

Sonoma County

# *Horse Journal*

Volume 7 • Issue 4  
Fall 2011



*Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council | Home of the Equus Awards*



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**Sonoma County****Horse Journal**

Volume 7 • Issue 4 • Fall 2011

*Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council – Home of the Equus Awards***Inside this Issue**

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**Cover Photo: Marcie Lewis**

Aries, an eleven year old gelding gathered from the Twin Peaks Herd Management Area in Northern California, embodies the pride and spirit of the North American Mustang. Aries currently resides at Windhorse Ranch, and is the subject of Kathryn Barrett's To the Heart of a Mustang Film Project. Read more about Aries, and other North American Mustangs in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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## A Message from the President

Howdy!

Your recently revitalized Sonoma County Horse Council is committed to promoting the health and well being of horses and the horse industry in Sonoma County, and to being an effective voice for all aspects of our \$300 million a year horse community. We cannot, however, do it alone. WE NEED VOLUNTEERS. In addition to the newly-formed Horse Cabinet, where representatives from all horse-related clubs and associations in the County are welcome, your Horse Council has formed the following standing committees:

- Disaster Response
- Fairgrounds Relations
- Government Relations
- Events
- PR and Communications
- Finance and Fundraising
- Membership

If you have the time, talent, and commitment to help, and have an interest in serving on any of these committees, please contact me, using the contact form on our website ([www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org)).

Let me take a few words here to support a spectacular local event. I hope to see you at Dressage in the Wine Country which will take place on Saturday, September 17th at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa. The Sonoma Chapter of the California Dressage Society organizes this event, and donates all the proceeds to local non-profit organizations. Please consider attending to see great equine demonstrations, enjoy wine tasting, and participate in the equestrian trade fair. For tickets, visit [www.winecountrydressage.org](http://www.winecountrydressage.org) or call 707-769-1703.



Finally...It's that time of year again! Please take a moment to nominate your favorite equestrian or horse for the Sonoma County Horse Council Equus Awards. If you know an individual who has dedicated themselves to advancing the health and well being of our equine friends, or the horse community, or supported the success of a particular discipline in Sonoma County, please take a moment to ensure that they get the recognition they deserve. We are also looking for that special horse that has contributed as well. You can find a nomination form in this issue of the Horse Journal or on our website. This year's nomination deadline is October 21.

Happy Trails,

Ron Malone, President  
The Sonoma County Horse Council



### It's time...

Know a deserving horse or rider? Nominate him or her for an Equus Award! Each year the Sonoma County Horse Council honors seven local equestrians and one special horse with induction into the Equus Hall of Fame. YOU can decide who wins. Submit your nomination today by filling out the inserted nomination form or visiting our website at [www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).

Deadline October 21, 2011

## A Message from the Editor

Greetings to our Sonoma County Horse Journal Readers.

When the Horse Journal crew puts together an issue, we generally try to have a theme. For example, in the past we have had issues focused on Dressage, gaited horses, and veterinary topics. The theme is usually "loose," meaning that we have four to five articles dedicated to the theme, with the rest of the pieces representing more general topics of interest for a wide Sonoma County audience. This issue is a little different.

When I circulated a request for pieces on Mustangs, I was immediately overwhelmed at the passionate response. I received more than a dozen pages worth of material, and couldn't publish everything that I wanted to include. This clearly reflects an interest and passion we hold in this community.

So, in this issue, you'll find a little more than you usually find on our "theme." I hope you find the articles of interest. Of course, you also find the broader articles, and usual "suspects" that you have come to expect. Enjoy. And send me a story; I would love to read about you.

Thank you for supporting the Sonoma County Horse Journal.

JoDean Nicolette  
Editor-in-Chief





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## Your Horse Council at Work

# The Horse Cabinet Update

At the last Horse Cabinet meeting, Dr Ted Stashak made a knowledgeable and well-researched, as well as interesting, presentation on the EHV-1 virus outbreak. With a resource such as Dr Stashak on the Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) Board, we can all feel more confident in addressing ongoing and urgent veterinary issues. We'll update you on the emerging Sonoma County cases as information comes in. During the rest of the meeting, we discussed several topics including an emergency evacuation plan for horses, use of the Sonoma County Fairgrounds by equestrians, and the importance of membership to the Sonoma County Horse Council, including how increased membership will improve the effectiveness of the Horse Cabinet. The Steering Committee met subsequently and made recommendations to the Sonoma County Horse Council Board with the following results:

An Emergency Evacuation Committee (EEC) will be formed and will be a standing committee of the SCHC. The EEC will work with Sonoma County Animal Care and Control to form an organized evacuation plan in case of an emergency. The plan will include transport, and horse stabling in certain situations.

A Sonoma County Fairground relationship committee is being formed and Bob Adams (Equus Hall of Fame-2011) will be the chairperson. The goal of the fairground committee is to work with the Sonoma County Fairgrounds to make them more available for the local equestrian community. Potential uses include horse shows, demonstrations, and clinics. Part of this collaboration will involve us, as local equestrians, collaborating with the fairgrounds leadership on their needs, whether they be environmental, legislative, or other. Our hope is that the SCHC can make some arrangement in which the Sonoma County Fairgrounds will welcome more equestrian events, and that the local equestrian community can better utilize an existing local facility.

The SCHC will focus on more clubs joining the Horse Cabinet. This will include reaching out to club leadership and sending representatives to meetings. As more clubs join, this will bring more members to the SCHC which will mean that it can more effectively represent the combined equestrian community, and exercise a more potent political voice in county affairs. More members will also mean that we will have more volunteers to do the work that will directly benefit all equestrians in Sonoma County.

Contributed by Tony Benedetti,  
Board of Directors, Sonoma County Horse Council



Tony and Exchange on the Bandit Springs 100 mile ride

The next Horse Cabinet meeting is September 14th at the Sonoma County Riding and Driving Club. At that meeting we'll update you on our progress, and hear more about what local equestrians want and need. Please come join us to learn more about what the Horse Cabinet is working on. We'd love to see you there. Check out our website ([www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](http://www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org)) for additional dates and events.



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# CEPEC Update: A Windfall for Trainers and Boarding Stables

Written by Wanda Smith, CEPEC Executive Director



The California Equestrian Park and Event Center (CEPEC) is an Olympic quality, multi-discipline equestrian facility being largely created in Sonoma County by professionals with ties to the equestrian community. This new endeavor will provide state-of-the-art facilities and services for the public, equestrians, and horses, and is anticipated to generate between \$65 and \$250 million annually for the county.

CEPEC will also be a windfall for Sonoma County's 140 trainers and 100 boarding stables, currently providing services for the county's 22,000 horses and 30,000 equestrians.

Major equestrian centers (like the Kentucky Horse Park, the Palm Beach Equestrian Center, and South Point in Las Vegas) have traditionally attracted riders, spectators, visitors, and residents interested in an equestrian life style. These centers, in turn, increase business for local horse trainers and boarding stables in obvious, but also not so obvious, ways.

The world class facility planned for CEPEC will bring to Sonoma County national and international equine events and shows such as the Snaffle Bit Futurity, World Equestrian Games, Rolex Three Day Event, and the Equestrian Olympics. When such events occur at CEPEC, local businesses will benefit in many ways. One less

obvious source of revenue will be horse boarding. Because CEPEC will not be a general boarding facility, event participants will need local stables for short or long term horse housing. Participants may arrive days before an event at CEPEC, or may be on a circuit requiring a lay over between shows at different West Coast locations. Owners and riders who bring horses to Sonoma County will be referred by CEPEC to local stables for accommodations. Local accommodations will allow visitors to have a base from which to visit the county's twenty-three parks with horse trails for conditioning, as well as access to practice at local stable arenas with the assistance of local trainers.

Sonoma County trainers will also benefit from the equestrians that CEPEC will draw. Sonoma County's many national and international champion riders and horses attest to the quality of our trainers. CEPEC will become a showcase for our trainers and their current and future champions. The CEPEC administration will refer event participants and visitors to local experts in every discipline for guidance and support. Trainers will also be able to "haul in" to the CEPEC facilities year around for practice, conditioning, and training. CEPEC's planned sixteen arenas, both covered and open, will provide optimal riding conditions and footing for different disciplines including Dressage, Show Jumping, Eventing, Cutting, Reining, Barrel Racing, Driving, and Polo. Existing show facilities in the county will continue to be an important resource for smaller shows and to host shows unable to be accommodated by CEPEC. In addition, existing show facilities can be utilized to qualify riders for national and international level events hosted by CEPEC.

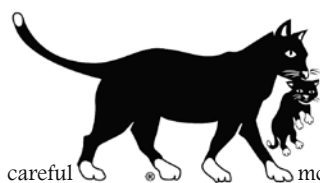
The CEPEC vision continues to move closer to a reality, and is gathering momentum. In the last several months, CEPEC has received a generous donation for preliminary development activities, participated in a pre-permit review with the Sonoma County Permit and Resource Management Department (PRMD), and advanced to the next stage of land easement acquisition with the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District. Through many community outreach activities in the last year, CEPEC is gaining increasing support and confidence from the local equestrian and business communities.

For additional information, visit the CEPEC web site at: [www.cepec.us](http://www.cepec.us).



Wanda is a competitive Cutting horse rider, author of *Horses of the Wine Country*, and an entrepreneur. She has a Masters Degree in Engineering from Stanford University and over forty years experience in product and project design, research, and management. Her background includes creating research centers around the world and founding an international research & development consulting company. Wanda has also served on several boards including the San Jose Medical Research Foundation, Silicon Valley Ergonomics Institute, Sweetwater Springs Water District (as a publicly elected official), Occidental Equestriennes, Vintage Cutting Horse Association, and CEPEC.

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## Sonoma County Events

Giant Steps Charity Classic Horse Show Is a Winner Contributed by Giant Steps Staff*Bridget and Scarlet*

Ten year old Bridget was born with a brain lesion that has resulted in severe cognitive, developmental, and physical delays. Her muscle tone can be very low, which affects her posture and lower body strength. Through riding at Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center, Bridget has improved her muscle strength and balance, and she regularly performs exercises that she resists in a traditional clinical setting, such as sit-ups and leg presses. Her physical therapist reports that she has become a stronger girl and continues to meet progressively more difficult goals thanks, in no small part, to her weekly therapeutic riding lessons.

August 3-7, Bridget and her fellow students received a "leg up" from some elite equestrians who came together for the second annual Giant Steps Charity Classic, a multi-day horse show that raised critical funds for Giant Steps programs. The Charity Classic highlighted California's finest professional and amateur equestrians who competed in multiple events at Sonoma Horse Park, a newly completed world class facility located off Lakeville Highway in Petaluma.

Over the course of the five-day show, horses and riders of all ages and levels competed in numerous events, each afternoon concluding with a marquee class to challenge the best of best. On Saturday evening, thirty-two riders competed in the Grand Prix Show Jumping competition that consisted of sixteen five-foot jumping obstacles. The winner, former Olympian Peter Breakwell, took home the top prize for the \$24,999 EcoVerde Grand Prix after completing the technical course without faults and in the fastest time. Additional sponsors of the Charity Classic included Wilson-Fleming Estate Winery, Eden Valley Stables, Gregory Motorsports, Merry Edwards Wines, Wells Fargo Private Bank, Goode Rider, and Revolution Moto.

