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## Sonoma County

# HORSE JOURNAL

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## PHOTOS BY MARCIE LEWIS

*Equus ferus caballus* or horses are such a diverse species, coming in so many colors, looks, shapes, and even hair styles. Witness our cover models: Cozzell, the gray Thoroughbred owned by Katie Franchini; Luey, the brown/bay Pure Spanish Horse (PRE) owned by Jamie Jones; and Iliad, the black Friesian owned by Tracy Underwood.

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# CONTRIBUTORS



Riana Porter is a lifelong enthusiast who turned her love for horses towards dressage at the ripe young age of 11. She has successfully competed in numerous national championships throughout her young rider years and professional career. In 2021, she was awarded her USDF gold medal after competing at the grand prix level. For the past 5 years, she gratefully has called Sanbar Dressage in Petaluma the home base for her training program.



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 eleven-year-old PRE Toledano.



After growing up training and competing in three day eventing and hunter/jumper, Hilary Merrill was introduced to the art of horseback archery by author/director/horseman Mike Loades, and together they established California's first HBA club, the California Centaurs, at Nathalie Guion's training center in Petaluma. Hilary trained and competed locally and internationally from Poland to South Africa. Athletics have defined Hilary's life, from trail running to bouldering to hip hop dance to boxing, and she has intensively self-studied kinesiology and skill acquisition for the last decade. At her ranch in Cotati, she uses her experience to help horses and riders improve physical communication, and enhance mental and emotional connection on the ground and in the saddle.



Melissa Kalember is a U.S. Equestrian Federation R judge, Sacramento Area Hunter Jumper Association judge, equine masseuse and intuitive trainer at (707) 363-1258 or melissa@kalemberequine.com



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



Susan 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.



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.



Becca Knopf is the program manager for the Sonoma location of the Square Peg Foundation. She holds her BA in equine business management from Otterbein University and has been a Certified Horsemanship instructor since 2012. Becca has taught and worked with people of a variety of ages, levels, and neurologies since starting with Square Peg in 2015. In 2018, she helped Square Peg to establish its satellite location at Cadence Farm in Sonoma. She lives with her rescued bloodhound Betty and still dotes on Danny Boy, the horse she and her sister have shared since childhood.

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With longer and warmer days upon us, our thoughts turn to spending more time outdoors with our trusty equine pals.

This quarter's *Horse Journal* cover montage suggests that horses come in all shapes and sizes. The broad range of breeds and their diversity ensures that there is a four-footed friend out there for everyone. No matter your personal interests, there's an animal to give you the foundation for a challenging and satisfying vocation or hobby.

In that same vein, the Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) represents the broad spectrum of horse owners. Whether you're involved with horses as a livelihood, personal best competitions, or simple weekend relaxation, the Council represents your interests in the regulatory arena. The Council works with political leaders and park management in crafting regulations that hopefully help and not hinder the equine community. And, of course, SCHC provides support to Sonoma Community Animal Response Team (CART) and other organizations in emergency response situations.

The SCHC has openings for two new board members. These positions give two members of the Northern California horse community who are passionate about horses the opportunity to secure the present and future of the horse world we care about. I know we are all busy, but trust me, Zoom has made meeting attendance much easier. If you would like to contribute ideas and leadership to the equine community, please reach out directly to me at hbeaumont@pcdinc.net for an introduction.

## The Equus Awards Are Coming

April 30 is the evening the equine community will gather at the Villa Chanticleer in Healdsburg to socialize and celebrate the

accomplishments of some of our own. The Equus Awards have always been a highlight event that fosters goodwill and introduces people across disciplines. The evening also represents our singular fundraising effort that powers the Council's efforts.

Typically, the event is held every two years, but due to Covid-19, it has been four years since the last one. As such, the success of this year's event is critical and will dramatically help offset the financial effects of the past couple of years. Attendance is wonderful, but it is sponsorship and donations that really help. Even if you can't attend that evening, please consider making a tax-exempt donation for the good of the order. Every bit helps.


As always, please make sure that your own membership is up-to-date. The effectiveness of the SCHC's efforts can be directly measured by the breadth of our representation. Sonoma County covers a lot of territory and having our membership representative of all corners and everything in between makes effective action possible.

Happy Trails  
Henry Beaumont



John O'Hara Photography

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- HORSE HARNESS: \$500, OBO. Condition: Used, oiled. Black Leather & Patent Breast plate style, 5" bit, Girth: 70" - 78".
- SMUCKERS PONY HARNESS: \$1275, OBO. Condition: Never Used, oiled. Black Leather & Patent Breast plate style, 4" bit, Girth: 56" - 68".

**For more photos or information  
Contact Lana at 707-535-6445, freedomfields22@gmail.com**


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# NEWS & NEWSWORTHY

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Photo: Hannah Beebe

Is Pinsapo a podcast guest?

## NEW PODCAST RIDES INTO NOR CAL

Sonoma County's Shonna Berk hosts the new Stable Connections the Podcast with new episodes available on Monday mornings and found on Apple Podcast, Spotify, and as an MP3 link on the website [www.stableconnectionsthepodcast.com](http://www.stableconnectionsthepodcast.com).

Guests have included Warwick Shiller, Morgan Caplane, and Dr. Sarah Reidenbach. "I believe in the power of conversation. By listening, we open the door to learning and by communicating, we open the door to connection," said Shonna. "I've spent most of my life within the horse community, whether at A circuit hunter jumper shows, traveling as a groom for *Cavalias Odyssey*, or currently as a bodyworker. With Stable Connections the Podcast my quest is to focus more on what we have in common as individuals and communities, rather than our differences. At the end of each conversation, I'm surprised and humbled by how much can be learned by simply listening, and I am reminded that we are all here doing the best we can with the cards we are dealt."

Shonna welcomes suggestions for podcast guests by contacting her at [stableconnections.sb@gmail.com](mailto:stableconnections.sb@gmail.com).



Photo Courtesy of Kaylee Thompson

Kaylee Thompson and Nu Id Be Special at work

## KAYLEE GOES FOR IT AND GETS IT

Nibs (Nu Id Be Special) lived up to her name when the eight-year-old Quarter Horse cutting mare finally found a safe and loving home with Petaluma's Kaylee Thompson. And Kaylee had the experience of her life when she hauled to the USA

NCHA World Finals in Texas and ended up World Show Champion and Reserve World Champion in the NCHA \$15,000 Amateur event.

Now this recent high school graduate is recognized like a rock star in the feed store. Better yet, at the big show NCHA #3 all-time leading open rider Matt Gaines came up to her and said "that horse loves you."



Photo Courtesy of Kaylee Thompson

Kaylee and Nibs in Texas

"Doing our very first run together, Nibs and I scored 75. We were all crying and hugging Nibs. Right there someone asked me who was hauling my horse to Texas."

Before the trip to Texas, Kaylee had never hauled outside California. To qualify for the World Finals, Nibs, Kayle, and her mom, Heidi Schmidt Thompson, for five weeks drove up and down the West Coast. "It was an amazing time. There is so much love around this horse."

## USEF RECOGNIZES SONOMA COUNTY EVENTERS

The Eventing Sport Committee of U.S. Equestrian Federation (USEF) has invited Amber Levine of Petaluma and Cinzano, a 2011 Holsteiner gelding owned by Cellar Farm Corp., to attend assessment sessions with Development Coach Leslie Law, for potential selection to the Eventing Development Program.

USEF also selected for the 2022 USEF Eventing Emerging Athlete Program two Sonoma County eventers age 25 and under.

The program identifies and supports athlete/horse combinations that have shown the potential to develop into future U.S. team candidates. They are Maddy Temkin, Sebastopol, with Dr. Hart, a 12-year-old Thoroughbred, and Tommy Greengard, assistant trainer at Chocolate Horse Farm in Petaluma, who is listed with his own horse Joshua MBT, an eight-year-old KWPN.

## HAPPY TRAILS

### Love Story of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans

Roy Rogers and Dale Evans made their first movie together in 1944, and so began a dazzling partnership with a devoted public following that lasted 52 years. *Happy Trails* is a collection of photographs and memories chronicling the lives of the King of the Cowboys and the Queen of the West. Readers meet the talented young man and woman who would eventually become the royal couple of B-rated Westerns. The dynamic pair costarred in 29 movies and recorded more than 200 albums together, eventually parlaying their fame with a half-hour television hit *The Roy Rogers Show*, as well as a comic book series and a long list of merchandise (including clothes, boots, and toys) bearing their names.

Co-author Howard Kazanjian is an accomplished film and television producer and entertainment executive who has produced several blockbuster films. Co-author Chris Enss is a *New York Times* best-selling author who has been writing about women of the Old West for more than 20 years.

## SONOMA CART 2022 TRAINING SCHEDULE

The following is the training schedule for the Sonoma County Animal Response Team (Sonoma CART). Register for all trainings at Better Impact on the website [www.sonomacart.org](http://www.sonomacart.org). For more information, email [info@sonomacart.org](mailto:info@sonomacart.org)

All in-person trainings will be held at Sonoma County Fairgrounds, 1350 Bennett Valley Rd, Santa Rosa. Enter Gate 7 at the intersection of Aston Ave. and Linwood Ave.

