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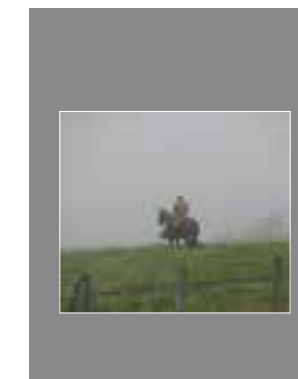
HORSE JOURNAL

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Cover Photo: Marshall Patterson

On a foggy morning in the grasslands of Sonoma Mountain, above Petaluma, Scott Gerber, his horse Red and his dog Suzy settle in his herd of Angus cattle. A native of Petaluma, Scott is a musician and singer as well as the state brand inspector for Marin, Sonoma and Napa Counties.

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Janet Jones, PhD, applies brain research to the training of horses and riders. She earned her Ph.D. from UCLA and taught the neuroscience of perception, language, memory and thought for 23 years. Janet trained horses at a large stable for many years, and later ran a successful horse training business of her own. She has schooled hundreds of green or difficult horses and competed in hunter, jumper, halter, reining and western pleasure disciplines. She is the author of *Horse Brain, Human Brain: The Neuroscience of Horsemanship*, published by Trafalgar Square Books / HorseandRiderBooks.com.



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.



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.



Melinda Newton, DVM, is a veterinary practitioner, freelance writer, endurance rider and marathon runner who lives in Northern California with her husband and daughter and lots of animals. She loves a good story and lots of miles on the trail with her Brittany dog at her side.



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.



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.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

After an enjoyable spring that saw people taking to the trails and returning to the competition arena, summer has finally arrived. Not only does the sunshine warm our hearts, but the long shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic is fading. It's a great feeling to be out and about with family and friends, participating in those activities we've missed for the past year and getting on the road back to normalcy.

To celebrate the change for our equine community, the **Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) will host an afternoon social and barbeque Sunday, July 18, from noon until 4:00 p.m. at the Tomrose Ranch, 5307 Stony Point Road.** The cost is \$40 per person. Come on over and enjoy time with friends, old and new. Please put the event on your calendars. Sign up through the website: SonomaCountyHorseCouncil.org.

Out of the Frying Pan

Now we go out of the proverbial frying pan and into the fire. With Covid more or less behind us, we now face with drought conditions. As continuous media coverage tells us, the North Bay is facing substantial water shortage and restrictions. If you haven't already done so, map out your own water requirements and plan how to address your usually reliable sources. Some will be fortunate to have a good supply while others may find the tap completely dry later in the season. Knowing who you are going to call for delivery and how you will store it is really important. And, given that delivery services will be overworked this year and possibly rationed themselves, it's important for you to know how long you can survive without delivery and plan accordingly.

Once again, our homegrown *Horse Journal* has hit it out of the park with a collection of stories from our many contributors starting with Mary Taft-McPhee and her discussion of *Preparing Hooves for Drought*.

The variety of stories and subjects never ceases to amaze me, and the quality of the writing across the board is superb. As a matter of fact, our *Journal* is a finalist in the American Horse Publications national awards, judged by journalism professors. More details to come. Kudos to Patti, Lynn and whole publishing gang.

Let's Grow Membership

Throughout the year the SCHC will focus on providing the horse community with energetic and positive representation in the political arena. To be effective we will also need to focus on expanding membership. To that end, we will be hosting some 'meet and greet' events around the county and hope that you will attend and bring us new members. Membership is inexpensive and provides not only a voice to the community but also connections of value through our membership in the American Horse Council.

We have a great community of horses and owners and it is up to us all to contribute a little to keep it healthy. Find a place to volunteer some time and join the Horse Council.

Happy Trails,
Henry Beaumont

John O'Hara Photography



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Sonoma County Horse Council

NEWS & NEWSWORTHY

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SCHC FINANCIAL HELP REACHES EQUESTRIAN WILDFIRE VICTIMS



Erika Jansson

The call came in as dressage trainer Erika Jansson was driving to Northern California after teaching miles away. She had to pull over to the side of road because the news on the phone blinded her with tears. The Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) was awarding funds to victims of the devastating 2019 and 2020 wildfires and Erika was one of the beneficiaries.

SCHC has chosen two county horse people to receive financial aid from the nonprofit's disaster fund. In addition to the award to Jansson, money was awarded to Linda Aldrich of Sonoma Pony Express who like Jansson was a victim of wildfires.

On October 27, 2019, fire spread through Renaissance Farm in Healdsburg where Jansson centered her dressage training business. While boarders and the Renaissance owners evacuated 17 horses, Jansson was teaching in Texas, so she could not rescue her business inventory held in a large storage shed at Renaissance.

The fire transformed into ashes carefully collected training and show items. "Many of my students depended on my supply for training and for attending competitions like fans and stall guards. I lost my shadbelly coat, horse shoeing equipment, helmets, longe lines and spurs. Many of these items I had collected from around the world. The ash from burning my things was so thick it stuck to your shoes," said Jansson.

The next year and a month later the Glass Fire poured like an avalanche over the Santa Rosa, California, ranch that housed the Pony Express, a nonprofit that had provided equine therapy to children for more than four decades. Linda Aldrich's home and barns were completely destroyed, though the horses and ponies, all originally rescue animals, survived.

Known as the "Sonoma pony lady", Aldrich has faced among other needs the rebuilding of more than 3,000 feet of perimeter fencing around her six-acre ranch. The SCHC donation also will contribute to replacing the temporary hay barn with a permanent structure.

"We are most grateful to those who donated to the SCHC disaster fund and allowed us to lend a hand to our equestrian community so devastated by wildfires," said Henry Beaumont, president of the SCHC board of directors. "We look forward to the time when a wildfire disaster fund won't be necessary."

DONATION FROM FOOTING COMPANY

In response to the SCHC Facebook post on Linda's and Erika's losses, GGT-Footing kindly donated five saddle pads to both of our grant recipients. Thank you, GGT-Footing.



Linda Aldrich and Sahar Bartlett of the Sonoma County Horse Council

OOPS

In the spring issue of the *Horse Journal*, the article "Horse People Buck the Pandemic" accidentally gave Maxine Freitas, executive director of Equi-Ed, the additional title as head of the equine science program and Santa Rosa Junior College Shone Farm. That title belongs to Amy Housman.

THE LATEST NEWS ABOUT CEPEC

The California Equestrian Park and Event Center (CEPEC) has made a formal proposal for the use of the land around the Sonoma Developmental Center (SDC) demonstrating how CEPEC would be self-sustainable, provide substantial revenue for the county, create jobs, recreation, education, internships, land monitoring and maintenance, as well as venues for equestrian competitions, wildlife research, veterinary services and historic and ecological displays.

The original proposal for CEPEC was submitted to Sonoma County and state legislators in 2015. In January, 2021, an updated memo was submitted to state and county representatives, and the agency planning future use of the SDC main campus. It included a petition with one thousand signatures supporting CEPEC on the SDC land.

The county and state public planning meetings have suggested using the SDC surrounding land for open space which the CEPEC project provides for a majority of this land. The planned footprint of the equestrian facilities will actually occupy less space than the buildings of the former Eldridge Farm. In addition to facilities for equestrians and horses CEPEC would also include specific trails for hikers and bicycles, community meeting facilities and historic and wildlife research opportunities and exhibits.

Additional information is available at www.cepec.us

ON THE MOVE

Jordan Rohanna and Rohan Dressage have moved to Jaz Creek, 3392 Roblar Road, Petaluma.

NEWS FROM THE REGIONAL PARKS

By Michael Murphy, So. Co. Regional Park Foundation Director

The Sonoma Valley Regional Park is planning to improve the horse trailer parking in the area and is interested in comments from equestrians who frequent the park. This is an opportunity to have input on an expanded parking area with hitching posts, manure bunker and water trough. Contact county park planner Steve Ehret, 707-565-1107.

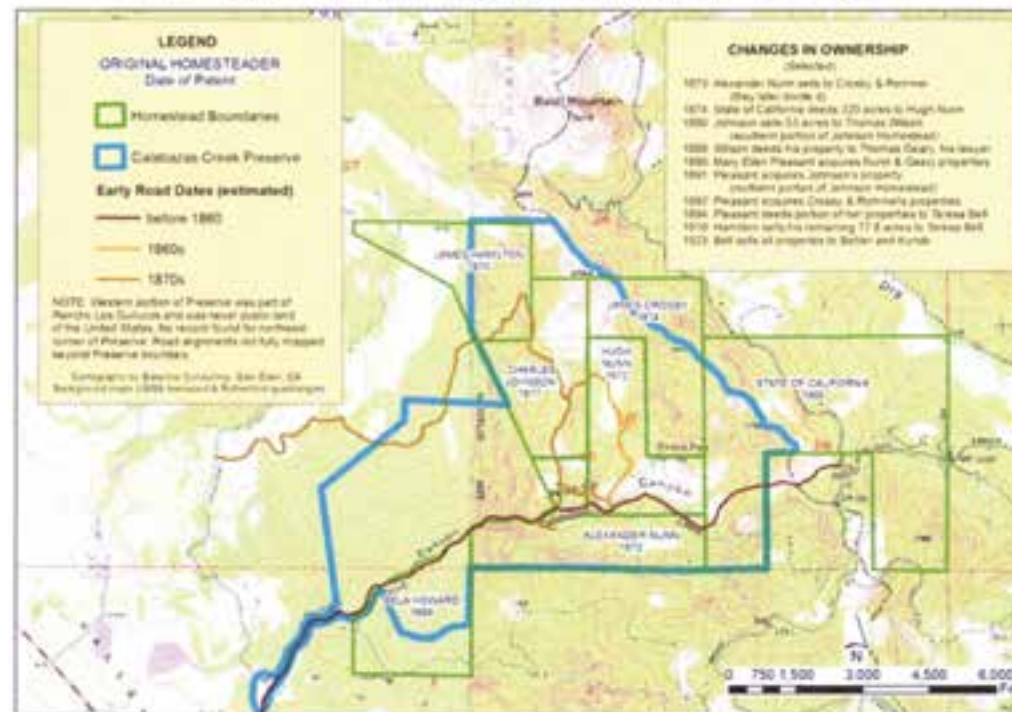
Looking to the future, in 2004 the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District purchased a 1,285-acre ranch north of Glen Ellen to establish a new park, now known as the Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve. Today the preserve is open to hikers. When the infrastructure is completed, it will be open to equestrians.

