

Sonoma County  
*Horse Journal*

Volume 9 • Issue 2 • Spring 2013



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



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

Volume 9 • Issue 2 • Spring 2013

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**Cover Photo: Marcie Lewis**

The DiDonato Seniffs and their rescue horses pose at their Cloverdale Ranch. From right to left: Zack, Cloud Mountain, Karen, Ritz, Megan, Alexandra, and Vinny. Read more about the DiDonato Seniffs, their horses, and horse rescue in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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## A Message from the President

Dear Sonoma County Equestrians –

In 2012 the Sonoma County Horse Council continued to make significant strides reorganizing and refocusing our uncompromising commitment to promote the health and well-being of horses and the horse industry in the county. Your Board of Directors and many dedicated volunteers have extended our outreach to all aspects of our vibrant and diverse equestrian community. We are stronger financially and organizationally than we have ever been. We have doubled our membership and we are gratified by the enthusiasm and commitment to preserving our cherished equestrian way of life that we see in horsemen and women everywhere in the county. However, in order to be prepared to meet the challenges the horse community faces today, and will face in the future, the horse community needs to unify itself and be able to speak with one powerful voice. So get involved with your local horse club and join the Horse Council. Encourage your local horse club to join the Horse Council and take advantage of our low annual associate membership rate of \$10. Go to [www.SonomaCountyHorseCouncil.org](http://www.SonomaCountyHorseCouncil.org), click on membership and SIGN UP NOW!

On Saturday, March 23rd, at our ninth annual Equus Hall of Fame Banquet, we were inspired by the enthusiasm exuded by the well-over 200 dedicated equestrian attendees. Guests included



riders from all disciplines and the majority of the County Board of Supervisors. Everyone had a wonderful time honoring several special equestrians and one special horse, visiting with one another, enjoying the inspiring presentations and the heartfelt "thank yous" from our honorees, as well as bidding on wonderful silent auction items and oogling at the \$1000 Martin Ranch Supply gift certificate. If you missed the banquet this year, make sure to keep your eyes peeled for next March's Equus Hall of Fame awards ceremony. You'll find the photos of this wonderful event in this issue of the Horse Journal.

Our annual members meeting will be held on April 25th at the Sonoma County Driving and Riding Clubhouse at the Fairgrounds starting at 6pm where SCHC directors will be elected. A slate of nominations will be announced soon by our Nominating Committee. Additional nominations can be sent to me to forward to the Nomination Committee by April 10th. Following the Annual Meeting, we will hold a Horse Cabinet Meeting where our featured speaker will be Professor Robert Eyler of the Sonoma State Economics Department. He will lead a discussion of the new Economic Impact Survey of the county's horse industry. We have commissioned him to undertake this survey on behalf of the entire horse industry in Sonoma County. This updated information will provide important data for governmental decision-makers who have a great influence over the continued health and well-being of our horse community. Your input at this early stage regarding the design of the survey, as well as your help in collecting the relevant data, is vitally important to insuring its success. So please help us help all of you who enjoy the equestrian way of life in Sonoma County.

Ron Malone, President



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Photo: MJ Wickham

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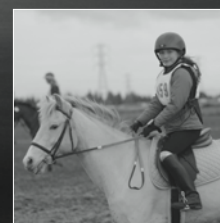
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# The 2013 Equus Awards