Please bring appropriate PPE for COVID-19: mask, hand sanitizer, and disinfectant wipes/sprays. Refer to [www.sonomacart.org/covid19-volunteer-protocols](http://www.sonomacart.org/covid19-volunteer-protocols) for more details.

Class	Date	Location
Livestock Handling & First Aid	April 10, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds Red Barns
Companion Animal Handling and First Aid	April 10, 1-4 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds Feather & Fur All
Hazards & Fireline Safety	TBA	Register at <a href="http://www.ResQFAST.com">www.ResQFAST.com</a>
Livestock Sheltering A-DSW swear in at 12 p.m.	May 7, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds Red Barns
Companion Animal Sheltering	May 7, 1-4 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds Feather & Fur
Trailer Safety Course	TBA	TBA
Animal Search & Rescue (ASAR) A-DSW swear-in at 12 p.m.	May 21, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds
ASAR Trailering Skills & Certification	May 21, 1-4 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds
Fire Shelter Deployment	May 21, TBA	So. Co. Fairgrounds
Hotline & Communications A-DSW Swear in at 12 p.m.	May 22, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds R&D Club
Dispatch	May 22, 1-4 p.m.	So. Co. Fairgrounds R&D Club
Preparedness Drill	TBA (June?)	So. Co. Fairgrounds

**Self Guided Training Program ONLINE:** Volunteers to complete training tracks consistent with area of interest on Better Impact PRIOR to in-person training. Courses may include: Animal Search and Rescue, Animal Sheltering, Hotline/Dispatch/Communications, Volunteer Coordination, Safety Officer, and Hauling Certification.

## CHA TO MEET IN NOVATO

The 2022 Certified Horsemanship Association Region 10 Conference will be held on April 30 and May 1 at Novato Horsemen's, 600 Bugeia Lane, Novato. This two-day event is open to the public and to all horse enthusiasts. For sign up details, visit [cha.horse](http://cha.horse). If you are a CHA instructor and are interested in presenting, please contact [bfalco@halleckcreekranch.org](mailto:bfalco@halleckcreekranch.org)



Tommy Greengard and Josh

Photo Courtesy of Tommy Greengard





# RED-HAIRED MARE is Heading for a THOROUGHBRED MAKEOVER

By Patti Schofler

**W**hen the three-year-old chestnut mare reared straight up on her hind legs in reaction to the excitement of a new horse at Ride Off Ranch, Charlisse kept her cool. And cool is what she'll need to keep when she and her family take this mare across the country to compete in the prestigious 2022 Thoroughbred Makeover in Lexington, Kentucky.

Charlisse "Charlie" Weintraub had watched over and over the video of the Thoroughbred mare's one and only race. Her students were buying lovely new Thoroughbreds, but she was not really shopping for a horse. Just curious. Or so she thought.

In that video Tango Kitten, then three-years-old, ran her first and only race. She was so slow that clearly, she was not up for the sport. She was last through most of the race and crossed the finish line nearly five seconds after everyone else.

dream, she was a weanling. I guess my two big fears were that she was too small and too young. Then what a relief. She got off the trailer and she was so chunky and so beautiful."

Kit was not Charlie's first off the track Thoroughbred (OTTB). She started riding at five, when instead of buying her the requested pony, her parents gave her lessons at the European Pony School in Santa Rosa run by Yves and Christine Sauvignon. She would eventually join Yve's horse school and compete in eventing, and later spin off to show jumping with Mary Dowdall of Cotati. When she was 13, her parents presented her with her first horse, a five-year-old OTTB.

"His name was Buster and it suited him. He bucked me off every single day the first year we were together. He was horrible. I was 13 and at that age you just got back on. My record was getting bucked off three times in a 30-minute lesson."

## WHY THE MAKEOVER

When Kit was delivered on November 19 to Charlie and Jonathan Weintraub's Ride Off Ranch in Santa Rosa, her one race made her eligible for the Makeover, organized by the Retired Racehorse Project and presented by Thoroughbred Charities of America.

To qualify, the horse can be any age but can have no more than 15 rides in a discipline other than racing by December 1, 2021. Charlie had only three rides on her by that date. Further, equine entrants can have no more than 10 months of retraining for a second career and must have raced or trained to race within the past two years.

The Makeover was something Charlie has longed to do, admiring that this organization was showcasing the abilities of these horses.

"The Makeover fits with my philosophy," said Charlie who along with her husband Jonathan, an accountant, run a nonprofit Ride Off Animal Rescue as well as a boarding stable. (Note the pun.) "My rescue outlook is to retrain a horse to be such a wonderful, good citizen that I can adopt it out and no one will mistreat it. People mistreat horses they feel are bad or too quirky. Not every horse will be right for a beginner, but training is teaching a horse to do a job safely, even though you might have to put on a more experienced person.

"The Makeover is set up to train a horse in eight or nine months and to show what you as a trainer can do. With Kit I'm

taking my time because she is so young and so malleable. You can hurt her with a bad ride and help her with a good one."

Actually, Charlie didn't expect to get accepted, especially based on her entry video showing her riding Lincoln, her Clydesdale, in a dressage show. She also included a video of her riding a student's Thoroughbred.

Charlie easily acquired the required veterinarian recommendation stating that she has the necessary skills and knowledge to care appropriately for a horse transitioning off the track. It took her two hours to fill out the entry, not very different from a job application.

Competition is available in 10 disciplines including barrel racing, competitive trail, dressage, eventing, field hunter, polo, ranch work, show hunter, show jumper and freestyle. Charlie entered Kit in dressage. She is considering entering show jumping, but she wants first to have Kit's leg joints X-rayed since they will need to jump a minimum of 2'6" and Kit is just four.

## TRAINING PLAN AND HOW IT'S GOING

Despite her many experiences at the racetrack, the mare will need exposure to many new sights in order to successfully meet the electric environment expected at Kentucky Horse Park. One adventure will be ponying her off one of the Clydesdales at Trione Annadel State Park to meet bicycles and hikers and other surprises.

Already Kit is coming into her own. Typically, horses from the track arrive fairly calm. They have seen everything and heard everything. They were stabled in a stall and exercised on the hot walker or on the track. They would hear the thunder of hooves over the track behind their stalls. "They arrive here where it's quiet with more space. When I turn them out in the bigger paddocks, they act like 'what do I do?'"

And then the honeymoon is over. "Their personality creeps in. And you have to ask what happened to make you so high and mighty?" Charlie laughed. "They're testing the boundaries and want to try this and that. Some are baby horses, but we have had seven-year-olds that have a certain wisdom about them, but they have their cocky moments when I need to say no, you shouldn't do that because your rider is 13 years old."

Kit is no exception. After a couple of months with Charlie, she entered the teenage phase and tested boundaries. One of those days she bucking Charlie off. "It's trickier with a chestnut mare. I will listen to her opinions. But if it's unsafe I will firmly ask that she follow my directions. That's what you do with a chestnut mare. Geldings ask for a cookie. Mares answer, 'Excuse me, you didn't ask me the right way.' And then she's miffed for half a day."

## TRIP PLAN

Since Charlie didn't expect to get in the show, she expects even less to win one of the cash prizes. While Jonathan has done considerable eye rolling over this adventure with Kit, he is all in for the four-day drive to Kentucky and back. "You can't marry a horse woman without realizing we're all a bit psycho," claimed Charlie.

Before Kit was purchased, Jonathan and Charlie had a deal: you have to sell a horse to buy a horse. When that deal didn't stand up in the purchase of Kit, Jonathan felt he was entitled to buy a motorcycle which he did.

The two Weintraub youngsters, Killian, 6, and Tatum, 3, are also in for the family adventure in the trailer living quarters



Tango Kitten has taken to training with Charlie who fits fine with the big mare.

Photo: Patti Schofler



Photo: Patti Schofler

After hardly any time, Kit and Charlie bonded.

Now she is barely four, and yet she ranks as a retired racehorse who qualified and was accepted with Charlie for the Thoroughbred Makeover. They will join just 482 trainers and 505 horses at Kentucky Horse Park, October 12-15.

The week before Kit arrived, Charlie, 37, had what she feared were prophetic dreams about this horse she bought after viewing only a few photos and the video. "I was so nervous. I dreamt that she got off the trailer and she was a pony. I'm 5'10." In my other

combination. By the way, Tatum is named after the actress Tatum O'Neal, who grabbed ten-year-old Charlie's attention in the film *International Velvet*.

"I can't believe we're driving across country for this. Even if we win, we all know that you don't make money with horses," said Charlie who graduated from Sonoma State University with a degree in accounting and business.

## DETAILS FOR MAKEOVER

The Thoroughbred Makeover and National Symposium will have waiting for the winners at least \$100,000 in prize money divided among the 10 disciplines. Charlie will show Kit in U.S. Equestrian Federation dressage Training Level Test 2. Then all horses will perform individually a five-minute demonstration ride that must include walk, trot, and canter in both directions. Horses should perform whatever movements best demonstrate the level and quality of their training. Scores for the test and demonstration will be added together for placings in the preliminary competition.

