

Sonoma County

Horse Journal

Volume 7 • Issue 3
Summer 2011



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

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**Cover Photo: Sue Buxton, DVM**

Ann Gillis, DVM enjoys the late afternoon sun in the company of her Quarter Horse Easy, and her Australian Shepard Maggie. Read more about Dr Gillis and from other local vets in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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A Message from the President



Howdy!

The recent outbreak of the highly contagious and potentially fatal neurologic form of EHV-1 highlights the need for the horse community to organize. Together we can keep informed and act for the common good of our equine friends and all aspects of the horse industry. Whether we face health issues, natural disasters, access to trails or show facilities, legislative or regulatory issues,

or the like, we can and will be much more effective if we act together rather than separately. The Sonoma County Horse Council's (SCHC) recent outreach program—the Horse Cabinet—is an important first step forward in your Horse Council's effort to help organize and mobilize the horse community. The Horse Council is here for you, but we need your participation, in the form of membership and in volunteer efforts, to help do the work necessary to serve the entire horse community. The more horse clubs, associations, and individuals who participate in the Horse Cabinet and the more equestrians who join the Horse Council, the more effective the horse community in Sonoma County will be. Individual memberships are only \$30 per year, business memberships are \$75 per year, club memberships are \$50 per year (and members of clubs who are SCHC members can become associate members of the SCHC for only \$10 per year). Go to www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org and click on "membership" for an application and JOIN NOW!

Mark your calendars for June 22nd the 7th Annual Equine Extravaganza Parade at the Petaluma Fair. You'll see costumes, paint, uniforms, kids, carts, carriages, and of course, lots of horses! This exciting annual event showcases numerous breeds and disciplines. Don't miss it.

Happy Trails,
Ron Malone, President

www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org



- Horse Council Activities and Projects
- Horse Cabinet Updates
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- Legislative Updates
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Your Horse Council at Work

The Sonoma County Horse Council Horse Cabinet

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

What is the Horse Cabinet, you might ask? Before I explain what it is, let me explain why it is needed. One of the primary functions of the Sonoma County Horse Council (SCHC) is to be an advocate for the Sonoma County horse community, either by speaking on behalf of the horse community as a whole, or by rallying the horse community on a common issue. In order for the SCHC to be an effective advocate, it must understand what the horse community thinks, what the horse community wants, and what the horse community needs. To achieve this, the SCHC created the Horse Cabinet.

The Horse Cabinet is a forum where the local equestrians can discuss ideas and problems important to the horse community. One issue from the past that would have been perfect for the Horse Cabinet was the local ordinance regarding sprinklers on ranch property. The proposed requirement was that indoor arenas in Sonoma County must be equipped with fire sprinklers. The horse community, while dedicated to safety, felt that installing sprinklers to protect a sandy, open space was an unnecessary financial burden on equestrian facilities. We needed to speak with a single, loud voice to change this ordinance. As in this instance, the Horse Cabinet's purpose is to take all the single interests in the horse community and join them together to be a single strong, forceful voice that represents the entire diverse Sonoma County community.

The Horse Cabinet is structured to represent the broadest possible cross section of Sonoma County equestrians. The Horse Cabinet is comprised of one representative from each equestrian club, organization, association holding an organizational membership to SCHC (\$50). Clubs that join the SCHC receive certain benefits in addition to representation on the Horse Cabinet. These include acknowledgement and space on the SCHC website (www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org), and a special discounted individual membership rate for club members (\$10). Why offer this discounted membership? The SCHC needs those in the local horse community to be members to validate its "voice" as an advocate for the local horse community.

The concept behind the Horse Cabinet is that each associate club representative can bring an idea or concern from the club to a Horse Cabinet meeting. Representatives from all the clubs can offer input, perspective, and discussion regarding the issue. The

representatives can then take any shared information back to the clubs for discussion at the club level. This creates a two way conduit for the flow of information from local equestrian clubs to a forum where an issue can be discussed by a broader audience of equestrians. If necessary, a plan of action can be created by the Horse Cabinet and the Horse Council.

A plan of action may mean the collection of additional information or designating a spokesperson to address the larger community on a particular issue. A plan of action may include the SCHC representing the local equestrian community at a public or legislative meeting so that the equestrian community can speak with one unified voice. This is how a single, powerful voice can be developed by the horse community. A steering committee within the Horse Cabinet, comprised of two SCHC board members and three club representatives, serves as a liaison and consultant to the SCHC regarding Horse Cabinet issues.

There is one group of equestrians who has not been mentioned for representation thus far—those equestrians who do not belong to an equestrian club. For those voices to be represented, as well as the individual voices of the associate members, the Horse Cabinet meetings are open to anyone who wishes to come. The only rule is that the issues must be relevant to the larger equestrian community.

The Horse Cabinet has met twice in 2011. In the first meeting we identified the representatives and introduced the concept of the Horse Cabinet, and in the second meeting we created the steering committee and discussed a few preliminary topics. Among the topics was the equestrian community's relationship with the Sonoma County Fairgrounds, including disaster response. The steering committee held a follow up meeting with the Director of the Sonoma County Fairgrounds, and the details were all worked out! Information will be presented at the next Horse Cabinet meeting. The Horse Cabinet will also be a resource for accurate and up to date information regarding the recent EHV-1 outbreak.

If you are interested in coming to a Horse Cabinet or Horse Council meeting, check out the schedule on the Sonoma County Horse Council's website: www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org. We'd love to see you and hear what you've got to say! U

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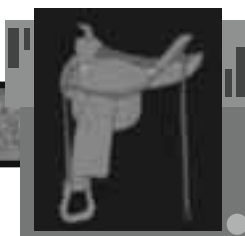
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*Your Horse Council at Work***Equine Herpes Virus (EHV-1) Update**

Written by Ted S Stashak DVM, MS, DACVS, Board of Directors, Sonoma County Horse Council

Introduction

Equine Herpes viruses (EHV's) are ubiquitous and have major economic impact on the equine industry worldwide. Of the five EHV affecting horses, the most important is EHV-1, which is the cause of the most recent outbreak. EHV-1 can cause respiratory disease, abortion, and neurologic disease. An estimated 80-90% of domestic horses are latently infected (non-symptomatic) with this virus by the time they are two years of age. This article will focus on the respiratory and neurologic forms of the EHV-1.

Risk factors

EHV-1 infection is most common in young performance horses that have a latent infection which reactivates during periods of stress (eg long transport or a performance event), causing clinical disease and viral shedding in nasal secretions. Although the neurologic form of this disease (herpes myeloencephalopathy [EHM]) is relatively uncommon, it can be lethal and thus have a major impact on the equine industry. The highest incidence of EHV-1 neurologic disease occurs in late winter, spring, and early summer. The apparent increase in EHM in North America in recent years has led to the proposal that EHV-1 could represent an emerging disease threat.

Status of the current outbreak EHV-1 (6/4/11)

The current outbreak occurred in horses that attended the Ogden, Utah National Cutting Horse Association's Western National Championships. Approximately 400 horses competed in this event. Of the fifty-four California horses attending, sixteen have been confirmed with EHV-1. Two additional confirmed positive EHV-1 cases participated **only** in the Kern County Cutting Horse Event on May 13th in Bakersfield, and four other horses had contact **only** with a horse from one of these events; making the total confirmed cases twenty-two. Seven of the twenty-two cases have shown neurologic signs and two horses have been euthanized. All confirmed cases are quarantined. The positive confirmed cases identified so far are located in the following counties: Amador(1), Colusa(1), Glenn(5), Kern(2), Los Angeles(1), Marin(1), Napa(1), Placer(3), Plumas(1), Sacramento(1), Shasta(1), Stanislaus(3), Ventura(1). Currently there is no evidence that the disease has spread outside these twenty-two EHV-1 confirmed positive cases in CA.

Some facts about the virus

The EHV-1 enters the nasal cavity causing mild respiratory signs (conjunctivitis and a nasal and ocular discharge) and a fever (>102 degrees F) within three days after contact. Shedding of virus from the nose usually occurs for six to ten days following the onset of the fever. At this point the virus is highly contagious. The viruses may also spread to local lymph nodes where they can remain dormant in healthy vaccinated horses with good immunity, or they may enter the blood stream and subsequently be transported and cause inflammation of nervous tissue; this results in the neurologic signs. At this point the disease is referred to as EHM. More research is needed to clarify the link between different strains of the virus and the disease manifestations. Currently it is probably best to consider both fever and neurologic disease as caused by EHV-1, and that possibly the virulence of the infective virus determines the extent of the signs. The greater virulence the more likely the brain and spinal cord will be involved.

History, clinical signs, and diagnosis

A fever (>102 degrees) often precedes the onset of respiratory signs. If the fever and respiratory signs are followed by the sudden onset of ataxia (wobbly gait), paresis (weakness), dribbling of urine, and difficulty with defecation (bowl movements) during an EHV-1 outbreak we can make a tentative diagnosis of EHM. The diagnosis of EHV-1 infection can be made by sampling nasal secretions and blood, and analyzing cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). A definitive diagnosis of EHM can only be made on post mortem examination.

Treatment


Treatment of respiratory symptoms is directed toward symptoms. Treatment of neurologic cases is challenging and primarily supportive, with attempts to reduce inflammation in the nerves. The outcome is directly related to the severity of the neurological signs. Your vet may recommend antiviral drugs. Isolation (quarantine) of affected horses and employment of proper biosecurity measures is necessary to prevent spread of the disease.

Prevention recommendations

The common vaccines available for EHV-1 immunization do not protect against the neurological form of EHV-1 (EHM). However, these immunizations do protect against the respiratory and abortion forms of the disease. Vaccination has been shown to reduce viral shedding and may decrease the amount of circulating virus in infected horses. So vaccination prior to infection may help reduce the severity of an outbreak. When an EHV-1 outbreak occurs, it is recommended to give a booster immunization to horses vaccinated >ninety days prior. Consult your veterinarian to determine the best vaccination approach for your horse.

Stress reduction, segregation of new horses, isolation of sick or exposed horses for three weeks, and employment good biosecurity are all important in preventing spread of this disease. Since the virus can be spread by aerosol (twenty-five to thirty feet), segregation/isolation should be greater than this distance. Direct contact with nasal secretions should be avoided and contaminated fomites (eg tack, buckets, hands, cloths) should be cleaned properly. Washing these items with soap appears to be sufficient.

Conclusion

While our understanding of EHV-1 infection is increasing, we still need more research about disease progress and spread. Efforts continue to develop a vaccine against the neurologic form. The response of state of CA, the American Association of Equine Practitioners, local veterinarians, and the Sonoma County Horse Council to keep horse owners updated on the spread of EHV-1, and to provide measures to limit the spread of EHV-1 was impressive, and the compliance of Sonoma County horse owners in following recommendations played a large part in containing the disease outbreak so quickly. 

For more information on EHV-1 and biosecurity, as well as updates, visit the SCHC website (www.sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org). You can also visit websites for the California Department of Food and Agriculture (www.cdffa.ca.gov), or the American Association of Equine Practitioners (www.aaep.org).



Sonoma County Events The Rose Parade

(A special thanks to Linda Dougherty)



The Sebastopol Wranglers, led by Linda Dougherty, chose to leave their horses home and ride stick horses during the parade.



