, this works perfectly for the horse, who spends most of his time grazing. At times of perceived danger, he can pull himself forward with his front limbs into a run to escape trouble.

For a ridden horse, this posture and movement will eventually and prematurely put strain on certain joints, pushing him into pain and eventually premature retirement. As trainers and riders, we can work with our horses to change them from their natural posture and movement to one that serves them better as ridden horses.

To best communicate precisely with the horse, the trainer begins work with longing cavasson which securely fits and doesn't slip. It provides correct control over the horse's longitudinal axis. The noseband around the nasal bone should be well padded with firm, but soft leather, and allow a finger's width below the bottom of the cheekbone so that it crosses a less sensitive part of the horse's head. The two bottom straps should be fastened securely to keep the cavasson straps from creeping into the horse's eye. The highest strap is slack. The longe line is then attached to the middle (top) ring of the cavasson, in the middle of the horse's nose area.

## Understand the Posture of a Horizontal Mammal

One of the challenges in correcting the posture of this horizontal mammal, particularly from the ground, is to keep them in that posture during movement. Try this exercise. Put yourself on all fours on the ground. Lean on your right shoulder and arm. Notice how your weight shifts off your front and hind "limbs." You probably feel the least amount of weight on your hind limbs and particularly on your left hind. This is how a right dominant horse stands.

You will also notice that if your weight is more on your forelimbs rather than your hind limbs. As you continue to stand and move that way, your right front limb will suffer wear and tear and become sore. It would be optimal if the all four limbs shared the weight more equally.

To correct this posture on you, the horizontal animal, swivel your head to the right, with your nose leading and allowing your neck to bend. Keep your head in the same plane by maintaining your chin to your forehead completely vertical. In order to do this, your right shoulder is pulled back toward your right side. You should feel some weight shift off that right shoulder and more onto the left hind, the limb previously least weighted. Swivel back and forth until you find that sweet spot where your weight is evenly distributed on each limb. Obviously, we won't be expecting horses to stand out in their pastures or paddocks swiveling their heads.



Cavasson

## Teaching Weight Shift

Stand up for the next exercise. Pretend you are going to kick a soccer ball. If you are a right dominant person, you probably would naturally want to use your right leg to kick with your right foot. Your left leg becomes the supporting leg, taking the majority of your weight in order to free up your right leg to swing. You thrust off the left leg, allowing that right leg to swing freely and connect with the ball.

When a horse is moving on a circle to the right, we want the horse to have more weight on that outside thrusting (left) hind, so that the inside right hind can swing forward, place itself under the center of gravity of the horse and propel the horse forward. This is difficult for a horse to do efficiently if much of their weight is on that right shoulder and limb, but the horse needs to learn to move in the correct, most beneficial dynamic posture.

To explain to the horse how to get to this posture, the trainer will tack up the horse in the longing cavasson with the longe line attached. The trainer asks the horse to walk forward. The walk will allow the horse to feel and understand what will be asked. The trainer then asks for a swivel of the head by a tug on the longe line that is attached to the cavasson, using the least amount of pressure needed to have the horse swivel its head. This cue is repeated, then released. The horse's head is not held in this swiveled position. If the horse isn't responding, it is important not to turn that ask into a pull. This will cause the horse to pull against the longe line and possibly strain muscles. We want the horse to learn to take this cue and position with a soft response, and as training progresses, the horse will be able to hold it himself. This usually takes time. The horse's initial response will vary according to its previous training, posture, balance, straightness and soundness.

Once the horse has the idea, even if its response isn't completely correct, the trainer asks the horse to trot. As a steady diagonal two-beat gait, the trot allows the trainer to work more easily with the horse. The gait is steadier than the three-beat canter and engages more muscles than the walk.

A balanced and straight horse has the confidence to move forward with other types of groundwork. And of course, once a horse has been straightened on the ground, it is much easier for a horse to begin to balance and become straight with a rider. 🐾

# Laterality: Crooked Horse Syndrome

By Kerry Ridgway, DVM

Condensed by Sher Bell Boatman with permission from Christine Heraud Ridgway

Kerry Ridgway, DVM, was an icon in Sonoma County and beyond for his fresh way of viewing horses and introducing horsemen and women to better alternatives. Dr. Ridgway died in 2015. With great pride, the Horse Journal shares one of his most original writings.

Since the 300 B.C. Greek soldier Xenophon wrote about horses, every riding master, expert trainer, and thinking rider recognizes that essentially every horse starts with a more difficult side, one side more concave and the other more convex. Most remain this way for their entire lives.