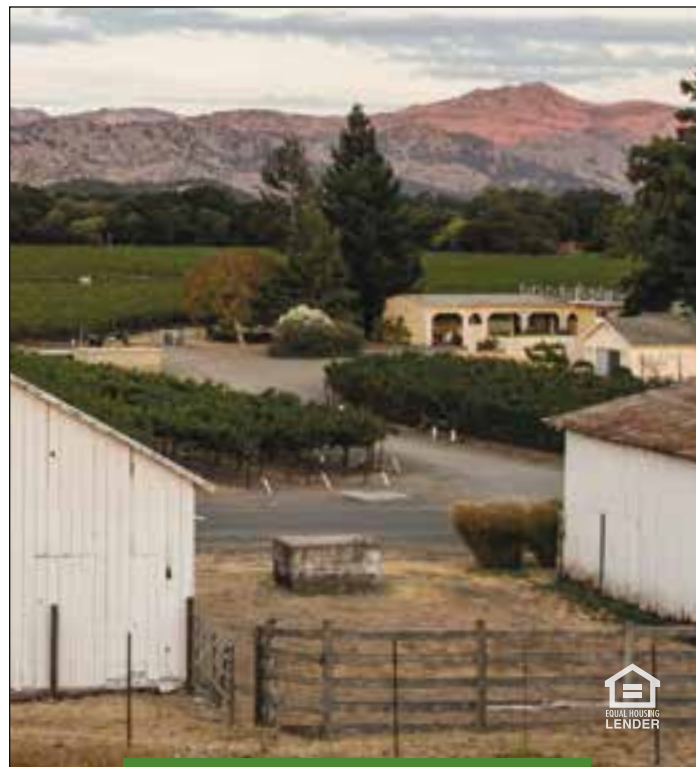
For the final competition, the five horses with the highest scores after the preliminary competition will advance to the finale for a demonstration ride scored in the same fashion as the preliminary competition and averaged between two judges to determine first through fifth finale placings.

A panel including all discipline judges will determine the overall Thoroughbred Makeover Champion who will take home a \$10,000 cash prize. A popular vote by in-person and online spectators will determine the People's Choice Award winner who earns the right to direct a donation to an equine charity of their choosing.

The *Horse Journal* will keep tabs on Tango Kitten (Kit), Charlisse (Charlie), Jonathan, Killian and Tatum as they travel to Kentucky Horse Park and take on the Thoroughbred Makeover. We will report back to you. 🐾







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# NAME THAT HORSE



SirPrize



Raisin Hell Amira



Big Gulp



Baby Jack

The naming of horses is a difficult matter and a horse might have many different names: the name that the human uses daily, the fancier name that is particular to that horse, and, you have to wonder, what name that horse thinks he deserves.

We gathered these names, some from our community, some about horses we've heard about.

We'll do this again.

Keep the names coming. Send them to the editor at [schc.pschofler@gmail.com](mailto:schc.pschofler@gmail.com)

### TELLS A STORY

**SirPrize** – "One of our mares always, always, lets us know when she is going to foal because she starts dripping milk 24 hours in advance of foaling. Well, this time she didn't and foaled without us being there to help if needed. We named that little guy SirPrize and as he grew up, he really lived up to that name. He loves having his picture taken, actually posing for the camera. Here he is with me, posing for the camera from day one." (Karen McMillan)

**Big Gulp** – Look at him and of course the Premarin rescue has the right name.

**Baby Jack** – Twenty-one hand, seven-year-old Percheron

**Raisin Hell Amira**

### RACE HORSE NAMES

**Oink** – Last seen finishing fifth in a five-horse race

**Wise Child** – Bred and named by author, aviatrix, and race horse trainer Beryl Markham

**Chestnuts Are Better**

**Two Pounds Over**

### GIRLS

**Scarlet O'Marea** – "Our first year together I said, 'Frankly my dear I don't give a damn!' recalling the famed book and movie 'Gone with the Wind.' We call her mare or night-mare when she is being ridden. Need I explain?" (Caitlin Ahlberg Magner)

**Winnema** – The origin of Winema (Winnema) is the Native American-Miwok word that means "female chief."

### BOYS

**Ragazzo** – Boyfriend in Italian

**Novio** – Boyfriend in Spanish

**Cazinova** – "We lost our beloved Cazinova last year at 32. Ron's first horse, he came to us as a spry seven-year-old named Zin. Since Ron preferred Cabernets over Zins, he wasn't going to call him Zin. As soon as we turned him out in the pasture to live with his new roommates, the gelding mounted the first mare he saw. I said out loud 'What a Casanova.' And then

we put 'zin' in the middle of his name and call him Cazinova. (Duffy and Ron Hurwin)

### BY SPORT OR DISCIPLINE

**El Rapido** – An eventing prospect

**Ez on the Slide**

### EXOTIC

**Jiangxi** – The seven-year-old Dutch Warmblood gelding was named after a province in the People's Republic of China by the breeder who adopted two young girls from Jiangxi.

**Dragonsmeade Zegna** – Dragonsmeade is a Morgan Horse breeding facility in Kentucky. Zegna is an Italian designer.

### JUST PLAIN FUN

**Cheeto**

**Lady Bang Bang**

**Curious George**

**Hang on Oliver**

**Bail Jumper's Legacy**

**Nifty How That Works**

### PONY NAMES

**Baskin Robbins** – A six-year-old thought his pony looked like an ice cream cone.

**Comet or**, for the show arena, **Great Balls of Fire**  
**Tex Biggun**

### WITH A DRINK IN MIND

**Guinness** – Iconic Irish beer since 1759

**Murphy** – Irish Murphy Brothers stout beer since 1856

**The Busker** – Also known as Irish Whiskey

These three Irish Cobs, named by Adrienne Spatz, are registered Gypsy Vanners. Notice a theme here.

### NAMED FOR THE FAMOUS

**Pat Garrett** – Lawman, friend and killer of the famed outlaw Billy the Kid

**Prince Caspian** – One of the Narnia tales by C.S. Lewis

**Captain Chrome** – This notorious cyborg space pirate is feared throughout the galaxy (and comic books).



Cazinova



Ez on the Slide



Dragonsmeade Zegna



Curious George



Captain Chrome







Diamond Moon with Riana Porter really gets into the soccer ball exercise.

Photos: Patti Schorffer

# DURING FIRE SEASON, LET'S PLAY

## Things to do when the air is foul

By Riana Porter

We Californians are learning how to live in the new reality of impactful, sometimes long, fire seasons, especially having to figure out how to care for our horses when poor air quality and potentially dangerous smoke inhalation affects horse health. This often means having to make difficult decisions about when, how much, and in what way to safely work our horses.

During wildfire season, I have found myself staying off my horse's and client horses' backs for weeks and even a few times, over a month. While we have wonderfully large grass turnouts at Sanbar Dressage where I train, we've learned that during lengthy periods that the horses are grounded, turnout is simply not enough for some of our more athletic horses.

As a horse caretaker, trainer, coach, and competitor, I have dug deep into my toolbox to find creative ways to keep my clients and their horses from going stir crazy when the Air Quality Index reaches an unhealthy level. This becomes an opportunity to shift my training focus to the horsemanship skills that are often pushed aside because of competition and riding goals that frequently dominate most training programs.

During smoky times we are limited mostly to walking and maybe a light trot and canter depending on the horse and timeframe. When we do work under saddle, I am diligent about giving lots of breaks to ensure the breathing rate of the horse stays as low as possible.

### GROUND POLE PATTERNS ON THE WEB

The many ground pole patterns found on the web cater to the walk, a gait that riders tend not to practice enough. In dressage, good, solid walk work can really improve one's overall test score. It also will improve one's general precision and execution of riding skills and bring more clarity to the horse and rider partnership.

A fun and stimulating tool for our horse and horse/rider team is to kick around the arena a 40-inch exercise ball encased in a soccer ball cover. The task: guiding ourselves to guide a horse to guide a ball on a specific line to a specific location.

Sound easy? In fact, while it's entertaining and stimulating for horse and rider, it is incredibly difficult. It takes a lot of focus for both horse and rider. The ball brings to light the holes that we turn a blind eye to in our daily work: our unclear aids, the imprecise timing of our aids, and the solid trust and understanding of aid pressure and release in a horse and rider conversation.

To teach a horse to trust a rider to guide them to kick a big scary ball, the rider must first understand how to communicate to their horse on the ground. It's easy to push and push with no result while overlooking cues that speak to the horse's confusion or distrust. To gain their trust and create a strong bond based on mutual understanding, to be their protector and leader, we must have the patience to observe, listen and learn how to interpret, often through trial and error, the conversation these amazing animals are trying to have with us. However, it's not one sided. They need to understand our cues and that takes patience on our part to teach them how.

Are you sure about what release you are looking for from them in response to your precisely timed pressure? If the horse is confused and reluctant, you need to reassess and check the clarity of what your pressure is asking of them. The key is not learning how to control the horse, but learning how to understand them so you can teach them how to manage themselves in the world you ask them to live in.

