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Cover Photo (Please Read):

Courtesy of the Denver International Airport



Blue, Bold and Unbridled: Denver International Airport's stallion sculpture has been called everything from beautiful to Blucifer to Satan's steed. The Blue Mustang's 9,000-pound body is electric cobalt blue, and his eyes glowing, fiery red eyes. Rearing the height of a three-story building, his body is fit and powerful, an emblem of the American West, unbridled, rugged and innovative. Not the smooth perfection of an idealized horse, he is scrappy and untamed and evokes a wild spirit. He's also deadly.

The creator of the polychrome fiberglass sculpture was artist Luis Jiménez Jr. who was rotating the giant stallion with a chain hoist in his Hondo, New Mexico, studio when a piece came loose and pinned him against a steel support, severing a major artery and killing the 65-year-old artist.

Repair, correction and completion of Jiménez's decade long work was taken up by Kreysler & Associates of American Canyon, California, who had consulted with Jiménez about the stallion. San Rafael resident Bill Kreysler headed up the installation of the sculpture in Denver where it instantly became an urban legend.

Read the *Horse Journal* article on stallions on page 8.

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CONTRIBUTORS



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.



Robin Everett is a freelance bookkeeper and 35+ year resident of Petaluma. She has been a board member of Golden Gate Arabian Horse Association since 2004, and holds the position of trail coordinator. Although horse-crazy her entire life, she did not purchase her own horse until age 50. Her equine sport of choice is endurance, and she has an AERC record of 4,720 miles since 1998. She currently owns three horses, two of which are retired endurance horses and a third who is an excellent trail horse.



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 <https://ceh.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/>.



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.



Lisa Thomas is a dressage rider who also loves trail, horse camping and archery on horse-back. She's had horses for over 30 years and specializes in the sale and purchase of horse property throughout Northern California. Lisa is an active member and supporter of Sonoma CART, Equi-Ed, Giant Steps and produces the *Horses of Sonoma* calendar each year. She received the Ursula Liakos award from the California Dressage Society for services on behalf of the Horse Council during the fires of 2017 and 2018.



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



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.



Gwen Kilchherr is a longtime Sonoma County landscape consultant and designer. She hosts the Saturday morning KSRO 1350 AM "Garden Talk" show. Gwen is a member of Sonoma County Chapter of the California Dressage Society and has volunteered at many of their events. She recently purchased the nephew of her mare Cleo. His name is Quest and like Cleo he is a Holsteiner from Oregon. She is excited to have both horses and herself in training with Lori Cook.

If you are interested in writing for the Horse Journal, Please contact Patti Schofler
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SPRING ARRIVES IN ALL ITS GLORY

Coming off a mild winter with some late rains, spring has pronounced itself in full glory. Trees are blossoming everywhere, the camellias and tulip trees are in full bloom and everything generally looks rosy. Concurrently, the long shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic appears to be lifting. Vaccinations are well underway, the county has declared 'red' status, businesses are opening and restaurants are welcoming people back indoors. It's not over yet but the motion is there and signs of normalcy are in view.

Let's keep our fingers crossed that events, shows and clinics will not be derailed as they have been in the recent past.

And speaking of spring, we have a beautiful photo essay dedicated to spring in this issue. As trail riders start heading for their favorite spots, we suggest reading Robin Everett's excellent article *Back to the Trails* for helpful pointers and reminders about safety. Also, Dr. Michelle Beko has written a nice piece on footing which should interest everyone.

As I'm sure you are aware, the Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) supports Sonoma CART's efforts to train people for emergency response. In this issue, you will find a list of a dozen training opportunities to prepare yourself for the next emergency response as may be required. Further, check out the HALTER Project website (www.halterproject.org) to see what trainings they are sponsoring. Julie and Tom Atwood have devoted themselves to driving this mission for community safety and we thank them for their efforts.

The Council will be holding a trailering course on June 26, which will teach safety and maneuvering skills, and earn certification that counts toward Sonoma County's Animal Disaster Service Worker (A-DSW) volunteer program. Sign up today. Space is limited.

The SCHC recently awarded two grants to victims of the 2019 and 2020 wildfires. Unfortunately, we have not received the amount of money hoped for to distribute to more people in need. Unlike 2017 where the local devastation from the Tubbs and Nun's Canyon fires received enormous national and international media attention, this time we did not receive any money from out of the area. We will continue to solicit donations to the disaster relief fund and offer additional opportunities for people to apply for grants—if we are fortunate to have funding.

As always, please support the businesses that advertise in the *Horse Journal*. This magazine is a gem and our thanks go out to Patti Schofler and Lynn Newton for their professional direction and to all of those contributors who collectively give us a publication for which we can be rightfully proud.

Make sure that your membership is current and please help us expand the ranks by inviting your friends to join.

Happy Trails!
Henry Beaumont

John O'Hara Photography



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MICROCHIP, TRAIL CLINIC, DENTISTRY

The Russian River Riders (www.russianriverriders.org) has loaded up spring with equine activities, all held at Hoofbeat Park, 300 Dry Creek Road, Healdsburg.

April 9-11 Richard Miller, DVM, and Esteban De La Torre, Equine Dental Clinic. RSVP to Jennifer Watson, jwatson430@sbcglobal.net

April 24-25 Horsemanship and Trail Preparedness Clinic with Ruth Van Sweden-Altes. Details are available at www.vsequine.com under Equestrian Events.

May 16 Microchip Clinic, \$20/horse, with veterinarians Alicia Benson and Amber Bowen. RSVP at office@vip-equine.com by May 2.

EQUINE REPRODUCTION SERVICE AT UC DAVIS UPDATES FACILITIES

University of California Davis veterinary hospital's Equine Reproduction Service has a newly renovated clinical teaching and research space at the school's Center for Equine Health, that includes four custom-designed stocks, all new flooring, a new student meeting space and an expanded laboratory.

Improvements to the Equine Reproduction Service facilities were funded by the school's Dean's Office.

The Equine Reproduction Service provides routine and advanced equine reproductive care, including artificial insemination, ultrasonographic pregnancy diagnosis, fertility evaluation, semen collection and evaluation, transvaginal aspiration of oocytes and embryo transfer.

Appointments with the Equine Reproduction Service are available by calling the hospital's Large Animal Clinic at (530) 752-1393.

THE HALTER PROJECT WELCOMES 2021 WITH MULTI-LINGUAL MATERIALS

HALTER PROJECT has available a wide range of written material and video resources in Spanish, designed to help workers and neighbors prepare, care for and seek help for animals during disasters.

"We have a printed booklet *Animal Disaster Action Plan for Workers* in Spanish and English that is very helpful in training staff, who are very often the people responsible for the poultry, ruminant weed-eaters, biodynamic farm animals and pets on our winery, vineyard and estate properties," explained Julie Atwood, founder of the HALTER (Horse And Livestock Team Emergency Response).

"Our short videos are intended to help educate our agriculture, hospitality, and other workers who speak a variety of Mexican dialects in COVID hygiene and safety. We also have a program available to deliver short in-person presentations at wineries for their vineyard crews."

Alma Bowen, executive director of Sonoma County Nuestra Comunidad, has been working with winery and vineyard managers

in the Russian River, Dry Creek and Alexander Valleys to teach the health, safety and wellness of the community through disaster preparedness, 9-1-1 awareness and CPR training.

The HALTER Project is a grass-roots program with a vision to help animals in emergencies and disasters by supporting efforts of communities and agencies to train and prepare for a ready response to, and the care of, animals in everyday emergencies and large-scale disasters.

PETALUMA EQUINE EXPANDS VET STAFF

Petaluma Equine at Circle Oak Ranch and Equine Sports Medicine and Surgery, led by Drs. Don Smith and Jerry Parker, have merged and share the name **Petaluma Equine Sports Medicine and Surgery**.

Earlier in the year, Petaluma Equine partnered with Sonoma Equine. Drs. Lisa Atckison and Yana Sorokurs of Sonoma Equine continue to be reachable at (707) 479-3530.

"These collaborations will greatly expand our collective resources and combine the complimentary assets of the practices. No changes will be made to the clinic contact information at (707) 721-4402. The physical address and web address will remain the same," said veterinarian and owner Daizie Labelle. The veterinarians at Petaluma Equine Sports Medicine and Surgery include: Lisa Atckison, Kendall Cannon, James Kerr, Jerry Parker, Sarah Puchalski, Russ Sakai, Donald Smith and Yana Sorokurs.



Equine surgeon Russ Sakai performs an arthroscopic surgery on the hind leg of a horse at Petaluma Equine. Photo Courtesy of Petaluma Equine.

Petaluma Equine also announced the opening of the Canine Center at Circle Oak Rehabilitation, headed by Kristen Hagler, RVT, VTS. Kari Farley, RVT, CERP, continues as equine rehabilitation coordinator. More information about canine and equine services is available at <https://www.circleoakrehabilitation.com>.

SONOMA CART HIRES ED

After experiencing exceptional growth in community needs since its inception in 2017 as a volunteer organization, Sonoma CART has hired Sarah Reidenbach, DVM, as its first executive director.

A Sonoma Cart volunteer since 2017, Dr. Reidenbach has previously served as medical director of the Humane Society of Sonoma County, medical director of Berkeley Humane, and veterinarian for San Francisco SPCA and Stockton Animal Services. She also manages her own nonprofit, Ruthless Kindness, that provides

free veterinary care to the animals of victims of domestic violence. She has responded to local disasters since 2015.

Dr. Reidenbach earned her doctor of veterinary medicine degree from the University of California Davis and her bachelor of arts from Stanford University. Further, she studied nonprofit management at Duke University.