These inherent aspects create the biomechanics of the natural horse movement and serve the horse well in its natural wild or feral state. However, they are antagonistic to the biomechanics of the ridden horse. Many techniques are utilized to straighten the horse, to minimize limb dominance and to develop the biomechanics necessary for riding horses. In essence, the goal is to make them more ambidextrous. Failure to achieve ambidexterity, balance and straightness creates problems in performance and a shorter useful life and eventually leads to unsoundness.

Every horse I've examined has had from a muscular-skeletal perspective identical patterns of muscle hypertonicity (increased passive stiffness or tightness) and pain upon systematic muscle palpation, regardless of discipline or use of the horse. Although the muscles involved in the pattern were consistent in all horses, about 20 percent of the time they manifested as a mirror image of the other 80 percent. There might be relationships of muscle size (hypertrophy and tone) according to use, but the pain and tension issues were, essentially within the same sets of muscles in all cases. This obviously has to relate to how the horse uses the same muscles on one side of the body versus the other side.

Then when I first was introduced to the concept of laterality, I had an eureka moment. Often described as dominance of one or the other side of the body, laterality is typically referred to in the human-biped as the state of being right-handed or left-handed. In the horse it has, for centuries, been defined as the crooked horse syndrome. Our coming to understand this syndrome is absolutely critical to every horse's wellbeing, performance ability, and long-range soundness.

## Crooked Horse Syndrome Is Fundamental

My confusion, lack of knowledge, and consequent disagreement about the role of laterality in gait and posture led us to research more about equine laterality's relationship to straightness training.

I came to understand that it matters not whether you are a rider, a trainer, a veterinarian, a groom, a farrier/trimmer or a massage/physiotherapist, nearly every muscular-skeletal injury or pathology that we identify and attempt to cure or manage is



related to the crooked horse syndrome.

As a result, my main goal has become educating the horse owning public as well as my veterinary colleagues to understand the how and why horses exhibit the crooked horse syndrome, and how these horses can be brought into balance and straightness, a key to soundness.

Let me first elucidate a few essential thoughts about muscle physiology which is based on a polarizing stimulation for contraction followed by depolarization and release. The release part can occur as a result of a sudden, excessively strenuous movement or series of movements. It can also be the consequence of extensive repetitive use of specific muscles, causing cumulative micro-trauma. Think of carpal tunnel syndrome in the human. It is the culmination of many tiny traumas.

## Prolonged Contraction Leads to Severe Problems

Additionally, there is a tremendous energy burn associated with prolonged

contraction. These muscles in our crooked horse fall into a chronically contracted and hypertonic state. This sets up markedly reactive or trigger points. Prolonged contraction sets up a state of chronic pathology.

I will use the example of a horse whose difficult or harder side is the right side. Horses that are right forelimb dominant have pain and hypertension in the neck muscles on the right side, but not on the left side. As I move back to the shoulder on the right side, I find marked tension in the deltoid muscles, the trapezius muscles, the ascending pectoral muscle, and the serratus ventralis thoracic muscle. I do not find these muscles to have excess tension or pain responses when the left neck and left shoulder are examined.

Not coincidentally, these tend to be the same sets of muscles that get more painful or damaged from overuse in a right-handed human. I also find more pain in the wither pocket or the trapezius muscles and chiropractic issues involving the upper thoracic vertebrae. These follow as a result of the shift in the center of gravity and shear forces to which they are subjected. Muscles only get to this state if they are the more used and, perhaps, abused set.

They have progressed from tone to a state of hyper-tone. If we are recognizing heavier muscle use present on the right shoulder and forelimb, we can logically describe this as a right forelimb muscle dominance.

This brings up the critical issue. When training for straightness is accomplished, diagonal balance is achieved. That is when →



← the horse is on a circle, the outside hind limb can then function as the supporting and balancing hind limb. In forward motion, the outside leg and hoof needs to stay in the line with the tract of the front foot. Thus, when our horse is asked to turn to the right, its right hind should now become the propulsive leg and the left hind become the supporting or balancing limb. In a correct and straight moving horse, the functions would immediately reverse as the horse turns to the left.

### Think About The Right-Handed Person

Similarly, a right-handed person cannot throw a ball or kick a ball well if the right shoulder is pushed downward and the range of motion is restricted. This effect can also be felt by walking and turning while carrying a heavy water bucket or suitcase in the right hand.

With the horse's right shoulder and limb weighted, the right limb is not as free moving as the left shoulder and limb. The stride of the right front is shortened. As bend to the right is requested, the rider may feel more tension in the right rein. During forward motion, the horse is freer in his less weighted left shoulder and limb. Therefore, this horse has an easier time picking up the left canter lead.