But the Grand Prix was not the only highlight of Saturday evening. Giant Steps riders impressed the crowd with a heart-warming demonstration of what they have accomplished with their equine partners. Among the presenters was none other than Bridget. While she used to be overwhelmed by social situations due to her disability, riding has helped her to build her confidence—so much so that she was able to perform a series of vaulting exercises in

front of the crowd of 375 guests. She stole the show. Her mom consistently marvels that "riding horses at Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center has given Bridget newfound confidence that she never before dreamed possible."

The Charity Classic is the brain child of Sonoma Horse Park owner, Ashley Herman-Griffin. "As a life-long rider, I have always felt the physical and emotional benefits of riding and being with horses. Giant Steps takes it to a whole new level, greatly improving the lives of hundreds of children and adults living with disabilities. It is an honor to serve as the annual host of the Giant Steps Charity Classic." Herman-Griffin has been so impressed with what Giant Steps accomplishes, in fact, that she has joined the Board of Directors.

*Dinner attendees enjoyed the spectacular Grand Prix Show Jumping*

To learn more about Giant Steps, to get involved, or to donate, please visit [www.giantstepsriding.org](http://www.giantstepsriding.org). The Center also gratefully accepts donations of tack. We hope you will join us for the **Third Annual Giant Steps Charity Classic August 1-5, 2012!**

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## Sonoma County Events

### The Santa Rosa Cattle Drive

Written by Valerie Kasnick

Santa Rosa went back to its rural roots on Sunday, August 7, with a real, old fashioned cattle drive! The old courthouse square was all abuzz with excitement as thousands of locals arrived to watch a herd of "doggies" being driven from a corral (donated and set up by Bob Giannecchini of Wine Country Ranch Equipment) down Fourth Street, all the way to the fairgrounds. The route was about two miles total.



*Saralee Kunde was spotted among the wranglers*

A team of professional wranglers assisted by some celebrity guest wranglers, and dozens of local riders, drove more than forty cattle through the city's downtown to the Sonoma County Fairgrounds.

The cattle, mostly Texas longhorns, are trained for cattle drives, but that didn't deter from the excitement generated by the name-sake appendages, and the potential for a "real life" stampede! Fortunately the obedient bovines were uneventfully herded to the fairgrounds as part of a reenactment of the area's rich agricultural history. Whistles and "yeehaws" could be heard from the many animated spectators gathered along the street's edge.

Many little cowgirls and cowboys got a taste of the Wild West and their western attire added to the authentic look of the activity. Santa Rosa firefighters dished up 600 wrangler breakfasts to the hungry onlookers, and everyone attending the event was offered a souvenir red bandana by a team from the fair.

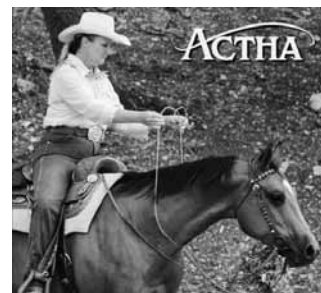
The event commemorated both "Farmer's Day," and the Sonoma County Fair's 75th Diamond Jubilee Anniversary, and was put on by Rosser Cattle Company owned by eighty-three year old Cotton Rosser, from Marysville. Cotton reported from atop his trusty steed, Buster, that he was very pleased with such a great turnout, but not surprised, given Sonoma County's rich history of ranching and agriculture.



## Vote for a Local Cowgirl!

### America's Favorite Trail Horse Competition Highlights SoCo Equestrian

Don't forget to watch local cowgirl and accomplished equestrian Tammi Bernd, with her Quarter Horse Gigi (Sandman's Dream Date), this fall in American Competitive Trail Horse Association's (ACTHA) new thirteen week reality television show "America's Favorite Trail Horse." The series premieres Tuesday, September 13 on DISH Network (HRTV Channel),



or alternatively on ATT Uverse, or livestreamed by HRTV's website. Filmed at the gorgeous Franklin Family Ranch in Blanco, Tx, each episode will be shown three times, at 5pm and 8pm each Tuesday, and then once again the following Sunday at 7am. The first episode will review the selection process and provide an overview of the competition (see summer 2011 Horse Journal for details). One hundred horses and riders were chosen to compete, selected from a nationwide field of a thousand.



*Tammi and Gigi enjoying a quiet moment*

Each episode will highlight ten horses and viewers may vote on their favorite horse each week. Episode twelve will showcase the top ten horses, and viewers will vote for first, second, and third place winners. Vote during the show, or visit [www.ACTHA.tv](http://www.ACTHA.tv) to vote throughout the week of each episode (until the next ten horses are featured). Episode thirteen will announce the winners as well as show clippings of trail horses around the country. Watch for Tammi and Gigi (#366) in episode nine on November 8, and cast your vote for them! Regardless of the outcome, Tammi reports they had a great time and Gigi performed admirably during the entire three-day competition. Gigi was the only horse out of the 100 at the competition to perform her Freestyle Program using just a strand of baling string around her neck to navigate through her obstacles (Gigi=Good Girl!). Feel free to check out Tammi (Tammi Bernd) and Gigi (Gigi #366 AFTH Finalist) on Facebook for more information and photos.

ACTHA's mission is to provide an enjoyable venue showcasing the wonderful attributes of the great American trail horse, granting them the recognition they so richly deserve. Their slogan is "Not Just A Trail Horse Anymore!"





Featured Article

# To the Heart of a Mustang

Written by Joan Rasmussen, Editor at Large



Photo: Marcie Lewis

Shadow owned by Christina Gri

**"I want to take you on an adventure  
to the heart of a Mustang...  
I want to bring a Mustang into your home..."**

Katie Barrett is passionate about Mustangs. Her project, *To the Heart of a Mustang*, is following a Mustang's journey from feral horse at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) holding area to trained riding horse.

Katie inherited her love of horses from her grandmother, who grew up on a ranch in Northern California, and got her first horse, a Morgan, at age thirteen. Her interest shifted to Mustangs in 2004, when an amendment was passed allowing some Mustangs to be auctioned rather than adopted. The Mustang adoption program was started in 1971 ("The Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act of 1971"), and designed to protect wild horses and burros. It allowed for management and adoption of captured horses and burros. Under that law and some later revisions, the BLM screened prospective adopters and retained ownership of the horses for a year following adoption.

The 2004 Wild Horse and Burro Sale-Authority Law modified the law to allow the sale of certain "excess" horses without the one year period. "Excess animals" are defined as animals more than ten years old and animals that had been offered unsuccessfully for adoption at least three times. While it is illegal to intentionally buy the

animals for slaughter, the immediate transfer of ownership leaves that option as a possibility as there is no follow-up as to the fate of the horse after the sale takes place.

Intrigued by what she learned, Katie went to Litchfield-Eagle Lake near Susanville to film the Mustangs. One particular horse that showed up on her video triggered a connection, and in 2005 she drove through a blizzard to pick up the four year old, who she named Rowdy Yates. This was the start of her Mustang journey. The training process was trial and error. She found that the Mustangs have no baggage—they are pure horse and survival instinct. Handling a Mustang requires that you speak and act "horse." Experienced horseman can gentle these horses quickly because they know how to read them and respond correctly.

Katie's training with Rowdy was successful and eventually he was sold to someone who uses him for endurance and jumping. For a while, Katie immersed herself in pursuing her MBA and focusing on her Friesian-Lipizzan mix.

Early in 2010, she got wind of the systematic removal of Mustangs, mostly from cattle ranches on grazing land. Horses are restricted to the Herd Management Areas (HMAs) set aside in 1971, whereas cattle can go anywhere. There are around five million cattle (also sheep) grazing on public land, and less than 30,000 Mustangs in the wild, but the argument is that the horses are degrading the range. Another opponent to the wild horses is the energy industry—natural gas & oil, and also alternative energy interests. Geothermal wells require a lot of water, which comes from wells drilled into the aquifer, draining the springs that horses and wildlife rely on, so the horses are moved on as "nuisances to water." Many more of the Mustangs were ending up in the holding areas—currently it is believed that there are slightly more horses in the holding areas than are roaming free, although counts of feral horses are generally inaccurate. Horses at the holding areas who are not adopted are at risk of being classified as "excess" and subject to sale—and potentially ending up on the dangerous journey to slaughterhouses south or north of the border.

There are plenty of folks fighting to change the laws governing the herds to preserve the rights of the horses, but Katie's mission is to encourage adoption of the horses by demonstrating that a person with average skills can turn these wild horses into partners. Her chosen vehicle to deliver the message is to do a film following one horse and horseman on the journey.

This led to a trip to the Litchfield BLM corrals following a roundup of horses from the Twin Peaks HMA. A thousand of the 1,700 horses on the HMA were rounded up. Katie found herself looking at two long rows of pens, with the horses broken out by sex and age.





*Dakota warmed to Katie right away*

She took over 500 photos as part of this “scouting mission” to find a horse at least five years old for her project. The horses had to be observed from a distance, but she felt a connection with a red roan stallion—who, as it turns out, was designated as part of a group of horses to be released and therefore was not available. Over the next few months, though, fate intervened and in January, Katie found that the horse was to be gelded and would be available after all. As an eleven year old, he fell into the “excess” category, and Katie was able to buy him rather than adopt him. There were still a few obstacles to overcome, but on Friday, May 13, the red roan now known as “Aries” (see cover) came home to Windhorse Ranch in Sebastopol (see related article p. 10). He was accompanied by little Dakota, a two year old bay that Katie obtained to keep Aries company. Dakota is a BLM Halter Project horse, which means that Katie is volunteering to gentle him for the BLM in order to make him more adoptable.

Katie is chronicling her journey with both horses on her website, [www.heartofamustang.com](http://www.heartofamustang.com), and her blog, [heartofamustang.wordpress.com](http://heartofamustang.wordpress.com). Through words, photos, and videos she lets viewers experience the progress, breakthroughs and often the frustrations that are typical of this type of endeavor.

I visited Katie in mid-June, after she had been working with Aries and Dakota about a month. The horses were in adjacent pens. Most of the work had been in building a relationship with the horses and starting to gain their trust and respect. Respect first, then friendship! It's a challenge just to get close to feral horses, and Katie uses a bamboo pole and training stick to establish contact. The horses are more accepting of the inanimate objects, and the distance helps to allow the person to touch the horses safely and without invading their space.

At this first visit, Aries was still wary and keeping his distance. Dakota was more engaging and curious. Several factors come

into play—Dakota was younger and raised largely in captivity, while Aries had mostly been roaming wild as a stud. Still, the horses' individual personalities have at least much to do with how they adapt to domestication as does their background. Each horse is different, and that means that each experience with a Mustang will be different.

A month later I came back, and the progress was remarkable. Although still not exactly cuddly, Aries was facing Katie consistently and showing enough curiosity to reach out and sniff her hand. Seems like a minor thing to most horse owners, but a huge step for a wild horse. He has shown some “draw” and connectedness, although he has also shown some signs of aggression such as headshaking. Figuring out how to deal with the horses requires constant adjustments in the approach—if one tactic doesn't work, try something else. It's the give-and-take that happens in all successful relationships.