Dr. Reidenbach lives in Sebastopol

with her family, which includes three teenagers, four dogs, one cat, two pigs, two sheep and a rowdy group of unsocialized rescue chickens.

Sonoma CART's mission is to provide educational resources and training for disaster preparedness, response and recovery for large and small animals, while working collaboratively with and assisting county agencies, emergency services and volunteers to provide sheltering, evacuation and care of animals during emergencies and disasters.

ENDURANCE LITE HITS THE TRAILS

US Equestrian Federation has created Endurance Competition Lite as a stepping stone for athletes and competition organizers in the transition to USEF national licensed competitions.

The introduction of the USEF Endurance Lite competition model will lower financial and other barriers to entry for athletes and endurance competition organizers interested in participating in or hosting USEF sanctioned events. Competition organizers interested in holding a USEF Endurance Competition Lite should contact Hannah Gabbard, competition licensing coordinator, at hgabbard@usef.org or refer to USEF Rule Book EN 101-120 found at www.USEF.org.

ADVANCED LAMENESS TOPIC AT AIM

Animals in Motion (AIM), Petaluma, will hold a two-day course on advanced lameness May 15-16 at Chicken Foot Ranch, Penngrove. For more information, contact Dr. Carrie Schlachter at 707-738-2529 or aimequinevet@gmail.com.



Sarah Reidenbach, DVM.

Photo Courtesy of Sonoma CART

NATRC RELEASES 2021 RIDE SCHEDULE

The North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC) scheduled rides for the year in Northern California are as follows. For more details, visit www.natrcregion1.org

Spring Kick-Off and Clinic	April 24-25	Auburn	(510) 708-1438
Cowboy Camp	May 15-16	Williams	(707) 217-3582
Eel River Ride	June 12-13	Potter Valley	(707) 743-9973
Jackson Forest Summer Ride	Aug. 21-22	Fort Bragg	(707) 743-9973
Round Valley Ride	Oct. 2-4	Brentwood	(925) 672-6491

WORKING EQUITATION CLINICS 2021

Jack Burns and J-Dot Stables will hold the following working equitation clinics at Fairwind Farm, 2276 Crane Canyon Road, Santa Rosa (707) 239-2290: May 1-2, July 31-Aug. 1, Oct. 2-3, Nov. 20-21.



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SONOMA CART RELEASES TRAINING SCHEDULE

Sonoma CART has released its schedule for the year of training opportunities. They include:

TRAINING	DATE	LOCATION/CONTACT INFORMATION
Fireline Safety	April 17	www.ResQFAST.com
Fireline Safety	May 29	www.ResQFAST.com
Companion Animal Sheltering/Handling	April 22	Zoom, www.sonomacart.org
Companion Animal Skills	April 24	Shone Farms, www.sonomacart.org
Field Operations, Trailing, SIP, Evacuation	May 13	Zoom, www.sonomacart.org
Field Operations, Trailing, SIP, Evacuation	May 15	Shone Farms, www.sonomacart.org
Fire Shelter Deployment	May 15	Shone Farms, www.sonomacart.org
Livestock Sheltering/Handling	June 10	Zoom, www.sonomacart.org
Livestock Skills	June 12	So Co Fairgrounds, www.sonomacart.org
Animal First Aid and Vitals	July 1	Zoom, www.sonomacart.org
Hotline, Dispatch and Communications	July 22	Zoom, www.sonomacart.org
Hotline, Dispatch and Communications	July 24	Shone Farms, www.sonomacart.org

TELL A GELDING ASK A STALLION

Insights into handling and caring for stallions

By Susan Banta

An old horseman's saying preaches, "Tell a gelding, ask a stallion, discuss it with a mare," usually shared when someone is 'having a discussion' with a mare. Most horse folk are familiar with the mare versus gelding temperament differences and resultant handling theories and techniques, but fewer everyday horsemen have experience handling and caring for stallions.

A Google search turned up lists of facts and fiction about handling stallions with one result eliciting the question "What do you call a female stallion?" Oh dear.

Clearly the mystery of how different genders are and what is involved with handling and caring for stallions calls for real answers from two California horsemen with many years of experience working with stallions.

Shilo Bishop of Bishop Lane Farm, Penngrove, has been the breeding manger and stallion handler of her family's famous Arabian stallions, including the celebrated international foundation sire, Monogram (1985 – 2019), for 30 years. Shilo intended to go to vet school but got hooked on stallion care which became her career and life-long passion. With degrees in nutrition and reproduction from Colorado State University and California Polytechnic State University, she has handled mares and stallions of many different breeds. In September 2020 she opened a small Animal Care Clinic at Bishop Lane Farm, and though she no longer stands any stallions, she continues to collect stallions brought to her farm.

Kevin Reinig began his career as an auction handler and groom for Glenwood Farm Hanoverians, Wilton, California. As a teenager he slipped into the role of prepping and handling the yearlings for the sales. He quickly moved into working with the young horses, brood mares and stallions, including noted Warmbloods Diamond and Prinz Gaylord, and he became the assistant breeding manager at Glenwood while still in college pursuing a degree in finance. He went on to become breeding manager for the Luccetti Ranch and since 2003 Kevin and his wife Ericka have owned and operated KEFA Performance Horses, a full-service training and sales barn in Wilton.

While huge differences among individuals, breeds and stable operations affect how we handle horses, Shilo and Kevin were clear that handling stallions is horse care plus, or to use a mathematical term, horse care squared. Here are some rules for horse handling squared.

Rule #1

Always be attentive and alert when handling stallions

Don't casually lead or ride a stallion on a loose lead or reins no matter how quiet he may seem.

Don't allow yourself to be lulled by his laid back, quiet manner. Kevin recommends that you always have a chain over their nose or carry a whip and wear gloves when handling a stallion on the ground.

Routine, consistency and calm firmness are paramount. Even the most mellow stallion may suddenly react out of character, and things can go sideways quite quickly. Kevin has worked with

stallions who are mellow enough at home that Kevin felt safe hanging out in their stalls, some even when they are lying down. Yet at a horse show, it takes only a moment of inattention or being casual with a stallion, even when you're onboard, for a tense, even dangerous situation to arise.

"You have to anticipate every possible thing. I have a hard time blaming the stallion, no matter how kind they might be, for doing what is in their nature to do."

Rule #2

If you did not raise him yourself, learn how he was raised and do not put him in situations that are unfamiliar and challenging to him

Understanding how the stallion was raised is critical to ensuring positive and safe interactions. During the years it was a major breeding operation, Bishop Lane simulated the large breeding operations in Europe with the weanling colts all living out together until they began to mature. During those two to three years, some colts were gelded and returned to the herd. Geldings and young stallions lived together until they began their individual careers. Monogram and his national champion son Consensus were raised in this manner, allowing normalization of their daily interactions with other horses as they matured. Still, and there is always a still, their purpose in life is to breed and that must never be forgotten, both Shilo and Kevin agree.

Rule #3

Routine, routine, routine. Always stick to the routine

Routine is important for all horses but add that squared for stallions. Follow the pecking order. When they get fed, who gets fed first, who gets turned out in what order, who gets worked and who goes to the breeding shed in what order is not to be changed. If you do, you will hear about it from the stallion.

Rule #4

Smile at their intelligence and never forget what they know

Having a stallion in your barn will change the dynamics. Small things like using the same wheelbarrow and pitch folk to clean a stallion's stall that you used in the stall of a mare in heat can create a problem. In a boarding barn, do not use for the stallion the cross ties used by other horses and client mares, and remind boarders to be aware and careful, no matter how quiet and gentle a stallion is. As a horse's performance training and focus advance, routine and consistent discipline can help condition a stallion to behave in mixed company.

Interestingly, the importance of routine can be a plus when working with stallions. When Shilo takes her stallions to be collected, she always uses the same rope type halter with a loose metal

nose band wrapped with tape that she prefers to use instead of a chain as many stallion handlers do. Kevin also uses a specific halter or bridle just for breeding.

This way the stallions know what that halter means, and what they are about to do, and they act accordingly. In the reverse, they know when they are not being led with that halter what they are not going to do. Similarly, they know when they are led out of the barn, one way goes to the turnout or work area, the other always goes to the breeding shed. In a large operation such as Glenwood where specific handlers took them to the breeding shed, they knew based on who came to get them where they were going.



A breeding halter.

Photo courtesy of Shilo Bishop

Rule #5

Stallions are for breeding

If you are not going to breed a stallion, think long and hard about why you would buy or keep a stallion. Common wisdom among experienced breeders is that if you are not going to breed your stallion, geld him. And even then, it can take months or even years for learned stallion behaviors to modify or disappear – the older the stallion, the slower the transition.

There are exceptions. Kevin has had a client-owned horse who "is the sweetest stallion and just doesn't show interest in mares in the barn. He hasn't been gelded because he acts like a gelding. He is not being actively bred now, but if being a stallion begins to interfere with his show career, he will be gelded."

When competing a stallion, remind the show management of his gender, even though the information is on the entry form, Kevin advises. This can help in ensuring that stall assignments keep stallions and mares separate, and they can alert other competitors that a stallion resides in the area.

In some cases, owners bring with them stall padding that restricts the stallion's view of the horses around them. It is the owner's and trainer's responsibility to ensure the safety of those around their stallion. Kevin says that he keeps a horse listed as a stallion for a year after he has been gelded to preempt any behavior-based problems at horse shows.

Breeding performance horses is big business. Although common wisdom may be that pasture breeding is probably the most successful, it is rarely if ever used these days. With the exception of Thoroughbreds, who for the purposes of registration must be bred by live cover (direct insemination of the mare by the stallion), most performance horses are bred by artificial insemination, which includes the collection and freezing of semen for shipping around the world.