So what happens to the feet when we have this shift in center of gravity that occurs and more weight is shoved into the right forelimb? Typically, the right front foot is more upright and takes a more forceful concussion during landing—as evidenced by a



This right dominant horse leans on his right shoulder, tilts his head to the outside of the circle and his hind end shears out.

higher incidence of suspensory and check ligament and shoulder injuries on the right front limb.

The left front, if not well trimmed, quite often has a long toe with a low and under-run heel. Without good farrier help these horses remain lower in the heel of that left foot. This limb is more subject to navicular, impar ligament, distal sesmoidean ligaments, deep digital flexor insertion on the coffin bone in the foot, and upper forelimb tendon injuries than the more upright right forelimb.

Good training is based on the observable biomechanics and way of going that we must change to achieve balance and straightness. 🐾

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# CHECK OUT THOSE EYES

Courtesy of the University of Guelph

How can you tell when a horse is feeling stressed? It's all in the eyes and the way their eyelids twitch, University of Guelph researchers have discovered. A horse will blink less and twitch its eyelids more when it's under mild stress, the research team found—a new finding that could offer handlers a simple, easy-to-spot sign their animal is becoming agitated.

"When we train horses, we specifically teach them to suppress their stress responses because we don't want horses to react when they are startled or nervous. But even if they've learned to suppress their reaction, it doesn't actually decrease the stress they feel," said Katrina Merkies, a professor in the Department of Animal Biosciences at the Ontario Agricultural College.

While stress can be measured through heart rate monitors or



Horse with heart rate monitor during the startle test. The ball was tossed approximately six feet in front of the horse. The handler maintained a fairly loose lead. The observer (not visible in the photo) was positioned about six to seven feet from the horse's right eye.

blood cortisol levels, Merkies and her team wanted a non-invasive measurement.

They recruited 33 horses of various breeds from three riding lesson facilities in eastern Ontario and exposed them to three mildly stressful scenarios. In the first, a ball was thrown in front of the horse in an attempt to startle the animal. In the next, the horse was visually separated from its herd for a few minutes. Finally, the horse's food was withheld for three minutes at feed time while its herd mates were allowed to begin eating.

Withholding the feed for a few minutes was the most stressful for the horse as indicated by its increased heart rate, restlessness, and head movement. Conversely, separation and the startle test evoked little response.

When researchers reviewed videos of the horses' eyes during feed withholding, they noticed the horses blinked less but twitched their upper eyelids more. On average, the horses' full blink rate decreased to an average of five blinks per minute during the stress compared to the eight to nine times per minute when relaxed. During the feed restriction, their eyelid twitches increased from an average of two twitches per minute to six twitches per minute. 🐾

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Sue Curry

# WHERE EAST MEETS WEST



Beverly (BJ) Henning-LeMaster

“Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet” is the first line of an 1892 poem by Rudyard Kipling. If we substituted the word “east” with dressage and “west” with reining, we might ask ourselves if Kipling’s statement applies to these two seemingly different ways to enjoy horses. Or, are horses simply horses?

*In the future, if you would like us to ask Northern California experts a question about horses, get in touch with Horse Journal managing editor Patti Schofler at editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org.*

For this issue we’re looking into the canter pirouette in dressage for our English discipline versus the spin in reining for our western sport, particularly from the judge’s point of view.

Our experts are Beverly Henning-LeMaster and Sue Curry.

## BEVERLY HENNING-LEMASTER (BJ)

Beverly (BJ) Henning-LeMaster holds seven breed and USEF judging cards, including a card in National Reining Horse Association reining. She became a licensed judge from the California State Horsemen’s Association at age 17, and from AHSA/USEF at age 21. In the 1980s, BJ and her parents opened the show and training barn Rockwood Glen Horse Farm in Sacramento where today BJ provides training and lessons. Her students have competed at world, national and state levels winning championship and world titles.

## SUE CURRY

Sue Curry is a USEF “S” Dressage Judge, and a member of the USDF L Faculty. Owner of Fairwind Farm in Santa Rosa, Sue and her students have been successful for many years at all levels of dressage with multiple students earning their USDF bronze, silver, and gold medals. Sue has competed at the FEI levels for over 20 years and has had multiple horses ranked in the top ten nationally. As a breeder of Oldenburg warmblood horses, she stood the licensed breeding stallion Donnerschlag until his death in 2018 at age 31. Many of Donnerschlag’s offspring are now competing through the FEI level. In 2018 Sue was awarded the Sonoma County Horse Council Equus Award.