### INTRODUCE THE BIG SCARY BALL

When you introduce the big, scary soccer ball, they will look to how you react to the ball. They'll search for the same body language and patterns you presented to them with your groundwork.

Don't expect them to go right up to that ball.

First, put yourself between the ball and your horse. As they show interest in it, gently roll the ball away with your hand. This encourages a change from their flight instinct to curiosity about why the ball might be afraid of them. It also releases the pressure put on the horse by the ball being close and encourages them to seek the pressure release by going towards the ball.

Once they are relaxed around the ball and they follow the ball with you rolling it, the next step is to show them to stand over the ball. When you ask the horse to stand with their feet two inches away from the ball, the ball sits in a blind spot. To help the horse relax, ask them to step closer only one step and then roll the ball. Repeat one step, roll the ball slightly away. Inch by inch they learn that with each single deliberate step, the ball continues to release the pressure and move away.

Next, ask them to gently step into the ball. Some horses will figure out how to step into the ball with one leg, but not the other. The precision and clarity of your groundwork will help to explain to them how to use the other leg as well. Shift the focus of your pressure and

release to zero in on the other leg until they find the same answer with that side as well. You should be able to encourage it by using lead and poll pressure to correct and guide the position of the front legs and shoulders to the side you are focusing on. You also can lightly tap the horse's side with the end of your lead rope or whip.

Once that is mastered, your leading skills will show them how to kick the ball at a full walk pace. I stand farther away on the side of the ball opposite the horse and have them kick the ball towards me at a walk pace. That way I still have ultimate control of the ball, if need be, but they are now moving the ball by walking each knee into it.

To go through those same steps while mounted, take the time to link what you did on the ground to under saddle by riding all of the same patterns and steps. It will go by faster than the groundwork did, but it is important to go through all of the motions the same way. Don't be greedy or lazy and start halfway through the process or skip steps because your horse was so good on the ground. Skipping steps means you changed up the order of the pattern and they may lose trust and understanding. Even if it's just a little bit lost, a little goes a long way with a conversation fully based on body language.



Colette Kolenda and Bombay Sapphire (Littles) exercise with the soccer ball on days when Littles' sensitive respiratory system needs a break.

Photos: Patti Schorffer

I love bringing out the ball at any point during training, but it certainly comes in handy during fire season when air quality is poor. The mental and physical exertion from playing comes without challenging the horse's breathing. Riders can slow down training to a speed that allows them to focus on and improve every little detail of communication. Of course, when the AQI is at an unhealthy rate, we stop all movement, even if that means we scratch from a competition and we do saline rinses with nebulizers. And we consult with our vet.

### WHEN SMOKE GETS IN YOUR EYES *What is too much exercise?*

With wildfires come a massive amount of smoke that can diminish our air quality. For your health and safety and that of your horse, follow these steps to decrease chances of long-term health damage.

Before you saddle up, check the air quality index (AQI) for your area at [www.airnow.gov/aqi](http://www.airnow.gov/aqi). Below are recommendations for what to do and not do in varying ranges of air quality.

**AQI 0-50:** No need to slow down. It is safe to ride at all levels.

**AQI 51-100:** Go for it, unless your horse has a pre-existing condition such as allergies, heaves or heart disease. For those horses, groundwork only.

**AQI 101-150:** Limit aerobic activity to an easy walk and trot, either under saddle or in hand. Decreased exercise intensity is important to ensure particulate matter such as ash does not get deep into the lungs.

**AQI 151-200:** Do not ride. The air is getting unhealthy for all horses and people. Avoid intense aerobic work. Use ground exercises to help build strength while minimizing exertion from both horse and rider. Working with your horse in hand can improve manners, patience, and proprioception. Ground exercises include pole or cavaletti work and walking over tarps or through water boxes.

Passive strength exercises and stretches also can benefit your horse. Carrot or treat stretches and neck bending will help with flexibility in the cervical, thoracic, and lumbar regions of the spine. Tummy and butt tucks will help round your horse's

back and engage the core muscles. You can also stretch the front and hind limbs to increase flexibility. Have your horse hold each stretch for 20 to 40 seconds.

**AQI 200+:** Stall rest with essential activities only.

Feeling confident with basic veterinary care in a time of non-emergency will help you feel confident in time of an emergency or veterinary issue. Practice taking your horse's heart rate, respiratory rate and temperature. Knowing your horse's normal vitals will ensure that you are aware when your horse is sick. The normal vitals for a horse are: heart rate 24 to 44 beats per minute; respiratory rate 16 to 24 beats per minute; temperature 99 to 101.5 °F.

Listen to gut sounds and look at your horse's overall body condition. Your horse should have gut sounds next to the flank on both right and left sides. Also, you can practice wrapping legs in case of swelling or wounds.

When the air quality is too poor to work your horse, this is a great time to deep clean the barn and trailer. Pay special attention to drinking water and hay. With ash and other particles in the air, some horses may not drink or eat from a contaminated area. Also go through your medicine cabinet and emergency kit and remove expired medications. Update medical information for your horse and make it easily readable. Important information includes your veterinarian, farrier, and emergency contact phone numbers.

Alicia Benson, DVM, CVA  
Sonoma CART Veterinary Lead  
VIP Equine Services





# WHO ARE THEY?

Go ahead. Name the breed of horse in each of these photos. When you think you know the answers, check out how you did on page 31.

Photos: Hannah Beebe, Marcie Lewis, Michele Ng, Patti Schofler, and Bee Silva  
Photos Courtesy of the American Quarter Horse Association, Allison Mathy, Diane Perry, and Wendy Roberts



1



2



3



4



5



6



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8



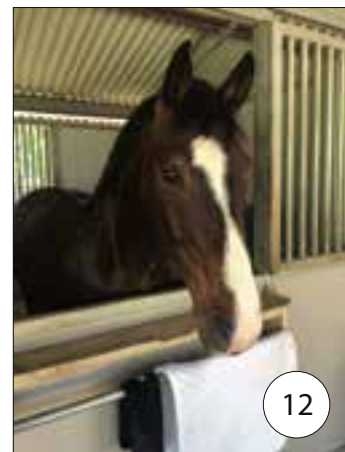
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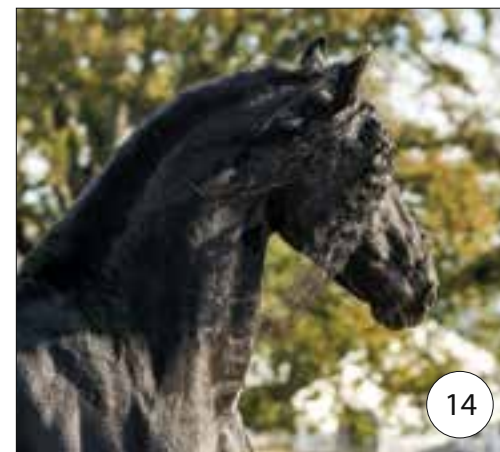
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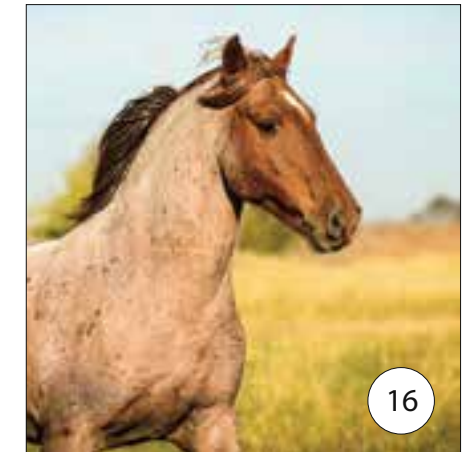
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16





# Horseback Archery

## Fitness for Body and Mind

By Hilary Merrill

**M**y cool and collected mustang Partner strides around a bend in the eucalyptus forest, following my weight shift as I hover above the saddle. As he shifts into the flying phase, I crouch, rotate my chest upward toward the target, feel my back muscles magnetize together and my quads solidly support my body. I draw my bow toward the sky, and kapow - I hit the qabac\* target, sitting on a pole nine meters up in the air.

Cultures around the world have distinguished their own way of practicing the historical martial art, hunting method, and modern sport of horseback archery (HBA). Common to each, however, is a horse and rider team that trusts and understands each other enough to surrender rein contact and to communicate via energy, seat, and leg. Only this way can the rider stabilize while in motion and shoot arrows from nearly every angle while navigating a path formed by terrain changes and obstacles.

Cultivating that stability, strength, and overall athleticism clearly expands a horse archer's potential in the sport, and riders in all sports. More importantly though, it can inspire the horse to trust his archer. With improved athleticism and proprioception, archers can better follow the horse's movement, be more accurate and clearer with their requests, and be more sensitive to subtle feedback. In turn, that investment, that try from the rider, means so much to the horse and helps him be top of his game.