Located at starting site of the Nuns Canyon Fire, the future park will be a steady climb along the bank of the Calabazas Creek, which is a Coho salmon spawning watershed. This ecological and cultural gem stretches from the Valley of the Moon to the ridgeline of the southern Mayacama Mountains along the Napa-Sonoma county line and contains the entire Calabazas Creek watershed.

The preserve boasts an important segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail along the ridgeline of the southern Mayacamas Mountains. Ultimately, this plan will provide the public with an opportunity to hike, bike and ride a sustainable trail along ridgelines that

Homesteads, Roads & Land Ownership, Calabazas Creek Preserve, c. 1860 - 1910

From General Land Office Patent Records, Bureau of Land Management & Sonoma County Recorder's Office



afford spectacular views of the San Francisco Bay Area, Mayacamas mountains and Napa and Sonoma valleys.

The property has served as a recreational spot for at least 75 years, being used for fishing, hiking, horseback riding and hunting. The Boy Scouts had a campsite in the canyon. The preserve has also been used for poaching, and in recent years, large-scale pot growing.

The preserve appears to have been mainly a pass-through area during indigenous times, with a few seasonal occupation sites. It was a border region between the Coast Miwok, Southern Pomo and Wappo tribes. Trading or other interactions took place with neither side occupying the land.

The California State Coastal Conservancy, with the support of the Bay Area Ridge Trail Council, awarded a grant to assist in the development of a public access plan. One of the objectives is to provide preliminary planning for the future development of public access infrastructure in a manner that minimizes detrimental impacts to sensitive resources.

The next step for the plan is to work with user groups, conservation partners, former landowners and neighbors, along with county and state park managers to create a Bay Area Ridge Trail connector trail to provide high availability recreational access to the preserve while protecting its natural and cultural resources. The vision includes a four-to-six-mile trail that will connect a trailhead in Sonoma Valley to a segment of the Bay Area Ridge Trail along the rim of the southern Mayacamas Mountains.

We encourage riders to hike the preserve and let us know what they would like to see for the equestrian trails.

TRAILERING COURSE A HIT AT THE FAIRGROUNDS

A Report from SCHC Director Greg Harder

Members and community folks showed up in April at the Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) Trailing Course eager to become certified trailer drivers for disaster relief. All in all, we had 19 individuals at the Sonoma County Driving and Riding Clubhouse

to learn how to safely perform a complete safety inspection of their rigs, test the emergency braking systems and operate their rigs forwards and backwards.

Our instructor was Leonard Iniguez from Half Moon Bay, a professional equipment operator with over two million miles of experience, including the transport of Space Shuttle parts. Leonard was able to lecture and answer questions with the technical knowledge and from practical experience. As Leonard says, "so much of driving is being aware of your surroundings." And as a lifelong equestrian Leonard easily used analogies about horses to which we could all relate.

After a lunch that was provided by the culinary aficionado SCHC President Henry Beaumont, we reconvened out in the Fairgrounds parking lot next to the Jockey Club. After demonstrating how to safely and efficiently walk through a safety inspection, the folks loaded up and started performing the assigned driving tasks. The nice thing about the course is that you can get instruction from Leonard,

go somewhere else in the vast parking lot, practice until you get the feel and then when you're ready you can drive through the obstacle course and obtain a certificate rating.

This course started out as a service to Sonoma County Horse Council members. With the advent of the 2015 Lake County fires, Dr. Ted Stashak developed a disaster response program with the county. We needed to prove to the county that our volunteers could operate safely behind the fire lines, thus the certification process. Now to operate behind fire lines as a County Animal Service Disaster Worker one must obtain a certificate proving competencies.



Trailing Course participant practises a tight maneuver.

We also provide the course for beginner and experienced trailer owners to learn how to operate smoothly and safely. In our state all you have to do is buy the trailer, hook it up and drive away. There is no instruction on how to drive with it or about the knowledge of the added responsibility that drivers need to know.

As Covid restrictions lessen, we expect to offer more spaces in a fall and 2022 Trailing Course. Timing will depend on the fire situation. Eventually, the course will be less about fire evacuation and more as a community service to help people drive their trailers. Stay tuned.

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The Latest on Rescue Ponies

If you ever for a moment questioned the resilience of horses, this update about the rescued ponies Karma and Pippin should eliminate any lingering doubts.

In the Winter 2021 issue of the Horse Journal, we chronicled the rescue of this mother and son pair. You may recall that the four-year-old Karma and her yearling son Pippin had been housed in a tiny fenced area of a concrete lot in downtown Oakland. Pippin was ridden by the 5'10" man, who was selling the pair. In the dark of night, the ponies unloaded at Jodi Richardson's American Made Miniatures Farm Sanctuary in Petaluma.

We asked Jodi how things are going. Here's what she told us.



Karma and another little friend



Pippin is looking for hugs.

Karma and Pippin appear to be transforming into new horses, both physically and in personality.

KARMA

Karma has roaned out so much that many people don't believe it's her. Karma's previous experience with people did not encourage her to want to be with them. She was hard to catch and extremely agitated when being handled. Her active work consists of being walked and going through very basic obstacles. When she thinks she's done something wrong, she appears to panic in anticipation of repercussions for a mistake. She is so much better, but on occasion she tenses up and gets nervous.

As Karma seemed to have an overall soreness to her body, it helped her to have a few acuscope myopulse sessions, a microcurrent electrical stimulation therapy treatment.

Now she waits at the gate for people. If she could she would be groomed all day. She craves attention so much that during our pony class she has been seen standing on our zebra's pedestal (where he gets groomed), waiting for someone to love on her.

She loves running in a herd, being out, having companionship and just being a horse.

PIPPIN

Pippin, now about two years old, is a smart cookie. Thank goodness he doesn't have opposable thumbs or he would be considering world domination. He is learning lots of ground work and enjoys having a job. He and my Florida Cracker gelding are the two to come running when they see us at the gate. We're actively looking for a harness and pony cart to see if he enjoys driving. We love watching his discovery of new things.

Growing by leaps and bounds, Pippin loves to run, and he and the 16-year-old Kentucky Mountain Horse enjoy playing chase around the back field. It's great to see him enjoying himself and becoming so much more after his humble beginnings. Poor Pippin appears to have a stifle that is giving him some trouble and is needing more acuscope myopulse treatment.

I know this sounds corny but he feels like he's been with us forever and fits right in.



Karma and BFF Eclipse give scratches.

Photos: Jodi Richardson

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THE BLACK & WHITE COW ISSUE

HEARTLAND'S "AMY FLEMING" OFFERS HER THOUGHTS

Our choice for the training view of the black and white cow/horse conundrum is Amber Marshall who with her husband Shawn Turner manages a 100-acre ranch in southern Alberta, Canada, filled with horses, cattle, dogs, cats, rabbits and chickens. Her credentials as a horsewoman and cowgirl, however, are demonstrated in her other job.

Amber is an award-winning television actress who plays Amy Fleming in the Canadian Broadcast Corporation's 14-season long television drama *Heartland*. Amy is a cowgirl who uses her intuition to help heal troubled horses. If you're a horseperson the first thing you notice is that Amy is the real deal; she really rides and really knows horses. The riding, chores and daily ranch life portrayed in *Heartland* are a carbon copy of Amber's private life.

Born in London, Ontario, Amber, 32, stepped out of toddler stage and was introduced to horses. She started out in with hunter/jumper lessons and turned to western when she got her first Quarter Horse at age 12. Many of her own horses appear on *Heartland*.

We wanted to know her thoughts about why some horses react to cows in general and black and whites specifically.

Is that reaction to cows a question of nature or nurture? Are some types of horses terrified of cows by nature and others unconcerned as if they were born with cows in their family?

It is my belief that some horses just have it in their genetic make-up to either love or hate cows. But with that being said, it is also about exposure and conditioning. For example, given the same upbringing in a cowless environment, a Quarter Horse is more likely to be receptive to cattle than a Standardbred. However, that doesn't mean a Standardbred can't learn to love cows, or that a Quarter Horse will take to them instantly. Growing up I had a Quarter Horse who was raised in the English world. He had never been around cattle. The first time we rode upon a field of cows it was as if they were all the boogie monster. I could feel his whole body trembling underneath me. My horses now are usually turned out with my cows. That way they get to know them on their own time and all my horses seem to love being around cattle.