## HJ: A pirouette and a spin: Is one a fast or slow version of the other? How are they different?

**BJ:** Spins are a series of 360-degree turns, executed over a stationary (inside) hind leg. Propulsion for the spin is supplied by the outside rear leg and front legs, and contact should be made with the ground and a front leg. The location of hindquarters should be fixed at the start of the spin and maintained throughout the spins. A reining horse has to complete at least four revolutions to both the left and the right. Sometimes the pattern will ask for 4-¼ spins to have the rider faced in a different direction when they lope off with their circles.

Spins and pirouettes are totally different. The spin on the reiner is flatter. They don’t elevate like the dressage horse. They don’t lift in

the thoracic as they do in a pirouette. The inside hind foot is a pivot foot, and reiners should not take steps, unlike a dressage horse. They keep their hind ends still and are very low and level in their shoulders. Unlike the pirouette, the spin is not performed in a gait. **SC:** The pirouette or half pirouette is a circle or half circle executed on two tracks with the radius equal to the length of the horse. The forehand revolves around the hindquarters, and the horse is slightly bent in the direction of the turn. The horse must remain “on the bit” and most importantly maintain the rhythm of the canter throughout the pirouette. The canter must remain three beats throughout the movement. At the pirouette or half-pirouette, the forefeet and the outside hind foot move around the inside hind foot, which should return to the same spot, or slightly in front of it, each time it leaves the ground. Pivoting is a major fault in a canter pirouette. The poll, neck and head in a reining spin is clearly different from a dressage pirouette. In the spin the horse’s nose is near the ground. The poll is not the highest point as is desired in the pirouette. The canter rhythm is not an important aspect. Spins are executed over a stationary inside hind leg. In dressage, this pivoting would produce less than sufficient scores.

## HJ: Describe the horse’s body position in a spin and a pirouette.

**BJ:** In the spin, the horse crosses over in front to get power and speed. The legs move level under the shoulders. When they take a step, not only do they cross in front, but their next step is sometimes two to three feet across. It’s not good if their head and neck go up and down to get around.

I like the horse that is very level in the withers and head. To do this their body has to be super quiet with a little to no bend and with a soft look to the inside. The horse needs huge control of his body that will allow him to accelerate correctly.

Weight on the inside hind stays in place as much as is comfortable for the horse. They pivot and sometimes they will lift that pivot foot just because they have to physically.

Their thoracic muscles are super strong and tight. Their abdominals are tight, building power in the hindquarters. Power comes from the stillness of their body and the levelness of motion. Very few horses can bend and turn fast. It’s hard to stay balanced with that bend going as fast as they do. But the top horses can.

How we judge the maneuver depends whether you like that

bend or the big bold crossing over flatter motion, which is my choice. I want a very level body that steps around rhythmically and without tension, but with lots of correctness and speed.

**SC:** In the pirouette, the poll remains the highest point, and the horse should show uphill balance throughout the movement. The quarters must lower, and “sit” and maintain activity. The poll, neck and head in a reining spin is clearly different from a dressage pirouette.

## HJ: What is the beauty of the spin and pirouette? How does it feel to ride?

**BJ:** A good spin is beautifully balanced and fun to ride. It’s not just poke and go. It’s cadenced, fluid and level.

**SC:** As in any well-balanced dressage endeavor, the pirouettes can be one of the most beautiful and wonderful movements to ride. To be able to ask the horse to come back, stay active, and lower the quarters while maintaining activity is absolutely a fantastic feeling.

## HJ: Discuss teaching the basic spin and pirouette.

**BJ:** Teaching the basics of a spin is usually easier with horses that are not thickly built. Front ends without thick, blocky shoulders usually learn to cross over more easily.

You want your maneuver with a reiner to be moving forward. So, you usually start with a small walk circle, tighten it until they rock back onto their inside hind to begin the pivot and then allow a movement forward out of it. You do that until they understand what’s asked and you build on it. You don’t want them sucking back. You want them reaching forward and stepping their outside front leg across the inside leg. Spinning left, the right front leg crosses in front of the left.

**SC:** In preparing to do a well-balanced pirouette, I do much work on the collectability and balance of the canter. The horse must be able to go easily from medium or extended canter back to collected canter with little stress or resistance. A full pirouette should show between six and eight strides of clear, balanced, collected canter with a clear three beat rhythm.

## HJ: Judging the spin and the pirouette, what are the criteria?

**BJ:** First, the spin has to be precise. If they don’t stop on their exact stopping point on the 360 degree turn, they are penalized a half or full point, or even given a penalty zero score, depending on how far the over-spin or underspin is.



So. Co. dressage trainer Riana Porter rides a pirouette on Donnerschlag son Dax.