Artificial insemination is safer, allows for more accurate and deeper insertion and permits inspection of the quality of the semen and easier control of breeding timing, Shilo explains. In all cases, the process is carefully monitored by experienced handlers. Collecting or live breeding can be a dangerous operation for the mare, the stallion and those working with them. Attention, discipline, routine...squared.

Shilo and Kevin are experienced with the collection process, which may use a live mare or a phantom, which is a dummy mount that looks somewhat like a wide, slopping, well-padded gymnastic

balance beam. The collector must be positioned to catch the stallion's ejaculation with an artificial vagina, trying to maximize the amount collected while keeping it uncontaminated. Some breeders use a phantom that has a built-in receptacle, but a handler still must be there to ensure that the stallion hits the target and to retrieve the semen.

Being under a stallion is an awe inspiring and sometimes frightening experience, Shilo and Kevin admit.

For the stallion owner looking at breeding, Shilo cautions that a large bank account and keen business sense is a must. To become a successful sire, a horse must not only have the conformation for and a record in his area of performance and success with his early crops of foals, he must also be marketed heavily. Ads, articles, brochures and online presence are an important part of owning a successful breeding stallion.

Hints and tips and myth busting from the experts

Women handling stallions, even breeding stallions, is not a problem. In fact, the softer feminine energy can be helpful when working with stallions, Shilo feels. Whether it's a man or a woman, it is calm, firm discipline that is mandatory.

Handlers should not be intimidated, and should show no fear. Kevin recalled his first experience collecting which was from a young, very athletic stallion. "I was almost paralyzed with fear, something I didn't confess until many years later to my boss and friend, Judy Ehlers, who was handling the stallion that day. She and the stallion had no idea I was so scared."

And as a final tip, stallions should maintain their exercise routine during the breeding season.

Do you "ask" a stallion? Perhaps the best answer gleaned from our experts is that calm, firm discipline delivered consistently with respect allows the illusion and controls the reality that stallions are territorial and dominant by nature.



Kevin Reinig maintains focus before entering the arena with a two-year-old stud colt.

Photo courtesy of Kevin Reinig


In the end, these experts agree the greatest reward from having and handling these special needs horses, as much as they love individual stallions, is the descendants. Following the successes of the stallion's get or offspring, seeing the effect the stallion has on the quality of the succeeding generations, and learning what individual mare and stallion pairings produce all make the extreme handling and care, horse handling squared, worth every minute of the extra effort.



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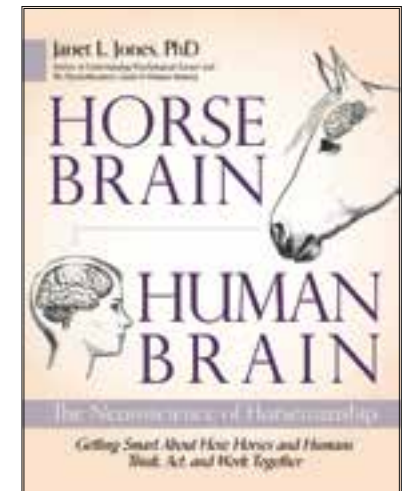
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An excerpt from the book
**Horse Brain, Human Brain:
The Neuroscience of Horsemanship**
by Janet L. Jones, PhD
published by Trafalgar Square Books
HorseandRiderBooks.com



Powers of Smell

A few months into his early training over fences, Shimmer was trotting tiny verticals with assorted flower boxes and varied poles. Many budding hunters are intimidated by fences they can't see through, so it was time to begin working on jumps that were solid but easy. A small brick wall was selected.

Now, for those of you who don't jump, don't worry: A solid brick wall in a hunter arena is not solid and it's not made of brick. It's a standing rectangle with narrow wood supports covered in lightweight plastic that's colored like brick. It falls over easily if anything goes wrong. The wall that this four-year-old powerhouse was jumping was only 2 feet high and 8 inches wide, no larger than his usual fare.

Shimmer trotted toward the little wall, sailed over it, and cantered out, seeming quite pleased with himself. Everyone smiled—he was a fancy Warmblood from Amsterdam, the color of a new penny with the friendly personality of a cruise director, so we all liked to watch him learn. He repeated his new accomplishment several times.

But when trotting the same wall from the opposite direction, Shim stopped. First time ever! Now, unless you like becoming a human catapult, you don't let a green horse get the idea that stopping is an option. Shim's trainer and rider overcame the problem fairly quickly, but it was the topic of the barn aisle after the ride. Why would he stop when approaching from one direction but jump so willingly from the opposite direction?

The process of asking why a horse behaves in a certain way is critical to good training. In refusing the wall, Shim was headed away from the arena gate. Was he gate-bound? No, he worked past the gate all the time without hesitation. Was he tired? No, the stops occurred only 20 minutes into his daily one-hour ride, and he showed no fatigue over other obstacles. Was the wall too big? No, Shim routinely jumped fences the same size, and he showed no hesitation from the opposite side of the same wall. The jump looked identical on both sides. The two approaches to it were similar in length. What else could it be?

Naturally, the answer didn't come to me until after the conversation ended. Shimmer had been jumping around noon, when there was no shade in the arena. But at other times of day, the side of the wall he disliked cast a deep shadow. Four big coonhounds slept in that shade daily, flopped out with their backs against the

cool fake brick. Their scent would have been especially strong on that side of the jump. Also, when snoozing there, the black dogs were hidden in dark shade, easy for a horse to miss visually.

Shim knew this from his usual morning workouts, when the dogs' side of the wall was shaded.

So, back to the noontime jumping: Neither side of the wall was shaded on the day Shim stopped, and the hounds were nowhere near it. But their scent sure was! In addition, the horse knew the dogs' usual location in the shade and knew that they were often hard to see. If my theory is correct, the dogs' scent would have been most condensed just as Shim's eyes entered the blind spot below and in front of his nose. And that's just how his behavior appeared—he approached at a fluid forward pace with his ears up, then stopped at the last minute—not a dirty stop, but short, sudden, as if surprised.

Could he also have smelled the dogs' residual scent from the "good" side of the wall? Maybe, but that side was upwind of their typical spot. The odor would have been much weaker on the side the dogs avoided and the wall was never shaded on that side, so the horse had no memory of them being there.

The Stepchildren of Perception

Equine smell and taste get little attention from scientists despite the fact that the horse's sense of smell is probably his strongest source of perception. Observation and brain anatomy suggest that it puts equine vision and hearing to shame. But our human brains are biased so strongly toward vision that we have studied it to the exclusion of other senses. And science is complicated enough that we usually develop research designs fully in one area (like vision) and for one species (like humans) before applying them to others.

Another issue that limits progress in studies of smell and taste is that the stimulation is chemical. Vision and hearing are based on mechanical stimuli—particles of light or waves of sound striking the eyes and ears. Scientists have become familiar with these forms of stimulation over three and a half centuries of intense study, ever since Isaac Newton picked up a prism in 1666 and demonstrated that white light contains all colors. But chemical molecules present many mysteries to this day. Not until 2017 were we even able to predict the scent of an odor from its molecular structure.

So, calling all equine scientists: We need the scoop on equine olfaction! It's deeply underestimated and largely ignored. →

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← What we know about it so far suggests that the horse noggin analyzes and interprets complex smells all the time, much like the human brain deciphers sights whenever our eyes are open.

Do Horses Rely on Smell?

They sure do. Horses are fascinated by scents. Often we are not aware of this because we hold our horses back from sniffing or teach them that it is unacceptable. Not to mention the fact that we don't even know the scents are there. But halter your horse up someday and give him his head away from the distractions of grass. Conjure up your best Type B personality—saunter slowly, stand around as if you have nothing to do, and mosey past various objects. Once your giant hound dog realizes it's okay to use his nose, he'll sniff himself silly.

Suppose your horse is alone in a field. He sniffs some manure left by another horse he's never met. From that one inhalation, your horse can determine the sex, state of health, and social rank of the mystery horse. He will know how long ago it left the area, and if necessary can drop his nose to the ground, cast for a lost scent, and follow a scent trail for a long distance. If the deposit was left by a mare, your horse will know whether she is in season. All this from a few road apples slouched in the dirt!

Now, imagine your horse is familiar with the mystery animal. In this case, equine research tells us that a sniff of manure provides all of the above information and more. Your horse will know which equine buddy it belongs to, the buddy's state of aggression toward your horse (regardless of social rank), and whether the buddy was nervous, frightened, or calm at the time he left his calling card.

In addition to the knowledge that comes to a horse by sniffing manure or urine, much can be determined just by sniffing the air. From a few inhalations on a day without wind, typical horses can:

- Locate water
- Avoid predators
- Determine how long ago other horses left the area
- Know whether those horses are familiar or unfamiliar
- Identify each familiar horse specifically
- Suss out the emotions of their herd mates
- Recognize a familiar horse or human from long ago
- Distinguish between familiar humans and strangers
- Notice new scents on clothing, blankets, or tack
- Follow scent trails
- Find the way home by smelling the barn or the body odors left on trail

Instead of shaking hands like we do, horses use their noses for social introductions—an important part of joining a new herd. They approach each other's noses and exchange air through their nostrils. If that goes well, they sniff each other's flanks and tails. We can aid this process by allowing potential herd mates to sniff from either side of an open fence at first.

Leave the halters off and get out of the way, because "help" from humans often creates trouble. Once two horses have become friendly through a fence, it's much safer to turn them out together.