Is it a breed issue?

I do believe that some breeds are more genetically set up to enjoy working with cattle. A Border Collie is wired to herd and more likely to naturally take to sheep than a Golden Retriever. And a Retriever is more likely to fetch a stick. That doesn't mean that either breed can't learn to do each task. It just means each excels in certain areas more naturally.

Have you experienced horses reacting to black and white (dairy) cows? Have you seen horses that are okay with black cows, but not with black and whites?

Moving out to western Canada I'm in the land of beef cattle. Most dairy operations in the area are fully enclosed since our winters are not suitable for exposure. I think these cows are more confusing to other animals because of their distinct patterns just like a zebra uses its stripes to confuse predators and merge a herd into one large blur of black and white. Holstein cows can do the same. When a horse doesn't understand something, fear takes over and its instinct to flee kicks in.

How would you help these terrified individuals?

Conditioning and exposure in manageable doses. Just like humans overcoming a fear, the best way is to understand why the fear is there in the first place. I believe horses that fear cows don't understand what these creatures are and what their intentions may be. Are they here to eat me? To attack? And the only way for a horse to understand those intentions is by being around the cattle and learning that they are not there to harm them. With that being said, some cattle are more intimidating. If you are walking your horse up to a herd of moms with their calves, they are more likely to stand their ground or even possibly charge you and your horse. It's best to choose a younger herd that has a general respect for horses. Then your horse is sure to have a good first experience. Having a mad mama cow charge your fearful horse will only send it backwards in the game. Take things slow and always try to set up the situation for a successful introduction.



Best known as Amy Fleming in the Netflix series *Heartland*, actress Amber Marshall works cattle at the Alberta, Canada, ranch that she and husband Shawn Turner run.



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EEK! A Spotted Cow

By Janet L. Jones, PhD, Author of *Horse Brain, Human Brain*

Black cows, brown cows, white cows, spotted cows—my three-year-old horse thinks all cattle are lethal Ninja Cows. Verrrry dangerous. But what is it about the horse who wigs out at black-and-white cows, but not black-and-white horses... or vice versa?

Two things. First, we have to consider the effect of past experience. I once trained an Arabian mare who ran backwards, eyes the size of dinner plates, rearing in fear from the sight of an Appaloosa horse. Many horses are skittish around Paints, too.

Multi-colored horses are less common than our everyday bays and chestnuts, so there's a better chance your equine friend hasn't seen many of them. And to a prey brain, anything new is potentially risky. Better to run needlessly from a spotted animal than to take the chance of becoming its dinner.

But wait... why does a horse have to see so many color combinations before accepting the general idea of Paint horses and spotted cows? That brings me to the second item. Human brains enjoy an automatic brain process called categorical perception. With no effort or control, our brains automatically group various instances of a sight (or sound, smell, touch) all together into one category. So, after you've seen two or three spotted animals, your brain creates a category that processes all spotted animals. This feature of our brains is so ingrained that we don't even notice it. And we have to make a conscious effort to override the stereotypes and generalizations it produces.

Categorical perception is not automatic in the equine brain. To a horse, each instance of a group is perceived and interpreted separately. So my spotted cow is as unique and different from your spotted cow as orange trees are from rocket fuel. At first, even my spotted cow viewed from the side is different than the same cow seen from the front. A horse has to see a lot of black and white cows and get some safe experience with them before he groups them together as a safe category. And even then, equine grouping is not automatic. The horse's brain has to apply learning, control and effort to create categories.

The horse's lack of automatic categorical perception is the basis for shying. We scold, "You've seen that a million times!" But not necessarily from the same angle or in the same context, right? Our brains may have seen spotted cows a million times, but that's only because they created a category into which all spotted animals fall. Our brains don't focus on minor differences in viewing angle, scent, vocalization, or context. Equine brains do.

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ON the SPOT: The Genetics of White Spotting

By Amy Young

Whether you're all about the chrome, like 'em loud, or prefer spots, white patterning is as unique as the horses themselves. It is "on top of" a horse's base color, which can often be identified unless the white pattern is extensive or the horse has greyed (see *Spring Horse Journal* for review).

White patterning is caused by an absence of melanocytes, cells that produce pigment in the skin and hair. These cells migrate and proliferate during embryonic development and are important for more than just color. They have vital roles in the eyes, ears, intestines, and other areas, meaning that their absence can result in health considerations. For example, melanocytes are required for normal function of the inner ear, and consequently, white patterning is associated with deafness in several species. If too many melanocytes are missing, which can occur in animals with two copies of specific white patterning variants, an embryo may not be able to develop properly (termed "embryonic lethal").

White patterning can be observed as areas of solid white, as in Paint Horses, or as white hairs mixed in with colored hairs, as seen in roans. Appaloosas also have their own unique white patterns. The genetic basis for many types of white patterning has been uncovered and the University of California Davis Veterinary Genetics Laboratory (VGL) offers DNA tests for many of these traits.

Solid White Patterns

Several types of white patterning are associated with the tyrosine kinase receptor *KIT* gene, which is involved in melanocyte growth, survival, migration, and differentiation.

- **Tobiano** is a dominant trait characterized by white patches crossing the topline between the ears and tail. The skin is pink under the white areas and black under the pigmented areas. Tobianos often have brown eyes, but they can be blue. The head is typically dark with white markings (like those of a solid colored horse) unless other white spotting mutations are involved. The legs are usually white below the hocks and knees and the tail can be two colors.
- **Sabino** is a generic description of white markings on the legs, often accompanied by white hairs in the midsection and a blaze. Sabino 1 is a rare pattern with an incompletely dominant mode of inheritance. Horses with one copy have two or more white legs or feet, often with white running up the front part of the leg, an extensive blaze, and spotting on the midsection with jagged or roaned margins. Horses with two copies are at least 90% white, called "sabino-white".
- **Dominant White Mutations** W5, W10, W20, and W22 cause variable white patterning ranging from extensive white face and leg markings with or without roaning and/or white patches on the belly to a nearly all-white horse. Eye color is typically brown. The W5 mutation is found in descendants of the Thoroughbred stallion Puchilingui; W10 is in descendants of the Quarter Horse stallion GQ Santana,



*Pete (top) and Catwoman (bottom) are frame overos. Pete is a bay frame overo since he has a bay base color (A/A, E/e) and one copy of overo (N/O). Catwoman is a black frame overo since she has a black base color (a/a, E/e) and one copy of overo (N/O). They also each have one copy of W20, which may contribute to their obvious frame patterns. Both tested N/N for other white patterning tests discussed here. *Horses that carry combinations of the splashed white mutations, tobiano, lethal white overo, and dominant white can display extensive white patterning and may be entirely white.*

and W22 is in descendants of the Thoroughbred stallion Airdrie Apache. A much older mutation, W20 is found in many breeds and has a more subtle effect on the amount of white patterning on its own. However, studies suggest that it boosts the amount of white patterning when in combination with other white patterning alleles. The W22 mutation occurs on the W20 background, meaning all horses with W22 also have W20. Two copies of W5, W10, and W22 are likely embryonic lethal, but this remains to be confirmed.

- **Camarillo White** is a dominant mutation found in the Camarillo White Horse breed that causes a completely white coat, mane, and tail. Two copies (CW/CW) are likely embryonic lethal.

In addition to *KIT*, white patterning variants have been identified in the *microphthalmia associated transcription factor* (*MITF*) and *paired box 3* (*PAX3*) genes, which have important roles in normal melanocyte function. Interestingly, *MITF* regulates *KIT*, and *PAX3* regulates *MITF*, so they are all involved in the same pathway.

- **Splashed White Mutations** are dominant and cause variable white spotting patterns of large broad blazes, extended white leg markings, variable white spotting on the belly, and blue eyes. Some splashed white horses are deaf. Six mutations (SW1 - SW6) have been identified and all cause a similar appearance, although the amount of white patterning is variable and likely controlled by other, currently unidentified, genes.

Four mutations (SW1, SW3, SW5, and SW6) are associated with *MITF*, whereas SW2 and SW4 affect *PAX3*. Some of these, such as SW1, are in multiple breeds, whereas others, such as SW4, have only been identified in a single family. Two copies of some splashed white mutations, such as SW3, are likely embryonic lethal, and mating horses that carry SW3 to each other should be avoided.

Lethal White Overo, or frame overo, is an incompletely dominant trait. Horses with this pattern have pigment that "frames the horse", with white patterning on the abdomen, middle of the neck, and face. Some frame overos have very little white, while others are almost completely white, so it is not always obvious if a horse is a frame overo just by appearance. Two copies of the causative mutation (O/O) result in a lethal white overo, characterized by a completely white coat and intestinal tract abnormalities that lead to colic, resulting in death soon after birth. Horses with one copy (N/O) have a frame overo pattern but do not have intestinal complications. They may be deaf. Importantly, N/O horses should not be bred to one another to avoid producing a lethal white foal.

This pattern is caused by a variant in the *endothelin B receptor* gene (*EDNRB*), which is responsible for proper development of pigment cells and nerve cells during embryogenesis. Similarly, *EDNRB* mutations cause Hirschsprung disease in humans.