And what's in it for the person who goes through the process and ends up with a “broke” Mustang? Like other horses, some Mustangs



*Photo: Marcie Lewis*

*Older and wilder, Aries exhibits more caution with his new friend*

are good, some are bad, and some are mediocre. They do represent a piece of American history and there is certainly a romantic appeal. The new adopter can feel good about having perhaps saved a life, especially in the case of an “excess” horse. From a more practical standpoint, due to natural selection, these horses tend to have good feet, be easy keepers, and have good minds—no “baggage.” And the person who takes on this experience is likely to find that this is the ultimate learning experience in how to interact with horses.

The Mustang is, depending on your point of view, a symbol of the wild and free American West, or a nuisance, competing with livestock ranchers and energy producers for valuable natural resources. At the base, though, the North American Mustang is an animal fighting for survival. Katie Barrett is doing her best to see that these creatures get their best chance at a good life.

For more information about Katie and Aries, visit [www.heartofamustang.com](http://www.heartofamustang.com). For more information about wild horses and burros, visit [www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov](http://www.wildhorseandburro.blm.gov). If you'd like to get involved in the legislation and management of wild horses and burros, visit [www.thecloudfoundation.org](http://www.thecloudfoundation.org).

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## Readers Write

# Mustangs Are My Teachers

Written by Kathy Sparling

As I sit in the Reno Livestock Events Center this weekend watching eight wild horses in the taming process, I feel the same emotions I always feel when I watch a competent horseman in the process of gentling a Mustang. Observing how the horse moves from fear to curiosity, from needing to take flight to being completely drawn to the horseman, is a never ending source of fascination for me.



*Kathy and Osha: a special bond*

People often ask me why I have such an affinity for the North American Mustang. What draws me? I've tried over the years to answer this question, but words don't come readily from a place very deep in my heart. This article is my attempt to convey what fuels my never ending fascination. Mustangs are the purest distillation of horse, speaking the purest form of horse language, and living out the essence of what it means to be a horse. And because of this, Mustangs are my greatest teachers of horsemanship.

Over the last decade, the Mustang has taken its place front and center in my world. My first trip to Palomino Valley, the national Wild Horse and Burro Center, took my breath away. Observing formerly wild and free roaming horses and burros gathered in large holding pens is something all horse lovers should experience at some point in time, creating a myriad of conflicting emotions that run from joy to great sadness. The variety in color and form is astonishing. Imagining the vastness of the intermountain West and picturing these horses living out their natural lives in the harsh and sparse environment, with the herd dynamics that are as basic to Mustang survival as food and water, is a lot to get your head around. Horse owners see bits of herd dynamics taking place in a pasture of domestic horses, but this does not approach the unadulterated essence of horse in action.

A Mustang's survival depends on being a herd member, and this shapes their behavior. Since we humans are a predator in the eyes of the Mustang, the concept that we can overcome the prey animal's fear of us is the first fascinating facet of the gentling process. How is it that we humans can convince the horse that we are not going to eat them, that we are partners, and that we can become a source of comfort and safety for them?

The act of gentling a Mustang is a slowly evolving dance. It is a courtship of sorts, of approach and retreat, of drive and draw, a building of trust and acceptance, building a bond that sometimes takes more patience than one can imagine possible. I've had Mustangs who allowed me to put a halter on the first attempt, on the first day at our ranch. Others have taken months of patient persistence. Always, though, once the Mustang decides to fully trust you, everything changes; suddenly the possibilities of that sought after partnership are realized.

Each and every Mustang presents a unique puzzle to be solved. With



*Enjoying Osha and Carol Spears' Molly at the beach*

some, it is possible to present your hand to be sniffed and then soon after to touch a forehead, a shoulder, the neck, or even the hindquarters. Satisfying a persistent itch can be the key to many a Mustang's heart! Other Mustangs will not let you within the length of a bamboo pole, which is a tool we often use to extend our reach. With these Mustangs a lot of undemanding time is spent habituating them to our presence. Eventually they learn that we will not harm them, and curiosity takes the place of fear. Gentling can then begin.

We start at the beginning. Handlers will force a halter on a Mustang in the loading chutes in order to "help" an adopter, but we avoid this option. Our gentling philosophy requires that the Mustangs choose, rather than submit. This might take longer, but I'd rather have a horse that I know has chosen to be with me, than one who has been forced. That doesn't mean we don't use tools such as lariats and poles, but we use our best judgment and a pressure/release method to reward the slightest try.

Because every horse is unique, the observant gentler must watch the Mustang closely to find what will work with that horse. One Halter Project filly would let me touch her everywhere, including her legs and feet, but would not allow a halter anywhere near her face. We used a lariat to help her get used to the idea of things we would ask for once we had a halter on. Soon we were leading her with the neck rope, and shortly thereafter the halter became a non-issue. You become a lateral thinker with these horses because being direct and goal-oriented is very predator-like, and can create a lot of brace.

Each Mustang I've gentled has been a valued teacher. The hours I've spent gentling have honed my observational skills and my understanding of horse nature, especially given the pure "horseness" of the Mustang. My goal is for each Mustang to become a trusting partner with no brace, but with incredible lightness, and a willingness to follow my lead, just as she would with the herd leader in the wild. As long as Mustangs are being gathered, I intend to offer as many as possible the best possible life in captivity. In return, I humbly learn horsemanship from the best teachers in the world.

*Kathy Sparling owns and operates Windhorse Ranch in Sebastopol, Ca, and gentles Mustang Halter Project horses as a volunteer for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). The ranch meets BLM requirements for Mustangs, and has several trainers who can assist the new Mustang adopter with the gentling process. Visit [www.windhorseranch.net](http://www.windhorseranch.net) for more information and to contact them.*



*A Horseman's View*

Column editor Art Grunig

## Participate with Your Horse

Let the horse participate.

I often see people begging their horses to do what they want them to do, trying to drag them around like blocks of wood, or trying to inject an instant, dominating type of control. Often two or all three of these are done at once. When we beg a horse to do something we are holding the idea of what we want the horse to do. However we are also holding the idea that the horse will not do it. Being sweet to the horse and offering it bribes (pats and treats) are often involved. It sometimes works and it sometimes does not. Holding an idea of what we want, simultaneously holding the idea that the horse will not do it, and bringing in the subject of treats can be confusing to horses. When a horse is given several options it normally chooses the ones it likes the best, not necessarily the one we have in mind.

If we focus on one thought, and ask one thing, the horse can also focus on it, get into it, and do it. The horse still requires time to read the situation, organize its response, and execute the response. Often people are confused about the difference between holding an idea and begging. Both give the horse time to read and react, but holding one idea presents only one option, and begging presents at least two. If we do not give the horse response time we will be taking the horse over and either spanking it or dragging it around. This is disrespectful. It makes it hard for the horse to take care of itself. It takes away its coordination, sense of self, composure, and feeling that it's part of what you are doing. Instead of participating together, you and your project are happening to the horse. It is like having something fall on you. In this situation the horse cannot take care of itself, nor can it bring what it has to offer to the project, nor can it take care of you.

Getting the horse to participate with you as a team mate means holding only one idea, setting up the situation so that only that one thing can happen, encouraging/motivating the horse just enough that it wants to act, and letting the horse assess, process, understand, organize itself, and execute the action. This can take anywhere from three seconds to a few minutes, depending on the complexity of the situation. Asking a horse to leave a corner of the arena should not take more than a few seconds. The horse was born knowing how to leave a spot of earth when asked to. Crossing a running stream, loading into a trailer, working cattle, or negotiating an obstacle course all can take considerably more time.

Pressure that is discipline rather than encouragement should be reserved for the times a horse intentionally chooses not to cooperate. Attention needs to be paid to the line between these two situations. Each horse is unique, and exhibits different emotional states at different times, and at different levels of training. We must plan what we want far enough in advance that we can act deliberately, and give the horse time to read it, process it, organize its response, and execute its response in time with us and with the project we wish to do.



*Art trains and performs bodywork*

If the horse is to fully participate with us we must also fully participate with the horse and the project we wish to do with the horse. I often see people back off and wait to see what the horse will do and then when the horse does not do the desired thing they rush in getting after the horse leaving it wondering, "What the \*\*\*\* just happened? I had no idea you wanted something or that something was going on!"

For example, if we want the horse to go around the inside of a square pen we need to be asking the horse to go through the corner well enough in advance that the horse can understand and figure out the corner before it gets there. If we wait until it is stopping in the corner to tell it we do not want it to stop then it is too late. We have just caused the horse to fail in what we wanted. If we then charge in and get after the horse until it leaves the corner we have tricked the horse into getting scolded. Horses do not like this. If we recognize that we have miscommunicated, regroup, and start fresh with our request, the horse will not feel confused or put upon. If we started asking the horse to go through the corner fifty feet ahead of the corner and the horse stopped in the corner anyway, we then want to put a discipline style of pressure on the horse. But even within discipline we want to give the horse the chance to change and participate with us. We want to be looking for the moment when the horse is beginning to change its attitude.

Participation requires your total involvement in what you are doing with your horse. This means total involvement with yourself, the horse, and the project. Anything that you are invested in at that time that is not part of your project will be there anyway cluttering up the results. Anything you leave out that is part of the project will leave a hole in the results of the project. The beauty of doing this well is the beauty of ONE. One project, one team, one clean result.

To contact Art Grunig (*Equus Hall of Fame-2006*) about training or body work, call him at 707-838-9755, or email him at [artgrunig@aol.com](mailto:artgrunig@aol.com). You can also visit his website at [www.artgrunig.com](http://www.artgrunig.com).

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## Vet's Office

Column editor Michelle Beko, DVM

## Diagnosing Lameness

In the last issue we discussed things horse owners can do to prevent lameness. This time let's consider what we do if our efforts fail and our horse does wind up lame. Lameness can be defined as any musculoskeletal problem that causes the horse to bear less weight and/or have a shorter stride on the affected limb. The intensity can vary from subtle to severe and may be caused by a sudden injury or long term wear and tear to any part (joint, bone, tendon, muscle, ligament, hoof) of one or multiple limbs. Treating a lame horse in the best manner depends on an accurate diagnosis. If a few days of rest do not resolve the horse's problem, it is best to have your veterinarian examine your horse.



Dr Beko demonstrates hoof testers as part of the lameness exam

Since our horses can't tell us where it hurts, your veterinarian will first try to localize the lameness. In other words, we want to know which part of which limb is causing the problem. The first step is to take a history. How long has the horse been lame? Is he getting better or worse? Was it a sudden onset or a gradual onset? Were there any known traumatic incidents such as a kick from another horse or a fall? Last trimming or shoeing? Because some types of riding are more prone to causing some types of injuries we will also want to know what the horse's job is.

The next step is a physical examination. Unless the lameness is severe, (eg lameness at the walk) your vet will likely want to watch the horse move at a walk and trot on hard and soft ground, as well as straight and circling. This will identify which leg and, under what circumstances, the horse is lame. It may be more complicated if the horse is lame in more than one limb. Most veterinarians will attempt to quantify the lameness by grading it on a 1-5 scale. A mild lameness that is inconsistent and difficult to see would be considered a grade 1/5 lameness. A horse that would put very little to no weight on the limb would be considered to be a grade 5/5 lame.