Using their noses and long muzzle whiskers, horses are experts at sorting various grasses. Some even sort their grain. This is easiest to observe when the horse is not particularly hungry. If you own Warmbloods, that might sound impossible, but many breeds are not bound so tightly to their food. The typical Thoroughbred, for example, is sometimes captivated by other activities: Like running. Or shying. Playing, bucking, testing—did I mention running? Using smell, they'll sort the alfalfa pellets from the Equine Senior®, the Strategy® from the beet pulp, like children who want each type of food separated on the plate. Many horses push tiny capsules of medicine off to the side while eating a bucket of processed feed. Their noses and whiskers help to discern which pellet is grain and which one is medication.

Because we humans have such frail powers of smell, we often forget to safeguard our horses by locking feed rooms. Horses can smell grain from a long distance even when it's behind a closed door, the way we smell steaks sizzling on the grill. There is no horse who can't break through a standard door to seize such mouth-watering goodies. For those of you who are new to horses, the feed room door should be barred at all times to prevent horses from eating their way to founder or colic—either of which can be fatal. 🐾

Let Them Sniff

Why is it helpful to let a horse sniff your body and clothes? So he can verify that you will not cause harm. Remember, horses are prey animals—they need reassurance in predatory environments. It's our job to comfort them so they can learn and perform well. Horses notice residual scents of predators near their barns and display indirect reactions to them. These indirect changes spell greater vigilance—the horses show more sniffing, more visual seeking, more interruptions while eating, and in some cases, a higher heart rate. Meanwhile, we—unable to smell a predator, and unwilling to accept that we, our dogs, and our cats are predators—wonder why the horses seem nervous. Respond to vigilance by calming the horse, not by losing patience. He didn't choose the wiring of his brain.

Many people worry that a horse who is encouraged to sniff objects will become a nosy pest. But with good training, that doesn't happen. Horses learn the conditions under which sniffing is acceptable—it's okay at home but not at group trail rides; fine on a halter but not with a bridle; allowed on the ground but not under saddle. Be consistent, and they'll figure it out. Preventing a horse from sniffing his environment is like blindfolding a child who's learning to read.



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MORNING LECTURE Check in 7:30am, lecture begins 8:15am

Topics include; trip preparation, driving do's and don'ts and how to handle emergencies.

Location: Sonoma County - Riding & Driving Clubhouse at the fairgrounds, Aston Avenue Entrance gate #7. **RSVP required for gate code.**
Limit 60
Lecture **\$15** or **\$30** non-member

Lunch Break 12:00 - 1:00pm, lunch provided

AFTERNOON LAB 1:00pm to 5:00pm

Each driver should bring their own trailer. We encourage that each rig have a driver and an assistant. Driver and assistant can switch roles.

Location: Brookwood parking lot, east of the fairgrounds. **Parking details provided with RSVP**

Limit 40 (20 drivers, 20 assistants)
Lecture & Lab **\$30** or **\$45** non-member



Sonoma County Horse Council

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Back to the Trails

By Robin Everett

As winter and the distractions of holidays and unpredictable weather wind down, spring pops up with longer days and drier trails. We feel refreshed and ready to get back out on the trail with our buddies—both equine and human. When making plans and feeling a bit rusty after the winter off, the following check list might be handy.

Point One: Be honest about your starting point. Did your horse spend most of his time in pasture or was he mainly stalled or in a stall and paddock situation? Is your horse young and still in basic training? Or is he starting to feel the effects of age? Does he enjoy being in groups with other horses? Or will he go out on his own and leave other horses behind? Horses have good memories of trails they have been on before. Everyone knows the horse who always knows where the barn or trailer is. And many of us have experienced the horse who slows in August for a mud puddle that dried up in April. Your horse may be surprised this year to discover familiar trails now look different, with downed trees or trails that were widened to permit firefighting equipment. How does your horse deal with such situations? Is he confident or suspicious or nervous? Does he look to his rider for direction, or does he make his own decisions? Do you know how best to support and encourage your horse as he faces these challenges? If there are issues you lack the skill to address, then contacting a good trainer for help might be point one on your to-do list for spring.

Point Two: Tack review. What condition is your saddle in? Is it clean? Has wet weather affected the leather? Are the stirrup leathers still good? Does your saddle need refitting or your girth need to be replaced?

Point Three: Your rig. Does your trailer need attention? Tires and bearings? Flooring and lights? Truck in good shape?

Point Four: What about your condition? Have you stayed in shape over the winter? Maybe that visit to a trainer should be for you as well as for your pony.

Point Five: Bring your horse back into condition. Does your horse need a dentist to make sure his bit seat is correct and there are no other issues that would preclude his bridle being comfortable? If he had his shoes pulled, it may be time for re-shoeing.

Horses hold their condition much better than humans do and the amount of work he needs will differ depending on how he spent his time off. Generally, allow six weeks of progressively harder work to get back to peak condition. My plan includes two or three rides per week, including arena time and a lesson with a trainer every two weeks. Speed, distance and time are all increased gradually, although never at the same time. If your horse has never been fully conditioned, his workouts will start at a less strenuous level than if he is an old hand at this. Pay attention to his willingness to engage his core and use his hind end. Stay tuned to his breathing and after each ride, track his recovery time. It should be a little better after each ride. He should never be too tired to eat.

Point Six: Review destinations. If you are lucky enough to have access to private property, your only concern may be the



Photo: Patti Schaffer

condition of local trails. Most of us who enjoy riding in local parks will find some significant issues this year. Not only is the pandemic still affecting us all, but so is last year's fire season.

With more people working from home, local parks, parking lots and trails are more crowded than in years past. We may need to reduce our speed to allow better trail sharing with hikers and casual walkers. We need to refrain from our usual outreach to children and others interested in our horses in order to maintain that important six feet of social distancing. We need to wear masks at all times when in public to demonstrate civic responsibility and concern for our neighbors. It's easier to just leave it on all the time than to try to pull it up when we meet someone.

The fire season created safety issues including damaged trees that can fall at any time. Park personnel may not have had the resources to clear some of our favorite trails.

In our part of the state, we have open spaces, city parks, state parks, national parks and the Sonoma County Regional Park District. Each of these has its own website and often a Facebook page. Once you decide which park you want to visit, check their website to be sure you are aware of the specific guidelines and restrictions that are in place due to either the pandemic or the fires.

The state park system is extensive, and it would be a good idea to check the status of an individual park. For example, the url for Olompali State Historic Park is https://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=465. Information about Jack London State Park can be found at <https://jacklondonpark.com/>.

The Point Reyes National Seashore is the nearest national park. This park was affected by the Woodward Fire and parts remain closed. This park is a favorite of many trail riders, but for now, we should stay in the southern half. Here is the url to a page which is being regularly updated: <https://www.nps.gov/pore/learn/management/firemanagementwoodwardfire.htm>.

The Sonoma County Regional Park District has both a website and a Facebook page. Here is the website url: <http://parks.sonoma-county.ca.gov/>. On Facebook, you can search for Sonoma County Regional Parks and "like" the page to be included in their published posts. For example, Hood Mountain is completely closed due to wildfire damage and one trail at Tolay Lake is restricted due to a nesting pair of golden eagles.

We are lucky to enjoy a sport that has fewer restrictions during this trying period than many others. We just need to be good trail citizens and we will continue to have trails available for us and our friends—human and equine.

Inside Your Park Pass

The Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation is an independent 501 (C) (3) nonprofit organization that supports the works of our county parks. We help create, preserve and enhance places of scenic beauty where people make memories. We raise funds, foster partnerships and advocate on behalf of more than 50 Sonoma County Parks

As a foundation board member, my goal is to give attention to the relationship between the parks and the equine community, and to enhance the trails, access and equine amenities that make our park experience more fulfilling. I will be writing articles about the 18 places to ride in the Sonoma County Regional Parks system in addition to the new developments and improvements that will benefit our horseback riding on the trails.

This year the Parks Foundation applied for a grant from Bay Area Barns & Trails (BABT) to improve the parking at Helen Putnam Regional Park in Petaluma. I had learned from Charlie Thompson, the president of the Petaluma Riding & Driving Club, that only two truck and trailer rigs have room to park there. Many do not ride there because of the



Photo: Patti Schaffer

parking situation. So, my daughter Grace and I checked it out. We got there early with my three-horse trailer and four-door pickup. When we finished parking, we faced the entrance and exit, leaving parking space for only one other trailer.

The riding is gentle with lovely views looking out over Chileno Valley. The oaks are majestic. The hikers seemed surprised to see horses in the park. Most people wanted to stop and pet the horses. After our ride, I sent pictures and a letter to BABT recommending a grant to expand the parking area. The grant was approved and the park will receive \$5,000 to expand the parking to 5,000 square feet.

Our parks are growing. Attendance is up 200% in some parks. A new park is being added in Monte Rio (Torr property) that will add another trailhead for the 5,000 acres in Willow Creek State Park. Another new park is slated for Mark West Springs Road at Porter Creek. This one already has been used as a working ranch with a lot of horse facilities.

This is some of what is going on for horses in our parks. I look forward to sharing more news of our trails with you.

—Michael Murphy, board member, Sonoma County Regional Parks Foundation

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Armani in purple
Photo by M.J. Wickham

I took this photo in June of 2019. I had never seen our pastures bloom like this before. We had had them reseeded a year earlier, and I can only figure that it dredged up some wildflower seeds in the process. Sixteen-years-old at the time of the photo and an Oldenburg whose registered name is Renaissance Man, Armani lives at home on my five-acre ranch in Santa Rosa. I turned the horses loose and played with my camera for about half an hour, shooting through the flowers. This was my favorite shot, a horse at ease in a beautiful place. I ride Armani mostly on the trail, but he's also a skilled jumper and decent dressage horse. While he is kind and large, 17 hands, he is a go-getter on the trail, and we love a good gallop with our friends.