Center for Equine Health (CEH) teaching herd horses Pete and Catwoman are frame overos. The VGL tested both horses with the following results.

Roaning Patterns

Roan is a pattern of intermixed white and colored hairs in the body while the head, lower legs, mane, and tail remain colored. White and colored hairs are evenly mixed in horses that inherit classic Roan, which can differentiate this from mimic patterns called roaning. Roaning patterns tend to show uneven distribution of white hairs. Roan is dominant, but the specific variant is unknown, so there is no direct test. The VGL has identified DNA markers in Quarter Horses and Paints associated with classic roan that can determine if a horse is roan and whether they have one or two copies.

Rabicano is a particular roaning pattern, with white hairs at the top of the tail ("skunk" or "coon" tail), and roaning in the flanks. It can occur on any background color. The VGL is conducting research on the genetics of rabicano and working to develop a genetic test. To participate in this study, contact research@vgl.ucdavis.edu.

Appaloosa Patterns

Leopard Complex, or Appaloosa spotting, is characterized by variable patterning with or without pigmented spots (leopard spots), mottled skin, stripped hooves, and progressive loss of pigment (varnish roaning) with age. It can range from minimal to almost completely white due to modifier genes (such as *PATN1*). Leopard Complex is associated with the *transient receptor potential*

cation channel subfamily M member 1 (*TRPM1*) gene, which is important in the cell signaling that enables night vision. Horses with two copies of the leopard complex mutation (LP/LP) also have congenital stationary night blindness (CSNB), the inability to see in low-light conditions, and are at increased risk for equine recurrent uveitis (ERU), a progressive condition that is the leading cause of blindness in horses.

Appaloosa Pattern-1 (*PATN1*) is a modifier of leopard complex spotting and controls the amount of white in the coat, increasing the amount of white in horses that have the LP mutation. The amount of white patterning on horses with LP and *PATN1* typically range from 60-100%. In horses with LP but without *PATN1* the range is generally from 0-40%. Additional modifiers likely explain the range in patterning.

The genetics behind blazes, stripes, snips, socks, and stockings likely involves multiple, currently unidentified variants. Coat color genetics is an active area of research; keep your eyes open for updates and new advances!

More information on horse coat color genetics and testing is available through the VGL (<https://vgl.ucdavis.edu>). Learn more about the health conditions discussed through the UC Davis equine health topics database (<https://ceh.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/health-topics>).

Photos: Amy Young



CEH teaching herd horse Isabella exhibits rabicano white patterning. Note the white hairs in the flank, and white at the top of the tail.





Photo: Angelika Mitchell

Fledgling Rescue

One lovely afternoon, when mom was out hunting down lunch, a baby bird walked out of the nest cuddled into the covered arena gutter, strolled down the arena roof and dropped into the drain pipe. It landed in the new world of the covered arena floor at Apple Creek Stable in Sebastopol, and not yet a flyer, stood bewildered. A young rider on her pony pleaded with her teacher to help the little one.

Flying to the rescue came daredevils trainer Carol Fricke and assistant Karen Bean. Out came the tractor and up went the front loader. With Carol at the controls, Karen skillfully sent the baby bird aloft to home sweet home among its siblings.



Photo: Angelika Mitchell



GONE AWAY SUE CURRY SHAFFER

Dressage judge, trainer and Oldenburg breeder Sue Curry Shaffer of Fairwind Farm in Santa Rosa died unexpectedly April 25. She was 67 years old.

Born December 30, 1953, in Ohio and raised in Pennsylvania, Sue bought her first horse, a Paint named Ranger, for \$300 with her own money when she was barely 13 and then worked at the barn to pay his board. She rode during school years at Lake Erie College, where she fell in love with dressage and earned her degree in equine studies. At 22 she moved to Colorado and opened her horse business.

For over 20 years she competed at FEI level and had multiple horses in the top ten nationally. In 1985, Sue and Orpheus were number one in the U.S. Dressage Federation rankings at Prix St. Georges, and were long listed for the World Championships.

Matching her accomplishments on horses and breeding horses, she became both an esteemed judge and teacher of judges. From her start as a judge at 21, she became a USEF 'S' dressage judge, a FEI 3* Para equestrian judge, and assistant director of the

USEF Para Equestrian Forum. In 2017 she was selected as one of 12 candidates to be a USEF 'L' program faculty member, teaching judges.

In 2018 she was awarded the prestigious Sonoma County Horse Council Equus Award.

Since 2020, she served as the northern regional director of the California Dressage Society.

Fairwind Farm

In 1992 Sue moved with nine horses to California and the start a new business. In 1999 Sue and husband Dyke Schaffer founded Fairwind Farm in Santa Rosa.

Over the course of a decade, Sue was a successful Oldenburg horse breeder, importing horses from Germany and growing her breeding operation with over 40 horses including several historic stallions and delivering more than 40 foals. In 2000 she imported the Oldenburg licensed stallion Donnerschlag as her foundation stallion. He lived to be 31.

At Fairwind Sue hosted many inspections for the breeding and approval of American-bred Oldenburgs.

She also trained numerous students to USDF gold, silver and bronze medals, teaching training level through grand prix.

Untimely Death

Sue passed away in her sleep of a presumed heart attack. The day before her passing she was coaching students at a local dressage show and judging in a virtual online show.

Sue leaves a big void in the American dressage community. She was known for her empathic and positive approach, sense of humor and smile that brought the best out in riders and horses. "Her kindness and generosity of spirit have touched all of us," said retired international dressage judge Axel Steiner. "I have known her for 40 plus years and she will leave a big hole in my heart and the dressage community."

Sue leaves behind her husband Dyke and daughter Megan Salkin.

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A Personal Journey to Horse Health

The idea for Petaluman Carla Odetto's Performance Equine Nutrition, Inc., originated with her research into nutritional ways to help her mother who suffered from severe fibromyalgia and her husband with early-onset Parkinson's.

A lifelong horse owner, Carla put that knowledge about magnesium's critical role in human health to work when her reining horse Holly became so sore-backed that she could barely tolerate brushing much less saddling. She also suffered from hives, edema, colic, cellulitis and chronic stocking up. "She wasn't retaining any of the training from previous sessions, and every day she became more fearful, for no evident reason."

After a few months on MagRestore, the mare was 70 percent better. When she stopped eating the magnesium, Carla developed transdermal magnesium products MagBath and MagOil. Holly was on her way to recovery and Performance Equine Nutrition magnesium therapy supplements, topical treatments and washes came into being.

www.performanceequinenutrition.com

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Save Your Saddle Rack

Meg Gould read the fine print in the contract for a new semi-custom saddle stating that improper storage of the saddle would void the warranty; it had to be housed on a saddle rack wrapped with saddle pads and/or foam. Time for this Bolinas eventer to get innovative.

"Stacks and stacks of saddle pads under each saddle are messy, and undoubtedly I would pull half of this mess down daily when getting a saddle. And so the Save Your Saddle Rack was born. Now the tack room is beautiful and organized, saddles resting gently protected."

www.saveyoursaddleracks.com

Jewelry from the Heart

Sonoma County custom jeweler Marie Scarpa, lifelong horsewoman and award-winning jewelry designer, created heart and horse hair earrings for her vaulting coach Kelley Holly when she lost her favorite horse, Tank.

www.mariescarpadesigns.com



Greetings

Marin Tack and Feed in Forest Knolls is the canvas for this wood sculpture made from reclaimed redwood created by Mill Valley native Peter Phibbs, artist in residence at Paradise Winery until the Tubbs Fire. Another of his works stands in front of Cloverleaf Ranch in Santa Rosa.

www.marintackandfeed.com

Cool Relief

Ice Horse ice therapy products headquarter in the town of Sonoma.

www.icehorse.com



RETIRING YOUR HORSE

By Patti Schofler



Life among friends makes for a nice retirement.

For years, you've tended to every bleep in this horse's system. Now he doesn't jump fences or perform canter pirouettes or spins or feel right with a day long ride through Point Reyes. What are you going to do with him? With yourself?

Most horses are retired because they can no longer physically do their job either because they aged out or because of injury, infirmity or illness. Others leave the big life because their riders lives changed. They went to college and left them with the parents. Or owners' finances changed and the horses lifestyles change with them. When retirement is the choice, the owners are thanking their horses for the past by giving them a good future.

Bobo had rehabbed from two suspensory ligament tears and returned to enjoy a spurt of successful competition, only to experience a ligament tear on a totally different leg. His rider could read him. He didn't want to rehab again. She didn't either, but she didn't know how she could let go.

The classic fantasy is for Bobo to enjoy a grassy field with a few good friends where they can run over perfect ground sans gopher holes and adobe clay and scamper into shelter from the sun and wind and rain. Yet retirement also can mean a change to a less demanding job that is more suitable for the horse that Bobo has become. (see sidebar)

WHO WILL BE IN PASTURE?

As Bobo's owner stared at the retirement pasture, the questions flooded in. Is 18 too young for this destination? How will he handle bad weather after life in a cushy stall? How will she handle having him out there in bad weather?

Her friend bumped up against these same questions when the horse she imported from Germany as a three-year-old was 22 and ready to retire. With great trepidation she unbuckled the halter to release him into pasture. She held her breathe. He didn't. He

just took off and never looked back, instantly becoming the wild horse of his dreams.

Idyllic as that seems, the scene will only work out with the right pasture and the managers that go with it.