In their search for greater success and enjoyment of their sport, members of the California Centaurs Horseback Archery team look for improved body awareness, spatial awareness, physical strength, mental endurance, and creative problem solving. Often the answer is found in cross training with the other sports and a variety of athletic arts including capoeira\*\*, swimming, yoga, running, boxing, aikido, Pilates, kung fu, and dance. That background allows the Centaurs to connect and communicate on more levels with their horses, and it



Hilary Merrill takes a shot at a qabac target.

helps them pursue balance in alignment, strength, and mobility for effective and exhilarating horseback archery.

### WE PAY ATTENTION

Before we prepare our bodies for these demands, we prepare our minds. We likely spend more time training the brain proprioceptively than we do building strength or endurance. When we get distracted or feel lazy, this disengagement from the moment causes us to miss certain energetic or body language signals from the horse, miss happenings in the environment, and overlook energetic or physical signals in our own bodies.

We build our capability to pay unwavering attention to ever more subtle details, which enables us to align our bodies tactfully and make our aids more subtle. Building awareness and agile use of our muscle groups clear up our communication with the horse. If I'm asking Partner to move away from my left calf, but I'm unaware of how my right thigh is simultaneously closed against Partner's right side, I'm giving him mixed signals and confusing him.

Sensory awareness and proprioception are at the heart of any improvement. If I'm paying attention, I can feel the terrain drop suddenly under Partner's hooves and I can sit up taller to help him balance longitudinally.

Play a game with yourself. In this moment, wherever you are, what are the most minute things you feel, hear, see, and smell? Set judgment and analysis aside to notice a wider array of senses.

### THE PLATFORM

One of the most groundbreaking techniques to improve our HBA practice and so many other horse sports is shock absorption, taught and popularized by my Polish HBA coach and world champion competitor Wojtek Osiecki. This posture creates a stable platform above the horse so that we can draw the bow and release arrows as smoothly and accurately as possible. The action melds our core and lower body with the horse and its movement, keeping the muscles engaged for shooting the arrow from confusing the horse while at the same time enabling us to adapt to terrain changes, stumbles,

and obstacles. Clearly this is a posture that can help in any riding.

In the shock absorption system, we engage our quadriceps, glutes, hamstrings, calves, soleus medius, core, and a variety of other leg and pelvic muscles to dynamically float above the horse's center of gravity. This is the most necessary but also the most challenging during extreme rotations as in the back shot or qabac position.

We also engage core muscles, from serratus anterior to iliacus, with a downward and inward focus on our center of gravity. The focus is intent but dynamic, enabling horseback archers to follow and support the slightest movement of the horse's own center of gravity. This anchored dynamism allows distal muscles and joints to move in a wide range of motion with sensitivity, strength, and accuracy, all while not disturbing the horse's brave job.

All equestrians can relate to the need for their trunk and legs to meld with their horse so that they can follow and request at the moments that make the most sense to the horse, and not hinder the horse's job with a blocking joint or tight muscle.

### THE DRAW

The Centaurs rely on physics to shoot like our mentor and phenomenal traditional Chinese archery practitioner Justin Ma. This style minimizes strain on muscles, maximizes draw length, and culminates in a forgiving release of the bow string.



The strength and tone of back muscles contribute to successful shots.

We depress our shoulders and open the bow using the serratus anterior, levator scapulae, teres major/minor, diaphragm, latissimus dorsi, trapezius, and rhomboids, all of which concentrates the work around the midline of the body and frees up the smaller muscles in our arms to be sensitive and shock absorbing as they cradle the bow grip and release the arrow. Rotated positions used for back shots, offside shots, and qabac shots definitely recruit the obliques eccentrically to support a steady draw, while the glutarals support...well, everything.

Most modern horseback archers pull 25 to 45 pounds when they draw their bows. Though this poundage is much more weight than a rider feels in the reins, riders use similar muscle groups to keep the shoulders depressed and allow the arms to follow and stay sensitive. When riders communicate through the reins intentionally using the aforementioned muscle groups, they can relax gripping forearms and tense deltoids, thereby following and signaling to the horse's mouth accurately and maintaining consistent connection through the reins. This is how show jumpers release over a jump and how horseball players reach for the ball. These upper body muscles also are key to healthy posture for all equestrians.

### THE RECOVERY

Today we spend a lot of energy, thought, time, and money on building up, but we don't invest as much in recovery, or coming down energetically. Recovery gives the brain time to process new information and the body time to fuse muscle fibers. When we truly own this down time, we come back stronger and more adaptable. Archers build tension in the draw and must release it to begin again. Riders rhythmically move through a cycle of tension and release in the canter. Recovery is an inextricable part of growth.

Equestrians can help their muscles recover and prevent muscle injury by hydrating properly. Additionally, myofascial release by a professional practitioner can release tightened fascia and thereby release tension in muscles when stretching alone is not effective. What is tight is weak. The same goes for your equine athlete.

When good proprioceptive feel and sensory awareness form our athletic foundation, we set ourselves up to recruit, build, and restore the most effective muscles for horseback archery or all equestrian sports. Developing awareness and athletic agility unlocks stratified subtlety in listening and communication skills, which appeals to the horse and thereby increases our trustworthiness and the horse's will to try harder. These are principles on which athletics and collaborative teamwork between rider and horse rely, as the name of our club, Centaurs, envisions.

\* *The qabac* is a run in which competitors shoot at circular targets located at the very top of poles near the track at least seven meters high.

\*\* *Capoeira* is a Brazilian martial art that combines elements of dance, acrobatics, and music. It was practiced by enslaved Africans in Brazil at the beginning of the 16th century to disguise the fact that they were practicing fighting techniques. It is known for its acrobatic and complex maneuvers, often involving hands on the ground and inverted kicks.



Centaurs Club members head out to the field for practice runs.

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Farrier Stuart Greenberg and a "client".

## GONE AWAY

**S**onoma County and beyond lost a great friend, teacher and farrier on December 24, 2021. **Stuart Greenberg** (1948-2021) began his teaching career with the Farrier Science course at Santa Rosa Junior College in February 1988. For the past 33 years he educated, enlightened, and inspired many horse owners and individuals interested in a farriery career. Students in animal/equine science found that his easy going, unassuming style, and wealth of knowledge and experience made being a student in his class immensely rewarding. He made sure everyone understood that the subject matter and topics he presented were all enormously important to understanding the horse, integral to the horse's welfare, and preeminent in our responsibility to them.

I had the good fortune to teach with Stuart in the Equine Science Department for the past 32 years. He was dedicated, humble, funny guy with a rich and varied past. I have to say I was taken aback when he told me one of the reasons that he came to California in 1983, moving to Occidental, was to study Transcendental Meditation. What a Renaissance guy.

Stuart was an avid learner, honing his skills and increasing his knowledge for the betterment of the horse and his students by participating in farrier clinics and competitions. He cared so deeply for whatever horse he was with. I remember coming down to my barn one day and found him leaning against the interior stall wall, just hanging out and eating his lunch with my horse.

He maintained open and positive working relationships with veterinarians and other equine professionals to find and achieve the best possible outcomes for the horses in his care.

At the time of his passing, a common thread in posted testimonies was similar to this one from Katie Moore: "A loss of a great man. I took Stuart's class at the JC. Learned so much from him. The world is just a little worse off now that he is not here."

We will remember and be forever grateful to Stuart for all he gave to our horse community and beyond for so many years. RIP, friend.

Maxine Freitas

Adjunct Instructor, Santa Rosa Junior College Equine Science and Work Experience

### MORE ABOUT STUART GREENBERG

Stuart Greenberg was a past recipient the Equus Award for his many years of humble and dedicated service as a classical farrier, and as teacher and mentor to hundreds of equestrians in Sonoma County.

Stuart was born in Louisville, Kentucky. As a child, he started to ride at Mrs. Brown's farm, where he took lessons with his brother. "She hollered at us a lot, I remember," said Stuart. After that Stuart took the opportunity to ride any friends' horses he could, usually bareback. Stuart reported that he never had much formal training, and didn't ride western or English, but rather just focused on communication with horses.

Stuart studied psychology at the University of Kentucky until he moved to Steamboat Springs, Colorado. There he met his mentor, Dave Lewis, a journeyman and classical farrier, who hailed from a long family line of blacksmiths. He studied with Lewis for a number of years and received recognition in several iron-working competitions while working in Colorado.

In 1988 he began teaching Farrier Science at the Santa Rosa Junior College where he consistently received the highest evaluations for his class.


Stuart's farrier technique is a dying art. He forged all his own shoes, making each set at home before he left for his shoeing appointments. His practice evolved into shoeing horses that needed special care and rehabilitation. Stuart viewed helping the horse as his primary focus.

Stuart loved horses, and though he didn't own a horse, he would ride on occasion when invited by friends. He did love to ride his Harley. When not shoeing horses, Stuart was also a blacksmith and crafted custom fireplace tools and irons and small decorative pieces.

Stuart lived in Glen Ellen. He is survived by his sister Judy Greenberg Guetig.



Stuart Greenberg was always the teacher as seen here at a Shone Farm event. He regularly made himself available to set up demonstration-informational tables with his rig and teaching materials at events such as the Sonoma County Farm Bureau's Ag Days and Hoofbeats in the Vineyard.