SR Triple Crown *Photo by Kelly Kennelly*
This week-old Arabian colt was clearly the expression of spring.

SPRING



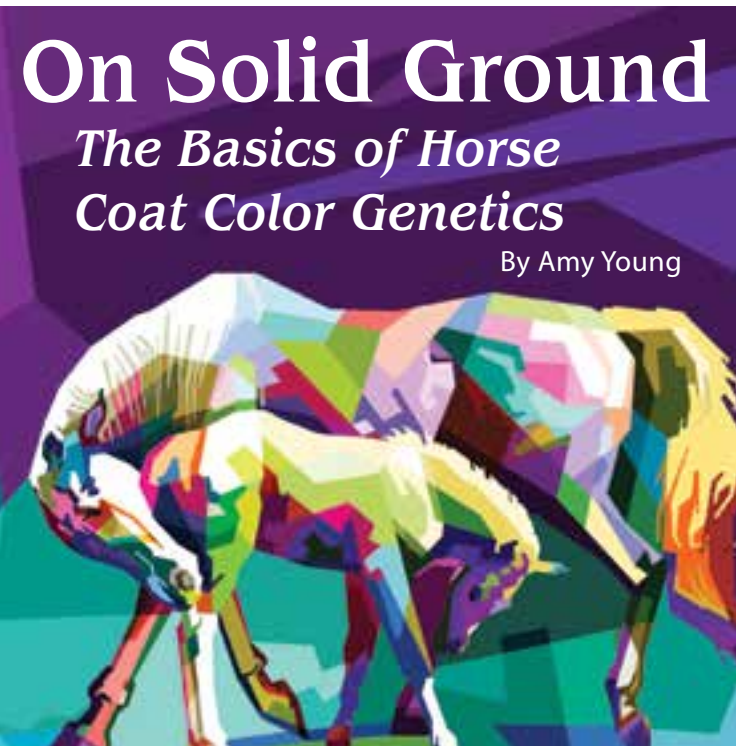
Gray horse with his own hair *Photo by Patti Schofler*

Shedding horse hair is sure a sign spring is coming. Z, 27 years old and formally known as Shagya Szydeco, is astonished by the amount of spring hair his owner Mo Cherry combed out in one session. Born in Maxville, Montana, he joined up with the Cherry family when he was only six months old. They lived in Cool, California, trail paradise, and Z eventually became a regular on the Western States Trail. Today he lives in a Petaluma herd.



A special relationship among the blossoms
Photo by Hannah Beebe

Nothing says spring like orchards in bloom. The breathtaking white blossoms on rows and rows of almond trees make for a fairytale photo location. I had the pleasure of photographing Amelia and her handsome nine-year-old Connemara gelding named Prince. The bond between these two is like no other and is one you will always want to remember.



Perhaps you're interested in coat color genetics because your goal is to avoid producing a notorious chestnut mare, or you simply would like to unravel the puzzle of why Beauty is black. In any case, it's easiest to begin with an understanding of the basics—the solid colors.

A Few Genetics Reminders

- Genes are stretches of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) that act as biological instructions to guide how organisms develop and function. DNA is packaged into chromosomes.
- Horses inherit one set of chromosomes from each parent.
- Every horse has "the gene" for all the basic colors as well as for color dilutions. Coat colors as well as diseases that may be associated with particular coat colors are determined by the version of the gene, or **allele**, that is inherited from each parent.
- Many coat colors have **dominant** (one copy of the allele needed to express the trait) or **recessive** (two copies needed to express the trait) modes of inheritance.
- The **phenotype** is what we can see (coat color) and the **genotype** is the combination of alleles that cause the phenotype (which often can only be determined by genetic testing). The genotype of the sire and dam can be used to predict possible coat colors of their offspring.

Covering the Bases

The three base colors—black, bay, and chestnut—are controlled by the interaction of two genes entitled *agouti signaling protein (ASIP)* and *melanocortin 1 receptor (MC1R)*.

- o Black pigment is controlled by the *ASIP* gene. The dominant allele (A) restricts black pigment to the points (mane, tail, legs, ear rims), resulting in a bay horse. The recessive form (a) distributes black pigment uniformly over the body, resulting in a black horse.
- o Also known as extension or red factor, the *MC1R* gene controls the production of red and black pigment. There are three known *MC1R* alleles: E, e, and e^a. Two copies of e or e^a (or one

of each) will result in chestnut coat color, regardless of the *ASIP* genotype.

Coat Color (Phenotype)	Mode of inheritance	Gene	Possible <i>ASIP</i> genotypes	Possible <i>MC1R</i> genotypes
bay	dominant	<i>ASIP</i>	AA, Aa	EE, Ee, Ee ^a
black	recessive	<i>ASIP</i>	aa	EE, Ee, Ee ^a
chestnut	recessive	<i>MC1R</i>	AA, Aa, aa	ee, ee ^a , e ^a e ^a

Two perfect examples are Crome (chestnut) and April (bay), Quarter Horse mares in the teaching herd at the University of California (UC) Davis Center for Equine Health. The UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory performed base coat color testing for both horses:

Horse	Phenotype	Genotypes	
		<i>ASIP</i>	<i>MC1R</i>
Crome	chestnut	AA	ee
April	bay	Aa	EE

Since Crome is chestnut, we knew she had to be "ee", but we couldn't tell her *ASIP* genotype just by looking at her. Since testing revealed that she has two copies of the "A" allele (AA), we now know that she can't produce black foals because she has no "a" allele to pass on.



Crome (left) and April (right) are part of the Center for Equine Health's resident teaching herd that play an important role in educating UC Davis veterinary undergraduate and graduate students and residents. They are supported by donations.

April is bay. Therefore, we know that she could not have two copies of "e" (if she did, she would be chestnut), but we didn't know if she had one or two copies of "E". Testing showed that she is "EE". She can't produce chestnut offspring because she has no "e" allele to pass on. Similarly, we knew that because she isn't a black horse, she had at least one copy of the "A" allele. But we didn't know if she had one or two copies. Depending on the sire's genotype, she could produce a black foal if it inherited her "a" allele and an "a" allele from the sire.

Variations on A Theme – Dilutions

Cream/pearl, champagne, dun, silver, and mushroom are all different dilution genes that act on the red or black pigments produced by the base color genes. Again, all horses have all of these genes; they just have different combinations of the versions of these genes, which result in the final overall coat color of the horse.

Dr. Rebecca Bellone, director of the UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory and geneticist with over twenty years'

experience studying pigmentation genetics in the horse, compares dilutions to the creamer in your coffee. You start with your coffee roast—chestnut (light roast), bay (medium roast), black (dark roast) and add your creamer. Depending on which dilution gene—or brand of creamer—you are talking about, this gives you colors like palomino and cremello based on how much creamer (one copy or two) you add.

The cream (Cr) allele dilutes both black and red pigment and has an incompletely dominant mode of inheritance. This means that a single copy results in one coat color and two copies (i.e. "double dilute") result in a different coat color.

- One copy of cream (N/Cr) on a chestnut base color results in palomino. A chestnut horse with two copies of cream (Cr/Cr) is cremello.
- On a bay base, a genotype of N/Cr results in a buckskin, and Cr/Cr is perlino.
- A black horse with one copy of Cr is smoky black. A black horse with two copies of Cr is smoky cream.

Pearl (PrI) is a recessive dilution that has been identified in Andalusians, Lusitanos, Paints, and Quarter Horses. Two doses on a chestnut background produce a pale, uniform apricot color with pale skin coloration. This allele is in the same gene as the cream allele. Horses with a very light coat resemble double dilutes, but instead result from having one copy of cream and one copy of pearl.

Champagne (Ch) is dominant, affects both red and black pigment, and causes pinkish/lavender skin and amber-colored eyes. Horses with one copy are phenotypically indistinguishable from those with two copies.

- A chestnut base and Ch (either one or two copies since it is dominant) results in a gold coat and flaxen mane and tail (often mistaken for palomino) and is referred to as gold champagne.
- A bay base and Ch results in tan coats and brown points and is termed amber champagne.
- A black base and Ch cause dark tan coats and brown points and is termed classic champagne.

Dun (D) also dilutes both red and black pigment and is characterized by a dilute body color with undiluted points. "Primitive markings" such as a dorsal stripe, barring of the legs, shoulder stripes, and "cobwebbing" on the forehead, may be present. Three alleles have been identified:

- dun (d) - dun dilution with visible primitive markings
- non-dun 1 (nd1) - not dun-diluted; primitive markings present but variable
- non-dun 2 (nd2) - not dun-diluted, no primitive markings



The color of this Icelandic Horse is black with silver mutation.

- The d allele is dominant over nd1 and nd2; nd1 is dominant over nd2.

Silver (Z) is dominant and lightens black pigment only. The mane and tail are typically lightened to flaxen or silver gray but may darken with age. Silver is associated with the inherited eye syndrome Multiple Congenital Ocular Anomalies (MCOA).

Mushroom (Mu) is a recessive dilution primarily found in Shetland Ponies and characterized by a distinctive sepia-toned body color and flaxen mane and tail. It dilutes red pigment and shows wide variation in shade.

Variability in the basic coat colors is described as "shade" (liver chestnut is a "shade" of chestnut). This is distinct from the dilution phenotypes. The genetic cause(s) of shade is unknown.

The Gray Area

Gray (G) coat color is the result of depigmentation of the hair that progresses as the horse ages. It is dominant and can act on any base color. Horses with one or two copies of "G" can be born any color, gradually showing white hairs mixed into the coat as they get older, and eventually progressing to white/near white. If a horse has two copies of gray (GG), all of its offspring will be gray.