Photo: Robert Buck

Linda Aldrich's Pony Express was one of the organizations that chose to turn out for the Rose Parade. The Pony Express was awarded second place among equestrian entries.



Photo: Robert Buck

Horses and the Rose Parade

On May 21, the 117th annual Luther Burbank Rose Parade walked, rolled, and pranced through Santa Rosa boasting a decidedly country theme. Participants wore blue jeans, cowboy boots, and ten-gallon hats. Unfortunately, the procession showcased far fewer four-legged participants than had been originally planned. Initially, a request from the Sonoma County Horse Council went out to local equestrian groups to generate as large a presence as possible in this high profile community event. The large equestrian showing was designed to show community spirit, and also to underscore the prominent role that horses and mules play in the local economy. One week before the event as many as seventy equestrians from a dozen clubs and organizations were scheduled to walk in the procession. That all changed in a matter of days as the local equestrian community became alarmed at the news of the EHV-1 outbreak centered around a Cutting show in Ogden, Utah (see related article p. 5). Clubs addressed the concerns in many ways. Some pulled their horses out altogether because they viewed contact with other horses as a potential source infection and spread. Others were forced to withdraw, as their facilities "locked down," not allowing horses out to participate. Others "rode" in the procession,



Kerry and Steve Bargsten, from Green Vista Stables, demonstrate the Ribbon Race, and the Egg in Spoon Race during a play day on May 22. Green Vista was one of the many facilities that "locked down" out of concern for EHV-1 spread. In lieu of the Rose Parade, many facilities instead held in house events, such as the Green Vista's Jailbreak Play Day, pictured here.

but on stick horses. One group piled into a pickup truck, and followed the course on wheels. For those groups who did choose to participate on their horses, the SCHC offered staging which complied with recommended biosecurity measures in order to minimize the chance of exposure to EHV-1. Despite the less than anticipated equine presence, the show did go on, with western-themed music, hay bales, and a good time had by all. exposure to EHV-1. Despite the less than anticipated equine presence, the show did go on, with western-themed music, hay bales, and a good time had by all. U

Readers Write

Local Cowgirl Competes for America's Favorite Trail Horse

Written by Nancy Kasovich and JoDean Nicolette

When Tammi Bernd decided to attend the American Competitive Trail Horse Association's (ACTHA) event in Dunnigan, Ca, she had no idea how her life would change. At the urging of friend Josette Brault, Bernd decided to enter and attend simply as a fun outing with friends. Local trail riding *afficionados* Nancy Kasovich, Sandy Edwards, Carol Barnes, Kris Skoog, and Jim Shura all went along for support and the good time. Bernd and her friends occasionally attend trail obstacle events for kicks and camaraderie, and to try new things with their horses. This time was no exception. The event in Dunnigan, limited to sixty riders, was a single day of judged competition in which riders navigated obstacles they might encounter on the trail. Tammi brought her bay Quarter Horse mare, Sandman's Dream Date (Gigi), who quietly completed the course flawlessly to the delight of Tammi and her friends.

Two weeks later, Tammi was awed to receive an email from the event organizers, stating that she was one of five riders from the Dunnigan event that had been selected to compete in the televised ACTHA America's Favorite Trail Horse Competition. Out of one thousand equestrians nationwide, only 100 horses or mules received invitations.

Tammi (formerly Tammi Galbreath) was raised in Sonoma County. Most longtime residents and horse folks know her by reputation. She has a long history of successful breeding and competing, including multiple Western Pleasure Futurity Champions, an AQHA



Tammi and Gigi

Champion, a youth World Champion in Hunter Under Saddle, and a top ten in the Hackamore Maturity in Reno. Tammi has been out of the world of heavy competition for many years, enjoying her relaxed life with her horses, and quietly contributing her expertise to the Sonoma County Driving and Riding Club (SCDRC) and the California State Parks Mounted Assistance Unit.



No problem! Gigi strides over the granite slab bridge

Well, Tammi's relaxed life received a big jolt, because if she wanted to participate in the America's Favorite event, she had to scramble. Tammi and Gigi had five days from the receipt of the email to get packed, loaded up, and get to Texas. Luckily they had great friend and neighbor, Sandy Edwards, along for the 1700+ mile, three-day journey to the gorgeous Franklin Family Ranch in Blanco, Texas. The haul was its own odyssey. On the first night, Tammi, Sandy, and Gigi stayed at a horse hotel in Blythe, California. What started out as an uneventful night took a turn for the worse when Tammi received news from home that her much loved twenty-six year old


mare Breeze (dam of Gigi) had colicked badly, and had to be euthanized. Despite her grief, Tammi decided to continue. "Having my good friend Sandy along really helped," she said, "and the fact that my wonderful riding buddies and family were supporting me both spiritually and financially in making this unexpected adventure."

The next night the Santa Rosa trio stayed in La Mesa, New Mexico at the ranch of retired vet, Dr. Joe Armstrong, and home of well-known Quarter Horse stud Von Reminic. Tammi didn't know where to stay on that stretch of road, so she looked up Quarter Horse ranches in the area, and found

Armstrong's Ranch. She contacted him, and he graciously accommodated them by offering them a stall. Armstrong was one of many wonderful folks Tammi met on the trip.

On the third day, they arrived. For the next three days, Tammi and Gigi competed on various trail obstacles in front of judges and the cameras. The first day consisted of being judged navigating obstacles on a trail ride over just a portion of the thousands of acres that make up the Franklin Family Ranch. The second day was an obstacle course in a "Trail Garden," such as crossing a granite slab bridge, and backing up over tree roots on a steep incline. The third day riders performed a freestyle in the Trail Garden. For the freestyle Tammi and Gigi navigated her choice of obstacles bridleless. ACTHA's rules state riders cannot remove bridles, so she dropped her reins and competed by guiding Gigi using a piece of twine around her neck. Tammi enjoyed each segment of the competition, especially meeting all the other riders. One of her favorite horses was a Pinto Draft-cross named Elmo, whose Missouri home had been part of the flooding. Tammi also mentioned several "very impressive" mules, and suggested that the competition should be renamed "America's Favorite Trail Mount."

How'd they do? Well, we don't know yet. The three-day event will be televised as a reality show beginning on September 13 on HR Channel on DISH network. Throughout the thirteen week series, viewers will decide by call or text (*a la* American Idol style), who continues and who will be the eventual winner. The number (so you can cast your vote for Tammi and Gigi) will be broadcast during each episode. Stay tuned for more details. Tammi said, about the competition, "I was so pleased and proud of Gigi. She did everything I asked and then some. From now on Gigi stands for Good Girl!"

According to Tammi, "Being successful with these trail obstacles, or even just in general with your horse, is really about training and trust. You have to know your horse's mind, as well as your horse's body. Sometimes when my horses are unsure or even afraid, I feel it, but I know they trust me because they respond in a positive manner and wow, what more can you ask for?" 



Tammi and first horse, Son John



Vet's Office

Column editor Michelle Beko, DVM

Preventing Lameness

Most people who've owned horses long enough have experienced their horse becoming lame at some point, often just before the show or trail ride they've been planning for weeks. Lameness in fact is a common problem for our equine companions. Lameness can be defined as an irregular gait due to a musculoskeletal problem. It can vary in severity from so mild that it can only be seen in limited situations (eg trotting the horse in a small circle on hard ground) to so severe that the horse can't walk. A lame horse will either bear less weight on the affected limb and/or take a shorter step with that leg. Lameness can be caused by a sudden injury or long term wear and tear to any joint, muscle, tendon, ligament, bone, or hoof.

There are some things that we can do to prevent specific causes of lameness. For example, making sure that your horse doesn't gain excessive weight on a lush spring-time pasture can dramatically decrease the likelihood that he'll get laminitis. There are some other things we can do to decrease the likelihood of lameness in general. Let's consider these.

Conformation

One of the most important things we can do is to start with a well-conformed horse. Evaluating conformation is an important component of a prepurchase examination (see accompanying article, p. 9). While most horses are not perfect, it is best to avoid buying a horse with major faults. In my opinion, the most significant faults include feet that are too small for the horse's body size, short upright pasterns, or forelimbs that "toe out" excessively. All of these attributes make it harder for the horse's limbs to hold up to the wear and tear imposed by regular riding.

Hoof care

Good quality and regular hoof care are essential to any horse's long term soundness. The hooves should be trimmed so they stay balanced and don't become overgrown. If the horse is shod, the shoe must be well fitted and large enough for the hoof. Horses should be reshod at a regular interval. Equine toes tend to grow faster than heels, which causes the hoof angle to change overtime. A changing hoof angle changes the angle of the weight bearing surface of most of the joints. If a horse needs to be reshod every six weeks but only gets reshod every eight weeks, the chronic imbalance will take its toll.



A desirable straight legged conformation

Fitness and fatigue

Our horses need to be fit for their intended use. We should always attempt to avoid fatigue in our mounts as it makes injury much more likely. A performance horse may be fit for her job but not for going on a five hour trail ride up and down hills. Similarly, an endurance horse may be ready for a twenty-five mile ride but not fit enough for an intensive hour long Dressage lesson. Also, excessive weight puts more strain their limbs therefore we should avoid letting our horses (or their riders!) get overweight.

Footing

The surface over which a horse is ridden is also significant. Hard footing puts a lot of wear and tear on our horse's feet and joints, while footing that is too soft and deep can strain muscles, tendons, or ligaments. Uneven ground is especially troublesome as it can put sideways strain on their limbs.

Warm up

At rest there is less circulation to muscles and more to the digestive tract and other organs. Five to ten minutes of warm up allows our steeds to get sufficient blood flowing to their muscles before we ask them to work hard. Sufficient warm up will therefore delay fatigue and injury.

While we can lower our horse's risk of becoming lame, I am convinced that the only way to guarantee that you never have a lame horse is to never own a horse! That won't work for me, so if/when my horse does go lame, I will attempt to diagnose his problem quickly, treat him appropriately and make sure he gets the rest he needs to heal. Happy trails! U



Michelle Beko, DVM is an equine veterinarian and has been practicing at Empire Equine in Sonoma County since 1992. She lives in Santa Rosa with her husband and daughter and enjoys riding her horse Hennessy. You can reach her at 707-545-3909 for questions or comments.

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Featured Guest Article

Prepurchase Exams

Written by Ann Gillis, DVM

Buying a horse is a huge investment, both financially and emotionally. As a result it behooves the potential buyer to have the horse thoroughly examined by professionals prior to purchase. This includes trainers to evaluate the suitability of the horse to the potential buyer, and also the veterinarian, who can assess the horse's physical condition. No horse is truly a "free" horse, and it is a wise financial investment to determine the horse's physical capabilities prior to taking it home.


Prepurchase exams vary depending on the veterinarian performing the evaluation as well as the intended use of the horse. Deciding what should be included in the examination requires good communication between the buyer, the veterinarian, and any other horse professionals involved. It is important to discuss with your veterinarian your expectations of both the horse and the exam, as well as intended use of the animal, including short (such as immediate performance level) and long (such as breeding) term goals. Determine if your veterinarian is experienced with the breed and the intended use of the horse. Ask your vet what procedures are included in the exam and the estimated cost. It is extremely important that you be present during the exam. It is preferable if the seller can also be there. Ask questions and discuss the findings of the exam in private, though. Remember that horses do not "pass or fail" the prepurchase exam. Rather you and your vet compile the data that are available at *that point in time*, in order to make

an informed decision. Remember that the exam findings are only relevant for that point in time, and are not relevant for other buyers or at a future date.