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# PONIES!

By Melissa Kalember

**W**ho doesn't love a good pony? They are cute. They pack kids around. They are great starters for some riders. Or are they the devil incarnate? They have *big-little man* syndrome and constantly keep you on your toes. Or are they all the above?

From my personal experiences, ponies get a bad rap. They get generalized into "Oh, that's a pony for ya." I do feel that some of the stigma we have put on ponies does borrow from the truth.

Most of the ponies I've been with do have a degree of that *big-little man* syndrome. They can act tough and mighty. They try to boss other horses around. They can be pushy on the ground.

I also feel most ponies keep you on your toes. I personally really love that about them. I am constantly teaching my riders to understand the horse they are handling.

What are they doing?  
Why are they doing that?

What would be the right thing to do based on what you know now?

Ponies offer so many moments to practice these questions. My riders have to learn how to think and then respond from their understanding of the horse's perspective, **not** their human perspective, and ponies are the best teachers.

I also believe and teach big picture and small picture. Let me explain. I have an amazing pony named Royal. He is a saint for the kids to ride. Royal walk, trots, canters, and jumps perfectly on the rail as the riders are learning body angles and control. They are loose legged with floppy reins and he never gripes. He just trots around at the same speed and takes super good care as a teacher should.

Royal is a champ at Interscholastic Equestrian Association shows where a random rider gets on and performs in jumping and flat classes. He is perfect for them. Every. Single. Time.

But is he 100% perfect? Nope. I don't think any horse is 100% perfect, and I love that. You have to learn all there is about the horse and pony and how to deal with it and roll with it. You have to learn what they like and don't like, and why. Then you figure out the best flow of tacking up, warming up, riding, living arrangements and so on for that particular horse or pony.

Royal can be nippy. He was really nippy in the first few months of our owning him, and now he is barely nippy. Why? What changed for him that made him less nippy?

In the beginning I had to take my own teachings and ask, "Why is he so nippy?" I had to study him and understand the nippy behavior from his pony world, not my human world.

He came to us with a mare and was protective of her. Every time we brought him in he was on the lookout for her. He had not had enough time at his new home to map or learn that she wasn't going anywhere and she would always be there when he returned.

I am lucky that I can see my horses in their pastures while I work. This allows me to watch their natural habits and behaviors with their pasture mates. Royal also was using nipping as a way to converse and connect with us. Not ideal from our human perspective, right?

But now that I put all this together and we found the flow he needs to tack up and feel like he's connecting with us, he is barely nippy anymore. We tack him up in the stall while he eats his grain



Photo: Steve Aja

Everyone loves Royal.

and supplements. When he turns his head towards us to say, "Hi," we touch the side of his cheek and he goes right back to eating.

The big picture is watching, studying, trying to figure out who they are and what they need from their horse or pony world, and then create all the small moments to work with them so everyone is safe and happy.



Photo: Steve Aja

Royal is a ham.

**MICHAEL MURPHY**  
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# NSAID

## Invaluable Horse Medications

By Michelle Beko, DVM

Most horse owners have probably given some sort of NSAID to their horses at some point in time. The term for these commonly used medications stands for Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drug. Non-steroidal means they are not related to the more powerful anti-inflammatory corticosteroids such as cortisone, dexamethasone and prednisolone.

These medications work by blocking part of the biochemical cascade that results in inflammation. Cells have arachidonic acid in their cell walls. When the acid is exposed to enzymes called cyclooxygenase (COX), they release prostaglandins that cause inflammation in that part of the horse's body. There are at least two types of cyclooxygenases, COX-1 and COX-2. For the most part, COX-1 causes the release of the good prostaglandins that help protect the lining of the gastrointestinal tract (GI) and maintain adequate blood flow to the kidneys. COX-2 causes the release of the bad or more inflammatory prostaglandins.

All NSAIDs reduce pain, inflammation and fevers. When used at the correct dosages over short periods of time, side effects are uncommon. Most of the adverse effects from these drugs are thought to be from blocking of the COX-1 pathway. These side effects most often affect the GI tract or kidneys.

The most commonly-used NSAIDs in equine medicine are flunixin, phenylbutazone, firocoxib, ketoprofen, and diclofenac. All are anti-inflammatory, provide pain relief, and can lower fevers. Common NSAIDs for people include aspirin, ibuprofen, and naproxen.

### Flunixin Meglumine

Commonly known as Banamine, or the generic form Preval, flunixin is a widely used medication in horses that is FDA-approved for musculoskeletal conditions and colic in horses and is available as an oral paste or an injectable solution. While research does not back the differences in effectiveness between NSAIDs in treating specific conditions, most veterinarians, including myself, believe that flunixin is the most effective drug for relieving colic pain and for treating ocular pain and inflammation. In fact, if a colicky horse's pain is not resolved with one dose of Banamine along with a short acting sedative/pain reliever, the horse likely needs surgery. Some types of shock also probably improve with flunixin. When used for an ongoing problem, it is safe to give it two to three times a day.

In addition to possibly causing GI or renal problems, the injectable form given intramuscularly rather than intravenously can cause soreness and, rarely, serious infection at the injection site.

### Phenylbutazone

More commonly known as bute, this NSAID



Photo: Michelle Beko

Equine NSAID medications come in many forms.

is available in paste, tablets, powder, and an intravenous injectable solution. FDA-approved for relief from musculoskeletal conditions and commonly thought to be the most effective NSAID for musculoskeletal pain, the therapeutic effect of one dose can last for 24 hours. Bute can be administered twice daily for an ongoing problem. Bute tablets are usually the most inexpensive form of any NSAID.

In addition to GI and kidney problems, adverse effects include massive tissue irritation and sloughing if the injectable form is given or leaks outside of the vein.

### Ketoprofen

Ketoprofen is not well absorbed orally and is therefore only available as an injectable solution. It can be used twice daily and may be injected intravenously or intramuscularly. Although it may cause GI or renal problems, it may be safer than bute or Banamine. It is significantly more expensive.

### Diclofenac Sodium (Surpass)

Surpass is a topically applied anti-inflammatory that is FDA-approved for treating osteoarthritis in several joints. Being topical, a minimal amount is absorbed systemically, and the known side effects are minimal. The animal form is applied twice a day. A similar formula for humans has a different base and requires several applications a day. Surpass is probably under used.

### Firocoxib (Equioxx)

Our newest NSAID firocoxib is available in tablets and as a quite expensive paste. The drug is FDA-approved for equine osteoarthritis in multiple joints for 14 days and should be safer than the other NSAIDs because it primarily blocks the COX-2 enzyme, sparing the COX-1 which yields the good prostaglandins. The original research found it comparable to two grams of bute once daily for reducing lameness due to chronic arthritis. Note, however, that bute is usually given twice daily.

While I am not aware of any research showing that firocoxib is safe over longer periods of time, many horses are on it long term and I am unaware of evidence of side effects. It is administered once daily. If the initial dosage given to a horse is two or three times higher than the standard dose, it will take effect earlier. However, after that there is no additional pain relief with increased dosages. While it is a good option for treatment of horses with chronic pain, it is probably not as effective as bute or Banamine in treating acute injuries or pain from laminitis.

NSAIDs are a vital part of my medicine chest. I cannot imagine treating colicky or laminitic horses without them. They are very valuable for limiting

the initial inflammatory response in acute injuries, although they can slow healing if used too long. I find that low dosages often help older, arthritic horses become a little more active, which then further improves their mobility.

Undesirable side effects are possible, although not common. Using NSAIDs at the high doses for longer periods of times increases the risk of side effects as does using multiple NSAIDs at the same time. Additionally, if we relieve a horse's pain, we need to be careful not to cause him further injury. For example, if we give a newly lame horse bute, we should not ride her or turn her out and risk worsening her injury. Similarly, we should not give a colicky horse Banamine and then feed him.

Lastly, if they really don't need to be medicated, don't give them anything. 🐾

**OOPS.** Due to an editorial or printing error in the Winter 2022 issue, it was incorrectly stated in Dr. Michele Beko's column that pinworms can cause summer sores. They do not cause summer sores.

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# IT'S NOT ALL IN YOUR HEAD

## Equine-Facilitated Therapy and Polyvagal Theory

By Susan Weaver Banta



Dr. Velcro

The mare had been considered headstrong and uncooperative, which led to extremely abusive training tactics. She became slow to trust and very clear about setting boundaries and expressing her opinions.

The young woman had suffered from the tragic loss of family members and had struggled with memories of the horrific event. Within minutes of entering the arena and stroking the mare, the young woman was clinging to her neck and sobbing uncontrollably. The mare stood motionless, yawning, a sign that she too was letting go. It was the sort of response that had earned the mare, Dr. Velcro, her name.

If you have shared your sorrows or your joys with your horse, you recognize the feeling of safety and connection that humans have with horses, even if it seems a mystery. However, it turns out there is science to back up that feeling.

Dr. Velcro is a lovely 30-year-old Paint mare, the grand dame of the ten-horse herd of Dr. Rebecca Bailey, PhD, a lifelong equestrian, psychologist, and Sonoma County resident who has developed an equine-assisted therapy based on the science behind that feeling of safety and connection with your horse.