*presented by Ron Malone, President, SCHC*



Lisa Lombardi for Clover Ten-Thirty



Donald Lee "Red" Rightsell



Steven Bruce Burchfield



Neil Murdock Shepard



Marthy "Marty" H Griffin



Valerie Gay Kasnick – Golden Pitchfork Award



## Sonoma County Horse Council at Work Horse Cabinet Update

Written by Greg Harder, Vice President, SCHC



Applying the OAN to a saddle

Man oh man, have we had a busy winter! Our Cabinet meeting in January featured local vintner and Mustang advocate Ellie Price. The topic was the continuing peril of the wild horses and burros on public lands in this nation. Ellie presented us with a slide show of horses being gathered, shipped, auctioned and fed, all on the public dole. According to the presentation, we have a problem with the wild horses and burro population getting out of balance with the existing animal populations that inhabit the rangeland. A few startling facts noted, the public is spending around \$750 million/year to capture and feed these animals. For example there are 50,000 horses and burros being fed daily in Utah. Because the US continues to round up wild horses, and has few adopters, and because federal law no longer allows wild horses to be gathered, transported, or processed for slaughter, the headcount in captivity is growing. Mustang adoption programs are helpful, but only a small fraction of wild horses go this route. Population stabilization, including humane reduction, has been proposed as a means to diffuse the conflict over rangeland. One possible solution presented was to inject chemicals through a dart, which will render the mares unfertile. This would reduce the number of replacement foals. Another interesting observation was made that by gathering the horses and burros and forcing them into unnatural surroundings, that the BLM was disrupting the family cohesiveness and structure of the wild herds, with unknown consequences. For more information about wild horse roundups readers can check out several visit websites including The Cloud Foundation, the Public Broadcasting Service, and the Bureau of Land Management.

On January 18th we held our first annual OAN (Owner Applied Number) application event, trailer inspection, and Horse Council BBQ. The weather was an extraordinary



sixty degrees, and lots of sunshine blessed our event. There were seven California Highway Patrol (CHP) vehicles, two County Sheriff cars, the Farm Bureau, and lots of trucks and trailers, all gathered in Shawna DeGrange's arena at Cloverleaf Ranch in Santa Rosa. The Sonoma County Horse Council offered free horse trailer inspections and OAN applications. We had sixteen trailers inspected (all passed), and even more people to have their OAN number applied to trailers, saddles, brushes, halters, and other gear. The officers were extremely helpful, not only with the inspections, but also with public safety education. One item to note (a learning point for me!) is to make sure that all the tires are trailer tires. How many of us have just brought the rim to Les Schwab and said put a tire on? We need to be aware of the sidewall construction for trailer tires. Also, from the CHP was the observation of how many people connect their breakaway brake system incorrectly. After all the work was done we gathered at the Cloverleaf Barn for a tri-tip BBQ and good storytelling—now I understand why cop shows are so popular.

I would like to personally thank Shawna DeGrange and Cloverleaf Ranch for their facilities, David Juricich of the CHP for the inspectors, Officer X (he's undercover), for the County Sheriff's OAN application team, Sarah Reid for keeping the traffic flowing, and the Farm Bureau for the BBQ.

Upcoming Cabinet topics include Board of Director elections in March, and May is special. The topic is "I thought I only needed a Class C to tow a horse trailer, uh oh..." Hope to see you then!



Photo courtesy of Julie Colt photography.

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*Sonoma County Horse Council at Work***Horses and Artificially Fluoridated Water**

Written by Ted S Stashak, DVM,  
MS, Diplomate ACVS, Board of Directors, SCHC



Dr Ted S Stashak

Some horse owners have voiced concerns regarding the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors plan to add fluoride (F) to the city's water supply. Horse owners wonder, and rightly so, if this addition will affect horses in the county. The Sonoma County Horse Council board asked me to look into this, so to become better informed about the possible effects of artificial fluoridation of water (AFW) on horses, I looked at the current recommendations established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Public Health Service (PHS), and reviewed the equine Veterinary literature over the past forty two years. Additionally, I consulted with an equine internal medicine specialist and toxicologist at UC Davis, and a specialist in bone pathology at Colorado State University. The following is a summary of the findings from these sources.

**Naturally occurring fluoride contamination:** Fluoride (F) occurs *naturally* in public drinking water. In 1986, the EPA established a maximum contaminant level goal (MCLG) and a secondary maximum contaminant level (SMCL) for naturally occurring F in water at 4 milligrams per liter (mg/L) and 2 mg/L, respectively. Note: 1mg/L = 1 ppm. The MCLG is a health goal set at a concentration at which no adverse health effects (e.g. skeletal fluorosis) are expected to occur. The SMCL was set at 2mg/L to protect against enamel fluorosis, which is objectionable but not dangerous. These are not recommendations about the practice of artificial fluoridation of water (AFW).

**Artificial fluoridation of water (AFW):** The PHS set the "optimal" concentration of F to be added in drinking water for the prevention of dental caries (tooth decay/cavity) at 0.7 to 1.2 mg/L, depending on how warm it is. People drink more in warmer climates (PHS 1991). The optimal range is designed to prevent dental caries but limit enamel fluorosis. In 2000, the CDC estimated that ~ 162 million people (~65.8% of the population served by public water systems) had AFW at a concentration of 0.7-1.2 mg/L.