Camden Wilson spins with Chocolate N Crome.

Photo courtesy of the National Reining Horse Association

There is a rhythm, and it increases with speed. From the beginning to the end of the spin, the cadence should remain the same, even if the speed increases. The really good ones cross over like a metronome: they’re going left, right, left, right.

Those that do the spin correctly get a maneuver score of zero. You can plus the horses that put the effort into it, that are correct and fast with the inside hind staying the pivot foot, front leg really crossing over in front as they look to the inside. Then when the rider asks that horse to stop that spin, says “whoa” and that horse stops dead and in perfect position, you can really plus the maneuver. Spins are scored zero to plus or minus 1 ½ points.

Horses have to stay in position. It doesn’t matter how fast they go if it’s not correct. Speed is good, but only if the spin itself is the correct speed

Spins are scored on the horse’s correctness, cadence, smoothness, finesse, attitude and speed.

**SC:** The pirouette in canter is judged according to the maintenance, suppleness, lightness, precision, and clarity of the entrance, the pirouette itself, and the exit.

If no attempt is made by the rider to collect before the pirouette, and the horse is “running”, then spins, or switches leads behind or in front, or both, the score will be insufficient or a four or below, depending on the severity of the resistance and lack of balance. If the rider makes an attempt to prepare and collect the horse, but momentarily loses the rhythm in the canter, and the horse becomes tight and tense over the top line, the score would be a five or six.

If the horse fulfills all the requirements, maintains the rhythm, sits, and shows clear collection and harmony with the rider the score can be seven or above.

## HJ: Do you judge before and after the spin and pirouette?

**BJ:** The horse’s attitude and the ability to be guided willingly are judged before and after the spin. Each spin is scored separately with maneuver and penalty scores.

**SC:** We judge three strides before the pirouette and three strides after, because the collection of the canter is a prerequisite to the actual pirouette. Many times, a rider comes into the pirouette with too little collection, which then makes it nearly impossible for the horse to sit and carry during the turn.

# FRACTURED LIMBS COME IN VARIATIONS

## with Wide Ranging Outcomes



By Michelle Beko, DVM

I was about half way through veterinary school when two Far Side cartoons by Gary Larson came out that aptly fit the state of veterinary practice. In the first frame of one, the viewer was looking over the shoulder of a woman reading a book. The caption read, "Doreen breezes through another chapter of veterinary medicine". The chapter she was reading was titled "Equine Medicine" and it had a list of diagnoses on one side of the page and treatments on the other side. The first diagnosis was "broken leg" and the treatment for that and every other diagnosis was "shoot". The other cartoon caption was "Horse hospitals" and the picture showed a few horses in bed with casts on their legs and doctors walking around with rifles.

Why do horses with broken limbs have a poor prognosis? Their bones are just as capable of healing as are bones of humans and other species of animals.

To find an answer, let us first consider the different types of fractures. A chip fracture is fairly common, especially in race horses. It occurs when a small piece of bone on the edge of a joint breaks off, either from repetitive or acute trauma. It is not life threatening and usually has a decent prognosis of returning to soundness if treated, usually by surgery.

A hairline or stress fracture can occur from repetitive strain, often from racing or from acute trauma such as a kick from another horse. Picture it as a plate with a crack. Although the horse may be very lame initially, with long term rest the fracture can completely resolve. It is at risk of progressing to a complete, displaced fracture, however, if it isn't rested long enough. Also, the horse's body weight on that leg when the horse gets up from laying down may cause further damage.

Complete fractures where the bone is in separate pieces are the most severe. The most common cause in racing horses is progression of a stress fracture. In non-racing horses, in my experience, the most common cause is a kick from another horse. I have seen various odd causes and at least one horse that fell and fractured a hind limb. Most falls, however, result in dislocating a joint rather than breaking a leg. Occasionally, a horse will take a bad step and shatter the second phalanx in the pastern.

Unfortunately, complete fractures have a poor prognosis. Since equine bones can heal, it would seem that a complete fracture should have a decent outcome. One problem is that there aren't surgical implants (plates, screws, etc.) made specifically

for horses as the market for them is too small. Most of the time, though, human implants are sufficient.

A healing problem unique to horses is that they have minimal soft tissue surrounding their bones, especially below the knees or hocks. Being rich in blood vessels, soft tissue contributes to healing.

Another more significant problem is susceptibility to infection, especially with an open fracture, or a wound associated with the injury. Also, surgery times tend to be long, leaving the bone exposed for a longer period of time than is usual for people, dogs and cats. Additionally, horses must recover in an environment that isn't as clean as is ideal.