CRITERIA FOR THE RETIREMENT PLACE

1. Check out the safety of the fencing
2. What is the soil like? Is it clay? Sandy loam? Hilly or rocky terrain?
3. How many horses per paddock and pasture?
4. Is there ample shelter?
5. What size are the water tanks and where are they? "When we moved into Back Creek Farm in 1984 there were automatic waterers in the corners of the shelters," said Lesley-Ann Van Deren, owner with her husband Tim of Back Creek Farm in Sebastopol. "When it was hot in summer, the big boss horse stood with his butt against the tank in the shade and didn't let anyone near. We put 70-gallon tanks along the fence line, far away from any corners."
6. Does a mixed herd work for your horse? Heidi Marks in Penngrove who has boarded retirees on her six acres for 10 years at first had geldings and mares out together. Not anymore. "It gets too much like high school."
7. Does the facility feed or do the horses only forage off the field? What do they feed? Back Creek feeds 30 percent alfalfa grass hay in the morning and for lunch with rye hay at night. "Because older horses tend to have stomach issues, we buy hay once a year so we

don't change feed every few weeks. Also, we feed in hay nets to slow down their eating and so they're not tromping the hay into the ground."

Because the older horses have teeth issues, Heidi will bring the horses into stalls for each to receive customized supplements. 8. What are the care arrangements? Older horses usually need medication. Who will do that? Are there regular visits from the farrier? "We have a team of vets and farriers. The owners can use their own or get on our schedule which is what the owners usually go for," said Lesley-Ann. "In any case, all the horses have to be wormed and vaccinated within 30 days of when we do our horses to ensure protection of all the horses."

9. Are back shoes removed for safety? Can your horse handle going barefoot behind?

TRANSITION TO RETIRE

How well the horse transitions to retirement depends on the previous life. When horses arrive at Back Creek Farm, they are housed in a 36' x 48' paddock where Lesley-Ann and Tim can watch them closely. "If they have been in stalls most of their lives, they may not be used to looking out and seeing a couple of blocks away or



At Back Creek Farm, a large shelter and paddock for two buddies works well on a day when pasture is not an option.

seeing deer and foxes running across the field. They may need to decompress from a big barn with all sorts of goings on. It's very quiet here. Those that have been injured have had decompression time, but they are seeing new things here."

With the horse in the smaller enclosure Lesley-Ann can evaluate the horse's personality. How easy is he to catch? Will he chase dogs? Is he food aggressive? Who will he go with? "I first put the horse in the paddock next to the regulars so he will know someone when he goes out in pasture."

After a couple of weeks, the new horse is led around the pasture to familiarize him with the fencing, and then put in pasture by himself. Soon a new buddy is added to the mix and slowly more horses are introduced.

From our back porch we can see pretty much every horse. We keep an eye on them to see how they get along, who plays well with others. There is always a boss, but what kind of boss? A mean one or just one that shakes his head to say go away? What is the line in the sand? Everyone says they have the best horse that gets along with everyone, right? But it's different now that they are in a herd situation. Sometimes they go wacko over the new life. We had an A circuit jumper who was okay in a paddock, but when I put him out in pasture he would stand at the gate and weave. It was too much space for him."



Fencing designed with the safety of horses in mind is a top priority for the retirees living at Heidi Marks' Penngrove ranch.

Heidi puts the new horse in the arena that is surrounded by the pasture. Sometimes they stay there for a couple of days, sometimes for a couple of weeks, until they are more a part of the herd. "The day I plan to put the new horse with the herd, I don't feed in the morning. I wait until dusk where animals tend to turn together because the dark is coming. And they're hungry enough to just turn to the food."

Back Creek horses are former grand prix jumpers, upper-level dressage horses, three-day eventers, cutting horses, trail horses, rescue horses from Neighsavers and CHANGE, lay ups and old broodmares. Two to three horses share paddocks and are turned out together in one of three four-acre pastures most of the year, though only occasionally in the winter. "We don't want them in the muck hurting themselves, sliding into fences, tearing up the grass."

When spring arrives, they are gradually introduced to the grass. The mare that looks like an overstuffed couch doesn't go out

on the grass until it dries out. Lesley-Ann will shift the horses around to different pastures. "We keep the pods together, but sometimes the boys are in the front pasture, the girls in the back, and then vice versa. Horses like to taste different grass and see something new."

"We watch them to be sure everyone is getting enough food," said Heidi. "I don't work outside the home, so I'm here. I know when a horse is having a problem. Why is the horse lying down at 7 p.m.? Why is that horse bobbing its head? You learn their body language and know when something is wrong."

CHANGES TO OWNERS AND HORSES

When the horses go into pasture, they may ignore their owners the first month or so. Owners make adjustment too. Some come out a couple times a week and then only once a month. Some cut back to yearly visits, especially when they become comfortable with the care.

The horses' bodies change. "They don't get skinny, but their weight goes to different places," Heidi pointed out.

Personalities adjust as well. "I had one horse that I had to lock up in the daytime because he was aggressive towards people. He had been abused at some point. He was fine with me, but I wouldn't trust him with others. After a month he was okay to turn out in pasture," said Heidi who mostly has had Quarter Horses, a few Thoroughbreds and a half Saddlebred.

A call came into Back Creek Farm requesting space for a horse with a neurologic disorder. The owner expected him to make it for only six months more. The horse moved in and has lived for four years.

"That horse is moving more, no longer being in a stall. He's got friends to play with. When the horses are happy and comfortable, they live longer," said Lesley-Ann. "We have two horses that are both neurologic and crab walk together in the field. When they are brought back into their paddock, one is shoulder in and one is shoulder out. They toddle in and eat their dinner and go to bed."

"The horses come to us around age 19 to 21 and stay until it's time to go. That is the hard part of my job. We have hands and eyes on them every day. We know when it's time. This one, for example, is ataxic, but he has a good gleam in his eye. He still trots out to the pasture. He has a little difficulty getting up, but he does lie down and gets up feeling refreshed. And then there are the ones who just aren't happy anymore. They eat. They go out. But they're not comfortable. That's when we have the talk with the owner."

Horses are complicated at any stage, and retirement is no different. And like other phases of their lives, providing a good retirement is part of the commitment to owning a horse. 🐾

Photos: Patti Schofler

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Career Change Ideas

Horses that need to dial down from their active careers have more options to enjoy than you might think.

HORSES AS THERAPY



Students at Halleck Creek Ranch enjoy the hills of Nicasio with the assistance of sidewalkers.

For 44 years Halleck Creek Ranch in Nicasio has helped people with special needs out of their wheelchairs and onto the back of a horse for trail riding adventures. At present the nonprofit has 18 therapy horses, all who have been donated for retirement from a variety of first careers.

Quarter Horse gelding Buddy joined the herd when the Halleck Creek farrier need to find a new home for his brother's horse. Quarter Horse Buck came from Wyoming where he had been working as a ranch horse. Today, he quietly and reliably packs kids

down the road.

Irish show jumper Finnegan retired from his performance career at 18 and has adjusted quite well to the trail.

An Andalusian mare, 28, with advanced level dressage training is calm and relaxed and yet "if you put your dressage legs on her, you see she hasn't forgotten a thing," described Brenda Falco, Halleck Creek program director. "It's amazing how the horses seem to know to be calm with our students."

The horses work only a maximum of three hours a day, in accordance with Halleck Creek's Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) guidelines.

With a rider onboard, they travel down the trails in the Nicasio hills accompanied by two side walkers: one on either side and one leading the horse by a halter under the bridle. "We have a very slow-paced program which might bore some horses and lead them into trouble. So, most of our horses are pretty mature," said Falco.

A former barrel racer and a working cow horse both have worked out well. A Thoroughbred made it for a few years, but clearly with his great energy he wanted to run and jump. He was rehomed to the University of California Davis (UCD) schooling program.

"Our staff and volunteers are committed to helping the horses succeed in their career change," said Falco.

HORSES AS TEACHERS

April and Crome are teachers at the Center for Equine Health at UCD. Like many of their fellow educators, they were donated not as old age retirees, but for medical reasons that limited their ability for performance. With a bit of medical management, they

offer veterinary students and residents the opportunity to actually experience their conditions on live horses, instead of reading about them or viewing them on a video.

"We have, for example, horses with heart conditions, lameness issues, mild neurological conditions. They are not retirement horses in the classic sense. Many of these horses have been here for years," said Amy Young, equine outreach manager. "They are a well-loved and vital part of our program. You can meet some of them through our 'Horse of the Month' feature on social media."

HORSES ON PATROL

How fun to be a cop's horse.

Horse mounted patrols are assigned to federal parks in Washington, DC, New York City and San Francisco. These nationally acclaimed officers and mounts are highly respected for crowd management and are assigned to maintain order during major demonstrations and special events.

One of the oldest established police equestrian units in the country, the U.S. Park Police Horse Mounted Patrol was established in 1934 with one horse that was rented from a local stable in Washington, D.C. Large park areas with open spaces, picnic areas, ball fields and other activities were soon found to be places where horses could patrol more effectively than foot officers or motorized vehicles.

The nation's Capital hosts civic functions each year, such as the National Cherry Blossom Festival, the Christmas Pageant of Peace and the Presidential Inauguration. In addition to being an attractive unit for display in parades, the horses were found to be highly effective in crowd and traffic management at these functions, given that they received the proper training and conditioning to maneuver in crowds of people and through heavily traveled roadways.