A thorough clinical exam, including a physical exam and a lameness exam might be all you need. This level of exam also provides enough information for your veterinarian to know whether to recommend other ancillary tests. These tests might include urine and blood analyses, genetic testing, drug testing (for things such as sedatives, long term tranquilizers, steroids, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories, etc), a reproductive exam, endoscopy, an ultrasound, or radiographs. The tests may be used diagnostically or to provide additional information regarding the animal.

Many clients wonder if they should ask for radiographs. Xrays will give you a *current* evaluation of the joints. These can be used as a "baseline" series which can document the condition of the joints at that point in time, or can be used diagnostically if there is a clinical problem that the vet has already identified (eg lameness). Radiographs cannot predict the future. They should not be allowed to provide a false sense of security, or a guarantee of future soundness.

It is vital that you understand your veterinarian's findings on the prepurchase exam. This means both the exam, and any ancillary tests. This is necessary in order for you to make an informed decision regarding purchase. Remember that no horse is perfect. Some medical conditions or conformation problems may not pose a problem for your intended use. Be sure to discuss any special needs the horse may have (such as shoeing, joint injections, systemic medications, etc), and whether you can afford these, and/or are willing to do them. After the prepurchase exam, remember that your vet cannot advise you whether or not to buy the animal—that decision ultimately rests with you. If you have doubts about any of the findings, consider getting a second opinion.

At the end of the fact-finding mission, I recommend that my clients create a balance sheet of the horse's pros and cons, including behavior, handle-ability, health, breed, conformation, suitability, performance ability, and anything else that is important to them. Even if you decide not to buy the horse, the money you have spent is worth it. Remember that there is no such thing as a "free" horse. The prepurchase exam may help you avoid both financial and emotional complications in the future. 



Ann Gillis, DVM (Equus Hall of Fame-2011) is a local equine veterinarian who has practiced in Sonoma County for the past twenty years. She lives in west county with her partner of twenty-five years, and three dogs, twenty cats, one miniature steer, four goats, four donkeys, and seven horses.



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Horse Husbandry—The Occasionally True Tales of a Local Horse Husband Anthropomorphize This!

Column editor Mark Krug

I find myself increasingly preoccupied with this term “anthropomorphic.” Not the word itself—a real mouthful—but with the concept, which is simply to ascribe human characteristics to non-human things like animals or inanimate objects. The word is almost always used as a criticism; we’re *not supposed* to assign human traits to our iPhones, or cars, or goldfish or, naturally, our horses.

Of course, we all do this. And I’d argue we do it because it is effective shorthand communication. If I tell you simply, “My laptop computer is cranky today,” you know it isn’t operating as it is designed too, but it must be working somewhat. You also know I’m frustrated and, just maybe, the cranky one. “Cranky” is a human behavior and a laptop is just circuitry so I’m guilty of anthropomorphizing.

I think this concept of anthropomorphism is antiquated when used in relation to animals, an Old World view that there’s this huge divide between animals and humans, that our species and only our species is “advanced.” When I was in grade school in the Olden Days, we were taught only humans use tools, only humans have language, only humans have emotions, and so forth. This is now largely de-bunked and some of this we can attribute to science, technology, and research, and some of it, just paying attention to animals with a clear lens. We have started to observe without the preconception that humans are somehow apart and separate from the animal kingdom. We’re one species among millions. Unfortunately, we’re rather self-important as a species, aren’t we?

Maybe the most amazing thing technology and research have brought us in this area is regarding language. Early this year, research was published that concludes border collies can comprehend the names of over 1,000 objects. Amazing? Yes, but also a validation: We’ve all been around herding dogs and know they are amazingly smart, attentive, and tuned in. More amazing was some research about prairie dog language published around the same time. Professor Con Slobodchikoff (another mouthful) has studied these critters for a couple of decades and has concluded that prairie dogs “have one of the most advanced forms of natural language known to science.” They vocalize descriptions of invaders to their habitat down to the color and size of the invader. If a coyote comes into an area, a prairie dog can tell his buddies, “Yo, a big ole’ brown canine is coming this way.” They vocalize whether a hawk is just circling or if it is diving. They have nouns, verbs, and adjectives in their language.

Yes, prairie dogs. Who knew? It is so ingrained in our human culture that humans alone have these “advanced” skills that many of us barely concede that primates can learn to master human sign language. But prairie dogs! Maybe chattering away in their colonies is the original instant messaging!

But, let’s move on. This is the *Horse Journal*, not *Prairie Dog Journal*. Here’s what I think: We anthropomorphize our horses both appropriately and inappropriately. The latter is the easier one to explain, it’s like the example of the cranky laptop—sometimes we’re lazy and imprecise when we describe our horses as if they are humans.

What I’m calling appropriate anthropomorphosis is my main point, the reason for my preoccupation. What I mean is that because horses are highly complex socially, behaviorally, and emotionally (not unlike our own species) discussing these characteristics without

being anthropomorphic is a real challenge.

Take the example of two horses that live together and get along well. We’re likely to describe their relationship in terms of human friendships. They may be very closely bonded, but their relationship is structured on horse social ties, not human ones. This doesn’t imply a lesser relationship, just one based on how horse societies work, not on how human societies work. But how to describe that friendship to others without being wordy and sounding like a PhD candidate working on an animal behavior dissertation is difficult. We’ve all had this experience where our non-horse friends start a conversation along the lines of, “I hear that horses actually have distinct personalities; they actually differ from one to another.” Rather than just say what we feel and go, “Duh,” we’re polite and say something like, “Why yes, they are all distinctly different, they’re like people in that way...” And this is really a lie, isn’t it? Horses are distinct individuals, they do share that in common with people, but they aren’t like people, they’re like horses!

After we’ve learned and accepted that horses aren’t dumb beasts, but rather complex individuals within complex social structures, we naturally try and communicate this as best we can and that means, most likely, setting ourselves up to be judged as anthropomorphic. I think at root, the issue is that it’s impossibly hard to perceive the world as a horse perceives it, except maybe for the Tom Dorrance’s of the world. And even if we could master this, we’d necessarily have to try and communicate that mastery to others using language geared exclusively toward the human experience.

So maybe anthropomorphosis comes down to a limitation inherent to our human language and our human minds. We simply aren’t armed with language to adequately describe the extraordinary traits, abilities, and characteristics of our individual horses. And more fundamentally, we aren’t horses and, try as we might to understand their world view, our own limitations as a species get in the way.

So, given this obsession of mine, it won’t be a surprise that one of my favorite bumper stickers of all time is:

Don’t anthropomorphize animals, they hate that.

It could only be improved if it said, “Don’t anthropomorphize animals, it makes them cranky.” U

Mark lives near Graton with his Dressage Queen wife Cheryl, a high-vocabulary Australian Shepherd mix, a bunch of complicated and distinctly individualistic horses, a cranky cat, but no prairie dogs.



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Featured Guest Article

Navicular Disease: Current Concepts

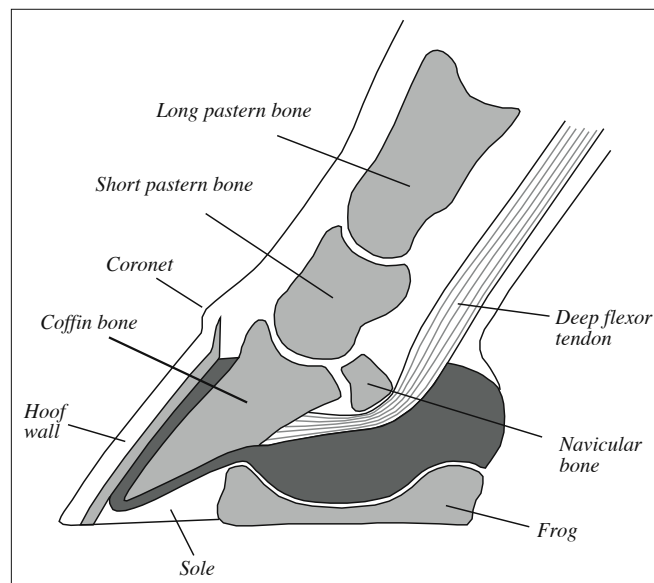
Written by John W Kaufman, DVM

This article will address primary navicular disease and also abnormalities of associated structures and current therapy options. Primary navicular disease typically affects the distal sesamoid (navicular bone) of the horse's forelimb and manifests as chronic unilateral or bilateral forelimb lameness. Veterinarians identify navicular symptoms as sensitivity over the navicular (frog) area of the foot with hoof testers, response to diagnostic nerve blocks of the Palmer digital nerves, perhaps resulting in shifting front limb lameness to the contralateral limb. The x-rays of the feet after the nerve block incorporate the five diagnostic views of each foot: Solar Margin, 65 degree Navicular, Skyline, AP, Lateral. It is important to remove the shoes to allow full visualization of all structures of the distal limb of the foot. In a horse with navicular, the x-rays will show primary navicular bone lesions including, but not limited to, the following: build up on the wings of the navicular bone, disruption of the flexor margin surface with increased synovial fossa and increased vascular channels, increase in cystic or lytic lesions of the sagittal ridge and from the skyline view, and a loss of the distinction between the medullary cavity and the cortex interface.

Primary navicular disease is managed by corrective trimming and shoeing combined with anti-inflammatory therapy for pain relief. Trimming ensures that the pastern axis is aligned, the foot is balanced, and the toe is brought back. Depending on the needs of the horse, elevation of the heel of the shoe may be necessary and squaring of the toe and /or rolling of the toe of the shoe can help by enhancing break over. When corrective trimming and shoeing and anti-inflammatory pain relief is needed, initial treatment often begins with administration and monitoring of cost effective medications. Often treatment with Butazolidin (phenylbutazone) is first, followed by Banamine (flunixin meglumine). Recently, treatment with a Cox-2 inhibitor Equioxx (firocoxib) has shown promise as it is kinder on the horse's intestinal lining than other inflammatory treatments.

When lameness persists there are many other avenues to pursue to delineate the cause of chronic foot pain. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) is particularly beneficial in helping to identify the specific cause(s) of the chronic pain. These include pathology of the distal sesamoid impar navicular ligaments, the collateral navicular ligaments, collateral coffin joint ligaments, navicular bursitis, synovitis and osteoarthritis of the coffin joint, lesions of the coffin bone, lesions of the deep digital flexor tendon, and any combination of these conditions.


Further therapies can include sterile coffin joint and or navicular bursa injections, administration of aspirin and Isoxaprine, shockwave therapy, and intravenous therapy with biphosphates. Sterile coffin joint and/or navicular bursa injections using cortisone, hyaluronic acid, and antibiotics are beneficial because they decrease joint fluid pressure, lubricate joints, and provide pain relief. Administration of aspirin and Isoxaprine are beneficial because the aspirin helps to make the platelets smaller while the increases blood flow to the navicular bones and related structures. With increased circulation, there is a resultant decrease of inflammation and



BASIC HOOF ANATOMY

expected reduction of pain. Shockwave therapy is beneficial, reaching the navicular bone through the bulbs of the heels and the frog. The treatment is used to make a chronic condition acute in order to bring more blood flow into the area and to decrease inflammation and ultimately provide pain relief.