The most significant problem horses face is laminitis. They need four legs to stand on. Putting too much weight on the non-fractured leg results in supporting limb laminitis. For example, if a horse breaks his right hind cannon bone (third metatarsal bone), he is at risk for foundering in his left hind foot if he can't bear close to full weight on the right hind leg.

Frankly, lack of surgical experience is also an issue in equine medicine. Unlike M.D.s or small animal orthopedic surgeons, equine surgeons don't have the opportunity to perform dozens of surgeries on complete fractures on a yearly basis. Faced with a poor chance of the horse returning to riding soundness and a potential bill of several thousand dollars, most people opt to euthanize their horse rather than attempt to treat them.

Hopefully, one day there will be better options, but progress is slow and we are likely to find the Far Side cartoons appropriate for some time. 🐾



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# DARN! THE HORSE PULLED A SHOE AGAIN

By Mary Taft-McPhee and Sam Durham

Some horses have a knack for turning up at the pasture gate with one shoe missing on the morning you planned to enjoy a nice relaxing ride—or even worse, on the day before a show. In these moments, excitement and anticipation turn into a rush to get it back on so you can keep up with training, enjoy your horse and protect their hooves from further damage. You already put them in bell boots. What else can you do to stop it from happening again?

Most habitual shoe pullers do the deed because of several factors working together. Their environment, farrier care, genetics, diet, activity level, fitness, consistency of routine, turnout timing, and pasture mates all play a role. If your horse has just started throwing shoes more frequently, the first question to ask is what among these factors has changed.

Since your horse's environment is usually the most variable, start by inspecting fences and stalls for places where a curious or bored horse can catch the edge of a shoe and pry it off. This often looks like a corner where the fencing comes together in a v shape, or wires large enough for them to put their feet through.

Are there areas of deep mud in their pasture, or are you regularly hosing down their legs and putting them into a stall? Frequent transitions between wet and dry can cause changes in the hoof's moisture, causing it to expand and contract, which can contribute to the loosening of clinches (the folded over parts of the nails on the outside of the hoof wall). Paying attention to seasonal changes can provide clues to issues that may be at play.

### Diet May Help Hoof Quality

Poor hoof quality leading to flaky walls that tear away easily can be addressed to some extent by augmenting your horse's diet with biotin or other supplements. Their diet also can become a factor if their workload decreases while being fed the same amount of calories, causing them to tear around the pasture to burn off extra energy. Remember, horses are social animals that respond to the activity around them in the barn and in the pasture. It may be that being turned out next door to a much younger horse causes yours to feel his oats more than usual. While it may not be possible to move either horse, changing the time of day they get to go out may help keep them both more relaxed.

You may also want to consider massage and body work for your horse. Stiffness and pain can cause unbalanced movement that can increase the chance of him stepping down on his shoes or being slower on the takeoff phase of his stride. Dragging or "dubbing" his toe or twisting it into the ground can cause additional stress on the shoe.

Ask your farrier what the cause and solution might be. A shorter shoeing cycle may keep the foot from getting too unbalanced. A farrier can fit the foot more tightly to the white line, add clips or



extra nails, or grind down the edges of the shoe more aggressively to help the foot slide off of it if it is stepped on. Many farriers will leave a beveled and slightly protruding toe on the hind feet to help protect the horse from stepping on himself if he overreaches.

### Look and Listen for Problems

Another way to prevent your horse from pulling shoes is to catch issues early. Keeping their feet picked out is good for their overall health, but it can also give you the chance to detect a problem before it becomes a lost shoe. Look for loose nails or clinches that are rising up or have been pulled away. Listen for the clicking sound of a loose shoe as your horse walks down the barn aisle. If you can get your farrier out quickly or restrict the horse to their stall ahead of time you might be able to avoid the loss entirely.

If your horse does lose a shoe, take steps to set them up for success when they are reshod. If it's still attached to the hoof and twisted or bent, you will need to pull it off and remove any nails that remain in the foot. You can try doing this with ordinary pliers or vise grips or a small pry bar as long as you are careful. We sometimes leave at a barn our old pull offs, a farrier tool used for that job.

If you don't feel comfortable removing the shoe, cover it with a diaper and duct tape to protect the hoof and prevent further damage. Once the shoe is off, put on a hoof boot or restrict your horse from moving around too much by stall or small paddock confinement. If you're able to find the shoe, save it for your farrier who will appreciate it both for the ability to reset it and for whatever clues it might provide as to how it came off.