Usually, we can't identify which area of the affected limb is injured by watching the horse move. For example, we may watch the horse move and decide that she is moderately lame (grade 2/5 or 3/5) on the right forelimb in a clockwise circle on hard ground but we can not say she is lame in her right shoulder or her right front fetlock. The next step then is to examine the limb. We will palpate (eg feel) the limb looking for heat, pain, or swelling. We will flex the joints looking for pain, stiffness, or loss of normal motion. We will apply pressure to the hoof with hoof testers to detect painful spots. We can stress joints by doing flexion tests. If holding the fetlock of the lame leg in a flexed position for a minute and then trotting the

horse immediately afterwards makes the horse significantly lamer that may implicate that joint.

In many cases your vet may have a tentative diagnosis at this point. But if we are still unable to localize the lameness, we may need to do a nerve or joint block(s). By placing a local anesthetic in specific locations around a nerve or into a joint we can temporarily numb an area so that the horse can not feel it. If we block the foot and the horse's lameness resolves, we learn that the horse's lameness is due to pain in his foot. We normally start low and proceed up the leg. Since the most common anatomical site causing lameness is the foot, we may not need to do many blocks. A nerve block is a low risk, simple procedure that yields a lot of information. Joint blocks pose a low risk of infection.

If at this point we have still not localized the problem we can consider doing other tests such as nuclear scintigraphy or thermography. Scintigraphy is done by injecting a mildly radioactive chemical into the horse's circulation and then scanning him to see which areas have increased levels of uptake. Actively inflamed areas will have increased uptake. This is particularly effective for diagnosing stress fractures in race horses but can also be helpful in many other situations. Similarly, thermography uses a machine to identify inflamed areas by sensing heat. Both are much more effective for acute lamenesses than they are for chronic ones.

Lastly, we sometimes use response to treatment as a diagnostic aid. For example, if a horse has a history and exam consistent with arthritis in her lower hock joints, we could just inject them with some therapeutic medication and see if her gait improved over the next few days.

Once we know where the horse is lame, we want to know what structure is damaged. If we have localized the lameness to the right front foot, for example, we need to know if it is due to the navicular bone, the coffin bone or joint, the collateral ligaments, etc. This is where our (human) doctors start when we walk in the door and let them know our left knee hurts. We usually get this answer by imaging.

Radiographs (x-rays) in horses primarily image bone while ultrasound primarily gives us soft tissue images. Both are readily available and are not excessively expensive. CT scans and MRIs are also available at referral centers and can image bone and soft tissue in greater detail. Both are particularly helpful for imaging soft tissue in the foot where the hoof wall limits the use of ultrasound. MRIs and CTs are both fairly expensive.

The more we know about what is causing our horses to be lame the better we can treat and hopefully resolve the issue. Lastly, I hope you are fortunate enough not to need any of this information!

*Michelle Beko is an equine veterinarian. She has been practicing with Empire Equine in Sonoma County since 1992. When she isn't working she enjoys riding, hiking, traveling, and spending time with her husband and daughter.*



*All Creatures Great and Small*

Column editor Grant Miller, DVM

**Dental Work: Getting to the Point**

As horse owners endure the troubled economy, many of them ask if they really need to have their horse's teeth floated. Veterinarians and lay dentists truly sympathize with client concerns. However, dentistry, like foot care, is essential for a horse's well being: to maintain weight, to perform well, and to be comfortable. The following is a series of commonly asked questions regarding dentistry that may assist horse owners in planning dental care for their horses.

**Why does my horse need his teeth floated?**

Unlike human teeth, horse teeth grow continually throughout life (just like their hair and hooves.) As the teeth grow, the enamel edges sharpen with chewing. These sharp edges can dig into the cheeks and tongue to create painful sores, called oral ulcers. Routinely filing these sharp points down (also known as floating) can keep the horse comfortable, aid in chewing food properly, and enhance performance by removing the painful distractions of oral ulcers.



On the left, properly floated teeth, on the right, an example of a "wave mouth" sharp, unfloated ones (a somewhat common issue among horses that do not receive regular dental care).

**What is the difference between hand floating and powerfloating?**

Hand floating is a more traditional method of filing teeth in which a dental rasp is reciprocated across the tooth edges to reduce points. Powerfloating represents an advancement in this practice by incorporating motorized equipment into the filing process. Powerfloats cut down on the time needed to complete a dental procedure, and often result in less collateral trauma to the mouth. In addition, powerfloating gives the dentist or veterinarian the ability to change the chewing surface of the teeth, which can correct malocclusions such as wave mouth, caudal ramps, step defects, and overgrown incisors (see figures).

**Is my horse awake during floating?**

Yes. Horses generally receive an intravenous sedative before floating which makes them tired and groggy, but allows them to remain awake during the procedure. Sedatives also provide pain control to aid them with any minor discomfort that may occur during the procedure. Horses stand throughout the procedure and their heads and mouth are supported by special equipment that the dentist or veterinarian provide. In many cases, your horse will not even have to leave your property since dentistry is commonly performed on a mobile basis.

**Are there any side effects of the procedure?**

In the vast majority of cases, the sedation and procedure lasts less than forty-five minutes. Most horses go back to eating right away and are back under saddle the next day. In rare instances horses develop jaw soreness, which is relieved by anti-inflammatories or acupuncture. Most jaw soreness lasts for only a couple of days, but may require moistened feed fed at chest level in addition to pain management.

**Do older horses still require dentistry?**

Absolutely! Remember, teeth grow just like hooves and hair. They do not stop growing just because a horse is older. In general, horses first receive dental work between two and four years of age, and then routinely receive dental work for the rest of their lives.

**How often does my horse need dental work?**

Again, every horse is different in their dental needs. In general, veterinarians recommend that horses have their mouths checked at least annually. Most horses will require annual floating, but exceptions can occur in either direction, especially if a horse has dental problems or issues.

**How much does floating cost?**

Costs can vary depending on who is floating your horse's teeth and what needs to be done. For instance, some horses require more sedation than others. Also, some horses may only require a routine floating while other horses may need malocclusions corrected or teeth extracted, which will cost more.

**Who can float my horse's teeth?**

Floating can either be performed by veterinarians or lay dentists. Many veterinarians have professional dentistry training and certification and are able to sedate your horse and perform dentistry without assistance. In the case of lay dentists, some have official dental training and certification and some do not. It is important to inquire about dental training when you are considering either a veterinarian or a lay dentist to work on your horse's teeth. Also, a lay dentist is not able to sedate a horse, diagnose any condition in your horse's mouth, or extract teeth. California State law allows intravenous injections or tooth extractions only by licensed veterinarians or registered veterinary technicians supervised by veterinarians. Only a licensed veterinarian can diagnose. Therefore, should you choose to use a lay dentist, you should inquire about which veterinarian accompanies them.

**Why is it important for a veterinarian to be present during dental procedures?**

It is illegal for a lay person to sedate your horse, extract teeth, or diagnose dental abnormalities. Because it is illegal, lay dentists are not covered by malpractice insurance unless they are working under the direct supervision of a veterinarian. If something goes wrong during the procedure (such as a jaw fracture or an overdose of sedative) the lay dentist does not have the training or the medications needed to respond to the problem. Further, owners have little option for financial recourse if your horse suffers from a mishap during a dental procedure with a lay dentist who is working without the immediate supervision of a veterinarian.

Although the horse community faces challenging financial times, dental care for your horse remains money well spent as it preserves your horse's teeth, keeps them comfortable, and increases the efficiency of their food consumption. It is a good idea to consult your veterinarian before dental work as they possess training and expertise and are required to oversee dental procedures by state law.

*Dr Grant Miller specializes in large animal practice. In addition to being a full time veterinarian, Dr Miller founded the SoCo CHANGE program in 2007, which provides ancillary support services to the SoCo Animal Care and Control Department in cases of equine abuse, neglect, abandonment, and voluntary relinquishment. Dr Miller also trains animal control officers around the state of California on several subjects involving large-animal husbandry, handling, and case investigation.*



Dr Miller performs dentistry





## Spitting Sand—A Learner's Journey Change

Column editor Jessica Boyd



*Calabar...who, me?*

air before crashing down painfully on my butt. The back of my pelvis, to be exact.

Steve was right. Something did need to change, though it turned out to be several things, including me.

What was I going to do now? Steve was right, I couldn't keep getting hurt. Obviously I didn't enjoy the pain and I couldn't afford to miss work, but I also needed to change the relationship and interaction with this horse—my affectionate, smart, challenging, engaging, Off-Track-Thoroughbred (OTTB), Calabar.

We had done lots of work together and had lots of ups and downs along the way. He relaxed when I took control on the ground, but I was nervous in the saddle and he knew it. While he tolerated my inexperience—especially on the trail—he needed me to be the boss when I was riding as well as on the ground. Meanwhile, work got busy, I spent less time with him, and the time I spent was not focused. I let behaviors slide (nipping out or being pushy) that I had never accepted before, just because I was distracted.

While this was going on with Calabar, things were also deteriorating with Lena, my super-confident Paint mare. We were letting someone else ride her while I spent my limited time working with Calabar, not knowing it wasn't going well until the signs were so obvious we wondered how we missed them. Our very forward spotty mare became hesitant and her confidence seemed to flag. Her gaits were off and her back was incredibly sensitive to touch.

Not only did we miss the signs in her, but I missed a possible warning in Calabar's behavior. Up until that time, he'd been a willing partner—curious, willing, and eager to please. I only clued in after we put a stop to the other person riding Lena and, in turn, noticed a change in Calabar. Like a perfect storm, the events seem to roll into each other, creating a downward spiral to disaster. And like the calm after that storm, we are picking up the pieces and rebuilding.

"Something has to change," said Steve. He was watching me hobble painfully through the house after my last fall from a horse—Calabar ("Bar") this time—though Lena had dumped me almost exactly a year earlier. The week before, Calabar had tried to dump me several times and finally succeeded, though I didn't get hurt. This time, he'd caught me unaware, pitched me forward, and taken off—leaving me hovering briefly in the

First of all, I addressed Calabar's behavior on the ground. Being on crutches meant no riding, but it did not limit my ability to correct the attitude. And correct it I did. We did a lot of ground work. We did a lot of work on "This is my space, this is your space," and "No, you can't do that, you need to do this," not to mention, "You can do this," "I want you to try this," and "Look how awesome you are!"

There were treats and lots of praise involved, as well as clear and consistent instructions.

There was also a second opinion.

Peter, our barn owner, agreed to get on Calabar and assess him for me. Was he really a bad horse too screwed up to fix? Should I just give up and move on? The concept left me cold. It's not that I didn't realize the challenge, not by a long shot. I was on crutches with a hairline fracture to my sacrum—and honestly had gotten off pretty easy all things considered. But this horse looked to me first, always. What had I missed? What could I change?

I'm not naïve. I know not every horse can be fixed. But this is a horse who had traveled far with me already, who had proven himself worthy and dependable on the trail—even a yellow-jacket infested trail—and who followed me around the arena like a puppy dog rather than running away when given the chance.