Gray horses have a high incidence of melanomas, often around the tail and head. Gray horses with two copies of the gray allele (GG) are more likely to develop melanoma than those with only one copy (Gg). Gray horses that also have two copies of black (aa) have a higher risk for melanoma.

More information on horse coat color genetics and testing is available through the UC Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (<https://vgl.ucdavis.edu>).

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TECH ADVANCES LEAD TO RIDING ADVANCES

Discovering Technology During COVID

By Patti Schofler



Photo: Patti Schofler

Sofia Platzman, 15, on her 13-year-old Georgian Grande Lion Heart, are followed by the robot cameraman as she listens to Henk Glijn's instructions.

Covid-19 is to thank for more than longer hair and happier dogs. The virus is in a sense responsible for a barnful of improved dressage riders. Because of Covid, Nicasio Riding Club (NRC) dug deep into the latest technology to rescue themselves when travel by their coach from Canada became impossible.

Today they ride with him more often, for less money per lesson, and as he teaches, he can throw another log on the fire to keep warm in his British Columbia living room.

For the past several years and on a monthly basis, NRC, owned by San Francisco architect and rider Julie Dowling, brought to the 38-acre west Marin facility from Canada grand prix dressage trainer Dutchman Henk Glijn. Among his students was Julie's daughter Sofia Platzman.

When clearly Henk would not be teaching there because of Covid, barn members, including in-house dressage trainers Maddy Colteaux and Stephanie Favaloro-Elliott, put their heads together. Sofia and her father Steven Platzman joined up to install a system that for a year now has allowed them to "ride" with Henk as much as five days a week.

Pixio and Pixem robot cameramen were designed for riding

horses and have been endorsed by national and international equestrian organizations. These auto-follow cameras film moving targets indoor and outdoor. Here's how NCR has set up the system.

Three beacons are set around the arena to describe the perimeter for the camera which is on a tripod in a corner of the arena and connected to Sofia's Apple MacBook Pro laptop. Henk is connected to the laptop via Skype. He can see the Nicasio arena on his television.

Sofia wears the watch that the camera follows. She wears earbuds which via a Bluetooth connection to her cell phone sitting on the side of the arena allows her to talk to Henk.

"Two years ago you couldn't do this. The internet speed was too slow and we had a lower quality camera," said Steven.

Now you can. From across the large jump arena Henk comments that Sofia's right hand is raised a bit too high. In his living room he watches Sofia, with the camera zooming in and out as needed. When Maddy walks her horse up to the mounting block, Henk sees something in a hind leg and asks her to walk away from the camera. He can see that the horse's left hind leg was not flexing equal to the right hind leg.

"I see so much more than I do when I am there in person," Henk explained. "You see them so sharply. I have good eyes, but I can't zoom. I'm amazed. It is not at all limiting."

That day Henk had taught four lessons before the ones at Nicasio Riding Club. "If I get up at six, I can teach three lessons by eight in the morning. My lessons are all over the country and in Europe."

Before Covid, Henk drove from Canada to Marin, teaching up and down the West Coast on his way. With this system, the hotel, transportation and food costs for the clinic are gone. Maddy and



Photo: Patti Schofler

The view through the robot camera



Photo: Patti Schofler

Henk Glijn seen on the laptop as he teaches students in Marin from his home in Canada.

Stephanie have upped the number of lessons because now two lessons are the price of one.

"The only negative side is I can't touch the horses. When you teach a clinic regularly, the horses know you. Now when they are good, I can't give them a hug," Henk lamented. "You can't do certain moves yourself to demonstrate what you mean or what they need. When I teach, I draw pictures and diagrams in the sand. I do like personal relationships and I do want to see my clients. But I will definitely continue to teach like this. It works for me up here."

Julie agreed because she has seen daughter Sofia's riding improve considerably, now that she works with Henk five days a week instead of once a month. Furthermore, she recently received permission from the U.S. Equestrian Federation to use the system in the warm up arena at a show.

At least Covid has brought about something positive. 🐾

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As the protocols for Covid-19 safety continue to impact life in the wine country, we are most fortunate to have our relationship with our horses. Riding can be a completely socially distanced sport and about as safe as any outdoor activity.

We're craving exercise, safe outdoor exposure, a change of scenery and something fun to give us a break from teaching our kids or working from the dining room table. Horses are the perfect solution and of course there's *biophilia*—that warm and fuzzy feeling you get by being out in nature, which is now recognized as a beneficial treatment for mental illness.

Given the many benefits of horses in a pandemic, it would seem that local horse businesses, services and nonprofit organizations are either holding up well or finding innovative solutions to move forward.

BUSINESS IS BOOMING... OR IS IT?

Actually, many in the horse business are thriving. Trainers have many new clients coming to them to learn to ride. This is especially true for children as parents seek activities to amuse, entertain and encourage new learning experiences. Adults are also getting back into the saddle now that they have a little more time or more flexible schedules. Often their love of horses has lain dormant for years and now is the perfect time to get out to the barn and develop a relationship with another sentient being—one that is not their spouse.

Lisa Bauman Bacon, owner of California Horse Supply in Santa Rosa, has seen her business weather the pandemic quite well with lots of new people coming into the store. Often, they are starting to take lessons and need riding gear. Others have purchased new horses and are driving new tack, grooming and stable supply sales. While many of us resort to the online superstore purchases for some things, we also have a great ethos of buying local here and that is paying off for the retail tack stores.

The market for used two-horse trailers is swamped and the product difficult to find, according to Don Baxman of Baxman Trailers in Petaluma.

Boarding stables also report a high level of new inquiries, although it's hard to say if this is because of Covid or because two large boarding stables closed shop in 2020. Some of those who charge the mid to upper range for board are reporting that most new calls are from people who are really looking for less expensive places to keep their horses. Many people are looking to save money with backyard boarding arrangements. This may be related to loss of income.

Businesses also face challenges with employees not coming

HORSE PEOPLE BUCK THE PANDEMIC

By Lisa Thomas



Making a space to groom and tack up your horse in a 'barn bubble' works well. If you're taking lessons on a school horse it's a little trickier, but masks, hand sanitizer and gloves still make it a low-risk activity.

Courtesy of Heart Horse UK, creator of digital equestrian silhouettes, word art, cartoons, logos

to work because they have caught Covid or are caring for family or home schooling or are fearful about exposure. On the upside, some owners are developing better customer relationships by working more hours to cover for staff absences.

HORSE SALES AND SHOWS

Trainers have seen a spike in people buying horses for the first time or adding to their herd, even with travel restrictions. Melissa Zanetti of Zanetti Quarter Horses in Penngrove is buying and selling a lot of horses lately, particularly to riders looking to step up to a higher level of competition.

Many horse shows were cancelled in 2020. This was a blow to competitive riders who had worked for months or years to prepare for the shows. The travel and congregating with friends are fun and a big part of the sport that had gone away.

As a result, many riders are staying home and perfecting their skills in preparation of the re-opening of show season. With Covid have come new ways to take instruction and get help online in learning to communicate with horses, groundwork, negotiating trail obstacles and many other aspects of horsemanship.

The American Paint Horse Association (APHA) has organized e-shows through the end of 2021, catering to various parts of the country and including the APHA Paint Alternative World Championship.

VReinWorld.com is holding world-wide nonpro reining competitions online open to all breeds through video submissions. The shows cover four categories with payout at each of the ten levels.

VirtualHorseSport.com is offering clinics and virtual shows online, catering to dressage, working equitation, eventing and western dressage. Video your ride and submit it to be judged by one of the site's judges, including local trainer Sue Curry Shaffer, owner of Santa Rosa's Fairwind Farms, USEF "S" dressage and FEI ***Para Equestrian judge.

Sonoma Horse Park found a somewhat happy medium this past year with its hunter jumper competitions. After closing their shows for several months, they re-opened for competitors and judges only in accordance with USEF Covid protocols—no spectators or vendors. Several riding clubs, associations and barns plan to return to bring back their physical horse shows this year and two new Quarter Horse shows were added to our local calendar.

THE BENEFITS OF HORSE TIME

In addition to new riders and new horses, people who already have horses are spending more time with them. That translates into a higher happiness quotient for them and creates

more work for the trainers and others who support the riding community.

"Horses have been my salvation during shelter in place," says trail rider Sandra VanVoorhis, Sonoma County Horse Council board member. "Early on, when they closed all the parks, it was a huge challenge to find places to trail ride. In Sonoma County, it can be difficult even to find a place to park your horse trailer on the weekends. Perhaps increased outdoor activity will be a lasting positive result of the shelter-in-place orders but I for one hope people end up back in the restaurants and wineries when this is all over."

Therapeutic riding programs have special challenges. Most had to shut down in early 2020 but are gradually reopening for some clients. The more independent clients who can work with just one volunteer have been able to return to riding. Those with more severe disabilities need more than one volunteer for the ride to be considered safe. In some cases, family members are getting trained to assist the riders, said Beth Porter, executive director of Giant Steps Therapeutic Riding in Petaluma.

However, many disabled people who participate in riding programs are now stuck at home with little outdoor exposure. Their horse time was often the highlight of the week and they find missing that connection stressful and depressing.

Some disabled people are not able to get vaccinations and young volunteers are low on the list. Beth reports that since Covid there has been a rush of inquiries about joining their program from potential riders and volunteers and they have a significant wait list.

Therapeutic riding programs have come up with innovative pandemic responses. Equi-Ed, Santa Rosa, has training material offered online and issued volunteer safety challenges to keep their people engaged. Maxine Freitas, executive director and head instructor, operates the equine studies program at the Santa Rosa Junior College Shone Farm that is closed due to Covid but is offering online classes.