Biphosphate therapy is relatively new to the equine world, but has been used for a long time in the treatment of humans to increase bone density. An intravenous therapy called Tiludronate (Tildren) IV has been introduced for the treatment of navicular disease and other orthopedic conditions. The evidence supporting this treatment is anecdotal, but the treatment has been used for many years in France for people with osteoporosis. It has been used in horses for some time. This therapy is effective because it densifies the bone and provides pain relief. Another biphosphate used in human medicine has been made available for use in horses. This medication also administered IV is called zoledronic acid (Zoldronate). This medication is estimated to be one thousand times more potent than Tiludronate and has a longer clinical effect. In humans, this treatment is recommended as an annual IV infusion for people with osteoporosis. When Tiludronate or Zoldronate therapies are provided, the routine administration of Banamine or Buscopan is necessary to prevent potential abdominal pain. With Zoldronate treatment, horses who are not on alfalfa hay require calcium supplementation a week or two prior to treatment as the Zoldronate can bind with calcium and make the patient hypocalcemic. Both have produced promising results with pain relief for sometimes up to six months and longer without other adjunctive therapy except corrective shoeing.

Navicular disease and/or chronic foot pain can be frustrating to manage. With today's advances in imaging and therapy, the horse with navicular disease and/or chronic foot pain can have a more productive, less painful and higher quality life. 



A Horseman's View

Column editor Art Grunig

Give Your Horse the Freedom to Be Good

When your horse realizes that what you want brings it joy also, your horse will want it too. If you share your joy with the horse when the horse is doing something you like the horse will have your joy. It will also have its own joy to add to it and share it back with you. Now you have even more joy. As it goes back and forth the joy is continually amplified. Be connected in joy.

While you may have to dictate to the horse to get the horse started with something or get it back on track if it leaves the picture of what you are looking for, you cannot get the reliable and happy results with dictation alone. Do not ask too much. If you ask the horse to do something too long the horse will lose its joy. If you are too critical the horse will lose its joy. If you are too bossy the horse will lose its joy. Give the horse the freedom to learn and discover for itself things that you want. Then they will be given to you by the horse (not taken by you). Gifts bring more joy than extortion.

Many horses have trouble learning to manage their balance with the weight, the contact, the feel, and the limitations of the rider. If the rider micromanages the situation or tries to force the solution on the horse, the rider's efforts show up as interference and causes more problems for the horse. It is often better to let the horse discover how to manage it than to manage it for the horse.

If we have the horse looking for good things, all we need to do is keep the horse in the picture of what we are looking for and let the horse discover what is there. Let the horse discover what we are looking for. Let the horse discover how to handle the situation. Let the horse discover the joy that is there. This is true for the horse learning to feel good with itself and to feel enjoyment, and comfort with the rider. It is also true for the horse finding joy in its



Art demonstrates his bodywork technique

job whether it is working cows, trail riding, jumping, or whatever. Discovering the joy is most important and most wonderful.

When riding a horse that has poor balance and form at the canter, guide the horse until it is safe for both of you, help it a bit to give it the idea of being balanced and then let the horse travel on its own. Sit quiet and steady giving the horse the freedom between your legs and in the bridle to experiment with different things. If the horse makes a mistake and causes its balance to get worse,

just wait. See if the horse can work it out. If the horse panics, help it enough to steady it or maybe even stop it and start over.

After the horse gets better balanced and more confident pick it up with the aides and very gently help it be a little better. The horse will usually accept this wisdom at this point if you are careful to keep the requirements small and easy to do. Then give it more freedom for a while. When the horse asks if it is okay to stop, let it. Do one to three repetitions each way in a session. The horse will learn to be balanced, feel good about itself and its job and to enjoy and trust you riding it. This approach works just as well with any job the horse is asked to do.

In the beginning, when things are new and the skill level is low, you need to give the horse a large space of freedom to be good in. As the understanding and skill levels increase the space needed can get smaller and the horse can handle more input and guidance. In fact, it often increases the joy when the work gets tighter and more excellent. A lot of horses really get off on doing something really well. If the horse cannot find joy in a given situation the horse should have a different job. This is a human responsibility. We control the world the horse lives in. If the horse cannot find happiness in its situation we should find a way to put the horse in a situation where the horse likes its life.

Many times all a horse needs is to learn how to enjoy what is there, but sometimes a horse just does not like certain things. This can be due to personal tastes and is often due to ambition, talent, and energy situations. The bottom line is if there is not enough joy in it for the horse there will also be less for the rider. The answer is to find a job or situation that the horse can find joy in for itself and to share with its rider. U

To contact Art about training or body work, call him at 707-838-9755, or email him at artgrunig@aol.com. You can also visit his website at www.artgrunig.com.



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Readers Write

International Dressage Trainer Teaches Riders to Have Fun! Written by Tracy Underwood



Santa Rosa Equestrian Center (SREC) welcomes Swedish Dressage trainer, Erika Jansson as it's newest addition. Erika's love for horses and teaching shines through in her fun loving approach to Dressage. The results are happy horses that are eager to learn and happy riders that are enjoying their horses more than they thought possible.

Erika was formally educated in Sweden. Unlike the United States, the European


countries require many years of diligent study and training before you can call yourself a horse trainer. Erika attended the Horse College in Skara for two years. The curriculum consisted of equine science, nutrition, shoeing, breeding and bloodlines, and veterinary assistance. After graduating from the Horse College, she was accepted at the at Sweden's Flyinge National Stud stable management school. Her riding progressed under Sweden's top Dressage, Eventing, and Show Jumping trainers, including Finnish Olympian Kyra Kyrklund and Kyra's coach Richard White. Upon completion of her studies, Erika was the first Swedish rider invited to be an auction rider at the world famous Hannoverian Verband in Germany. Erika came to the United States in 1997 to be the private trainer for the Furth family at their Chalk Hill Winery Equestrian Center. While at Chalk Hill she frequently had the opportunity to train with Steffen Peters and Debbie McDonald. She continues to train horses for the Furth family.

When Erika starts with a new horse and rider she has clients fill out a questionnaires about their horses and themselves. People sometimes forget to mention issues that may affect training so the questionnaire helps fill in the blanks. She also examines tack for proper fit. She likes to ride the horse initially so she can feel what the owners are experiencing. Horses often look different than they feel. Dressage riders, in particular, often get caught up in their strive for perfection and lose their perspective. She is often heard telling her students, "Dare to make a mistake," and "It's supposed to be fun!"



Erika uses cavalettis as one of her many teaching tools

Erika strives to keep lessons interesting for both the rider and the horse. She frequently uses poles, pylons, and other props to create exercises that are fun and motivating. Erika is a great believer in cross training. Many of her Dressage horses jump on a weekly basis. Sometimes she will lunge a horse over jumps. She doesn't require the jumps to be high, just enough to get their backs up. She also likes to get the horses out of the arena. Her favorite way to introduce horses to *passage* is outside the arena. She likes to have two horses riding up a hill, she will have the other horse and rider gallop up the hill while she is holding her horse back. She uses the energy the horse generates from wanting to catch up to the other horse and asks for *passage*, no whip or spur, just the horse's own energy.

Erika offers a fun strength building cavaletti clinic at SREC for horses of all disciplines. Riders are placed into groups of four based upon the size of their horse's stride. The riders start off by going over a couple of poles in a line and Erika keeps adding up to twenty-five poles. All the while the rider must keep the horse connected and manage the tempo. It is a very challenging and rewarding clinic. Upcoming clinics are scheduled for June 26, July 24, and August 28, 2011. Clinics are held at Santa Rosa Equestrian Center, LLC, 3184 Guerneville Road, Santa Rosa CA 95401. For more information about SREC visit www.srequestrian.com, or call (707) 566-0500. For more information about Erika or her clinics, please visit www.erikajansson.com, or to schedule a lesson contact her by phone at (707) 326-7612. 

Tracy Underwood is a real estate attorney by profession. Tracy moved to Santa Rosa from Manhattan Beach, California in 2004 when she and Wesley Leckner purchased SREC. Tracy enjoys overseeing the day to day operations of SREC and European Pony School. She is very active in the local horse community, hosting several Dressage and jumper schooling shows. She is a Northern Regional Director of the California Dressage Society (CDS) as well as co-chair of the Sonoma chapter of CDS. Tracy can be reached at tracy@srequestrian.com.



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Readers Write

Pippa Returns to Rolex

Written by Andrea Pfeiffer

I really couldn't believe it had been 365 days since we last entered the Dressage ring at Rolex, but yet here we were again. Kelly Prather was set to ride our Irish Sporthorse Pippa in the Three Day Eventing competition. My memories of last year were not as fuzzy as I had hoped! We spent an entire year basically getting ready for this moment. The preparation list was long: planning, fitness, and travel details, but once again we were on our way.

Day one

As our Pippa, Kelly, and Nancy left the barn on another adventure East, I followed along by air to meet them in Kentucky. Both their drive and my flight were uneventful. We had a new groom on board this year, Maddy Hogan, who fits right into Team Chocolate Horse Farm! Claus Bergener joined us from Germany and all was a go for another round at America's only Four Star Event.

Day three

I now realize why there are so many churches west of the Mississippi; the weather inspires you to pray, for either one thing or another. This year was no exception. We arrived along with hundreds of other horses and riders, and joined the bustle of preparations to make a home at the Kentucky Horse Park. It turned out to be an amazing week. As all settled down we were notified of impending bad weather... How bad? Well bad enough to evacuate all horses, riders, grooms, and support staff to the new indoor that was built for the World Equestrian Games (WEG). So picture this, an evacuation order to grab and go and RUN to the indoor, roughly a quarter mile away. With fifty horses in tow and all that goes with it we ran (tempted to hop on bareback)! Fifty Four Star fit horses running to safety—it was like flying kites at the end of a rope—what a scene that was. The wind was enough to blow you over and the rain at this point was blinding. The horses were not too happy about the wind up their tails and the rain beating in their faces. Unbelievably, we all made it safely indoors and literally rode out the storm. Once inside, the participants and crews remained calm. I was impressed at the organization and how smoothly it all worked out. Once we were released, all the horses moved quietly back to the barns. We watched the news that evening and were shocked at the incredible devastation that the tornadoes had wrought. We had sat through it all in the indoor arena. I will take my 100-year earthquake any day. The local folks deal with these horrors every year at this time—they are tougher stock than I.

Rolex officials moved the horse inspection to late afternoon to avoid a head-on collision with the weather. Pippa's first jog was nerve wracking, as the entire weekend can start or end here. Just as Kelly and Pippa jogged out for the ground jury, the sun chose to burst through and shine down on them, and I heard the most welcome word that I can hear: Accepted. Our journey could now



Pippa and Kelly demonstrate their great form on the Rolex Cross Country course

officially continue.