In 2006 the National Research Council (NRC) published a report regarding F in drinking water which validated most of the earlier guidelines established by the PHS. To date, the maximum safe level of F in water for horses has not been established. Published guidelines for horses are extrapolated from other species. The EPA recommends a maximum F concentration of 2 mg/L in water intended for livestock.

Two reports (2006 in Pagosa Springs, Colorado, and 2008 in Hitchcock, Texas) identifying chronic fluoride poisoning in separate groups of horses drinking AFW have been published. Chronic F poisoning often manifests as dental fluorosis (condition that is associated with enamel loss and pitting of teeth), hoof deformities, bone thickening, thyroid dysfunction, intermittent skin allergies, generalized un-thriftiness, vague and persistent episodes of colic, and lameness. Both articles describe a long period of exposure to AFW, at a concentration of <1.3 ppm. Both reported that no other

sources of F were present: F-containing phosphate fertilizer was not used on the pastures, nor were F-containing mineral supplements ever fed to the horses. However, no soil or water or forage testing for other F sources was reported in either study.

**Discussion:** The 2006 and 2008 reports are missing important information necessary to confirm that AFW alone was the cause for the signs of chronic fluorosis in these horses, because testing of the feed, water supply and soil was not done. F occurs naturally in public water systems as a result of runoff from weathering of fluoride-containing rocks and soils, and leaching into groundwater. Atmospheric deposition of fluoride-containing emissions from industrial sources also contributes to amounts found in water. In 1992 the CDC found that ~ 10 million people had naturally fluoridated public water supplies, and the concentration in most ranged from <1.2 mg/L - 3.9 mg/L. Exceptionally high concentrations of naturally occurring F in drinking water were found in areas of Colorado (11.2 mg/L), Oklahoma (12.0 mg/L), New Mexico (13.0 mg/L), and Idaho (15.9 mg/L). Water from deep wells or hot springs in some regions and volcanic rock and ash are particularly high in F. While the horses' in these reports improved following discontinuation of drinking the AFW, the authors did not rule out the exposure to these other sources of F, which when added to the AFW could have resulted in toxic levels.

**Conclusions:** There is simply inadequate proof that Sonoma County horses are likely to be affected by the Board of Supervisors' plan to add F to the city's drinking water. Evidence to date indicates that F concentrations allowable in US public waters systems do not cause fluorosis. Most horses in our area drink from wells, and are not exposed to city water. For horses nationwide that drink AFW, fluorosis is a very rarely reported condition. This said it would be prudent for any governing body responsible for making the decision to add F to the public water supply to consult experts in the field and have environmental assays done to identify any contributing sources of fluoride. The form of F added to the water supply may also be an important consideration (CDC 1993). The Sonoma County Horse Council has presented its review of the situation, and findings to the Board of Supervisors and the Farm Bureau. For more information on fluorosis in horses the reader is referred the following references:

- 1) Krook, L. P.; Justus, C. Fluoride 39 (1) Ann Arbor: International Society of Fluoride Research, 2006, 3-10
- 2) Macicek, P.; Krook, L. P. Fluoride 41 (3) Ann Arbor: International Society of Fluoride Research, 2008, 177-183
- 3) Shupe JL, Olson AE. Clinical aspects of fluorosis in horses. J Am Vet Med Assoc 1971;158:167-74.
- 4) <http://horsetalk.co.nz/2012/10/13/expert-discussesfluoridated-water-and-horses/#.UMuzHL9uDf0>
- 5) [http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record\\_id=11571&page=R1](http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=11571&page=R1). Fluoride in Drinking Water: A Scientific Review of EPA's Standards (2006). Table of contents



## Readers Write

# Cloud Mountain

Written by Zachary DiDonato Seniff

"What's the name of this personable white horse that keeps diving into my pocket for treats?" I asked Michelle, the owner and founder of Harvest Moon Ranch, who was fostering a number of SAFER (Sonoma Action for Equine Rescue) rescue horses. We were visiting her Sebastopol property one chilly October afternoon in 2010 to evaluate Honey, a Belgian PMU mare we were considering adopting.

"That's Cloud Mountain," she replied with a smile. "He was rescued from the Petaluma auction by SAFER, and I adopted him. He's a Walkaloosa (I soon learned that that meant half Tennessee Walker, half Appaloosa), a true gentle giant, and though we don't know much about him," she continued, "we understand he was a local Sonoma trail horse in his previous life." Standing seventeen hands tall, and weighing in at almost 1300lbs, Cloud had an ominous, almost intimidating appearance, but within moments we were all drawn in by his affable demeanor and curious nature.