Virtual Barn Buddies at Giant Steps is a series of Zoom meetings where clients can visit their favorite horses online or watch volunteers grooming them. Giant Steps also has a few clients visiting their horse partners in the barn for a snuggle or a brushing.

While we're all dealing with many changes because of Covid, one thing that hasn't changed is that being with horses is one of the most healthy and therapeutic things we can do for ourselves, and the horse community has done a great job adjusting and honoring that truism while staying safe. 🐾

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Photo: Cindy Shellenberg

WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

Maya Schellenberg Olufs

"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 English and "west" with western, we might ask ourselves if Kipling's statement applies to these two seemingly different ways to enjoy horses. Or, are horses simply horses?

For this issue we're inspecting the difference and similarities between saddle fit for western and for English saddles.

Our experts are Maya Olufs representing the western horse realm and Nancy Dotti describing the English horse world.

MAYA SCHELLENBERG OLUFS (MO): Sonoma County native Maya Olufs today is a sales representative for McCall Saddles of Vernal, Utah. With 15 years on the Arabian horse show circuit and 10 years learning the buckaroo lifestyle and horsemanship, her experience reaches back to famed tack stores Offutt's and Shaw's where she was for many years a fitter for western saddles. At her home in Penngrove, three ranch horses serve as jacks of all trades.

NANCY DOTTI (ND): Nancy Dotti began her professional saddle fit training in order to apply her horse training experience as well as science and technology to improve horse movement. She trained at the Society of Master Saddlers in England and the Master Saddlers Society of the U.S., both of which awarded her certification as a Master Saddle Fitter. She and business partner **Michele Guttenberg (MG)** are independent saddle fitters who founded Contact Saddles to provide education, training, saddle fit and Albion England sales throughout the U.S. Nancy and Michele call Sonoma County home.

What is your goal for saddle fit?

MO: The goal is to get the correct structural fit and support for the horse, correct leg placement and balance for the rider as well as comfort for both the horse and the rider. In doing so, the rider is correctly over the horse's center of balance, the horse is able to carry the rider with ease and the horse and rider can move together with freedom and balance.

ND & MG: The goal is to allow the horse to move as freely as possible under the weight of the rider with limited saddle interference, proper freedom for the horse's shoulder and engagement through the back. While keeping the saddle off the horse's spine and the rider's weight evenly distributed over the saddle area, we want a saddle that supports a rider in finding and keeping the correct position easily and in comfort.

How do you determine what is necessary?

MO: A few views of the horse are very helpful to me. The first view

is to stand directly behind him. Other views are at the left side and the right side. I look at the withers structure, shoulder muscling and structure, and the topline. Being able to put my hands on the horse especially over the shoulder and wither area to check for symmetry is a huge help in determining which saddles will work the best on the horse. Taking what I see into account, then I see which saddle fits best without padding, making sure we have clearance on either side of shoulder muscle, clearance in the gullet and that it fits evenly and square on the horse's back.

ND & MG: We want the weight of the saddle and rider distributed evenly on both sides. We don't want weight on the withers, spine or any bony structure. For the best weight distribution, the saddle should be level. With an unlevel saddle, the lowest part of the saddle bears the most weight. A level saddle can sometimes be the hardest part of saddle fit for the untrained eye to see and something of value to learn.

A horse balking at our request is not usually a badly behaving horse; sometimes it's an ill-fitting saddle. So, it is important to see the horse ridden under saddle. Some horses elevate more in front, or behind, or stay completely level through all gaits. If you don't incorporate how the horse moves into your evaluation, there may be pressure points, interference with the shoulder, saddle shifting or a struggle by the rider to maintain their position that will not be obvious with a stationary horse.

What changes can you make in the saddle?

MO: There are not very many changes you can make in a western saddle, like you can with an English saddle. The most padding a western saddle has is the sheep skin lining on the bottom of the saddle. That is quite different from the adjustable flocking in an English saddle. The western saddle tree is wood and not adjustable. It is hard cast covered in rawhide, Kevlar or fiberglass.

Because there aren't that many changes that you can do to make a custom fit, it's important to get a good structural fit with the correct support. It is very important for the tree to have good contact and even pressure disbursement down the entire length of the tree and then make any slight adjustments with external padding. That way it gives you more flexibility as your horse



Nancy Dotti

Photo: Kim Brutzman

grows and changes, sheds, loses weight, gains weight or gets older. We also take into consideration conformation issues, like a weak topline. These all call for adjustments that can be made very inexpensively with padding as opposed to trying different trees or having multiple saddles throughout the horse's career. For example, if one side is more developed than the other side, you can fit the tree of the saddle to the larger developed side by shimming up on the side not as developed.

After those adjustments are made, I put a thin pad on and let the rider try the saddle. Excessive padding will actually get in the way rather than help with the fit. I compare a saddle fit to a hiking boot. You want contact, support and correct fit. Once you have that, but you add a thick sock, you may actually cause your foot to blister.

Of course, there are cases where a horse bulks up or has an injury that results in changes in the horse's body and you may have to address that with a different saddle. But I do understand that it's an investment, an expensive piece of tack. I don't take that lightly.

ND & MG: Saddle fitting allows changes to panels, trees, pads and the saddles themselves. The correct changes to a panel can keep a saddle level and balanced as the horse grows or changes work or develops different muscling. Even with an older saddle, wool flocking may be amended to custom fit the contours of the saddle to the horse's changing back. Many saddles also have the option of changing the tree size in case a horse outgrows the tree or if the saddle is used for a different horse.

Some of the issues that saddle fit addresses are the angle of the panels, bridging, shoulder clearance, symmetry, balance, levelness and a match with the horse's anatomy.

Do you expect to see changes right away?

MO: I see willingness to move correctly, ears forward, chewing, balance, fluidity and cadence in the gaits. The biggest change I see repetitively is the rider saying, "He feels me so much more and I can feel him." Responsiveness is what I see.



Flocking and flocking tools for an English saddle.

Photo by Nancy Dotti

The biggest compliment you can get as a saddle fitter is when the rider isn't paying attention to how the saddle fits because the horse is moving freely and willingly.

ND & MG: Often the change in the horse is seen right away. The horse is able to engage and move more freely. The rider can feel the horse more responsive to their aids. We've even seen lameness

go away.

On the other hand, if the horse is experiencing soreness, the horse may be tentative even with the correct saddle fit because the adjusted saddle has pressure over the whole saddle area, including spots that are still sore from the previous saddle. If a horse is recovering from injury or soreness, saddle fitting may need to be done incrementally to allow the horse to adapt and heal.

Sometimes the saddle that the horse immediately moves best in is one that will cause different problems in the near future. While it is good to take pressure away from a particular spot, the weight must go somewhere else. If you take all pressure off the shoulder, it's possible then that all the weight is moved to the back of the saddle. Similarly, if too wide a fitting is used to relieve pressure in the back of a saddle, the weight is then concentrated on the front of the saddle. A balanced and level saddle allows the weight to ride evenly over the saddle so no acute area of the horse's back is asked to do too much of the job.

Do you fit the saddle to what the horse will be?

MO: I want to give the horse the correct amount of support at the time of the fitting. However, I also take into account where the rider wants the horse to get in its growth and conditioning. A horse's age, sex, breed, confirmation, training schedule and history all play into how the horse will change. It's like a woman who has a dramatic hourglass figure. You would have the dress fit the larger parts and then have it altered. Similarly, you fit the largest part of body and then pad up until the horse can bring up the muscle structure of the less defined side closer to that of the more muscled side. Adjusting is all with the padding as the work is designed to build the lesser side.

There are four types of western saddles trees. Semi-Quarter Horse is the narrowest. Quarter Horse is the middle of the road and the most versatile. Full Quarter Horse is widest. The mule tree is very straight.

ND & MG: It is always important to understand the full history of the horse, its current condition and the goals and expectations of the rider. If the horse is coming back from a layup or is young, we can expect changes to happen quickly and plan appropriately. Saddle fit is dynamic and we still can be surprised by a Thoroughbred that grows into a giant or by the chubby Warmblood who spent the winter on grass. Sometimes the future is unexpected. As saddle fitters, we must consider the horse and the rider today and in the future to achieve the best saddle fit.

What is the hardest horse to fit?

MO: A horse that is unbalanced is by far the hardest to fit with the correct amount of support, but not impossible. Riders tend to work the unbalanced horse more on the easier, stronger and more balanced side. As a result, the muscle mass unfortunately continues to become greater on the stronger side

Also, hard to fit are horses that are very stoic. It is much easier to fit a sensitive horse than it is to fit a stoic horse that shows little to no signs of an ill-fitting or a correctly fitting saddle.

ND & MG: Some breeds can present a challenge. For example, classic Friesians often have backs that undulate when they move, causing lots of saddles to bounce. This can be addressed with a special panel design to accommodate their unique



← movement. Another challenge is the really short backed horse with an average rider that wants to be in a 17.5 inch or 18-inch seat. There is not always enough area on the horse to carry such a saddle.



Photo Courtesy of McCall Saddle Co.

Any thoughts about buying a saddle?

MO: Most people have a certain body style of horse they are attracted to. I take that into consideration when fitting because most saddles, expensive investments, if properly cared for can last a lifetime. Buy something that works for you, but also for the type of horse you are attracted to. Consider the body style and confirmation attributes that attract you. If you had a cast of your horse's back and had a tree made to fit that cast, that horse has to stay in that shape for its entire life. When the horse changes, the saddle no longer works. That's why I believe if you have structural fit, you can adjust to changes with padding.