The U.S. Park Police Horse Mounted Patrol training staff receives numerous requests from outside agencies to provide training. This agency has assisted the U.S. Army, U.S. Secret Service, as well as police departments. Instructors are regularly requested to provide training at police seminars held throughout the United States.



U.S. Park Police Officer Joe McKeever and Reebok charm visitors to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

Today, the U.S. Park Police can always use horses for patrol and to teach new officers to ride. "The big question is mental stability," said Lieutenant Patrick Kaiser, commander, Horse Mounted Patrol. "They must have a good mind and a brave spirit." What does he do when he is over-faced? A horse that loses his mind at new experiences and wants to turn and bolt or rear won't do.

They should stand at the very least 15.3 hands, and walk, trot and canter sound and sane for a beginner.

Donated horses are given a 120-day evaluation. After service, all the horses are retired to forever homes.

For details on donating a horse contact Lieutenant Patrick Kaiser at patrick_kaiser@nps.gov.

My Older Guy

By Gwen Kilchherr

You have to wonder if destiny determines why some horses, like people, live long, happy lives or if it's the way their lives ran all that time. We asked Horse Journal contributor Gwen Kilchherr about Indy and where he fit into this conundrum.

Indy has been mine for over 25 years, and he's between the ages of 36 and 38. His hair has some white highlighting and a few of his teeth have fallen out. Other than the scheduled farrier visits, and immunizations as needed, until last May he'd only had to be seen once for an injury evaluation.

Many horse people say Arabians are tough. Add some Quarter Horse to that mix and you have one amazing combination. At least that's Indy. He can still outrun my 20-year-old Cleo and probably always will.

In 1995, I was searching for an all-around riding horse so I could ride dressage, try my hand at limited distance endurance riding, have fun trail riding and, if my two young sons wanted to ride, that would be an added bonus. Luck would have it a friend found an ad in the *Press Democrat* "Chestnut gelding, Quarter Horse, Arabian for sale. Great on trails, good with kids." Even better he was located right around the corner from me.

The owner said Ace was between 9 and 12 years old, 15.2 hands, loves going trail riding, and is great around kids. She hopped on and rode him around the property bareback in only



Back in his youth, Indy enjoyed his days on the endurance trail with his owner Gwen Kilchherr.

a halter. For my ride I rode him across the street to the original Empire Equine building parking lot filled with semi-trucks and forklifts moving all about. He didn't take a false step. I was sold.

After a thorough prepurchase exam, Dr. Michelle Beko couldn't find any concerns and commented that he had nearly perfect feet. Ace became Indy—because he looked like an Indy.

My husband Walter and I fixed our pasture fences and built a barn. About six months later, I was able to bring him home. We hit the trail, starting at Shiloh Ranch Regional Park where Indy was great. As the months went by Indy and I got in shape and enjoyed participating in several limited distance endurance rides.

Years later I started back into dressage, but Indy wasn't very happy in a dressage arena. He wanted the trails. So I found my dressage horse, Cleo, and Indy was tested out by my friend Jessica Caldwell. She was hesitant about him because she liked to jump and we didn't know if this 12-year-old horse could or would jump.

After a few lessons, Indy took to jumping and would jump way higher than he needed in order to clear jumps. The pair entered a few jumping shows at Santa Rosa Equestrian Center where for the most part they did quite well. There was the time, however, when they were disqualified for going way too fast through the jump course. He must have had the course memorized and told Jessica to hold on, he's got this.

A few years later, Jessica bought her own horse and couldn't spend as much time with Indy. But that was ok, because Indy is now pushing 20 plus years old. I semi-retired him in the pasture with Cleo, but when friends came over, especially young ones, he enjoyed taking them for a little ride.

And that is where he is today and will be as long as he lives.

What would you rather be doing?



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A Good Death

What Are You Waiting For?

By Melinda Newton, DVM



Giving animals under our care a good death is our responsibility—whenever possible.

Granted, it isn't always possible, given that it's a dangerous business, this thing called living. They get lost, hit by a car, burned by a fire, swept away in a flood, maybe poisoned by contaminated feed.

On the other hand, we sometimes get lucky. Those under our care live a full and happy life until they drop dead, seemingly out of nowhere, maybe from an undiagnosed heart condition. It's over so fast that it leaves you reeling. Why just yesterday they were fine.

Other times the choice is clear. Your horse is writhing on the ground in pain from a colic episode. Surgery isn't an option and medical management has failed. Euthanasia is the only choice to give your partner the relief they need.

The really hard one is when the timing isn't so clear. You've received a terminal diagnosis and you must decide the time of death or choose when to call it quits after a long, gradual decline from chronic illness. Or a younger animal has a disease that won't hasten their death, but that calls into question what the "right" decision is moving forward: life or death?

Of course, we want the decision taken out of our hands. We want them to die in their sleep, at home. Yeah, you, me and everyone else. These hard cases really suck.

How Will I Know?

"When will I know?" I get asked by clients and friends. People want the formula for when it is time. Is it when they stop eating X days? When a body condition score reaches a one out of whatever number scale you want to use? Is it when they can't stand? Is it the look in their eyes? Or when they are so confused that they are head pressing in the corner of their stall? Or maybe it's when various body fluids are pouring out of various orifices with varying amounts of control.

When do you make the decision to end a life that has nothing to do with the only other culturally acceptable times to end a life—putting food on the table or war?

The problem is every animal is an individual, has different priorities in life and deals with the suffering and limitations of old age or their condition differently.

Most people wait too long. Concerned with cutting a life short unnecessarily, or guilt-wracked with should-haves and could-haves, they hang on to their horse's continued existence as proof that this is not a convenience euthanasia.

An Animal Lives in the Present

Remember that an animal cares nothing for our intentions, or whether there is some small hope of a better future. An animal lives in the present. Any decision to prolong suffering should be because there is a significant hope that a well-lived life can be had on the other side of that suffering. Let's set aside the guilt, sadness and other complicated human emotions that are important and real, but don't matter to the animal in front of us.

Ask yourself, "What am I waiting for?" rather than asking when should I.

Are you waiting for your horse not to eat for a couple of days? Are you waiting for there to not be any more good days?

Considering the question "What are you waiting for?" instead of "When is it time?" clarifies a lot of things. It often brings to mind the scenarios that we don't want our animals to experience if it is in our

power to prevent it. Are you waiting for your arthritic old mare to not be able to get up from the cold mud, after struggling and panicking for hours as she tried again and again to make her arthritic joints obey her still young-at-heart spirit?

I will not wait until the bad days have squeezed out all the good ones so that there is only suffering. That isn't fair, and that is as selfish as euthanizing too early. Somewhere between convenience and a love too great to let them go is a happy medium where the needs and suffering of the animal are considered independent of the human's needs.

Listen to your gut. It starts with a small voice. "Someday," it says. "Not today, not tomorrow, and not next week. But it's coming."

At some point "someday" turns into "soon." Not today, not tomorrow, but it's time to turn a critical eye towards the question of "What are you waiting for?" That will help define the end markers.

Maybe it took an extra try to get up in soft footing after that roll. During turn out, she falls. She's never done that before. Now when she runs in the arena, there are no wild gallops.

How Long Do I Wait?

How long do I wait? Depending on circumstances, I try controlling the footing, medication, management, but at some point, all that can be done in our specific circumstances has been done. Now there's evidence that one night she struggled for a prolonged time trying to get to her feet.

But she's fat and shiny and nickers at me when I go out to the barn. Is it time?

Your gut hurts. You can barely think through the decision, and your mind slips off sideways when you think about doing it, even as you try to grab it with both hands so you can turn it over and see it from all angles. You think about the judgment of social media and others looking in from the outside. "You could have..." "You should have..." "Why didn't you just..." "Will others think you euthanized because it was easy? You just bought a new car, and your new baby is taking up a lot of your time. You have a big vacation planned, and you fly out next week.

I can't give you an algorithm where you plug in numbers and it gives you a result.

Here's what I can offer for comfort.

For all of us, life is always too short. It doesn't matter if you squeeze another week in. If it's a week of suffering, it doesn't mean anything. If there's a terminal diagnosis and quality of life will only get worse, it's okay to say goodbye now while life is still good. It will never be enough time. You will always wish there had been one more ride. There will always be regrets. Don't make holding onto an animal longer than what is fair to them be one of them. Under the guise of "life," there are things worse than death.

I will gently put her to sleep on a warm day when the sun is shining, while she is standing, and her last hours will be filled with love and gratitude for the years of service she gave to me.

Give them the gift of a good death. 🐾

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STEP FORWARD EQUUS AWARD WINNERS

The 13th Equus Awards Dinner, April 30, 2022, will celebrate the honorees chosen by the Sonoma County Horse Council for their outstanding contributions to the horse community. Until that date the Horse Journal will be introducing you to the winners: Andrea Pfeiffer, Ted Stashak DVM, Lee and Barbara Walker, Tracy Underwood and Royal Crest's Rockappella (Barbie). In this issue we applaud Tracy and Barbie.

Tracy Underwood

By Patti Schofler

She was calm and cool. She was generous. She was inviting. She was organized. That was who people wanted to meet at the end of the driveway to safety as they fled wildfires. And that was who they found in this high energy spark of comfort known as Tracy Underwood who welcomed as many fire refugees as she could stuff into Santa Rosa Equestrian Center (SREC), even though 100 horses already called it a safe home.