So Peter got on and rode my fire-breathing dragon and when he got off (and had me get on) he told me Calabar wasn't too bad, he just didn't know a lot. That was both a relief and a challenge. I was glad to know he wasn't inherently evil, and knew it was up to me to step up to the plate. It's what we both needed if this was going to work.

So I started lessons. First on a lesson horse of Peter's—just to be sure I could ride a "kid's horse," then on Lena, and finally back on Bar. And my horse was good, really good. He didn't act up, he tried really hard, and he tried to anticipate what I might ask next.

The lessons are going well. My seat is improving and Calabar is not only responding but sometimes anticipating my requests. I have a long way to go before I'm a great rider, but I have a mostly agreeable mount, so that's more than half the battle.

So, yes, things had to change and they did. I had to become a leader and commit to this horse I believe in. Calabar had to go along with it. We had to get Lena out of the situation she was in and regain her trust in us.

Having survived this relatively unscathed, what have I learned? Among other things: stay focused on your horse when you're with him; never underestimate the power of herd dynamics; listen to your horse—they are usually trying hard to tell you something and you don't want to miss it.

What else is out there for the two of us? Who really knows, but I know we can face it together as long as we're both listening and doing our jobs.

*Jessica Boyd lives in Sonoma County and blogs with some regularity about all her horses and their adventures at Spotty Horse News, <http://www.spottyhorse.blogspot.com>. You can reach Jessica and her herd at [spottyhorse@gmail.com](mailto:spottyhorse@gmail.com) or through the Horse Journal at [learner@sonomacounthorsecouncil.org](mailto:learner@sonomacounthorsecouncil.org).*



## Readers Write

## The Kiger Mestano

Written by Pinie Minto



Pinie and Kiger Mestano Ruby at a Mustang demo

Photo: SButterworth

For decades, stories and folklore have surrounded a small band of "Spanish type" Mustangs living near Beatty Butte and Harney County, Oregon. This area of Oregon is so inaccessible that these wild horses had been isolated from humans, and safe from the Mustang runners. They had even achieved a certain mystery. With the passage of the Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act in 1971 all wild herds had to be gathered and placed on designated lands. When this band of horses was finally corralled, a small group of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employees, in particular E Ron Harding and Bill Phillips, realized what special animals stood before them: a centuries old Spanish horse honed and shaped by the country around them. Ancient European history and breeding, combined with decades of "survival of the fittest," had combined to produce an incredibly unique band of mostly dun-colored horses.

To understand the origin of this band, let's talk about the history of California for just a moment. California became a US territory in 1848. In 1851 the "Act to Ascertain and Settle Private Land Claims" was passed. With the passing of this Act Spanish and Mexican Land Grants were dispersed, and a number of the Spanish and Mexican cattlemen and horsemen moved to the Idaho, Oregon, and Nevada Great Basin Area. This historical migration is still seen in the Spanish influence culturally, and in the Vaquero/Buckaroo style of this area. This human migration makes the local folklore describing a Spanish or Mexican man that brought his dun-colored horses out of California to Roaring Springs (a likely origin of this band) seem completely plausible.

The BLM had the foresight and commitment to protect this little band of Spanish Mustangs. By designating two Herd Management Areas (HMAs), Kiger HMA and Riddle Mountain HMA, the BLM insured the preservation of what was now to be known as the Kiger Mustang. With the support of the BLM, private owners organized and created the Kiger Mesteno Association (KMA) for the protection, promotion and registration of domestic bred and adopted horses. The KMA has required DNA on all registered and adopted horses, doing their part to insure an accurate registry. As we selectively breed these horses we can rely on the fact that every four years an adoption of wild horses will take place and the breed will enjoy a fresh influx of nature's "survival of the fittest." The next adoption is Oct 8th and 9th, 2011 in Burns, Or (see sidebar). There are over 100 Kigers up for adoption this year. If you want to try your luck in a raffle, the KMA is sponsoring a Kiger Mustang filly from the 2007 adoption. For more information about this raffle visit [www.kigermustangs.org](http://www.kigermustangs.org)

Ten years ago was my introduction to the Kiger. I started a Kiger filly for a client of mine. From that time on I have made the change from domesticated horses to the Kiger Mustang. These horses have incredible eye appeal with their dun-factor striping and proud presence. They can perform as well. *Kiger Cougar*, adopted 1991, placed twenty-first out of 150 at the Snaffle Bit Futurity in Reno, Nevada. Steens Vaquero was World Champion in the Western Riding class at the 2002 American Buckskin Registry Association (ABRA) World Show in Tulsa, Ok. *Bravo Canyon* is a finalist in the American Competitive Trail Horse Association's (ACTHA) America's Favorite Trail Horse competition, to be televised this fall (see related article p. 7). Read more about *Bravo Canyon* on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/#!/bravocanyon>). And of course I must mention my own "stangs" that serve me faithfully starting colts, being cow ponies, giving lessons, and doing Kiger demos. I ride one each year during the Buckarett Ride, and their fitness, skill, and calm disposition does me proud among up to fifty other riders. Their hardiness and beauty keep me braggin' on my 'stangs. Next time you're looking for a new horse, be sure and include "Kiger Mustang" in your search.

### Kiger Mestano (Mustang) Adoption Information October 8th and 9th, 2011 Burns, Oregon



No other horse in America is quite like the Kiger Mustang found on Steens Mountain in southeastern Oregon. Most wild horses are of mixed influence and characteristics while the Kiger Mustangs possess many characteristics of the original Spanish Mustang. The word Mustang was derived from the Spanish word mesteno, which meant "wild" or "unclaimed" horse. The word Mustang evolved as slang from the original Spanish word.

To adopt a Kiger Mustang, or obtain more information about the adoption, call the BLM office at 541-573-4400, or email [patti\\_wilson@blm.gov](mailto:patti_wilson@blm.gov). You can also visit [www.blm.gov/adoptahorse](http://www.blm.gov/adoptahorse).

*Pinie Minto is known in Northern California as an expert horsewoman and trainer of horses and their owners. A working cowgirl/wife/mother/grandmother, she grew up working cattle astride Quarter Horses on the family ranch in Elk Creek, California. As a partner and founder of the Elk Creek Buckarett Ranch Ride, her main focus every spring is sharing the ranch experience with other women. Over the past ten years she has enthusiastically settled on the Kiger Mustang as her ride of choice. From time to time she has a ranch-trained Kiger for sale.*

*According to Pinie, "God gives his best to those who leave the choice to Him."*





## Readers Write

# Gentling the Mustang: Putting Relationship First

Written by Charlotte L Angin

There is an old saying among horsemen that goes something like this: when you create an agenda for your horse, he is bound to have other ideas. Throughout my years observing horses and both traditional and non-traditional training methods, I have found this well worn cowboy anecdote astoundingly accurate. Truth be told, creating a relationship with a Mustang challenges conventional wisdom and sets the human on a course of intense personal growth. Shifting one's perspective about horse behavior and training, seeing the world through the eyes of a wild horse, no longer presents itself as an option to be considered. It is, quite simply, a requirement, the first step on the journey toward connection.



Tehya and Charlotte

The relationship between horses and humans is built not only on the principles of love, trust, respect, and leadership, but also one's ability to consciously connect with their horse in a calm, grounded state of awareness. Creating this sense of awareness and presence in partnership with our horse companions is the cornerstone of the work I facilitate with my clients. As prey animals, horses are masters at reading our emotional energy. Their survival in the wild depends on their innate ability to sense incongruence in their environment. They naturally reflect back to us our emotional state but do so in a non-judgmental way. What is crucial then, is that we approach our horses from the heart with honesty and self awareness. Conversely, when we approach our horses with our heads full of training schedules and demands, we are likely to miss an opportunity to learn and observe the language and wisdom the horse has to offer. I have often wondered how the horse world might be different should we approach each day asking, "What has my horse to teach me today?" Perhaps we are often so focused on "doing" that we forget to just "be" with our horses, for truly, it is in moments of stillness that horses speak volumes.

Creating yet another heart-centered connection with a new horse was the furthest thing from my mind when I met my Modoc County Devil's Garden Herd Management Area (HMA) filly, Tehya in the Spring of 2010. She had come to Windhorse Ranch as a Halter Project with two other fillies of similar age. It had been more than twenty years since I had worked with a yearling and against all reason, I adopted the blue-eyed beauty with a certainty most horsewomen are all too familiar with. It was a gut "knowing" from deep within, devoid of all logic, which said, "That's my horse."

The potential pitfalls of the challenging road ahead swirled in my mind, yet the very core of me was surprisingly calm. When I checked in with my inner wisdom, I knew there could only be one way to begin a relationship with my new filly. There really was no room for my ego or agenda with this wild horse. The initial connection would come through "be"ing with my new horse, not doing. It meant turning conventional horse training wisdom on its

head. For if there is one thing I have learned from my beloved horses it's that ideas do not have to come from books or clinicians to be valid. So often, our very own intuition is worthy of our attention and follow through.

As I began my first attempt at connecting with Tehya, something deep inside me insisted that I sit down, ground my energy and be still. So, I sat myself on an overturned milk crate in the middle of the paddock Tehya shared with the other fillies. The girls were a little concerned yet clearly curious as they stood in a huddle and continued to munch their hay and groom each other with enthusiasm. As I sat relatively motionless, noticing the wind blowing through the trees and the red-tailed hawks circling

overhead, I noticed that at no time did the fillies take their eyes off me, despite the distractions. I sat. And I sat. Tehya was always the first one to saunter up and give me a tentative sniff in those first few days. She would approach and retreat over and over and at first, I made no effort to touch her as she eyed me with pensive curiosity. As the days went by, she would check in with me the moment I would sit down and she would stand next to me quietly for longer stretches of time, checking out my knees, my hair, and finally, my hands. The other fillies followed suit and within a couple of weeks, all three wanted to be next to me whenever I sat down. We were communicating and connecting in our quiet state of being. No pressure, no schedule. Doing nothing was, in fact, doing something.

Long hours sitting in silence on the milk crate gave me time to ponder the pressure we often place on ourselves as well as our horses. In the back of my mind, I was aware that Tehya's baby hooves were overgrown and needed attention and that gentling her to the point of getting a halter on her was essential to her overall health and well being. As she became more comfortable around me, she needed boundaries, both for my safety and her own. She playfully tested her teeth out on my pant legs and quickly learned the meaning of "no." I learned that wild horses required slow, deliberate movements from their human as anything else would seem predatory in their world. To force her along on my time frame was certainly achievable, however pushing often creates



Tehya is curious and watchful



a horse who responds to their human out of fear, rather than cooperation.

The more I began to take my mind out of the equation, instead listening to the wisdom of my body and heart, each new step with Tehya became almost effortless. Touching with hands and then a rope and halter became mundane to her. Haltering was a big step with moments of tremendous frustration but in the end, being completely present with her and believing that putting a halter on was “no big deal” resonated deeply with both my body and spirit and naturally, with her as well. The next step was movement. Could she follow my lead at the end of a rope? Well, of course. We had developed a relationship during all that quiet time together. She contentedly followed me everywhere I led her with an uncanny sense of personal boundaries.