### HORSES ARE PARTNERS

Dr. Bailey provides equine-facilitated therapy to families and survivors of severe trauma, veterans dealing with the life-time aftermath of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), families in high conflict divorce, and police departments. In that practice, the horses who often come with their own traumatic backgrounds are full partners in the therapy which focuses on the importance

of being in a safe place with positive social interaction and non-verbal de-escalation of agitated states.

This equine-focused practice came naturally to Dr. Bailey. Growing up near Boston, Massachusetts, horses were always part of her life.

"I've ridden since I could crawl," she chuckled. While her family centered on competitions, Rebecca found her joy riding her pony, Locket, through the trails and woods made famous by Henry David Thoreau. With Locket she experienced a connection and sense of security amid turmoil and disruption in her own family. This influenced her to bring equine-assisted therapy into her practice soon after graduating from The Wright Institute in Berkeley. She has called California home since she was 18.

In the 1980s and 1990s, using her personal experience and intuition, Dr. Bailey worked with like-minded colleagues to develop a successful therapy model called Connection Focused Therapy, incorporating equine-facilitated activities before they were truly accepted by mainstream therapists. Dr. Bailey developed the therapy with Linda Kohanov, author of the *Tao of Equus* and *The Way of the Horse*.

Photo: Margie McDonald

### FAMOUS CLIENT

In 1994 Dr. Steven Porges introduced the Polyvagal Theory, providing the direct scientific, physiological explanation for the psychological healing connections that were the basis of Dr. Bailey's therapy. Her success using this model with survivors of severe trauma brought her a high-profile client, Jaycee Dugard, who was kidnapped in 1991 at age 11 and held captive for 18 years during which time she had two children. She gained national attention when she was located and released. Dr. Bailey and Dugard continue to work together promoting this successful process.

With her long-time partner in the Polyvagal Equine Institute, dressage instructor and trainer Margie McDonald, she continues to provide trauma therapy for individuals and families, while also focusing on educating and informing others about this unique equine therapy based on mutual connection.

Working out of her own ranch in Glen Ellen for 18 years, as well as a privately owned ranch overlooking the Sonoma hills, Dr. Bailey herself suffered the trauma of losing her home and office in the Nuns Fire of 2017, which she just recently rebuilt. No horses, humans or dogs were lost or injured.

In science and physiology, it is understood that the cranial vagus nerve connects the brain to the organs in the body including the gut, the heart, and the throat. The vagus nerve system regulates the physical response to danger, real or imagined, triggering the fight, flight, or freeze response. In severe situations, this internal system takes over and blocks the brain's ability to think rationally. It is this system that must be calmed down for the human or animal to return to normal functioning.

### CONNECTS THE BRAIN TO THE FACIAL MUSCLES

The Polyvagal Theory contends that the vagal nervous system has a third equally important pathway. It controls the critical social engagement by connecting the brain to the facial muscles and ears. This system exists in all mammals. Because horses are social animals not burdened by complex human mental and psychological issues, they are ideal partners for humans in trauma therapy.

Many equine-facilitated therapies are based on the functioning of the vagal nervous system, but all believe the horse is mirroring human behavior.

On the other hand, Dr. Bailey contends it is not mirroring when working with horses, donkeys, and ponies, but rather it is about "the space between us. Your action creates a reaction; their action creates a reaction. At some point one of you has to step into that space and help the other one feel safe."

This safe space is imperative for any constructive social interaction and relationship, be it humans or equines. For survivors of severe trauma, the ability to allow this feeling of safety must be re-established before the individual can function successfully in their relationships and in life.

In Dr. Bailey's program, matching horses and clients is very specific. Because groundwork, especially grooming, is sharing space in a safe and controlled way, it is used more than riding. As clients interact with and observe their equine partners, they become aware of the effect of their own behavior on another being. They feel the benefits of co-regulation as both they and the horses de-escalate. They should witness the similarities of their own reactions to that of others in their broader lives.

Other interesting and effective exercises that one can do with their own horse are outlined in Dr. Bailey's recent book, *Equine Connections: Polyvagal Principles*.



Dr. Rebecca Bailey and Summit

Photo: Kassel Rowe

Currently there are ten four-legged partners on Dr. Bailey and Margie McDonald's staff, including Dr. Velcro's equine colleagues Mister and Summit.

Mister, a tiny miniature dropped off by a woman who never returned, is the ambassador of connection, very smart, often used in herd observations. His cuteness belies a naughty streak that makes him a good teacher for pre-teens dealing with the frustrations of attention deficit disorder.

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### FORMER BUCKING HORSE

Often running away from anything he perceives as threatening, Summit is a sensitive former bucking horse who is hypervigilant to changes in his environment. He serves as the go-to horse to teach grounding and self-regulation. He responds to calm breathing and soft vocal tones, allowing his human partners to witness the power of these soothing interactions. They see an example of de-escalation and coming into co-regulation initiated by the human partner.

The horse Spirit became a partner for a veteran who suffered with debilitating PTSD, unable to connect emotionally with the people in his life. After taking months to become comfortable in therapy and with Spirit, he was confronted with the science behind his inability to connect. He balked. He became agitated and defensive. Quickly shifting gears from the session she had intended, Dr. Bailey asked him to spend time grooming Spirit in a quiet corner of the barn. She added Native American flute music, as sound can be a strong calming factor in co-regulation.

As the grooming progressed, Spirit curled his lip in appreciation and then seemed to fall asleep. The session continued for some time when the veteran slowly began to smile. Dr. Bailey had never seen him smile. Finally resting his head on Spirit's neck, the horse and the man engulfed in a safe cocoon. Later he acknowledged this to be a moment of feeling, something he had not experienced in many years.

Horsemen and women who have experienced this connection with horses may envision how equine-facilitated therapy effects those who have experienced trauma, and understand of the science and physiology of reactions to threats and perceived threats may contribute to a safer world.





# A TRICK FOR NEW LEATHER



Have a new bridle that is stiffer than a board? A gallon baggie and neatsfoot oil are all you need to turn it into a buttery bridle. Put it in the baggie, toss it like a salad and let it set overnight. The next day hand massage the piece until the leather is warm and soft. Let it dry on a terry cloth towel.

Wipe off excess oil and sponge with glycerin soap and a little water if the leather is still moist or with lederbalsam if the leather feels a bit dry. After each use remove dirt and sweat with a warm washcloth. Follow with a quick swipe of glycerin. Never use so much water that you see foam.

— *Lee Webster Ramensky, a leather whisperer*

## MAYBE MORE THAN YOU WANTED TO KNOW

**From Wikipedia:** Neatsfoot oil is a yellow oil rendered and purified from the shin bones and feet (but not the hooves) of cattle. "Neat" in the oil's name comes from an Old English word for cattle.

"Prime neatsfoot oil" or "neatsfoot oil compound" are terms used for a blend of pure neatsfoot oil and non-animal oils, generally mineral or other petroleum-based oils.

Fat from warm-blooded animals normally has a high melting point, becoming hard when cool, but neatsfoot oil remains liquid at room temperature. This is because the relatively slender legs and feet of animals such as cattle are adapted to tolerate and maintain much lower temperatures than those of the body core.

Other body fat would become stiff at these temperatures. This characteristic of neatsfoot oil allows it to soak easily into leather.

## A GOOD OR BAD TESTIMONIAL? IT DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK

When the buckles of my bridle started falling off, even I thought it was time for a new one.

It arrives. I whine. It is so stiff. My friend sends me to the "leather whisperer."

Instructions arrive, and I follow them meticulously, down to the prescribed terry cloth towel. That is with one exception, the final step so specifically directed: "Whip off and clean with glycerin and a little water."

Out of the towel comes my somewhat slimy bridle and, in theory, I expect to slip it on to my quiet, accepting mare. Instead, she sniffs and snorts, throws her head in the air as far from the bridle as she can. No way is she allowing that dead cow foot on her head.

Five minutes. A ton of sugar. Finally, I get the bridle on.

Lesson learned. Don't leave out that final step. — *Cherry Baumann, Petaluma*

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# HELP! Yellowjackets

By Gwen Kilchherr

Nothing is more worrisome than hand walking your horse to graze and, yikes, yellowjackets! What's worse is if unbeknownst to you, or your horse, you step on a yellowjacket nest. Now you've done it. Yellowjackets will aggressively defend their nests if disturbed.

There are many species of yellowjackets, but one species in particular is more aggressive and troublesome than the others. They are black with jagged bands of yellow and a very narrow waist. Yellowjackets look very similar to paper wasps but can easily be distinguished from them as paper wasps have a longer waist and legs.

Yellowjackets construct nests out of paper-like material made from chewed wood fibers or cellulose, mixed with their saliva. These nests are underground and can have thousands of larvae and adult workers. Their nests are typically located in abandoned rodent burrows such as gopher and vole holes, tunnels, tree cavities, old structure cavities, wood piles, and dense ground covers, especially if these are undisturbed areas.