Day five

Dressage day was quickly upon us and all our preparations were going to be put to the test. We were given a Thursday draw, and before lunch. I felt lucky about this because the grounds are usually quieter on Thursday, and at this time. We had an hour for ring familiarization which we made full use of. The dreaded TV cameras were once again in place and I must admit my heart sank. This was our undoing last year, and we spent

twelve straight months working on the issue of stage fright. Now all I could do was wait and see! We spent an hour working around the cameras to spy all the nooks and crannies where I am sure all the Dressage goblins hide out. After we left, all I could do was keep a stiff upper lip and truly hope for the best. Kelly and Pippa had a very good warm up and were as prepared as they ever could be. When they were up, they generated a strong trot down the shoot and now all was up to them. As usual at any competition you really could hear a pin drop. I sat in the owners/groom box with a friend and promptly grabbed her arm and did not let go. I am sure she still has bruises from the longest five and a half minutes of my life. Well let me tell you, Kelly rode like a rock star. Pippa definitely remembered her experience of last year and hinted that she



Water doesn't phase Pippa as she and Kelly complete a clean Cross Country round

might repeat her camera shyness, but we could see Kelly say (with her lips and her seat), "Not today, Pippa." As they headed down the center line for the final time I had tears in my eyes, but for joy this time, not utter disbelief! They had conquered their fear. I was so proud of them both.

Day six

These events go by fast, so we were off to check out the Cross Country course. Rolex had a new course designer this year whom

Photo: Andrea Pfeiffer



Pippa and Kelly clear the Show Jumps without a hitch

we knew very well, Derek Di Grazia. In the west we have had the privilege of riding many of his courses, so we felt like he was part of the home team. He is an excellent designer with a very good eye on how a horse will perceive a particular problem on course. He designed an excellent, well-built Four Star track that was ready to be jumped. The only problem was trying to find a canoe or kayak to check it out! With all the incredibly bad weather, the course was virtually underwater. At the sunken road you could have run the rapids! I wondered how they would make the course work? The water jumps went well over our boots—a pair of hip waders might not have been tall enough. I really have no idea how they pulled it off, but when Cross Country day arrived the course looked amazing. The sunken road turned into the fifth water jump and several of the gallops were a bit damp but definitely manageable.

Day seven

Cross Country day dawned with great weather, cool and crisp. Kelly and Pippa were early in the day so the footing was still in good condition. Of course one is always nervous on Cross Country day but both my girls ran well here last year so I was confident of a finishing round. Mind you, after the Dressage round, no one would stand next to me for fear of losing a limb! Even my husband stayed home. Too much stress, is what he said! It was a tough day for so many. Fourteen horse and rider combinations had their 2011 Rolex come to an end. Luckily we only saw a few minor rider injuries, and no injured horses in the spills. To watch Kelly and Pippa leave the box is always a great moment. To see them come through the finish is even better, and that is exactly what they did. Ok, more tears, but all joy! After Cross

Country we go through the usual mayhem getting horses cooled down and taken care of so that they jog sound the following day. It was a late night but all were confident that Pippa would jog sound and finish.

Day eight


Show Jump day started very early as the jog was at 8am. Pippa was unwrapped, iced, cleaned up, acupuncture, and made ready for her final appearance in front of the ground jury. As usual the tension is tight as you wait for the word. Pippa really did look perfect and the judges did not hesitate to "accept" her. One more box checked off. Only Show Jumping to follow. This really is a strong discipline for Kelly and Pippa. They have a good history of pulling off clean rounds at big moments and of course we were all hoping Rolex would be no exception. The stands were packed, and the weather perfect, so we were ready to roll. Jimmy Wofford helped warm them up for this final phase and also walked the course with us. It was a big, but clean round, and well within their grasp. The pair had a

workman-like warm up with one good hind leg rub before they headed down the shoot for the last time. The crowd sent up a huge round of applause as they entered and the look on Pippa's face said it all. She realized that crowd was here to see her and all

of a sudden I could swear she was smiling at the same cameras that had terrified her before. The whistle blew and off they went. I was at the edge of my seat, as was everybody else. Kelly guided Pippa with such courage, grace, and skill and was rewarded with a double clean round. The stadium went crazy. I went crazy and the smile on Kelly's face leaving the ring is a smile I will never forget. That final box now checked off! Kelly and Pippa have completed the Rolex Kentucky Four-Star Event. A journey set in motion when Pippa arrived from Ireland nine years ago.

Day ten and beyond

Our trips home were uneventful. And it's a good thing be-

cause we are all tired. All are home now. Pippa is enjoying a well-deserved break, and Kelly and I looking toward the future. 



Another clean jump

Except as noted, photos by Shannon Brinkman
Art & Sport Horse Photographer
www.shannonbrinkman.net

Pippa (aka Ballinakil Glory) is an Irish Sporthorse ridden by Kelly Prather, and owned by James and Andrea Pfeiffer. Pippa and Kelly's accomplishments include winning the Three Star Cross Country International Championships at Rebecca Farm in 2007 and 2009, and representing the World Cup Team Strzegom, Poland in 2009. The Pfeiffers own the Chocolate Horse Farm in Petaluma, a facility that specializes in Dressage and Eventing. For more information about Chocolate Horse Farm visit www.chocolatehorsefarm.net, or call 707-778-7544.



All Creatures Great and Small

Column editor Grant Miller, DVM

What Makes Horses Skinny, and How Can They Be Fixed?



A recent rescue, initially (at left), and during rehabilitation (above)

Horse rescue organizations are taking in an increasing number of horses in need this summer. While many factors can cause horses to need assistance, the most common is malnourishment. When caloric expenditure exceeds caloric intake, a horse will lose weight. These horses are in starvation state. Rescue organizations become quickly familiar with the common category of the starved horse; these horses are a large proportion of horses in rehab. Feeding a horse back to a healthy body weight is not a simple or straightforward task. It can require months of dedicated and expensive efforts, and should be overseen by a veterinarian as there are many potential pitfalls (eg diarrhea, laminitis, and organ failure). Understanding the major causes of starvation is the first step in formulating a useful treatment strategy for a horse in need.

Inadequate caloric intake

The most common cause of an underweight horse is not enough feed. Starved horses who not been fed at all (vs underfed) are the most challenging to rehab. Absence of any food in the digestive tract for a long period of time can alter the intestines' ability to absorb nutrients. Refeeding can cause colitis (inflammation in the intestines) and a fatal diarrhea. Fortunately, most cases are simply fed too little. In this instance, the horse digests its own body stores in order to meet its energy requirements. In order for a horse to gain weight, its caloric intake must exceed its caloric demands. This is also termed a "positive energy balance." The most obvious way to create a positive energy balance is to feed high quality feeds, high in digestible energy. A high quality feed is palatable, free of contaminants, and easily chewable and digestible. Feeds that are particularly high in energy include pelleted supplements, alfalfa hay, grains, rice bran and oil. It is very important to seek veterinary consultation in formulating a feed plan for a starved horse since some of these foodstuffs can have negative side effects if used incorrectly. Veterinarians have extensive training in horse nutrition and should be the first call for advice when helping a skinny horse. In addition to increasing caloric intake, decreasing caloric demand can be important. Using shelter and / or blankets to decrease the horse's work to keep warm, limiting strenuous exercise, and reducing stress can ensure that food can simply be turned into body mass.

Dental issues

Horses' teeth grow throughout their life. As a result of this continual growth, the chewing process can result in sharp enamel points. Sharp edges dig into the cheeks and tongue, resulting in painful sores. In order to avoid pain, many horses will alter the way that they chew their food. In most cases, altering their food grinding pattern will result in lower efficiency in digesting nutrients because chew-

ing (mastication) is the first step in digestion. If not properly ground up, food will pass through the gut without the maximum harvest of calories. Some thin horses are fed large quantities of food and still cannot keep weight, simply due to ineffective chewing. Dental care performed by a licensed veterinarian or licensed horse dentist in the direct supervision of a veterinarian should be considered when feeding a starved horse. Some horses have missing or abscessed teeth that can impeded their ability to chew, in addition to sores. To maximize the use of feed and avoid waste, tooth care should be considered early in the rehabilitative process.

Parasites

In rare circumstances, parasites can be responsible for weight loss in horses. Many people will first suspect parasites as when they see a skinny horse, but in reality lack of proper feed and dental issues are far more common. Nevertheless, because parasites can live anywhere in the digestive tract they should be considered in a rehabilitation program. Deworming a starved horse should only be done under veterinary supervision as the horse may be too weak to handle a massive parasite die-off. It is recommended to do a simple parasite egg test on the horse's feces prior to deworming. Rescuers are often surprised to find few or no parasites in their horse. When choosing a dewormer, a veterinarian should be consulted to recommend type and quantity.

Chronic disease

Some horses suffer weight loss from chronic disease. The two most common diseases include cancer and Cushing's Disease. Cancer occurs in many forms and can affect horses of any age. Some types include squamous cell, lymphoma / leukemia, sarcoids, and melanoma. Cancer results in the uncontrolled growth of tissue (tumors) and can spread all over the body (metastasis). Cancer can steal thousands of calories/day in advanced stages. This results in rapid weight loss as a horse cannot eat enough to overcome the demand. Cushing's Disease is generally considered a disease of elderly horses. It results when the brain loses its ability to control hormonal functions. The pituitary, adrenal, and thyroid glands, and liver and bone marrow lose ability to work well. In advanced cases high cortisol concentrations in the blood cause stress and weight loss. Testing for Cushing's is safe, inexpensive, and simple, as is the treatment. Other chronic diseases causing weight loss include heart failure and neurologic dysfunction. In order to rule out chronic disease as a cause of weight loss, rescuers should consult a veterinarian.

By understanding the four main categories that can result in horse weight loss, good Samaritans can increase their chances of success in rehabilitating a starved horse. Veterinary involvement in these cases is crucial, as complications can occur when helping these fragile animals back to good health. U



A healthy weight (and horse) after refeeding under a vet's supervision

Trails and Open Spaces

Column editor Sarah Reid

From the Tail End, Part Two

Myth or Fact: Horse Manure Spreads Invasive Species

"There are no studies that significantly implicate trail use by horses with spreading weeds." *Envirohorse*

Here's a hot topic in the back country world, as well as our local horse camps: do horses spread weeds in their manure? Should we be feeding weed-free hay all the time, or just before we go to a place that requires it? How far in advance should we feed weed-free hay before going? What exactly IS weed-free hay? How can you find "certified weed-free" hay and are pelleted feeds considered "weed-free"? Does horse manure truly spread and sprout seeds?

Research has been conducted by several groups, including American Endurance Riders Conference (AERC), and the topic is hotly debated in groups such as Back Country Horsemen of America. This is an issue to consider when going out to parks and lands and trails with our horses.

Manure = weeds

If you wonder whether horse manure facilitates the spread of weeds, consider the following questions. How often have you ever seen anything other than mold spores growing on a pile of horse manure on a trail? In wet weather, when seeds might germinate, horse manure is often diluted to the point of washing away. In dry weather, manure quickly breaks down within a day or two and blows away or scatters. Do the seeds get a chance to sprout or not? Do they get scattered with the manure and sprout nearby? If the seeds do sprout nearby, why are our trails not choked with wheat, oats, or barley?

According to *Envirohorse*, "The bulk of unprocessed forage consumed by California horses is alfalfa (*Medicago sativa*), rye grass (*Lolium multiflorum* or *perenne*), timothy hay (*Phleum pratense*) and oat hay (*Avena sativa*). If horses were a vector of seed spread, these grasses could be prevalent in our open spaces and parks, but they are not, except possibly in places where they were introduced in earlier times as grazing forage for cattle. Because the horse is not perceived as a major contributor to the spread of weed seed from trail use, trail manure has been little studied. However, there is much literature on composted horse manure."