ND & MG: When buying a new saddle, consider it for years into the future. Ask questions. Consider the likelihood of getting a different horse or changing disciplines or relaxing your own position as you mature.

When you are most comfortable in a saddle, you likely won't notice the saddle when you are riding. Instead, you want to focus on training your horse or the beautiful vista on a trail ride. You want your saddle to assist you in keeping your correct position, but not to force your body into ways you are not currently elastic enough to maintain.

In the future, if you would like us to ask Northern California experts a question about horses, let us know your question and give us suggestions of who you would like to us to interview. Get in touch with Horse Journal managing editor Patti Schofler at: editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

IS THAT A HOOF PICK IN YOUR HAND?

The Feet Are Part of Your Inspection

By Mary Taft-McPhee

You're headed to test ride a potential new mount. You have your saddle and your boots and your hoof pick. Yes, your hoof pick, your tool for sleuthing out valuable information about this possible new partner.

After you've had a wonderful test ride, consulted your trainer and friends, and the horse of your dreams has vetted out, did you remember to check out the feet? It's unlikely that a hoof care issue (absent lameness) would change the entire balance of your decision to buy, but careful evaluation of a horse's feet as part of your decision-making process can enhance your understanding of other questions encountered. Feet offer insight into overall performance, potential for future injury and larger than usual farrier bills, and they can help you set appropriate expectations.

When you meet the stranger, pick up all four feet. While you're looking for basic information, you need to pick out any dirt and rocks that hide a clear view of the frog and sole. As you're doing this, you also want to notice if a horse is reluctant to pick up any of the feet or to bear weight evenly, and whether the horse is generally cooperative and easy to work with. Looking at the bottom of the foot, ask yourself these questions.

Is the frog roughly in the same plane as the sole, or has it recessed back into the foot? A healthy frog is a good sign of a foot that is balanced and bearing weight well.

Are the soles soft? If you can move them by squeezing them with your thumb, you can expect the horse to be tender over rocks and rough terrain. Depending on your intended use, the horse might need pads or be more likely to develop abscesses.

If the horse is unshod, is there a good connection between the sole and the white line, and the white line and hoof wall? Sometimes you may see minor separations or areas where dirt and rocks are wedged up between the wall and the white line. If this is extensive, it can indicate poor quality hoof wall or unbalanced feet.

If the horse is shod, are there any special apparatuses such as pads or bar shoes? Why are they there? Does this fit with information you got from the vet check? Remember that shoe modifications or shorter cycles can increase your farrier bill. Factor this in to your budget. Pay attention to whatever issues require the specific shoeing and their potential impact on future performance.

Like tree trunks, hooves can tell a story about past growth and conditions. As you set the hooves down, look at the hoof wall. Can you see a major change in slope, texture or quality from one



Photo: Patti Schofler

portion of the hoof to another? Are there any visible rings on the surface of the hooves? Large prominent rings can indicate past episodes of laminitis. A common thing to see is evidence of a change in nutrition or environment, which will show up as an area above which the hoof is of different quality than it is below.

Keep in mind that for horses with weak, shelly hooves any supplements you start feeding will take nine months to a year for the growth of new hoof wall to reach the ground.

You may also want to note whether the angle of the hoof wall matches the angle of the pastern, and any other distortions in the shape of the feet, such as a flare to one side. These will be greatly affected, however, by how long it has been since the horse has seen a farrier. Bear in mind that if he is significantly overdue, bad angles or a tendency to stumble could be as simple to resolve as getting him back onto a regular farrier schedule. You want to know as much as possible about his shoeing schedule and history, including the last farrier's name and contact information if available, to help ensure an unbroken chain of care.

With a little bit of attention to the hooves and a framework for relating what you see to other information gathered in your pre-purchase exams, you can enhance your understanding of a horse's history, capabilities and potential future challenges to help ensure a perfect fit.



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FOOTING FACTORS INTO KEEPING HORSES SOUND

By Michelle Beko, DVM

Whether we have a competition schedule or trail rides to look forward to, our horse's soundness will determine if we can enjoy them as we would like. Unfortunately, unlike track surfaces and race horse injuries, we have little information for sport and pleasure riding horses as to the role surfaces play in that soundness.

The basic biomechanics of a horse's leg in motion may give us some clues. When a limb advances forward, the foot makes its initial contact with the ground. This portion of the stride is called primary impact. Secondary impact occurs as the hoof slides forward a little and then stops. The forward slide dissipates some of the impact on the limb, although how much forward slide is ideal is unclear. The third portion of the stride, when the limb is perpendicular to the ground, is called the stance or support phase. This is the moment when the greatest force is placed on the limb. The horse's fetlock absorbs shock by hyperextending and dropping towards the ground. Lastly, "breakover" occurs as the horse's body weight passes over the limb and the toe leaves the ground.

Horses need to experience some impact or load during the stance phase in order to become fit. If that load is excessive, however, it will increase their likelihood of injury. Increased body weight of the horse and the rider, and increased speed and jump height results in an increased load. The number of times that load is placed on the limb also is important. A horse that gallops three times a week is more likely to be injured than a horse that gallops once a week. Ideally, the horse is exercised enough to maintain fitness and training but is not over-exercised.

Many injuries that horses get are likely acute exacerbations of chronic micro-trauma. In a recent seminar, Dr. Susan Stover from University of California Davis explained this concept with a very good analogy. Imagine trying to break a stick. If you are strong enough, it will snap. If not, you would bend it and weaken it. If you did that several times, eventually it would break more easily, she explained.

Footings can potentially lessen the impact of the stance phase and is likely a very important factor for maintaining soundness, especially for horses in upper levels of competition. The properties of the footing are more important than the type. For example, the hardness of an arena is more important than whether it is sand, dirt or a synthetic surface. Excessively hard surfaces are more damaging to bones and joints, while excessively soft and deep surfaces can put soft tissues such as tendons and muscles at risk. How grippy the footing is affects how much hooves can slide. The arena base underneath the footing and the maintenance of the arena are no doubt very important factors as well.

While we don't know what a perfect arena would be, we do know that it should be consistent. It shouldn't be wetter, deeper or grippier in some spots. However, evidence shows that horses working on different surfaces from time to time allows them to strengthen their musculoskeletal system and to increase their coordination.

Meanwhile, we do understand that keeping our horses sound requires adequate fitness, good hoof care and a horse with good conformation no matter the surface they work and play on.



Primary Impact—Right Front



Secondary Impact—Left Front



Stance—Right Front



Breakover—Right Front

Photos: Michelle Beko whose horse Zeke modeled for these images

TREES—DEATH BY COMPACTION

By Gwen Kilchherr

Trees are super. For horses on a hot summer day nothing beats pasture and paddock trees for shade. For humans, trees on our properties add value to a home or barn and provide an aesthetic beauty.

Sweet and picturesque as it is to see horses grazing under and around trees, overtime the horses' presence can cause extensive damage to young trees, mature trees and germinating seedlings. Horses chew on the bark, sometimes girdling the trunk. They rub on the tree and break branches.

When trees are the only source of shade, and several horses stand under and around the trees, their hooves compact the soil. Their pawing and stomping, their excessive weight, activity and traffic, whether the soil is wet or dry, pack the soil even more, and create a condition called soil compaction which is detrimental for the overall health of these trees, particularly for their root systems.

Soil compaction occurs when a force, such as a horse's hooves, compresses the soil particles and pushes air and water out of it. The soil becomes denser. The compaction reduces the pore space that should hold air and water in place for the roots. Compaction is inevitable when the soil is wet and less able to withstand compression.

Soils that are severely compacted have significantly less oxygen availability (becoming anaerobic) and most of the necessary soil organisms and beneficial bacteria and fungi disappear.

When trees appear to be in an unexplained decline, perhaps showing fall color during the middle of the summer, chlorotic leaves, leaves that are smaller than normal for that species, thinning canopy, crown dieback or even the death of a tree, most tree owners suspect pests or diseases and turn to chemical sprays or



This popular spot for horses to hang out suffers from compacted soil.

Photo by Gwen Kilchherr

fertilizers for the solution. Yet neither chemical nor fertilizer applications will help the tree if the problem is soil compaction in the root zone.

Soil compaction can also affect the tree's physical stability. As the root system suffocates, a tree's ability to keep itself anchored into the ground is compromised. Such trees are more susceptible to being knocked over during major storms or high winds.

When soils are compacted by hooves, rain water is unable to infiltrate the ground and desired native grasses cannot grow. Unwanted weeds take over, soil erodes and deep muddy, water-logged areas develop.

Before you allow horses to spend some, if not all of their time, in a pasture or paddock that has trees, create a permanent fence around each tree as wide as the canopy to keep the horses from standing directly under the tree or trees. This is the simplest and easiest way to prevent soil compaction and the best way to keep your trees healthy for as long as possible.

A hooved animal of any size, be it a miniature or draft horse, can cause soil compaction because not only do the weight and hoof shape determine the severity of the damage, so does the length of time the soil is exposed to the animals.

If your horses have been taking advantage of the shade from the trees in their pasture, fence off those trees sooner rather than later. Maybe the newly fenced trees are growing in the part of the pasture that as the sun moves during the day, they will still provide some shade for the horses. On the other hand, a simple three-sided structure with a roof will also give the horses some reprieve from the hot sun.

Should you suspect that your tree or trees are compromised from the compacted soil damage, consult with a certified arborist. They can provide you with helpful guidelines regarding mulching, watering, fertilizing and pruning to help loosen the soil and help your trees recover. If it's not too late.



Fencing around a pasture tree may keep it thriving.

Michelle Beko, D.V.M.

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