Photo: Marcie Lewis Photography



Photo: Courtesy of Tracy Underwood

Tracy with her guy Verso, the Lusitano stallion she imported from Brazil.

The Equus Award is presented to Tracy not just for her forethought and generosity in fire season, but also for bringing to the Sonoma County horse community needed horse shows, expanding a place for young riders to learn and giving so many volunteer hours to organization and club boards.

But wait. This is a person who waited until she was a grown up to get her first horse and who had never given a moment of thought to owning a boarding facility.

Back up. When Tracy was a little girl growing up in Southern California, she saw a picture of a Friesian horse and dreamed of having one of her own. She grew up, became an attorney and opened a small law office in Manhattan Beach with her husband Wesley Leckner, still with only a dream of a horse.

"Wes had broken his leg playing volleyball and I had to take care of his business, including the litigation which I hate," Tracy recalled. "I think he felt guilty and his way of thanking me was to buy me that horse I always wanted."

Her Friesian Rimer is still with her at age 24.

At the same time, 2004, the two bought the 50-acre Oak Ridge Training Stables and renamed it Santa Rosa Equestrian Center. "My parents and Wes's grandfather lived in Humboldt County. We didn't want to move somewhere as remote as Humboldt and thought Wine County was a great place to be closer to family. We still had the house and business in Manhattan Beach. I never wanted a riding facility. I just wanted one horse. Who knew?"

More boarder horses and ones of her own filled the center. She purchased a Lusitano stallion from Brazil, Verso, as an active breeding stallion, and Friesians Illiad and Kadence joined Tracy's herd. Today her main riding horse is an American Sugarbush Harlequin Draft named Talisman. No, not a Friesian.

As the facility continued to grow, Tracy became active in the community, joining the Sonoma County Horse Council board of directors, the California Dressage Society's local chapter as well as its state board where she served as northern regional director for nine years. She sat on various U.S. Dressage Federation, Santa Rosa Junior College and Sonoma County Fairgrounds committees. All along her goal was to grow the love of horses and riding.

Her own dressage and combined test horse shows proved such a catalyst. The shows became a landmark.

"I loved doing the shows, especially the schooling shows. They were open to all types of horses and riders. The goal was to create a welcoming environment where you could bring your 10-year-old kid who'd been riding for three months on a 28-year-old serviceably sound Quarter Horse or your three-year-old FEI prospect. You could dress up in show clothes or come as you were."

Another of her trademarks was her introduction of fodder to the horses' menu, grown from barley seed by a hydroponic process she describes as highly nutritious and an excellent source of hydration with a small environmental footprint.

Another love of Tracy's was the European Pony School, started by the former owners Yves and Christine Sauvignon. Sadly, it was a victim of the fires. "It wasn't burned, but we lost 4500 homes in the county and many families left the area. Many of the people remaining were scrambling to find a place to live. The resulting construction equipment and road closures created such traffic gridlock in the Santa Rosa area. It turned what was a 15-minute trip to drop off a kid at pony school into a 45-minute trip."

The pony school was closed. And now SREC has been sold. Yet the memory and example remain. SREC was family. During the fires Tracy felt they were safe because of family. She had firemen's daughters with horses on the property. They were surrounded by vineyards whose owners let her know they were turning on their irrigation systems. Boarders were family and they showed up to help. Everyone helped fill water buckets.

And in the middle of the night more horses came in and out, many from the Fairgrounds who had trouble handling the chaos and intensity. When they called, true to her form, Tracy's response was "Send them over." 🐾

Royal Crest's Rockappella "Barbie"

By Susan Banta



Photos Courtesy of Brigitte Scholl



On an unusually warm and sunny day in December, 2020, Royal Crest's Rockappella, known affectionately as Barbie, went out to her pasture as she did every day since her retirement six months earlier. She lay down in the warm sunshine and stayed there. Even in winter, her end was sunny and gentle, as was her nature throughout her 27 years.

The first equine recipient of the Sonoma County Equus Award since 2013, Barbie was a light chestnut, almost palomino, American Saddlebred with a flaxen mane and tail and amber eyes. Being a true blond who was always a little bit skinny prompted her nickname. For the last 15 years of her life, Barbie's kind and generous nature was often the first introduction to horses for stary eyed beginners young and old who came to Monarch Stables, Santa Rosa, to learn to ride these irresistible creatures.

Monarch Stables owner Brigitte Scholl was herself one of those stary eyed 10-year-olds who after seeing a lady with a horse on her shirt convinced her mother to look into riding. The lady became her first instructor and introduced Brigitte to American Saddlebreds, the breed she fell in love with for their intelligence, people-oriented nature and the dynamic charisma in saddle seat riding and driving.

Brigitte went on to compete and to develop her own lesson and sales business in the Bay area. Brigitte first met Barbie when she was competing against the mare. Although small for an American Saddlebred at 15.1 hands, Barbie was large in presence and very showy with manners to match. In her successful career Royal Crest's Rockappella was third in the country pleasure division at the 1998 World Championships in Louisville, KY.

As Barbie's career peaked, her owners asked Brigitte to take her on as a sales horse, but every time Brigitte found a buyer, the owners found a reason not to sell her. Finally, they confessed that they really wanted her to keep Barbie at Monarch Stables on the condition that Brigitte would care for her for the rest of her life. At age 11 Barbie became a member of the Monarch Stables family.

Barbie was shown successfully by many of Brigitte's students, teaching them the ropes of Saddlebred competitions and earning many ribbons and awards up and down the West Coast. One year she even carried the Monarch Stables flag in an exhibition at Dressage in the Wine Country.

Her light shown brightest, however, as the star of the beginner lesson program, teaching both riding and driving to hundreds of adults and children. With her gentle nature and smaller size students as young as four years old could ride her unaccompanied in the ring and even two-year-olds sat happily and safely

on her back. Young enthusiasts would groom her for hours and she never moved a foot. She was decorated with finger paint, her mane braided and rebraided as her young fans led her around fairgrounds and show grounds. Even being dressed up as a sheep or a unicorn did not try her patience.

In early 2020, Brigitte realized her dream of owning her own ranch and Monarch Stables moved to Cotati. On the day her offer was accepted, Brigitte learned that Barbie had won the Equus Award, a meaningful coincidence. Once moved, the first thing she did was to build the large three-sided covered area attached to the barn that opened directly into an acre pasture, complete with a plaque that read "Barbie's Dream House." Barbie, even during her show years, never liked being confined in a stall except at horse shows. In the summer of 2020 Barbie officially retired to enjoy her dream house full time. 🐾



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Tanya Vik

Photo: Chase Mandel



Dianne Sommerfeld

Photo Courtesy of Dianne Sommerfeld

WHERE EAST MEETS WEST

"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 the leg position in western riding and dressage.

Our experts are Dianne Sommerfeld representing the western horse realm and Tanya Vik describing the English horse world.

DIANNE SOMMERFELD (DS): Originally from Long Island where she evented, Dianne eventually fell in love with western riding. She made her way to San Francisco via Texas and operated a saloon and a day spa for 25 years to support her horse business. Today, she trains and instructs with owners' horses and lesson horses for ranch riding, western and cowboy dressage, and reining. Her students enjoy the trail as well as competition. One horse she trained in cowboy dressage was high point out of 503 horses at a competition at Murieta Equestrian Center. Dianne's 3D Performance Horses is located in Fulton.

TANYA VIK (TV): Tanya Vik has been teaching and training for over 25 years. She is an active competitor, earning a spot on the 2008 and 2009 USEF developing rider list and competing at the National Championships in Gladstone, New Jersey. She has competed many horses in California Dressage Society and U.S. Dressage Federation championships from training level to grand prix and has been champion and reserve champion numerous times. Her students compete at all levels both locally and at the state and regional levels. Tanya has trained with the late Sandy Howard, Lilo

Fore, David Hunt, Andrew Murphy and Mary Wanless. Born and raised in San Francisco, Tanya today lives, trains and teaches in Petaluma where she lives with husband Larry Mandel and son Chase.

How would you describe the correct leg position?

DS: We line up everything: ear, shoulder, heel. Some people ride with very long stirrups, but among the better riders the leg has more bend in the knee than we might see underneath the long chaps. We ride with a level foot all the way home in the stirrup, not on the ball of the foot.

TV: First we need alignment: shoulder to hip to ankle bone so that we have our leg underneath the hip in a vertical balance, with the ankle bone neither behind nor in front of the hip. If the horse magically disappeared from under the person, the rider would land on their feet.

The leg should have angulation with a bent knee in front of the hip, not with a straight leg. The stirrup must be short enough for this. We have to control the back-forward motion of the hip. If knees were straight underneath us, our hip would move back and forth with no ability to control the motion. When the knee is forward, the thigh bone organizes and balances the amount of motion in the hip.

Is the position affected by different leg lengths and proportions?

DS: Not really. Typically, when people who have ridden western start riding with me, the first thing I want to do is bring up their stirrups.

TV: No, it shouldn't matter what size the rider is. What is important about leg position particularly for dressage is that the thigh needs to be positioned so that the knee and the toe are pointed forward and the flat part of the inner thigh is alongside the saddle. The rider's flexibility and conformation will make this harder or easier to achieve.