Typically, the previously mated, overwintering yellowjacket queens will start making their nests when the weather begins warming up in the spring. The queen emerges in late winter to early spring to feed and start her new nest. From spring to midsummer, the nests are in the growing phase, with the hard-working larvae requiring large amounts of protein. The workers will go foraging, mainly for protein, which are usually other insects, and for some forms of sugars. By late summer, the growth of the colonies will have slowed down, or if not, have ceased growing. At this time, they will require large amounts of sugar to maintain the queen and workers. This is why foraging wasps are particularly interested in sweets.

Really worrisome is when foraging yellowjackets want what you're eating, should you be eating or drinking a sweet drink outdoors. Or then when you're mixing your horse's feed which has molasses or something sweet in it, and they try to get to it. They can become extremely aggressive if you try to shoo them away. That's when you get stung.

So be careful. These female yellowjackets can sting someone several times, and some individuals may be sensitive to their venom, then require medical help.

Yellowjacket colonies usually live for one season. But during a very mild winter or along the coast, their colonies can overwinter and become quite large. In some areas, when the rain and freezing winter temperatures return, their nests should die out. But beware. The newly mated queens will find protected areas to overwinter, so that their life cycle will begin again in the spring.

## SPOTTING AN UNDERGROUND NEST

If you find yellowjackets darting in and out of a certain spot of the ground, chances are very good that the nest is right there. Do not go any closer. Mark the area with a big rock, stick, or something you'll be able to find later.

Do not attempt to swat yellowjackets with your hands, especially when you are eating. When eating outside, check your food

before putting it in your mouth. Pack up your food and move away, preferably indoors. Keep a lid on sweet drinks, especially sodas.

Keep your horse's feed in a metal garbage can with a lid. When he is done feeding, remove the feed bowls and wash them. Don't toss any uneaten foods on the ground as it will only attract the yellowjackets. Dispose of the food in a garbage can with a lid.

Keep garbage cans away from eating areas and keep them covered.

## TRAPPING

Once you have found and clearly marked an underground nest, you have several methods to trap the yellowjackets.

**Lure traps**—These traps are easy to use and are available in many stores. They contain a chemical that attracts foraging yellowjackets. Some users also add a small piece of meat, such as beef or chicken, to make it more desirable to go into the trap. Follow the directions on the package for best results.

**Water traps**—These homemade traps are made of soapy water in a rectangular plastic tub or a five-gallon bucket, filled almost to the top. Cover the opening with a wide wire mesh. Attach a piece of meat to wire or string,

and suspend it one to two inches above the water. When the yellowjackets take some of the meat, they fly down into the water and drown.

Both of these traps work better in late winter to early spring to trap the queens. The fewer the queens, the lower the population. That's why during the summer and fall months it seems like you're constantly trapping them. The queen is laying eggs to keep up the population.

**Nest sprays**—Aerosol sprays can be effective but must be used with caution. It's best to use these products at night, after you have located the nest. Wear protective clothing and eye protection and follow the label directions carefully.

For those who are hesitant about taking on yellowjacket control, we are fortunate to have the Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District to help us, and their service is free. Once the nest, or nests, are marked, call their office at 707-285-2200 or submit a service request online, and they will send someone out to help.



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# Square Peg Team Creates Community for All

By Becca Knopf

Horse Journal • Spring 2022  
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From across the barn, a Square Peg staff member joyfully greets a small boy as he runs up the dirt path from the car to the shed row. Dirt and rocks fly in his wake and two stocky ex-racehorses, a dark bay with a full blaze, and a handsome, dish-faced gray, flick their ears toward the sound but calmly continue munching on the diminishing spring grass.

"Patricio quiere una zanahoria, por favor," the boy says, and from a bulging Safe-way bag, a carrot is produced and timidly thrust forward by a small hand. The carrot slips through the little fingers and falls to the ground in front of Patrick. The pink muzzle of the petite young chestnut Thoroughbred with smart goldfish eyes expertly tracks the fallen carrot and his contented crunching commences.

This young Hispanic student is on full scholarship as part of Square Peg's mission to bring its ability to serve to neurodiverse individuals to a community that better reflects the true demographics of Sonoma County, Square Peg's satellite location.

Square Peg is a 501c3 non-profit organization serving San Francisco and San Mateo Counties which since 2004 has embraced families affected by a host of diagnoses, from autism to attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder, depression, anxiety, William's Syndrome, and cerebral palsy in its adaptive horsemanship program and retired racehorse rescue program.

"By adding horse rescue to the therapeutic riding model, instead of saying, 'We're taking you to the ranch because you are poor or autistic or because you've been in trouble,' we are saying, 'You're going to Square Peg because these horses need you,'" explained



Lesson horse Mowgli begs for more carrots as Sigrid Silva, age 7, and her sister dress up for him outside his stall.



Jacob Mason, age 26, takes lessons with Square Peg on Atticus on days he comes to Cadence farm with Autistry Studios as part of their paid-internship program.

Joell Dunlap, who with husband Darius founded Square Peg.

Square Peg retrains, rehomes, and provides sanctuary to horses who need career changes, the majority of which are off-the-track Thoroughbreds. As a Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (TAA) accredited organization, Square Peg aligns with TAA standards and its practice of good horse husbandry from ensuring horses are properly shod and ethically trained to following the three F's—friendship, fodder, and freedom.

In late 2017, US Dressage Federation gold medalist Susan Pommer, owner and trainer at Cadence Farm in Sonoma, lost a short, brutal battle with lung cancer. To honor her legacy, Susan's family wanted Cadence Farm to continue as a place of growth, joy, and thoughtful horsemanship. Fitting into that wish, Square Peg built a satellite operation in Sonoma, opening in July 2018.

During the early days of the pandemic, high school volunteers performed theater or studied pre-calculus propped against hay bales while a teacher fought to keep their attention via laptop screen. Currently, Square Peg staff supervise and teach horsemanship, behavioral and physical health, classical dressage, and positive reinforcement training techniques to several youth who have opted for homeschooling programs to better address their anxiety or social needs. You can find these kids enthusiastically cleaning

stalls and turning horses out between kissing muzzles and helping tack up for other clients' sessions.

In the fall of 2020, Square Peg committed to structuring its culture to more fully reflect the communities where they operate. In both Sonoma and San Mateo Counties, that meant offering services to Spanish-speaking communities. By partnering with local agencies that serve the Hispanic community, Square Peg has begun to serve, at no cost, families that would otherwise not have access to recreational, behavioral, and educational services.

Part of what has enabled many Hispanic families to feel comfortable at Square Peg is the staff assembled in Sonoma. As program manager, I am proficient in speaking and singing the *Frozen* and *Moana* songs in Spanish. We have also hired a young native speaker, Cristian Lopez. His easy smile and youthful friendly demeanor put all at ease. Cristian has a personal understanding of being a young Hispanic man with a passion for horses and ranch life, and he's eager to share his enthusiasm with the families that come our way.

"In the Hispanic culture, people rely on family units and don't often ask for or take help from outsiders," explained Cristian. In his role as volunteer supervisor and ranch hand, he is not only actively involved in the daily care and well-being of the horses, but he also trains new volunteers and often jumps in during a session with students to lend an additional hand or bring some more energy.

"By just being himself and modeling inclusivity, Cristian helps families feel they made the right decision to come to the ranch," said Joell.

Bringing on new students was a challenge Square Peg ran into when initially reaching out to families. It wasn't until their former employee, Mexican/Canadian citizen Gabriela Trava, spoke at the Sonoma Valley public school's forum for Hispanic families

called Parents University and posted a flier at the local mercado that the organization found any traction.

In the last few years, there's been a lot of talk about cultural competence in the service space, but Square Peg has focused on the idea of "cultural humility." Cultural humility is an understanding that one can never truly walk in another's shoes, but can always work hard to confront personal cultural biases, and to commit to always learning and improving.

Square Peg has piloted a program with the Sonoma Mentoring Alliance to add some of their mentees to the volunteer and lesson schedule with the financial support of the local community.

In addition to offering approximately 30 one-on-one sessions a week, Square Peg is partnered with local organizations including Autistry Studios of San Rafael, which uses the farm and staff to serve neurodiverse adults, many of whom are on the autism spectrum. The Autistry participants gain ranch management skills and learn to care for and work with the horses while also practicing social etiquette, workplace communication, time management skills, and self-advocacy.

"The horses offer all an accepting space where no one is judged by their heritage, neurology, trauma history, brand of shoes or how good your grades are," said Joell. "They give everyone a refreshing break from the internal narratives and limiting beliefs. When one considers the neuroscience behind the rhythmic motion of riding a healthy, relaxed horse, and the healing benefits of caring for animals in a beautiful outdoor setting, one can understand the many levels of healing and neurologic and emotional regulation that the Square Peg experience brings to distressed families."

To donate support to Square Peg, or learning more about Square Peg services and team, please visit:  
[www.squarepegfoundation.org](http://www.squarepegfoundation.org)



Sigrid Toral Silva, age 7, hugs Danny Boy on the trail by the Cadence Farm.



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# THE BREEDS ARE NAMED

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