While it is not possible to prevent all lost shoes, by checking and addressing the many factors that contribute to them, you can reduce the number of times you find a negative surprise at the gate, and increase your time in the saddle. 🐾



# A SHORTHAND CHECKLIST FOR SADDLE FIT

WHATEVER YOUR DISCIPLINE, THE FACTS ARE THE SAME

By Emily Eyles

Many riders ask themselves, "I wonder if my saddle fits?" and that's a good thing. The fit of your saddle affects the way you ride, how your horse performs, and the longevity of both horse and rider.

The following outline is a tool towards evaluating a proper saddle fit for both yourself and your horse.

**Step 1: Confirmation:** Each horse is built differently. When assessing saddle fit, it is essential to understand your horse's unique confirmation and therefore his or her needs.

Start by identifying the confirmation and body type of your horse. Take notes on how high or low the withers are placed. Check for uneven muscle development and asymmetry issues. Notice if they have a long or short back. This information leads you to identify what type of tree and panels will work best for your horse. Whatever saddle you are using, the tree acts as the skeleton, and therefore it is of utmost importance that the tree fits the horse properly.

**Step 2 Placement:** Once you have studied your horse's unique needs, saddle placement gives you a good idea if the saddle will be suitable for your horse.

When looking at your saddle, girth or cinch it up without a pad. The most common mistake I see is that people place their saddle too far forward, restricting shoulder movement. Therefore, when putting the saddle on, first place it on the withers, push it back behind the scapula (shoulder blade), and then adjust it so it "locks" into place.

To ensure proper placement, the saddle should sit behind the scapula and between the 8th and the 18th thoracic vertebrae. If the saddle goes past the 18th thoracic vertebrae, it will be resting in the lumbar region and can cause back pain. To find the right place, locate the last rib on your horse and follow the line up. If you aren't sure if you have found it, find where the hair lines come together and go straight up from there.

**Step 3 Withers Clearance:** For the untrained eye, a good rule of thumb is to fit between two and three fingers under the pommel. You want the saddle to have enough clearance so it is not sitting directly on top of or too high on your horse's withers. Either of those scenarios will cause the balance to be off, potentially leading to additional problems as a result of incorrect pressure being placed on the horse's back. In addition, these scenarios will throw the rider off balance off, causing them to sit incorrectly. Finally, wither clearance also provides you with a good idea as to the appropriate saddle width for your horse, ensuring it is neither too wide or too narrow.

**Step 4 Balance:** The deepest part of the seat should typically be between the 12th and 13th rib. There are many different types of saddles with many different seat balances, so it is important that you find the correct balance for your saddle. If you are having trouble finding where to look for the balance, place a small ball on the seat. It should roll to the middle. If you draw a line from the top of the wither to the balance point, the deepest part of the seat



should be level. You will be able to see if the balance is too high, too low, or just right.

**Step 5 Gullet Clearance:** The gullet or channel is the open space between the panels. You want the horse's top line to be able to come up without any restriction from the saddle. You do not want the saddle to be directly on the horse's spine nor touching the connective tissue on either side. This is very important for the horse's back, as serious damage can occur when you don't have appropriate gullet clearance.

**Step 6 Panel Pressure:** The panels should contact the horse's back evenly without pressure points, gaps, or bridging. Bridging occurs when the pressure points are on the front and back without contact in the middle. You can assess possible bridging by running your hand flat across the panel from underneath. If you notice anything other than even contact, that is a red flag to inform you that an adjustment is needed.

**Step 7 Movement:** Next check for saddle movement. You always want a small amount of movement with the saddle to follow the horse's natural gait. However, you do not want excessive saddle movement or rocking side-to-side. Also, check the placement of the billets, ensuring when girthed or cinched that they are not pushing the saddle forward into your horse's elbow when they walk.

**Step 8 Listen to Your Horse:** We are our advocates for our equine friends. They will communicate their discomfort through their movements and actions. Look for clues in their behavior when you put the saddle on. Notice if they are in pain or girthy. Check for rubs or white hairs. If you're not sure if your saddle needs to be checked or adjusted, follow your instincts. You know your horse better than anyone else.

This brief overview touches on the outstanding elements of proper saddle fit for horse and rider. As many additional considerations add to the total picture, consultation with a professional saddle fitter with a trained eye might be an all-important **Step 9.**

# SONOMA COUNTY HORSES BACK IN THE DAY

## New Millenium Horses

By Wanda Smith

The last in a series of articles on the evolution of horses in Sonoma County

In the last 200 years, horses of Sonoma County have evolved from being primarily service animals to use for selective breeding programs, competition, therapy, and pleasure riding.