Today, Tehya is a happy, healthy two year old. She is incredibly smart, eager to please and remains friendly and curious. Her energy is that of a horse who is ready and willing to learn the way of humans. Her only requirement for cooperation is the grounded presence of her human. Through her eyes, I am reminded daily of the importance of self awareness, emotional energy, and most importantly, being present in the moment, no matter what we are doing together. Our connection, built on hours upon hours of



*The Windhorse herd enjoys a warm afternoon*

quiet and gentle interaction, has grown into a solid bond. I have grown as a leader and a horsewoman and I have once again reaffirmed for myself that when we learn to get out of our head and slow down, the answers we seek are already inside us. The horse will undoubtedly let us know if we are on the right track or have missed the mark.

Surely, the world is



*The Devil's Garden fillies*

filled with experts and it is our task to pick and choose the tidbits of wisdom they have to offer. Every horse is different and what works for one horse's personality may not work for another. To find the balance, we must first take the time to know our horse and learn their individual language. Could it be that the horse is the real expert on horsemanship? If this is so, we might be wise to sit down, be still, and observe with an open heart.

*A Bay Area native, Charlotte Angin facilitates conscious partnership between horses and the humans who love them. Her lessons and consultations emphasize human awareness and “presence” with horses while honoring both partners ~mind, body and spirit. Her background in education, Equine Facilitated Learning, natural horse care/horsemanship, and animal communication offers a unique perspective to her clients—both horse and human. She is based at Windhorse Ranch, Sebastopol. Charlotte's website is [www.equispiritus.net](http://www.equispiritus.net).*



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## Horse Husbandry The Occasionally True Tales of a Local Horse Husband

Column editor Mark Krug

### In Memoriam: Cowboy the Dog

This summer, I had to put my beloved, geriatric dog Cowboy down. He was a twelve-and-a-half year old Aussie/Lab, a good life span for a ninety-pound dog. Cowboy was born on a horse ranch, died on a horse ranch, and lived every single day in between on a horse ranch. He had the name Cowboy when we adopted him and we never changed as it fit him perfectly. With his Lab body and Aussie coloration, he looked the part.

In his prime, his nickname was The Foreman as he assumed full responsibility for the resident horses and cats and, in fact, for all critters who visited. I recall once walking out of the house and having my attention drawn to some crows in a walnut tree 150 feet away making an unusually loud racket. Evidently, Cowboy felt my attention diverted to those birds was inappropriate and promptly trotted over to them business-like and barked a clear and assertive command to the blackbirds to scam. They did. That dog never missed a beat (Though managing skunks turned out to be a losing proposition; he begrudgingly acquiesced to their visits after the second encounter).

Watching him execute his management duties was endearing, but honestly, not all that useful—with one glaring exception. One winter Saturday I had two horses turned out in the arena while I was working on ranch fix-it project number 8,503. My wife was out of town. I needed to run to the hardware store for parts and out of laziness; I violated a cardinal ranch rule we had agreed upon: never leave the property with horses loose in the arena. Worse, I also left an arena gate unlatched.

When I returned from the store and pulled into the driveway, my heart sank when I saw the empty arena and gate open. The horses could be anywhere, including running on the busy street a mere eighth of a mile away. I was freaked. But then, as I pulled in further, I saw that Cowboy had the two horses penned in an interior area where an outbuilding and two fence lines made a “U” and he was diligently standing guard on the open end. When the horses noticed my arrival, they tried to come my way, but The Foreman made it abundantly clear that they were to stay put. They did. Crisis averted, butt saved. After haltering and putting away the two horses, I profusely thanked Cowboy and while he always liked affection, he seemed puzzled by the lavish attention as if to say, hey, just doing my foreman duties here, you knucklehead.

This recent and very tough good-bye has made me keenly aware that I watched this amazing dog go from over-amped puppy to over-achieving young adult to older adult to “retired” while my life changed very little over that compact twelve year period. It has caused me to realize how the much shorter life span of our horses, dogs, and other domesticated animals really defines our relationships with them. Think about how dramatically different the relationship would be if our life spans were a fraction of



*The Foreman supervises his walk*

theirs, instead of the other way around.

Imagine, if you can, that giant tortoises were our stead of choice rather than horses—animals that can live in excess of 200 years! Incidentally, my friends who have seen me ride would say that as a mount, a giant tortoise is literally just my speed. But that’s beside the point. Just go with me here and imagine for a moment that you’re observing someone with a giant tortoise for sale discussing the reptile, we’ll call him Tony, with a prospective buyer:

Buyer: So, what can you tell me about Tony, what’s his history?

Seller: Well, he’s about 145 years old, still gotta lotta good decades in ‘em.

My granddad bought him from a New Mexico farmer back in the late 1800’s, he was a ranch tortoise and did a little barrel racing too.

Buyer: Barrel racer?

Seller: Yeah, turned in a sixteen-point-two once.

Buyer: Really, a sixteen-two?

Seller: Yeah, sixteen hours, twelve minutes. But, ya know, honestly, the last thirty to forty years, he’s lost a step.

Buyer: Well sure. Hey, I noticed he seems a little short-strided on that front left, do you see that too?

Seller: Yah, I understand when he was only thirty-five, a mere turtlet, before my granddad got him, he got in a ferocious fight with a ‘possum and has had some intermittent lameness in the left-front ever since. One of those deals where he’ll look fine for ten or fifteen years and then suddenly, he’s looks a little off for a decade or so. Really frustrating...

Silliness aside, it is easy to see how the life span differential really defines the relationship with our critters. We’re almost always going to see our animals age through one or more of life’s major phases, including, sadly, the final passage.

Occasionally people in my position, that of grieving the loss of a beloved pet, say they won’t adopt again as the good-bye’s are simply too hard. I certainly understand that feeling. Hard as it is to live with the compressed life span of our horses, dogs, cats, and other critters, it is the natural order and my goofy tortoise fable shows that the alternative offers perhaps no real relief. Reversing roles and having our critters observe us passing through our own life’s inevitable passages while they remained more-or-less in a constant state would be extraordinarily different and frankly, a little bizarre.

So I suspect another dog will join my family in the not-so-distant future. That is, of course, unless the tortoise whisperer thing takes all my time...

*Mark lives near Graton with his Dressage Queen wife Cheryl, their three middle-aged horses, an ageless cat, no tortoises, and the spirit of The Foreman.*

Photo: Corrine Faulkner



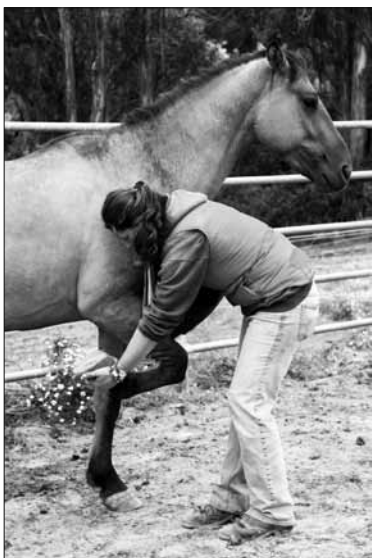
## Readers Write

## Mustang Troubles

Written by Barbara Chasteen



*This beautiful gelding from the Carter Reservoir herd arrived lame from a transport injury. Part of his left-sided mane twists to the right side, a clue to the scar tissue that stiffens his neck and right shoulder.*



*Bodywork can help tame a horse. Even before he accepted a halter, Tesoro allowed massage to clear scar tissue and free up his shoulder.*



*Deeper work after haltering helps Tesoro learn to appreciate what people have to offer.*

We like to see Mustangs as fresh, unspoiled horses, free of many of the problems we find in domesticated breeds. After years of working with my own Mustangs and many others, I've learned that these wonderful horses often come to us with significant challenges to their physical and mental health. During capture they experience severe trauma, as they are chased into holding pens, separated from their herd, given many vaccinations within a short period,

and kept in a cramped, unnatural environment. Transport to adoption events and to new homes in a dark, rattling trailer on busy freeways can also result in injuries and enormous stress. We need to evaluate our new Mustang's condition, then help him (or her) rebuild the immune system and recover mentally and physically, in order to be able to accept gentling and riding.

*Barbara Chasteen (Equus Hall of Fame-2005) is an avid equestrian and equine bodyworker. She is a member of the California State Parks Mounted Assistance Unit. Barbara owns two and a half Mustangs: Bella (pictured), Mojave (her MAU patrol horse), and Beau (a Spanish Mustang/Andalusian cross).*



*When she arrived in Sebastopol, Bella (another Carter Reservoir horse) held her tail held stiffly out behind when she moved, a sign that her spine was damaged. Her first willing contact with people was to let them massage the muscles of her hindquarters.*



*A year later, Bella has a relaxed tail and graceful walk. However, chronic skin problems show that her immune system is still struggling to repair itself. She received fifteen vaccinations during her first month in captivity.*



*Mojave's face early on shows the depression and shut down state that many Mustangs live in after capture.*



*Mojave has learned to enjoy human company. One way to help mustangs open up to their new life is to use flower essences, which can help heal emotional trauma.*





## Trail and Open Spaces

Column editor Sarah Reid

# Connection & Spirit: Trail Through the Eyes of a Mustang



Sarah and Oreo on the Pacific Coast Trail with Donner Summit in the background

Humans have been domesticating animals for thousands of years. Dogs and horses have been trained to work with us and for us in many different ways and in doing so have become adapted to humans. I watch our Lab/Golden Retriever cross as she meets strangers: "Hi, I'm Franci. I don't know you, but I love you anyway." Isn't this a typical greeting for a human-domesticated dog breed like a Golden? Many of our horses are similar today; I bet you know one you could describe the same as Franci. But domestication takes generations, studies have shown that a wolf pup taken from the wild cannot be domesticated. One can be taken from the wild, but the wild cannot be taken from it. I believe the same can be said for Mustangs. I realize that I am comparing prey animals and predators here, and that Mustangs, being prey animals, may be more successfully trained and gentled.

But while we think we have gentled and trained these "wild" steeds, they still retain the instinct for survival in the wild. They live by flight or fight, trust only my herd, rely on instinct, be watchful, take care of those who take care of you, and make sure there is an out. Some of these characteristics and tendencies make them a truly remarkable partner. Mustangs can be trained for any discipline. They are described as intelligent, athletic, and possessing endurance, speed, and agility. They have won Tevis Cup Endurance events and were greatly prized by the Pony Express riders.

I am just setting the stage here for what I truly want to tell you about in this article: the past nine years of learning world perspective through the eyes of a Mustang. I find the Mustang to be alert to everything. He sees the differences in things. He is connected with nature in a practical way, and is partnered with me differently. There is a different awareness in him, and I honor that, and all of this in him. He is Mustang.

### *It's been moved*

One of the first things I started to observe about my Mustang was that he notices when things have been changed on his familiar trails. A rock resting a few feet away from where it sat last week warrants a look-see. A tree that has fallen next to the trail requires inspection, especially if freshly cut by a chainsaw, which requires even *closer* inspection. Rain erosion on the trails, which has changed footing, may even result in this Mustang stopping to say the footing is no longer safe, at least for now. A garbage can out of place may need to be watched carefully as we walk by. This horse remembers where things should be: it wasn't there last week, it has always been just so, now it is different, and we must take a look and make sure it is safe and inspect it. It may not be spooky, but he has to take a good look at it, and catalog it for next time.