I am one of five children (ages ten to fifteen) with little to no real riding experience, so we were searching for a bomb-proof, kid-friendly horse. A year prior to that my parents purchased a sixty-five-acre farm in Cloverdale and poured every spare bit of time, energy, and income into restoring the house and century old barn, in addition to replacing the barbed-wire fencing. Following months of intense sweat equity, our property was finally ready to welcome some equine friends to their "forever home" and all of us kids, especially me, were envisioning seamless transformations into cowboys/cowgirls so accomplished, that even John Wayne would be proud. Cloud, though he hadn't been ridden in many years, seemed the perfect fit for our bucolic utopia, so despite his injuries and laundry list of special feed and supplements, that very same day, we let Michelle know that while Honey was not exactly what our family had in mind, Cloud Mountain had received a unanimous vote and would do nicely.

The next step involved scheduling an inspection of our property to assure it was safe and appropriate for horses. SAFER invests a significant amount of manpower into rehabilitating each horse they rescue (proper nutrition, training, vaccinations, hoof care, dental work, transportation, etc) so understandably feel committed to doing their due diligence prior to any adoption. In fact, their contract is very specific to note that the first year is on a trial basis and only after a calendar year has passed and a follow-up assessment of the horse is performed do they officially sign the horse over to its new "owner." The inspection thankfully went well and we were given the stamp of approval.

SAFER was kind enough to arrange transportation for Cloud from Sebastopol to Cloverdale and I still remember well the day he stepped off the trailer and down the gravel driveway of his new home. Cloud was only a teenaged horse, but moved tenderly, like a senior in its late twenties, because he had been overworked for so many years. He had prematurely succumbed to arthritis, laminitis, and a severe shoulder injury. He was also a bit overweight due



Zack and Cloud

Photo: Marcie Lewis

to a lack of exercise and we'd been told he was receiving chiropractic therapy to help keep his back aligned.

Immediately we began weaning him off of his previous diet and turning him out to pasture more and more each day. Our property is at the north end of Sonoma County and is largely comprised of golden rolling hills dotted with grand oaks. Cloud could graze to his heart's content on the healthiest grass available in the western US, but he would have to work in order to get to it....just the way nature intended. Literally within weeks, Cloud had slimmed down and muscled up and his arthritis had improved. We began lightly riding him on the trails and he responded beautifully, a confident old pro. Michelle had also provided us with the contact information of Cloud's farrier, who generously agreed to make the trek up to our farm every eight weeks or so to keep his hooves in tip top shape. Though he was happily barefoot, given his history of hoof issues and laminitis, we thought it best to provide Cloud with this consistency of care.

It wasn't before long that we adopted a second horse, an off-the-track Thoroughbred (see related article p. 9) and then two more. Cloud now had his own herd to run with and to keep him company. He absolutely loves to be ridden by adults and children. Unwavering and dependable, he always assumes the position of lead horse on the trail and takes his job very seriously. Though a gelding, he is no doubt the alpha male and our farrier likes to refer to him as the "benevolent dictator." He is truly the gentlest giant of them all and even gets along well with our rambunctious Vizsla puppy. I hope we have enriched Cloud's life as much as he has enriched ours.

*Zachary DiDonato Seniff is fourteen years old and a freshman at Burlingame High School. He lives with his mom and step-dad and is the middle of five children. Zack is passionate about soccer and hopes to become a Navy SEAL some day after graduating from college.*



## Feature Article

## Some Wagon

Written by Alexandra DiDonato Seniff

"What a majestic animal," I thought to myself as all seventeen-three hands of this seven year old, off-the-track Thoroughbred was unloaded from the trailer and led down our driveway by a gentleman resembling the Marlboro Man. She hadn't raced in over two years, but this spectacular bay mare carried herself like she had just won the Triple Crown. Long and lean, her muscles still rippled with every intentional, graceful step. Her Jockey Club registered name was "She's Some Wagon" (aka Megan) and all we knew about her was that she had run twenty-eight races (many at Golden Gate Fields) and was a relatively quiet, healthy, and well trained horse. SAFER (Sonoma Action for Equine Rescue) rescued Megan shortly after her retirement in 2009 at the tender age of five.