Studies have also shown that chewing and the equine digestive tract kills a substantial fraction of seeds horses swallow. Seeds that make it through the horse whole and germinate in the dung are immediately degraded by dung organisms, that is if they aren't eaten by a passing bird, skunk, raccoon, squirrel, deer, or some other hungry critter. Further, our large herbivores, such as equines, do not significantly carry seeds in their hair or coats, even in winter. As you buy your horse feed, there are several related issues to consider, which might impact your choice. If you buy whole oats for example, unless chewed well, the oats go through whole. Therefore, your horse probably didn't get any nutrition out of it. Better to buy crimped oats so your horse is more likely to get the nutrition, and the seed has less theoretical potential to sprout.

AERC found in their study that when they spread manure along-

side trails to see if any seeds that might be present would sprout, the so-called invasive weed species in the manure could not grow because the environment was too hostile. Also, seedlings could not take root on the trail itself because of the exposure and the constant trail traffic. AERC determined that horse manure simply was not a conduit for spreading weeds on trails.


Weed-free products

Many horse campgrounds, including Stewarts Horse Camp at Point Reyes National Seashore, request that you bring weed-free hay during your stay. Complying may not be so easy because finding baled "certified" weed-free hay can be challenging. Many stores say their hay is weed-free but cannot supply a certification for you. Many National Forest equine campgrounds now also request weed-free hay, and for back country horse camping, require pelleted feed only. Interestingly, when you day-ride at Point Reyes National Seashore weed-free hay is not requested or required. My take on this is that the campground is attempting to avoid the spread of seeds through hay spread on the ground during feeding time at camp.

Many pelleted hay feeds are certified weed-free and say so right on the product feed tag. If you are not sure, contact the company directly. One of our local, northern California companies that supplies certified weed-free pelleted hay is Elk Grove Milling. Local feed stores carry their products. These are quality pelleted hay products, with no additives. Often better hay goes into these than what you might see locally in some baled products! Always transition your horse slowly, before you leave home. Make sure you are weighing and feeding enough pelleted hay product to accommodate what you were feeding in baled hay, and to accommodate heavier trail riding work or stress of camping/traveling. Provide a feed tub deep enough to avoid spillage and spoilage, and provide storage which discourages "break-ins" from unwanted critters, big and small. If traveling, research to find out where to re-supply.

What's the scoop?

Even if your chosen equestrian campground has rules and/or recommendations, there's a lot of room for personal choice and decision-making. Research your choices on the web. Some trail users are adamantly opposed to our manure on trails because they firmly believe that our equines are spreading weeds. I firmly believe they are not. I firmly believe we are spreading Sudden Oak Death more on our own shoes as hikers than our horses are spreading weeds in manure. But that is something for a different magazine altogether, like Bay Nature.

For further study please consider visiting the following websites used for this article: www.aerc.org, www.californiastatehorsemen.com/envirohorse, and www.americantrail.org. 

Sarah Reid is an equestrian representative to several open space and park projects. If you would like to share trail or public land news with Sarah, or you have an idea for a story, email her at trails@sonoma-countyhorsecouncil.org.



Colts and Fillies

Column editor Kelly Henson

Cortez Finds His Heart

Guest written by Jose Landaverde

Magdalene and Cortez were together every day. They would buck and gallop in the middle of the pasture from sunrise until the evening fireflies appeared in the sky. The two jet black horses ate the crisp, fresh grass in the morning together and Cortez picked wild flowers and would decorate Magdalene's mane as she drank from the pond. They did the same routine for many seasons to the point that Magdalene wanted something more than flowers, or midday strolls around the shores of the pond. Magdalene wanted Cortez's heart.



Cortez and Magdalene enjoy fun in the morning sun

"I cannot give you that," he answered. "You see, it's far away, on a black mountain. And on that black mountain, hiding in the midst of a forest, there is a small cave. And inside that cave there is a box, and in that box there is a heart. My heart is hidden so no one can ever break it. Not even you Magdalene," he finished.

"You are always detached from me Cortez. I want more than just you next to me. I need more than just eating grass and apples together, I need your heart," Magdalene explained. "I'm leaving you, please do not follow me to the other pasture this time, please don't." Magdalene walked away. It took many days to drain the tears from Cortez's sweet brown eyes.

He knew he had to go on a long journey for Magdalene to love him again. So he went after his heart that was inside that box, inside that cave, a thousand miles away.

He took some alfalfa, and some oats, and a picture of Magdalene.

A wise horse once told him that all a horse needs to survive is a strong faith, food, drink, and love. He had the first things, but he had lost the last one. And he was determined to get it back. "I will come back and give you my heart Magdalene. Meet me in the middle of the pasture before the rooster speaks," he called out as he trotted away to the black mountain.

Cortez walked for hours, then days. His heart was so far away. He was thinking of turning around and going back. "We were doing so well without the heart...just trotting around and laughing near the pond," he kept thinking to himself.

Cortez kept on walking. He became very hungry and so he ate some of the hay, and drank some of the water from a shallow creek and looked at Magdalene's picture to gather more strength. He must have already been walking for hundreds of miles. He climbed the mountain. A few black wolves were trying to get in his way. One told him that there are better looking mares than Magdalene. Another told him that Magdalene does not really love him. A huge wolf kept saying she would break his heart. Cortez spoke out loud and showed the picture of

Magdalene to the creatures. "She is worth it and is everything I want," he whinnied. He entered the forest. Then he saw the cave. He saw many caves, in many shapes. He guessed that a lot of horses hid a lot of stuff here—stuff they were afraid could break.

He thought to himself, "How will I find mine?" He continued searching, hoping to see something that stood out, and then he saw it. He recognized the cave from his dreams. He ran towards it, and entered the small dark cave. He lifted up the box, and opened it. Inside the box, wrapped in a red velvet cloth

was his heart. Cortez put it in his bag and turned to exit the cave, when he saw Magdalene. Magdalene was in the opposite cave, opening a box too. She lifted a piece of red velvet cloth that covered her Fear. Suddenly they turned around and saw one another, and started laughing, and laughing. "I think I love you," Cortez said. "I think I believe you," Magdalene answered. They trotted down the other side of the black mountain and saw their pasture at the foot of it. Cortez turned and lifted his giant neck over hers, and said, "I guess my heart was closer than I thought, I just took the long way around to find it." U

Jose Landaverde has been a resident of Sonoma County for over twenty years. He has worked for the county for more than ten years helping local residents access social services. Jose was introduced to the world of horses by his fiancé, Kelly and has been very supportive of the time and energy owning a horse requires. In his spare time, Jose enjoys creative writing and artwork.

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Readers Write

My First Horse Show

Written by Kayla Hordyk

I had always imagined myself performing in Dressage competitions, but when I was actually faced with it, I was terrified. It all started when Kris, my riding teacher, asked me if I wanted to ride Rosie in a horse show. Well of course I said, "Yes." I had always dreamed of it! Kris told me that I would have to start riding twice a week, and I could ride alone and practice the routines I was supposed to memorize. When I went home that day a flood of questions rushed into my brain. Questions like what would I wear, what courses would I memorize, and how would I get to the show? When I finally fell asleep, I dreamed of Rosie and I looking like professionals doing a great performance.

When I woke, I knew I would make my dream come true. At my next lesson Kris answered all my questions. She let me try on the jacket and shirt that I had to wear. She gave me the courses I would have to memorize, and told me I would be riding with her on the way there.

I went home that day and worked on memorizing the courses. I studied every night until I could not keep my eyes open any longer. I practiced hard. I rode twice a week for a month and a half. I rode alone for the first time with no teacher and no parents. The only things accompanying me were the trees and woodland animals. It was very unsettling but peaceful at the same time. I actually felt as if Rosie was my legs and I was the torso. "Wow," I thought, "is this what it truly feels like to have a real bond with a horse?"

Dad went with me to most of my alone practices with Rosie. He called out my routines. Once when I asked to Rosie halt, she side-stepped. I was terrified! What if she did this during the show? The next time I rode she didn't do it. I was hoping and hoping that she wouldn't sidestep anymore.

When I had my lessons with Kris, we worked on Rosie's halt. Rosie got better at being "on the bit," which means her nose is perpendicular to the ground and her neck is arched. Sometimes Rosie likes to stick her nose out instead of tucking it in.

The day before the show I went over to Kris's house to get ready. I cleaned and polished Rosie's tack until I could see my reflection. I brought Rosie down from her stall and brushed her with a curry-comb and then a soft brush. I shampooed her, too. I then braided her mane so it would fall on the proper side. When I got her dried off, I covered her with a blanket so she would not be dirty the next day. When all that was done, I loaded the horse trailer and thought, "Wow! That was really tiring!"

I couldn't sleep that night; all my worries and fears came to my mind! I was thinking about Rosie side-stepping, not being on



Kris, Rosie, and Kayla: a successful first show

time, me passing out... All those things! When the morning came, somehow I got myself up and dressed in the shirt, pants, jacket, pin, and hair barrette. Before I knew it, I was out the door heading to Kris' house. When I got there, I went and got Rosie and brushed her again. Kris oiled her hooves to make them shiny. We loaded her into the trailer and we were off in a flash.


When we got to the show, and went to unload Rosie, she did a little rear of excitement. I thought, "Oh no! Please, please, please don't do that during the show!" Rosie calmed down. I was tacking her up when my grandparents, parents, and sister came. I smiled and waved them over. When Kris and I went to scout the arena, we saw a girl riding a freaked out pony. The pony was shrieking, and rearing. This was

my first impression at my first horse show. I was a nervous wreck. But Rosie didn't rear, buck, or neigh when we practiced her. My stress level came down.

When it was time for my performance, I trotted to the middle of the arena, halted, and saluted to the judge. When I halted Rosie did not side step. I was so happy! I went on with the rest of my routine. My circles were a little "eggy" but otherwise I did well. When I saluted to the judge at the end, she asked me, "So, how do you think you did?" I said that I thought I did well. I wasn't surprised when she said Rosie needs to mind the bit more.

My second performance came up fast, and before I knew it I was cantering and doing circles in the arena. I got the same evaluation as last time. When I untacked Rosie, I shared some of my hot dog bun with her because she did such a great job. I was hooked.

The color was just returning to my face, when Kris asked me to check to see if we won any ribbons. We told the lady my name and she pointed to a little pile. Kris and I were so surprised! There were two BLUE 1st PLACE RIBBONS in that pile! My family was also in disbelief. My favorite reaction was my grandma's. "Oh my gosh!" she yelled. I hugged everyone.

I ran to Rosie and showed her what we had won. I cried as I kissed her little velvet nose and hugged her. I learned that day. I learned that things are not always as scary as they seem. You just have to believe in yourself, and when you believe in yourself, anything is possible. 

Kayla Hordyk is now fourteen years old. She been riding since she was ten years old under the direction of Kris Huot. Her other interests include Cross Country running and Track & Field. Kayla is headed to Maria Carrillo High School next year as a freshman, hoping to continue her current academic achievement (GPA 3.9). Kayla would like to donate her time at a horse rescue farm this summer.