The reason this is important is that when we are riding, the place where the motion happens is the hip joint. If thighs are rotated outward or inward, that motion is restricted.

Does the position change during the course of the ride?

DS: Since we ride one handed, we have to do more cueing with the leg and body than with a rein on the neck, like the old westerns where the guy just rips the rein across the neck. We have our home position with 60 percent of our weight in the saddle, 40 percent in our stirrups. We change the leg position with what we are doing.

We open and close doors for the horse to move into and away from by using the part of the leg from the knee down. When I turn, I open my leg to invite the horse to fill in that place. When I do a sliding stop, I put my legs forward and press into the stirrups as a cue for the horse and to keep me from flying over the horse's head. My horses are trained to back with my legs a little further forward. You'll see a lot of reining trainers keeping their legs in the same place to back up. To stop a horse, I put my leg forward and then I put the leg right back in alignment.

TV: Hopefully not. Before picking my horse up after a break, I always reposition the wiggly bits of the upper thigh under so I get the flesh to the back. Then I really get the flat of my inner thigh alongside the horse. That is ideal. With your thigh rotated you can easily move your hip back and forth and move affectively with the horse.

Do you use different parts of the leg for different reasons?

DS: Mainly, the thigh is neutral and we use the leg from the knee down. An equitation saddle and a roping saddle are both designed to keep the leg in the same place. A reining saddle has free swinging stirrups because we are moving the leg around to cue the horse.

We call it boot topping, using the inside of the leg below the knee. If my leg is still, the horse will still its legs and stop. So, we kind of bump along with the leg, allowing the leg from the knee down to be loose until we want to stop the horse.

TV: If aligned properly the inner thigh can work like the brakes on a bike, as a regulating half halting tool. Compressing inwards has a slowing affect. It also puts tone into our hip to slow our seat. A firmer closing of the thigh can be used to stop the horse. If we

don't have a forward going horse, our thigh should be more neutral. In any case the thigh should not grip to keep us on the horse.

The lower leg, our calf and heel, is our gas pedal. For me the lower leg should not be squeezing or pressing or pushing continually, as that kind of stops a lazy horse from going. If we squeeze harder our hips get tight and stop following the horse and then the horse doesn't want to go. Make sure not to grip with the lower legs.

There are zillions of textures of aids. Any time our horse doesn't respond to a light to medium use of the leg, we should give an attention getting kick. One good way to kick is to pull the whole leg off and slap it down with the side of the calf quickly and repetively. Then come back with a light leg aid.

The heel can rub the horse, especially in lateral movement. Sometime it's a press for a little longer or a little less. What matters is that the horse responds appropriately and with a "yes."

What leg position faults do you see most?

DS: I see a lot of people riding with their leg very far forward.

TV: The lack of proper alignment and rotation. Many riders have their legs in front of them and/or have too much weight in their feet, pushing the stirrup in front of them. We should just be meeting the stirrup with the foot. When we push hard downwards with the foot into the stirrup, typically the heel goes forward toward the horse's front legs, and the downward force into the stirrup pushes the seat upwards. We get more tension in our hip and tend to be popping off the saddle rather than getting deeper into it.

I'm not a proponent of mega heel down, but the heel down should come from ankle flexion rather than from pushing excessive weight into the heels.



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CHOKER

It's All in the Word

By Michelle Beko, DVM

Choke, a relatively common occurrence, is a blocked esophagus, the tube that connects the horse's mouth to his stomach. It lies next to the trachea (aka windpipe) that connects the nasal passageways to the lungs. Unlike people, it is rare for the obstruction in the esophagus to protrude into the adjacent trachea and impair the horse's ability to breathe. He can, however, get aspiration pneumonia if he inhales feed from his nasal passageways into his lungs.

Fortunately, unlike young humans, horses are not inclined to ingest inedible things like marbles. Pelleted feeds are the most common thing for them to choke on, but I've seen many cases where horses choked on hay or treats such as apples or carrots.

If you are present when your horse initially chokes, you will see an abrupt onset of coughing and gagging with feed and saliva coming out of the nose or mouth. Most horses are a bit distressed or even panicky at first. If you arrive after the fact, you will usually find your horse somewhat depressed with dried feed in his nostrils or, if he tries to eat, fresh feed coming out of his nose.

If you think your horse might be choked, prevent him from accessing more feed and call your veterinarian. Some cases will resolve before your vet gets there. If that hasn't happened, your vet will likely sedate your horse. That calms him and relaxes the muscles in the esophageal wall. It also causes your horse to lower his head, allowing some of the feed to drip out and reducing the chance that some will be inhaled. Most vets will then pass a nasogastric (stomach) tube from the horse's nostril into the esophagus to the obstruction. They can then gently flush water through the tube to relieve the blockage.

It often takes a lot of time and flushing to resolve a case of choke. When the tube can finally be advanced into the horse's stomach and we can pump some water in without it coming out his nose, we know the blockage is gone. Many years ago, I was called out to see a pony that I had not met before. The owner was quite impatient and wanted me to solve the pony's problem quickly. In spite of my explanations that I had to be gentle or I could rupture his esophagus, and that we would know that he was better when I could get the stomach tube all the way into his



stomach, she insisted, "Go on and push it on in." Fortunately, I was able to eliminate her pony's choke, even if I was way too slow in her view.

If your veterinarian is unable to resolve your horse's choke, there are two options. First, leave the horse in a stall or pen with water but no food overnight. Many will be better in the morning. The other option is to send the horse to a referral center (like University of California Davis) where they can potentially put the horse under general anesthesia and using an endoscope and long, narrow forceps, remove the blockage.

The majority of horses who have an episode of choke recover uneventfully. If I suspect that a patient who was choked might have aspirated some feed, I will put them on antibiotics. Otherwise, I advise owners to watch the horse carefully for signs of aspiration pneumonia such as a fever or coughing.

You can minimize your horse's risk of choke by breaking treats such as carrots or apples into smaller pieces and avoiding feeding things like watermelon rinds or corn husks that they are unlikely to be able to chew. Beet pulp should be mixed with water. If you have a greedy eater, any pelleted feeds should be given in a wide pan so the horse can't grab a massive amount in one mouthful. And if your horse does choke, know that he will likely be okay. 🐾



Michelle Beko, D.V.M.

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Preparing Hooves for Drought

By Mary Taft-McPhee

This summer the consequences of rock-hard hooves meeting up with unyielding ground will be worsened by drought. The combination may impact your horse's soundness and require changes in shoeing and stable management practices.

Let's start with the good news. Dry conditions mean almost no issues with thrush, white line disease, scratches and other bacterial infections that thrive in moist environments. Feet that are soft and prone to distortion of the hoof capsule during rainy season tighten back up and become stronger with less moisture, encouraging healthy upright growth and the chance for some horses to go barefoot.

Now the bad news. An extreme loss of moisture in hooves can cause cells to tighten up and leave tiny gaps between their walls that can make them brittle and prone to chipping and fracture. Unfortunately, because summer is show season, many horses are getting worked and bathed more often than usual. Consequently, their hooves may go from bone dry to soaking wet and back again within a couple of hours. This rapid change in moisture level causes them to swell and contract. In turn the clinches (the folded over parts of nails on the outside of the hoof wall) may rise and shoes more likely to come off.



Cracks and raised clinches result from the dryness of this hoof.

Photo: Mary Taft-McPhee

On harder ground horses with thin soles may need pads or packing materials in their existing pads. Because of greater abrasion from dry surfaces and increased work, horses who can go barefoot in the winter may need to transition to shoes. Your farrier may want to leave more sole on the foot than usual to protect it from the harder ground. However, if the sole is left unexfoliated for too long, it may start to become weight bearing, which can lead to soreness.

As everything dries out it becomes harder to trim and shape hooves. To address this, some farriers will use a small blowtorch to soften hooves before trimming or a chisel to chip away sole that is too hard to cut with their hoof knife.

You can fight back against these issues by being mindful not only of the dry environment but of when your horse's feet are going from wet to dry. In general, horses who are kept in stalls will have more moisture in their feet from soiled bedding than those who are on full turnout. You might consider sponging them down after light work rather than giving a full bath, both to conserve water and to keep their feet from becoming too saturated.

For horses on pasture, consider permitting the water trough to overflow so as to ensure that hooves are in regular contact with moisture as they stand to drink.

Get feedback from your farrier about the horse's environment, hoof quality and your efforts.

You can also set your horse up for success in advance of the dry season by making sure its hooves are receiving the necessary nutrients to be strong and resilient. If you have concerns about hoof quality, consider adding biotin to the diet or checking for selenium deficiency, which can cause dry, cracked hooves. Do not over-supplement without testing as selenium can be highly toxic. As with all supplements, read the ingredients carefully and consider all sources in their diet in combination. Because hoof growth moves down from the coronary band at an average rate of 1/4 to 3/8 inch per month, expect a good six months to a year before the nutritional change has an impact on hoof strength and quality.

In addition to its impact on hooves and soles, drought greatly increases the risk of fire. If your farrier is working at the forge and anvil, they will want to water down the ground near their truck to reduce the risk of a spark catching as metal scale or debris drops away from the shoe. Even more so than usual, your farrier will appreciate a clean workspace free of hay or shavings. Let's keep ourselves and our horses safe this summer. 🐾

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