### *Are you sure this is safe?*

Keeping "NumberOne" safe is the first priority. After the January 2006 storms, we went venturing up Spring Creek Trail in Annadel, one we had been up dozens of times over many years, in all seasons. Now however, the lake had spilled over the newly re-landscaped old spillway, causing newly placed rocks and stones to tumble down onto the trail. The park ecologist had not meant for this to happen, and the trail was a mess. When The Mustang came upon this changed trail area, now a rocky streambed, he stopped and snorted and said, "HMMM!! This is different than it was several weeks ago, and does not look stable or safe." No coaxing on my part would make him step onto the rocks. I got off and tested the area myself to find that the rocks were indeed very precarious and unstable (*Why do I question his judgment?*). Generally stream crossings do not give him pause, however, he knew this one was not safe. He has done this numerous times with different footing material and has always been right.

### *Predator alert!*

Predators can be most accurately identified by one physical characteristic: they have both eyes on the front of their heads. All the better to spot their *equine* prey! But not all predators are created equal. Dogs: not a problem, even running around, popping out from under the trailer. Even Chihuahuas barking ferociously at the end of a Flexi-lead (*Really?*). Domestic cats: sigh. Bobcats: yawn. Coyotes: interesting to watch. Humans: big predators, also cookie machines... generally okay, even when approaching at high speed on two wheels, or when they have two sets of eyes like when carrying a baby on their back, or running, even better when we can chase them down the trail! But mountain lions: those are another story for this Mustang. Although we have never seen one, and hope we don't, this Mustang has definitely gone on "mountain lion alert" a number of times. He has a very specific behavior when he identifies a recent scent. He issues a general high





tension in his body, unlike any other reaction. He holds his head high, flares his nostrils, blows, engages all his senses, and steps carefully, even quietly, to hear and see it all. He is ready for flight, and the rider is fullseat ready for action.

One of the first times we experienced this in Annadel, we came across flattened grass and turkeys about fifty feet up in the trees, chirping in an unusually distressed manner. The Mustang went into high alert. Later when I checked with the ranger, I found out that he had just left the area himself and had retrieved some very fresh mountain lion scat off the trail there, had seen the flattened grass, and guessed the lion had been hunting. He sent the scat off to a lab to test DNA to see what sex the lion was and what the lion had been eating. The Mustang reaction was filed in my memory bank for "next time." There have been many in Annadel in the years since, some confirmed by the ranger as consistent with lion trail crossings and sightings. The Mustang doesn't react to other predators except with mild interest.

#### **Practical awareness of nature**

Across a huge meadow, perhaps a quarter of a mile away, under a tree in the shade laid a buck, resting in the afternoon heat. He hadn't moved. How in the world had my Mustang even seen that? But, he showed me by stopping and looking, alert with ears and head, but not worried, just aware of another being out there. I saw, and acknowledged, saying, "Thanks for showing me, buddy," and we quietly moved on down the trail. Each ride is filled with such moments of awareness. At first my control-freak part of me wanted to keep his head forward and on the bit, under my control. Then as I learned to look where he was showing me something, let him move his head and look at things, I learned to honor his alertness to nature. I learned that his attention to his surroundings was not spookiness, but a general awareness. If I looked where he was looking, I would see things I wouldn't otherwise see (with my human sensory deficit defect). A world of interesting things opened up to me in my trail experience, and I found myself talking to my Mustang, thanking him over and over again for showing me things, sometimes simply an interesting rock or water glistening in the sun.

#### **Connectedness and partnership**

And so with all these experiences, and my new awareness, I learned that I have been in a presence of an equine partner very different from the domestic horse I last rode. He had been a very good trail horse, had taken me on a dream journey only a first horse could. But this Mustang Journey has brought me to completely new understandings of the equine mind only a horse totally in touch with the wild side can. New in our relationship someone had told me it would probably take a full year for him to completely trust me, and that was true. Once that trust was formed, it became a bond like no other, and continues to grow stronger even after nine years together. There is a spirit in a BLM Mustang that is forged in the blood, no matter how little or long they are with their wild herd, the wild is there forever. That spirit can be a wonderful love to share.

*Sarah Reid found her Mustang Oreo in Petaluma nine years ago.*



*A proud and handsome Oreo*

*Mustang Oreo came from Fish Creek Herd Management Area near the Ruby Mountains of Nevada and was originally adopted at six months old. He is currently seventeen years young and enjoys multiple days on the trail each week with Sarah and friends.*



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*Colts and Fillies*

Column editor Kelly Henson

# Dancing with Horses

"Do I really have to go to bed Mama? I'm not tired yet," pleaded Jacob as a big yawn began to reach across his face. His eyelids began to droop heavily over his usually wide green eyes after his long day of playing in the barn with his brothers. His exhausted seven year old body was finally ready to surrender to a long night's sleep. After all, he had to be rested for another day of play beginning in the morning.

"Yes my love, it's time for you to have sweet dreams of faraway lands," Mama answered as she kissed Jacob good night and slowly left the room.

As Jacob drifted off to sleep, his mind wandered through images of cowboys and horses, dancing in green grassy fields with rolling hills, like waves on the ocean. As he fell into a deep sleep, the images began to get more vivid and Jacob began to hear the cowboys speak to him...

"Howdy there, boy! What's a little buckaroo like you doing here? Did you come to help me dance with the horses?" asked a tall, lean cowboy with a southern drawl. His gray hat was as big as Texas and Jacob could barely see his brown eyes watching him from underneath it. His belt held up faded and frayed blue jeans decorated with copper rivets, and the buckle shined like the North Star in the sky.

"I'm not really sure why I'm here but I would love to help you dance with the horses! Um...what's dancing with horses?" Jacob asked with wide eyes and a confused expression on his face.

"Ha ha ha! You've never danced with horses before?! Well let me show you." Suddenly, the cowboy was surrounded by horses. Jacob saw big horses, little horses, brown, white, and polka dotted horses. He began to skip and jump, and within moments all the

*A solo dance*

horses were running and jumping in the air along with him. Jacob watched with amazement as he saw them all dancing together in unison.

"Come on little buckaroo! Start dancing and the horses will dance with you." The cowboy took Jacob's hand and showed him how to skip to the left and then the right. All the horses began to side pass from side to side. They lifted their hooves way up in the air, and held their heads high, as they marched alongside the cowboy and Jacob. Manes and tails flew, and colors blurred. Together the dancers, two-footed

and four, celebrated all night over beautiful pastures and through flowing creeks.

Slowly the image of the cowboy and horses began to fade from Jacob's mind as he drifted back to earth. His sleepy eyes began to focus on a familiar face.

"Mama! You'll never guess what I did last night. I danced with horses. The tall cowboy with the big hat showed me how and we danced with the horses all night long!" Jacob went on and on during breakfast until he had shared every moment of his dreams with his family.

"Well Jacob," his mom said when he had finally finished talking, "I guess tonight you won't be arguing about going to bed, will you?"

"No Mama, I won't. I can't wait to see the cowboy and horses again," replied Jacob. And they both hoped silently that someday Jacob would find the same magic outside his dreams.

*Kelly Henson has a bachelor's degree in psychology and enjoys creative writing. Kelly and her National Show Horse Tobi enjoy trail riding and dance regularly in the pasture. If you would like to contact Kelly about a story, email her at [kids@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:kids@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).*

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## Trails and Open Spaces

Column editor Sarah Reid

*In the spring issue of the Horse Journal, column editor Sarah Reid asked readership to mail or email her some reasons they trail ride. Sarah found this answer the most compelling, and chose to feature it here.*

## Why I Ride the Trails?

Guest written by Nancy Martin

It's cheaper than a shrink and I really mean this. Occasionally my schedule will allow me to plan a ride. Then I'll look forward to that moment, savoring in advance the forthcoming reliable bliss of ambling along through soft footing in the forest or inhaling crisp salt air of the sea, hearing nothing at all excepting the sounds of wind, birds, or ocean waves. Bliss indeed.

More often than not though, I'll discover a few unexpected hours on my calendar and quick, change into my riding gear. Oh the joy of putting my horse into the trailer, cranking up the radio and taking my freedom as I find it, straight to a favorite riding spot in our gorgeous Sonoma County. There is no doubt that this is riding heaven, with our myriad of heavenly State and Regional parks all easily at hand, our gift. The choices here are many and diverse, with differing terrain and habitats. There is no bad choice. Bodega Head is a favorite of mine and also my horse *Amigo's*, who seems to love the sea air. A short drive to Marin will take you to Pt Reyes National Seashore, where the cool horse camping, unlimited exquisite trails, terrain, and micro-climates make for unbeatable riding and nature-viewing. At Point Reyes, I have even ridden under gigantic nests of eagles, nurturing fledglings. Have you ever been through Sausalito heading up to 101, turned right and gone through the tunnel to arrive at Fort Cronkhite, and ridden the Marin Headlands overlooking the Golden Gate, Sausalito and Tiburon? Fabulous! Ah, marvelous Marin at it's best. The North Bay is horse heaven, we couldn't be luckier.

Let's not forget our favorite riding pals and their mounts who have given us so much simple pleasure over the trails and throughout the years. We all find folks who we get along with and who enjoy going at the same pace. My long-time riding pard Ishi rides mules, while I have Peruvian Pasos. We elicit lots of comments from folks out on the trail who often say, "Wow, that horse has really long ears." Then Ishi delivers a good dose of 'Mule 101'. Makes me smile every time.

Are my horses glad at the opportunity to strut their stuff? You bet! You can no doubt, feel when your horse is in a good mood? *Mi*

*Amigo* literally skips down the trail at will with nary a heel at his flank. Happy, happy, happy, working himself up into a big frothy sweat until I put on the brakes.

Having been a member of some fine local riding clubs I can honestly say that, sharing this joy in tandem with the offering of service to our county has become the big winner for me. At present I am a member of both MAU State and Regional park systems and also the EMP (Eldridge Mounted Posse) where I serve on the board. 'Being the eyes and ears' for our rangers, police and firefighters, and also now for our county community at large as we witness park financing rapidly diminishing, is nothing short of an honor in addition to that free bliss.

I rest my case.



Nancy and Amigo in therapy together



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## Readers Write

# Local Ride Held to Benefit Mustangs

Written by Hetty Dutra

How often can you have a fun ride with a great group of folks, enjoy your horses and see what they can do, engage in friendly competition over obstacles, and benefit the Mustang Heritage Foundation (MHF)? The American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) hosted such an event this year: their second annual charity ride, and this one benefited the North American Mustangs. The ride is titled "Ride for the Mustangs," and all the entry fees went directly to the Foundation.