**Demographics:** Since the end of the 1900s the number of horses has been growing at an annual rate of at least four percent. Sonoma County is home to at least 26,000 horses, most of which are purebreds. Unlike the 1800s in which only a few breeds of horses existed in the county, there are now over 30 different breeds here. Horses of mixed breeding are becoming more popular due to a recent trend to import or rescue wild horses and train them for trail riding as well as endurance riding because of their strong constitution.

**Millennial Champions and Movie Stars:** As in the last century, Sonoma County has produced many national and world champion horses from the diverse breeds in the county. The Irish Sport Horse **Ballinakill Glory** was an international eventing champion ridden by Kelly Prather and owned by Andrea Pfeiffer who competed in the World Cup. **Hunter**, a stallion owned by Wendy Webster, was also an eventing competitor as well as a Holsteiner breeding sire who was consistently listed by the U.S. Equestrian Federation (USEF) as a top eventing sire between 2011 and 2014. The Quarter Horse **Royal Intimidator** was successfully ridden by an eleven-year-old Amy Galea to win two world championships. The Percheron **Hera** was rescued from a Premarin drug farm by Glenn and Dana Benjamin and became a national driving and halter champion. **Sadie**, a Belgian draft horse, is a national champion vaulting horse for the Tambourine Vaulters.

Sonoma County horses have continued their role in



Photo Courtesy of Wanda Smith

Sadie is a steady customer, just right for vaulters.

movies that began in the late 1900s. **Gus**, a Clydesdale from the Jack London Ranch in Glen Ellen, was the model for the main equine character in the 2012 Disney animated movie "Brave." In 2017, the national champion eventing Thoroughbred **Gin 'n' Sin** was cast along with Sharon Stone in the movie "Running Free" as a race horse that helped save the owner's ranch from foreclosure.

**Therapy:** Many of Sonoma County's millennial horses are used for therapy for people with a variety of disorders and behavioral issues. These include autism, addictions, behavioral problems, depression, and post trauma stress. There are at least ten equine therapy centers in Sonoma County. Horses at Giant Steps in Petaluma are used to help disabled riders improve physical, cognitive, social, and emotional skills. The Equi-Ed horses in Santa Rosa provide therapeutic riding for people with and without disabilities. The Belos Cavalos horses in Kenwood provide equine assisted therapy for victims of criminal violence, abuse, abduction or neglect.

**Economics:** The formal tracking of the impact of the horse industry on Sonoma County economics began in 1994. Since then the production value of the equine economy has increased at an annual rate of at least six percent. In 2014, revenue generated across the county by the equine industry was \$617 million compared to \$583 million spent in the grape industry. The selective breeding of horses by Sonoma County equine enthusiasts has resulted in high price show horses. Some competitive equestrians pay over \$1 million for their horses although the majority of horses cost significantly less and are thus affordable to the general public.

Sonoma County's horses have evolved over the centuries from being prehistoric wild roamers of our plains and forests to animals that enhance our ability to explore trails and beaches, compete, and obtain peace of mind.

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MICHAEL MURPHY  
EQUINE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT CONSULTING  
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## Help Us Help the Equine Community

After the Valley Fire (2015), and the Tubbs and Nuns Fires (2017), the Sonoma County Horse Council provided over \$125,000 in grants to individuals, businesses and non-profits that suffered equine-related fire losses not covered by insurance.

The community's generous donations to the Council's Equine Disaster Relief & Preparedness Fund made these grants possible, and also enabled the Council to offer disaster planning and preparation training to the community as a whole.

The Council needs your support again to offer similar grants to the survivors of this year's wildfires and continue our efforts to help the community prepare for future disasters. Please make a donation of any amount today by sending a check to SCHC, P.O. Box 7157, Santa Rosa, CA 95407 or reaching out through the website at: [www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org/donate](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org/donate)

The Council will begin taking grant applications as funds and resources become available. Check the website periodically to see when grant requests are being accepted and to download the application form at that time.

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SCHC Board Member Sandra Van Voorhis had lunch with her new mule friend.



SCHC Board Member Greg Harder comforts pot-bellied Wilber.



SCHC Board Vice President Sahar Bartlett joins the volunteers and comforts evacuees.



Are you sure you have measured that grain properly?



Can you read this?

**SCHC BOARD WORKS THE EVACUATION CENTER**  
Sonoma County Horse Council Board Members were seen at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds after and during the fires in August. They were assisting Sonoma CART (Community Animal Rescue Team) with the evacuation and housing of over 1,000 animals from horses to mini donkeys to emus and pigs.  
Photos: Patti Schofler



Check-out is what time?

## AD SPECS AND RATES


Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council, the *Horse Journal* is a quarterly publication designed to reach the Northbay'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: [www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org)

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*Published the first week of January, April, July and October.*



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