Readers Write

Perks and Pitfalls of Having Your Horse at Home

Written by Michelle Larsen

I have been blessed to have a few horses over the years and with only an exception or two, those horses have been At Home Horses rather than Boarded Horses.

For me it just works better having my horses living where I am. Right now I have an amazingly defective gelding named Digger, always with one health crisis or another, and his companion Sheepy (aka *// Divo*) at the house. I cannot begin to tell you how wonderful it is that I have 24/7 access to my Beasties. I can get to them within a matter of seconds. The downside to that is when I let the geriatric dog out at 3:30am to do her business the entire neighborhood knows MY business because The Beasties have been staring at the back door for hours waiting for some sign of movement so they can tell me loud and clear that they don't care what time it is, they are hungry... NOW! Digger has a very nice Inside Voice and is not obnoxiously abrasive in his demands. Sheepy on the other hand can wake the dead in the next county when he feels his needs are not being met in a timely manner, Timely, by the way, means ANY time he thinks his needs are not being met. Sheepy can be very demanding.

There are a few things that I have chosen to accept by having my horse and his companion living at home. One of the most noteworthy is the need to find someone to care for them if I am going to be away. I am extremely fortunate that I can trade horse/sheep-sitting duties with my sister who's Farm-ette is much more extensive than mine, but not nearly as high maintenance. Her spread is easier because she didn't let her livestock develop any ideas that they're family members. There are times when I know Sheepy is just waiting for a chance to get into the house so he can sit on the couch, watch some cartoons, and drink root beer. Furthermore, I have photographic evidence that Digger is just one step away from walking into the kitchen and making his own PB&J.

Besides easy access, another plus of having Digger and his side kick at home is I haven't had to mow for the past five years. Every afternoon they get to come out of their paddock and have free range rights to the property. These are supervised outings; Digger needs a halter plate that reads *Trouble Follows Me*, and Sheepy's halter plate would read *Trouble*. Of course this might give everyone the wrong idea about who Sheepy really is, so I haven't gotten halter plates at all. I am pretty sure they don't care. They just aren't that into the whole Bling Thing. Carrots yes, Carats no.

Downsides include dealing with the "byproduct" of all the money I spend at the feed store on hay and shavings. Sometimes I think that alone would be worth sending the Beasties to Board Out. I have yet to come up with a cost effective, practical, environmentally correct, and consistent solution. I have called people who have ads listed in the Penny Saver that say they want "organic" horse manure, only to be informed that IF I would switch to straw bedding we might be able to work something out. In one instance, people came over and provided an estimate to haul out the byproduct. We exchanged phone numbers, work schedules, timetables, and planetary alignments only to have the entire operation unravel in a tremendous confluence of unfortunate miscommunications. The result was that absolutely none of the byproduct leaves the property. That was a Total Bummer. I have brought in dumpsters and hired tractors. I have had neighbors come by and get a couple of pick up loads of compost for their garden. I have



Digger makes himself at home in the backyard

used it on my flower beds. Regardless, there always seems to be way more byproduct that needs to be disposed of than places to dispose it to.

Regardless of the drawbacks, which aren't really drawbacks—more like minor inconveniences to give me something to complain about—I love having Digger and Sheepy at the house. I hear how people want to get away, go on vacation so they can relax. I don't get it. I come home and I don't want to go anywhere because I have everything I have ever wanted right in my backyard. Even when they start yelling at me to feed them at 0 dark thirty in the morning. U

Michelle Larsen is a Sonoma County local, born and raised. Michelle has been lucky to have horses in her life, on and off, for more than thirty years. Michelle lives on a postage stamp sized bit of Sonoma County that is home to her long suffering husband, geriatric dog, defective horse, and Sheepy.

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Contact Jane Mesics 707-478-7983 www.sonomachangeprogram.com

Readers Write Reduce & Produce

Conserve, Preserve and Produce Energy from the Sun

Written by Al Wilcox and Mary Khoury

California's energy demand is second only to that of Texas. However, Californians have one of the lowest per capita energy consumptions in the country. The lower personal energy usage is due partly to California's changes in energy-efficiency building codes¹ and financial incentives for energy efficiency improvements.² However, individuals and businesses have also embraced energy conservation, and California ranks first for solar installations with approximately 50% of all installations in the US.

Energy conservation and energy efficiency improvements are the first steps to reduce energy use and cost. Conserving and reducing energy waste often has a faster financial payback even compared to generating power from renewable energy sources like solar. Also reducing energy needs means a reduction in size of the renewable energy sources needed (i.e. smaller solar system size). Every dollar saved by energy conservation can reduce the cost of installing renewable energy sources by three dollars. While rooftop solar installations are popular (mostly residential), a unique and very cost-effective ground mount solar system manufactured by SunPods, Inc. is ideal for horse ranches and agricultural businesses.

Reducing energy use

The first step is to **conserve** energy by using energy efficient lighting and appliances, then **preserve** energy by reducing building energy waste and finally, **produce** renewable energy from resources like solar. Using this **conserve, preserve and produce** strategy gives the best energy efficiency, the largest financial return and has the biggest environmental impact. Using this approach it's also important to remember that homes and buildings don't use energy, people do.

Knowing which energy efficiency improvements will save the most requires determining how much energy is being used where and the amount being lost through inefficient practice or operation. The largest building energy uses are generally heating and cooling systems, lighting, water heating and appliances and electronics. Energy efficiency improvements for the highest energy users can give the biggest energy cost savings. A Home Energy Rating System (HERS) licensed professional can perform a certified Building Energy Assessment and determine the most cost effective energy-saving upgrades. Below are some example recommendations that may result from a HERS home energy assessment. In conjunction, a solar on-site evaluation can find the best location for your solar system installation. Finally, monitoring home and building electrical energy usage and solar production is easy and inexpensive using a variety of available energy monitoring products.³

Conserve energy—change to high efficacy lighting

Standard incandescent light bulbs use 80% of their electrical energy to produce heat and only 20% to produce light. This energy waste is greatly reduced by replacing incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent (CFL) and fluorescent lights. CFLs are up to 200% more efficient and fluorescent lights are up to 400% for light production compared to incandescent and last up to twenty-five times longer.



Thermographic image of a recessed light fixture showing heat "leaking" into a living space due to poor ceiling insulation



Blower Door Test determines Building Envelope Leakage

Light Emitting Diode (LED) lights have even better energy efficiency and are more environmentally friendly. LED technology has a promising future for energy savings as commercial products improve and prices reduce. Each

of these lighting types can have different "color temperatures" so it's important to evaluate the Color Rating Index (CRI) for the specific lighting application.

Preserve energy—air ducts and envelope leakage


The cost of heating and cooling a building is usually its greatest energy expense. It is not uncommon to have 30% or more air duct leakage (meaning 30% of the energy for heating and cooling air is being wasted). Also the single biggest loss of energy from our homes and businesses is from hot or cold air leaking into and out of the building (Building Envelope Leakage). Proper air sealing and effective use of insulation reduces hot and cold air leakage, meaning less energy is needed to maintain comfort at a lower energy cost.

Produce renewable solar energy—easy and affordable

The earth receives more energy from the sun in just one hour than the world uses in a whole year. Harnessing that sun to generate electricity is a win/win for energy users and the environment. Today's solar systems are designed to replace the most costly electricity (highest costs per kWh on your electric bill) with renewable, less expensive electricity. The result is a significant reduction in your monthly electric bill. With Federal tax incentives, utility rebates, and green financing options, electricity cost savings can begin the day the system is installed. A solar system can pay for itself many times over with your electricity cost fixed (or "levelized"). Steadily rising utility electricity rates will have little or no effect on your electricity bill.

Solar companies, like SunPods – a California based solar manufacturer, are making solar systems less expensive and easy to install. SunPods' modular solar arrays are



delivered fully assembled, set into place, and simply connect together, reducing ground mount solar installation time by 85%. The SunPods' solar system design is well suited for agricultural-related businesses and rural residential locations. SunPods can be placed in virtually any sun-exposed ground location. 

¹ California Code of Regulations, Title 24, www.bsc.ca.gov/title_24/default.htm

² California DSIRE database for State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency, www.dsireusa.org

³ Example energy monitoring product: The Energy Detective (TED) from Energy, Inc.

Al Wilcox is Marketing Manager at Steele Energy Solutions, Inc.
Mary Khoury is VP, Marketing at SunPods, Inc.



Mule Tales

A Healthy Birth

Written by Veda Rose Pope

The arrival of a new foal is a wonderful expectation. After the birth, the beautiful little foal is a sight to see—nursing, moving around, and ever frolicking. You want it to grow up healthy and sound. But in the first 24-48 hours you notice something is wrong. The foal's head is drooping. You check the gums and the eyes and find that jaundice is developing. Quickly you get the baby to an equine hospital in hopes that you can save its life with a blood transfusion. Any blood from a donor other than its mother will give the foal a chance to recover. I am not a veterinarian, I am a long time, experienced breeder. I wanted to share my solution for foal jaundice with you.

Vets call the condition that I'm describing neonatal isoerythrolysis or NI. The rest of us call it foal jaundice. It's similar to RH incompatibility in humans. The incompatibility of blood types between the sire and dam creates a lethal situation for a newborn foal because the dam's immune system can view the foal's blood as foreign, and attack it with antibodies. The mare and foal share some blood during the pregnancy, so she develops antibodies. When the foal is still in the uterus, it is not affected because the antibodies are too big to cross the placenta. So the foal is safe until it is born, and it first begins to nurse. The mare produces a rich "pre-milk" called colostrum which contains antibodies that can be absorbed by the foal. The antibodies in the colostrum provide the foal instant protection against diseases until its own immune system can get up and running. Unfortunately, in the case of a sire/dam blood type mismatch, some of the antibodies can attack the foal's red blood cells. This problem occurs occasionally in horse foals and more frequently in mule foals because of the dissimilarity between blood types of the jacks and mares.

The danger of foal jaundice occurs only in the first few hours of life when the foal can absorb mare antibodies through its gut. After that, the gut thickens, and the antibodies do not get into the foal's blood. So the trick to protecting your foal from potential foal jaundice is testing for compatibility before the foal nurses. Some vets and breeders can perform this test by mixing blood from the foal's naval with colostrum to see if they react (clump). If they do, then you've got a problem. If they just form a creamy mixture, then it is safe for the foal to nurse.

I first encountered this problem years ago when I had a foal die. I noticed that certain jacks produced healthy foals with my mares, and certain jacks produced foals who got jaundice. That's when I started my research. Once a mare has NI foals, she is more likely to have other foals with the same problem. I had a bad experience with one vet who I took a mule mare to for a transfusion. He told me, "It's only a mule." Little did he know about mules, and that this mule was very special to me. She later became one of the greatest show and working mules of my twenty-six year career as a breeder. From that year on I continued to breed that same mare and all the others to that good jack, creating one Hall of Fame mule, and many more outstanding ones.


I realized that the biggest challenge was getting to the foal before it starts to nurse. If you are a breeder, you have likely noticed that the mare will lie down the moment you leave to get another cup

of coffee. If you are present for the birth, it's possible to muzzle the foal and begin hand milking the mare to remove the colostrums for testing. I decided I needed to find a solution to help keep the foal from nursing if I missed the birth. Being a leather worker, I designed the birthing bra, which has worked to keep my foals healthy for twenty-five years.