The Mustang Heritage Foundation, founded in 2001, is a public, charitable, nonprofit organization dedicated to facilitating successful adoptions for Mustangs and burros designated as "excess." The program areas focus on adopters, philanthropists, youth, and horse training professionals. The MHF sponsors events such as the "Extreme Mustang Makeover," designed to garner attention for Mustangs, and present them as animals that are adoptable, and fun to own. The MHF works in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Some specifics of their efforts include providing information education about Mustangs and burros, including their care and use as athletes and companions, assisting in creating an image of the Mustang as a manageable partner by improving selection and expanded and enhanced training programs for critical Mustang age groups, and attracting potential adopters. MHF also identifies and provides opportunities to become involved in the Mustang and burro experience through adoption, volunteering, sponsorship, and philanthropy. Other programs include a Trainer Incentive Program, youth programs, and adoption events. In every program, the MHF promotes humane treatment of Mustangs and burros.

Local ACTHA affiliate Hossmoor Ranch in Brione (see contact info below) held their ride on September 10th this year, and drew more than sixty participants. Hossmoor and other affiliates rescheduled their ride from June 4th, due to the EHV-1 scare, but the later date only increased their entry numbers. Participating organizations include ACTHA affiliates nationwide (from Georgia to California) and thousands of riders, all competing over the same six obstacles on local courses on one of two dates: September 9th or 10th. The ACTHA registers the ride with the Guinness Book of World Records and has been judged the largest ride in the world due to the usually extensive participation occurring on what is usually a single day. We don't know yet if they beat the existing record, but we'll hear soon!

Hossmoor collected donors and sponsorships for the event, and put together some fabulous prizes. Six lucky riders won "Ride for the Mustang" buckles—three gorgeous ones for first place in the Open, Pleasure, and Junior Divisions and three slightly smaller (but



*The Mustang Heritage Foundation dedicates itself to promoting adoption of wild horses and burros*

still gorgeous!) buckles for second place in the same divisions. Other prizes included items for "Best Dressed," "Best Groomed," and "Hardest Luck." All sponsors/donors provided generous additional prizes to add to those given by ACTHA sponsors. In addition, twenty volunteers donated their time to benefit the Mustangs and also, to just have plain old fun.

Participants rode the course in small groups, and were staggered, so they came in at different times. While the volunteers and spectators waited for everyone to finish, Jim Bone recited Cowboy Poetry and Regina Scotland gave a Mustang Demonstration Ride. Booths and banners, and some refreshments were on hand, as well. Back Forty BBQ catered lunch and served chicken and beef brisket with all the trimmings.

How do you find out more, and get in on it next year? Just go to ACTHA.us, click on Rides, and check out the schedule. You can also visit [www.mustangheritagefoundation.org](http://www.mustangheritagefoundation.org) for more info about them, their programs, or the rides. If you are near Hossmoor, check us out. If not, check out the other "Ride for the Mustangs" events for a location near you. Or, visit [hossmoor.com/events](http://hossmoor.com/events) to see the flier for our rides. You can also always email me ([cowgirl@hossmoor.com](mailto:cowgirl@hossmoor.com)) or call 925-228-5790 for a flyer, answers to your questions, or a cowgirl who'd just plain be happy to talk to you. Event visitors can overnight at Hossmoor, and ride in some spectacular nearby parks or school over those obstacles your horse wasn't so good at doing. Hope to see you next year!

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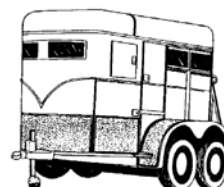
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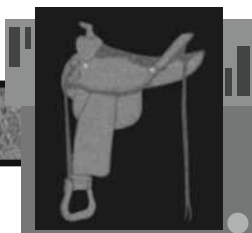
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## From the Horse's Mouth

### Giant Steps Receives Several NARHA Awards

Giant Steps Therapeutic Equestrian Center, located at the Riverside facility in Petaluma recently underwent review and inspection for accreditation with the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA). Not only did the facility receive a 100% rating on their accreditation score, they received two additional recognitions this year. Sam B, age sixteen, was chosen from over 800 riding programs in the US and named NARHA National Youth Equestrian of the Year! Sam has Aspergers Syndrome, a condition characterized by social isolation and eccentric behavior. Just a year ago, Sam struggled with the social aspects of his life, hiding emotionally by refusing to communicate. Today, he not only rides, but has made the choice to give back by volunteering in two classes a week. Sam also has recruited another rider (who also has Aspergers) to come out and volunteer with him on Saturdays. Together, they take great pride in horse and stable care. Sam would like one day to be a NARHA Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor and now



sits in on weekly theory classes. In addition, therapeutic riding horse Katydid won the Region 11 Equine of the Year. Katydid was chosen because she defines the heart and soul of equine-assisted activities and therapies. She personifies the willingness, attitude, and diversity of talents that these hard-working partners bring to the program. Katydid is an eighteen year old veteran, and the undisputed queen of the barn. For more information about Giant Steps, or to get involved, please visit [www.giantstepsriding.org](http://www.giantstepsriding.org).

### Local Veterinarian Donates Award Money to Equi-Ed

Dr Nancy Kay, small animal veterinarian, and author of Speaking for Spot: Be the Advocate Your Dog Needs to Live a Happy, Healthy, Longer Life, was this year's Leo Bustad Companion Animal Veterinarian of the Year Award. The Bustad Award is presented annually by the American Veterinary Medical Association and Hill's Pet Nutrition to a veterinarian whose work promotes and exemplifies the human animal bond. Dr Kay has generously donated the financial portion of the award to the Equi-Ed therapeutic riding program. Dr Kay reported, "I have some good news for Equi-Ed! I am the fortunate recipient of Bustad Award, and I can directly donate it to an organization that honors the human-animal bond. Equi-Ed certainly qualifies (and holds a special place in my heart). I know firsthand how much of a difference this money can make." Dr Kay's veterinary degree is from Cornell College of Veterinary Medicine, and she completed her residency training in small animal internal medicine at the University of California Davis Veterinary School. Dr. Kay is a board certified

specialist in the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine and published in several professional journals and textbooks. She lectures professionally to regional and national audiences, and one of her favorite lecture topics is communication between veterinarians and their clients. Since the release of her book, Dr. Kay has lectured extensively and written numerous magazine articles on the topic of medical advocacy. She was a featured guest on the popular National Public Radio show, *Fresh Air* with Terry Gross. Dr Kay is staff internist at VCA Animal Care Center, a 24-hour emergency/specialty care center in Rohnert Park.

### Equi-Ed Opens in New Facility

This summer, Equi-Ed moved its program to a new facility. Camp Silvano, located in the hills between Napa and Sonoma Counties offered space to the special Sonoma County program designed to aid individuals with mental and physical challenges. A very generous donor gave Equi-Ed funds to cover a three-month lease. Camp Silvano, owned by Peruvian Paso *aficionado* Mickey Harmon, offers a covered arena and room for the horses. Equi-Ed organizers expect to conduct the fall lesson session uninterrupted. Harman, her family, and tenant Kay are "real salt of the earth type of people" as one volunteer stated. They have worked closely with the program to best meet its needs and have been incredible company during long work days at the ranch. Last spring Equi-Ed was given notice to move out of its former Loch Haven facility by August 1. Equi-Ed had been at Loch Haven for seven years. Finding a facility that could accommodate the needs of a therapeutic riding, driving, and vaulting program was not easy, but volunteers and organizers did it! Thanks to dedication and long days by volunteer work crews, on July 31st the last of the Equi-Ed supplies and the horses arrived safely. Eventually, Equi-Ed hopes to find an investor willing to purchase the Camp Silvano property and lease it back as a tax donation. The optimal situation would be for Equi-Ed to receive enough donor money to purchase the property outright. Equi-Ed's annual Ride-A-Thon in August and its Fall Festival Celebration in October, the program's biggest fundraisers, have taken on more importance this year. Please attend these events and lend your support to Equi-Ed, which has served individuals with disabilities in Sonoma and Napa counties since 1993. For more information about Equi-Ed, or to get involved, visit [www.equi-ed.org](http://www.equi-ed.org).

### Equestrian Author Donates June Proceeds to Fight Cancer

Jim Naugle, local gaited horse expert, trainer, and author donated the June proceeds from his two novels, Johnny's Jacket and its sequel Wild Cat, to cancer research. Both books are set in the Montana wilderness and feature Dixie, a spunky Tennessee Walking Horse, her owner, Jennifer Gates, and two loyal canine companions, Dot and Pepper. The tales are "good old rip roaring adventures" that are extremely uplifting, exciting, and hard to put down. These books are a treat for readers of any age (see spring 2011 Horse Journal for more information and excerpts). Both books are available in hardcover and paperback at [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com), and Johnny's Jacket is also available on Kindle. Autographed copies are available at Naugle's email address below. According to Naugle, "I know from experience how devastating it can be. I also have had firsthand experience seeing the tremendous results of modern research and the incredible relief it can bring. I feel it is time for a little payoff." Order autographed copies at [chevalleranch@aol.com](mailto:chevalleranch@aol.com). You can also inquire about Petaluma horse boarding (starting at \$250) and gaited horse training with Jim Naugle at [www.chevalleranch@aol.com](http://www.chevalleranch@aol.com).

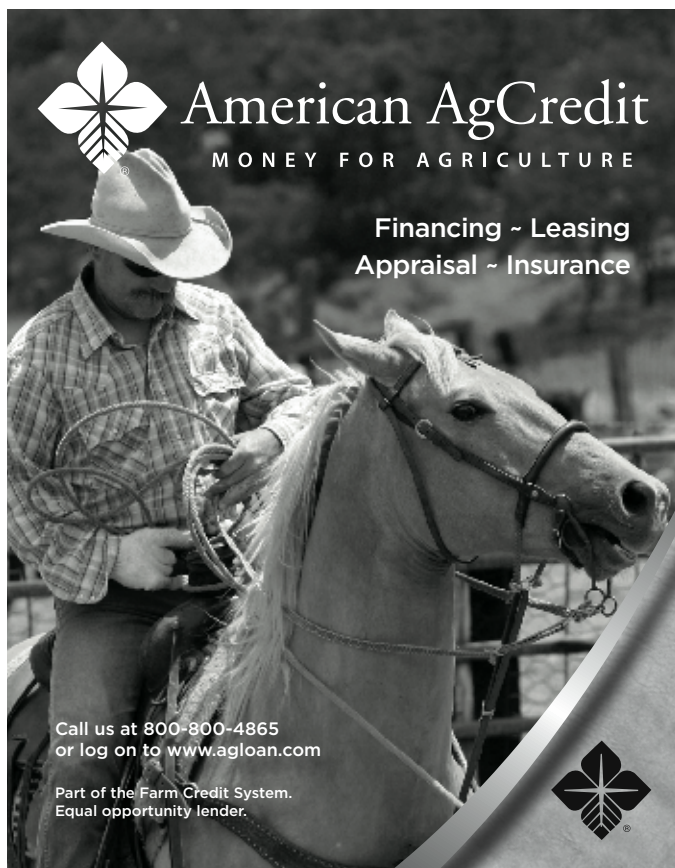
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The Horse Journal belongs to all of us in Sonoma County, so let us know if you would like to write. Articles are usually 500 to 1000 words and, of course, horse-related. If you are interested, contact any of the editors at the addresses listed on page one, or JoDean Nicolette, Editor-in-Chief, at [editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org). You can also write to us at Editor-SCHJ, P.O. Box 7157, Santa Rosa, CA 95407. We'd love to hear from you!

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