The birthing bra is a harness that expands and retracts to hold a soft leather bra sack that surrounds the mare's milk bag. It detaches on both sides to let down for hand milking; you don't have to muzzle the foal. Simply milk on the opposite side from the foal. When the foal reaches for the nipple, the soft deer-tanned leather bag is warm to the foal's nose, feeling like mom...but no faucets yet! If possible, you can start milking the mare just before she foals as this will speed things along.

You'll have to use bottles to collect the milk, and milk every fifteen to twenty minutes, or every time the foal nuzzles the bag. It's a small price to pay for such a wonderful result. Now a days there is a commercial udder milker you can purchase. Some foals will need replacement for the first few hours until their gut thickens. My experience is not to feed the foal any replacement milk unless you are absolutely sure of its purity. Sometimes foals do not do well on a milk substitute as it can cause diarrhea, another potentially fatal foal problem. To very persistent foals, I give only warm water hidden from the newborn on the opposite side of the mare so as not to interrupt the foal's natural way of searching for the nipple.

The mare can wear the birthing bra safely for an extended amount of time, but you should check her hourly. Right at birth, it's not a good time to handle or imprint the foal other than normal attention to the navel and bowels. After the foal has success at suckling in a day or two, it would be fine to sit in the stall and allow the foal to come to you. Always approach the mare first, stroking and telling her what a good girl she is. Make her your primary focus of affection as she will be more inclined to share her foal with you.

The birthing bra can make experience of foaling less stressful and safer. For more information about the birthing bra or other projects, phone Veda Rose at 707-975-9813, or write her at Veda Rose Custom Saddle & Leather Apparel, 1600 Ludwig Ave SR, Ca 95405. Email inquiries can also be sent to mulesfriend@yahoo.com. 



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*Horse Tales***Culturally Appropriate Attire**

Written by Wendy Beth Watson

I grew up riding English—taught by a proper English woman who instilled in me a love and respect for its traditions and wardrobe, as well as good horsemanship. I still love the look of properly fitted breeches and tall boots, and though I mostly ride trail these days I still wear a velvet hunt cap.

I didn't get the whole Western "thing," not even when I learned to ride my Missouri Fox Trotter Western in order to show him. At the time it was the only way they were shown. When I put my show clothes on I'd look at my reflection in the mirror and think "Sigfried & Roy." Everything was gold Lamé, rhinestones and satins, and loud colors were all the rage.

I also worked as a groom for some of those shows, heaving heavy Western saddles onto horses' backs and spending way too much time zipping ladies into show chaps they had sadly outgrown. Sometimes that process took two or three people to accomplish, so perhaps it's no wonder the romance of Western style continued to elude me... until recently.

I went on the five-day Elk Creek Buckarett trip with my horse and my two friends. The trip was based on a cattle ranch, where we rode the range, and had several days of instruction on working cattle, followed by a competition that involved Reining, working cattle, and trail obstacles. We three were hardly cowgirls: a Dressage Queen, a "Natural" horsewoman/Trail rider, and me—a gaited horse *aficionado* with Hunter-Jumper training. Although the three of us were good-enough riders in our various disciplines, we were definitely the tenderfoots of the group. The skills needed to work cattle were foreign territory to us.

The other women there were the real deal. These girls could cut a cow with ease, and they showed off their Reining skills in the early morning when we warmed our horses up for the day. Galloping and sliding to a stop. Spinning their horses and backing them up



Former Dressage Queen Anja Seitz at the Elk Creek Buckarett

really fast. I was impressed with how obedient their horses were and how well they rode. And they looked so damn good doing it.

They all wore the same basic ensemble—cowboy hat, jeans, vest & shirt. Loud silk scarf tied or pinned elegantly at the throat (this is called a "glad rag"), cowboy boots, and a pair of chinks hanging off the hips. The long fringe swayed gracefully as they rode or walked, hanging down past their boot tops. These ladies looked (and were) so tough and capable, yet ladylike.

They were nothing like any women I had known before. They could handle a rope and hold their liquor. They were straightforward and fair, and spit-out-your-coffee funny. They were encouraging to us newbies, and when the Dressage Queen cantered and spun in a Reining pattern for the first time they cheered and clapped.

I had such a good time I almost forgot about how bloody cold it was sleeping in the elements at night, and the sunburn, and the skin I wore off my butt from hours in the saddle.

On the last day the Dressage Queen ambled toward me as I sipped my coffee in the morning sun. At first I didn't recognize her. The transformation was immediate. She was dressed like the other women in a pair of borrowed chinks and a cowboy hat. She swaggered. There was no trace of the proper German girl I knew. She was a cowgirl now. She lined up with others for a group photo, and one of the girls yelled out, "What we need is some guns and cigarettes!"

When I got home I read up on the history of chinks & chaps and found out some interesting things. It seems chaps are an American invention. Probably modeled after the deerskin leggings worn by Native Americans and/or borrowed from the Mexican *vaqueros*. They were necessary and ideal for protection from brush and cattle horns. The first chaps were shotgun style, like a pair of pant legs one could step into. Competitive rodeo brought about more wildly decorative styles, like batwings, which flapped around like mad when a cowboy sat bucking stock. Woolies were chaps with hair, usually angora or whatever was available. These were perfect for warmth and protection in mountain areas prone to cold and wet weather. Chinks are a shorter version, hanging just below the knees; they're cooler for hot climates.

Now that I have a better understanding of what chaps are I have a new appreciation for them. It doesn't hurt that they look so good.

I think the Dressage Queen might be switching teams. U

Wendy Watson lives in Santa Rosa and has loved horses all her life. Her current partner in crime is a Missouri Fox Trotter named Hank. Wendy can be reached at wkittyagogo@aol.com

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Horsey Haiku

Contributed by M Lu Cook

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worries are all forgotten.
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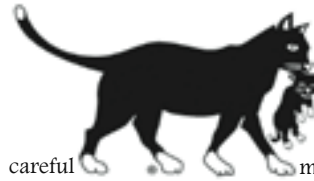
You nicker softly.
Eyes fixed, ears alert, you wait
as carrots appear.

At the lightest touch
you get my desire to trot
and away we go.

Shedded hair in clumps
falls as raven hops closer.
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A horse crazy kid,
I waited twenty-five years
to call one my own.

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From the Horse's Mouth

Marin Horse Council Member Publishes Horse Camping Guide

The Marin Horse Council (MHC), whose goal is to protect and preserve the equestrian presence in Marin County, has published a list of nearby horse camping sites. The comprehensive list contains facilities from San Luis Obispo to the Oregon border, and stretches as far east as Reno, Nevada (including the Sierras). MHC member Sandy Greenblatt is the primary data collector and author. This list contains information about location, contacts, and details about facilities such as horse-housing, camping amenities, and nearby restaurants. You'll find information about familiar parks like Point Reyes, but also lesser known camps such as Grant Ranch County Park (San Jose) and the Marble Mountain Wilderness (near Eureka). The guide also contains information about day-use parks such as Annadel and Sugarloaf Ridge. Despite the thoroughness and detailed content, Sandy urges users to contact camps and parks directly prior to visiting to obtain the most up to date details and conditions. To find the horse camping list, and the spectacularly detailed and informative Marin County Equestrian Trail Guide, visit www.marintrailguide.com. To learn more about the Marin Horse Council, visit www.marinhorsecouncil.org.

Welcome Back Dressage in the Wine Country

Dressage in the Wine Country returns to the Sonoma County Fairgrounds in Santa Rosa on September 17, 2011. Join fellow equestrians and horse-lovers for a day of wine tasting, shopping, and top flight equestrian entertainment. Sponsored by the Sonoma Chapter of the California Dressage Society, this year's extravaganza will showcase international Dressage riders, Reiners, *Doma Vaquera* Jumping, and others in performances choreographed to music. Also featured will be breed and discipline demonstrations. Afternoon wine and beer tastings will feature twenty-plus award winning wineries and microbreweries. Among the trade fair vendors will be saddle makers, equestrian fashion and horse ware shops, artwork, glass sculptures, barn and ranch equipment suppliers, and Premier Equestrian property representatives. Bring your appetite and grab a bite to eat from the many food vendors. Doors open to the trade fair at 2pm with the wine and beer tasting starting at 4pm. The equine performance starts at 7pm. Come and join us for an evening of equestrian entertainment at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds! For tickets and information visit the Sonoma Chapter website, www.winecountrydressage.org or call 707-769-1703.

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Annadel's 40th Anniversary Celebration

On April 17th, 2011 a celebration of Annadel State Park's fortieth Anniversary was held at adjacent Spring Lake Park. The celebration, sponsored and organized by the local cooperating organization Valley of the Moon Natural History Association, was well attended by many local and regional users. Fleet Feet Sports in Santa Rosa sponsored the second annual Annadel Half Marathon fundraiser as part of the event (www.annadelhalf.com). This technical and challenging course wound 13.1 miles on mostly single tracks through the hilly far-reaches of Annadel. The California State Parks Mounted Assistance Unit played a large role in making the footrace a success. Twenty riders (equestrians and cyclists) participated in event support in various ways. They pre-rode the course, identifying obstacles, and clearing brush, including poison oak. Riders also stood the course in order to indicate direction, and identify injury or emergency, and they rode sweep (drag) in case of injured or left-behind runners, and to clean up the trail. Horses at predetermined stations on the trail were met by enthusiasm by participants. After the race, several mounted unit members attended the festival, giving the kids a chance to interact with their horses. The Annadel State Park Fortieth Anniversary and Half Marathon Celebration raised nearly \$25,000 for Annadel State Park. If you'd like to participate in supporting our state parks, visit www.jacklondonpark.com. To sign an online petition regarding keeping our state parks open, visit www.change.org/petitions/pledge-to-keep-annadel-state-park-open.

Local ACTHA Affiliates Postpone World Record Ride to Benefit Mustangs

The American Competitive Trail Horse Association (ACTHA) holds an annual national ride day entitled "Ride for the Mustangs," and donates proceeds to the Mustang Heritage Foundation. In California, local equestrians still have a chance to participate because this year's rides have been mostly rescheduled in response to concerns regarding the EHV-1 outbreak. Local affiliate Hossmoor Ranch in Brione (see contact info below), for example, has rescheduled their ride for September 10, 2011. The ride, originally scheduled for June 4th, includes ACTHA affiliates nationwide (from Georgia to California) and thousands of riders. Non-western states are continuing on schedule. The ACTHA registers the ride with the Guinness Book of World Records and has been judged the largest in the world due to the usually extensive participation occurring on a single day. Participating groups identify local courses, each containing six to eight ACTHA-approved "obstacles" for which participants are judged. Rides often meander through beautiful, private, and often otherwise inaccessible areas. Winners receive plaques, and limited-edition buckles. Other awards include best-groomed horse, best-dressed riders, and hardest luck on the course. Other events offered at the rides include Mustang demonstrations, poetry readings, talent competitions, and live music. For more information about schedules and local rides contact Hetty Dutra in Hossmoor (cowgirl@hossmoor.com), or visit the American Competitive Trail Horse Association at www.actha.us.



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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. 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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