I am one of five children and my family had just recently purchased an old farm in Sonoma County. We spent over a year fixing up the barn and outbuildings, seeding the pastures and mending the fences, in hopes of having our own horses someday. None of us, except maybe my mom, who grew up back east riding English, was what I would call a proficient rider, but we were all eager to learn. We had rescued a charming, bombproof 'Walkaloosa' trail horse (Cloud Mountain, see p. 8) from SAFER about six months prior, and he had worked out great, so we felt good about getting another from them. The rescue organizations make every attempt to uncover whatever background information they can, but generally, what you see is what you get, and it's a calculated gamble based on the nuggets of truth you're provided and your gut instinct. It doesn't always work. The horse we brought home after Cloud did not fit with us as well. At any rate, SAFER was gracious enough to accept "Penny" back into their foster system and worked with us to identify another calm riding horse that would be a good fit for our situation.

We first went to visit Megan a few weeks prior to her delivery at a foster home. I remember she made quite an impression due to her overwhelming size. Immediately we could sense she had a playful side because as soon as her foster mom hitched her up for grooming and turned away to grab some brushes, Megan began untying herself with her teeth. It was hilarious. My mom jumped in to secure the knot just before Megan became completely untethered and I was still laughing at her Harry Houdini impression as we saddled her up for a "test drive." Megan was an immense animal, but I did not realize just how powerful and statuesque she was until I was sitting on her back. She was even tall for a Thoroughbred and it was as if together, we could conquer the world. Now, at that time, I was 5'7" and fourteen years old and hopefully still had some growing to do, but I could only imagine how



Photo: Marcie Lewis

Alexandra (right), with Megan and Maeve

insignificant Megan's jockeys must have felt, given their even more diminutive stature. I rode Megan briefly around the property and instantaneously felt a strong connection to this stunning athlete. She would make a nice riding horse for us and a lovely companion for Cloud.

Having previously adopted a SAFER horse, we were not required to undergo another formal inspection of the property. Our greatest concern when Megan arrived was how we would teach this horse, who was born and bred to thunder around a flat, quarter-mile racetrack, to negotiate the rolling hills and occasional steep trails of our land. My brother referred to her as the "hill retard" for the first few months because initially she had no idea how to get her feet under her going down hills. She was happy to sprint up them, but would take forever navigating back down. Eventually, with lots of patience and practice, she figured it out. She is also happily barefoot and sees the farrier every eight weeks or so.

Megan has not been without her challenges, however. Though we have a three stall barn, all of our horses (we now have four) prefer to remain outside all year round. They will take shelter in the run-in shed from the rain and intense sun, but otherwise choose to be out and about, hither and yon. Nine months out of the year this is perfect, but in the winter, as a result of her hummingbird-like metabolism, we have to supplement her grazing diet with stable mix. The one vice she does have, that we haven't been able to correct, is that she can be territorial around food and bossy toward her herd-mates. This is not as big of a headache for us as it is for her equine companions, but when she sees that big bag of carrots coming toward her... lookout everyone!

Megan has been with us for nearly two years now and we still consider her a blessing.

*Alexandra DiDonato Seniff is fifteen years old and a sophomore at Burlingame High School. She is the oldest of five children. Alex plays trumpet in the marching band and is a member of the track team in addition to playing soccer. Alexandra hopes to pursue a career in veterinary medicine.*



Photo: Marcie Lewis

Alexandra (top left), Maeve, Zack (bottom left), Aidan, with Vizsla Chelsea



## All Creatures Great and Small

Column editor Grant Miller, DVM

# CHANGE-ing Horse's Lives: Available for Adoption



Bob two weeks into rehabilitation

2013 is off to an interesting start for the Sonoma County Coins to Help Abandoned and NeGlected Equines (CHANGE) Program, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that assists Sonoma County Animal Care and Control (SCACC) with equine humane cases. CHANGE offers transportation services, rehabilitative care in private foster barns throughout the county, and adoption services for horses in law enforcement custody. In addition, CHANGE provides education

and outreach to animal control officers and the community. Through a partnership with SCACC, CHANGE has been able to help sixty horses in need since the program's inception in October of 2005. Cases range from loose horses, to abandoned horses, and also neglect cases. Most of the cases involve horses that are found with inadequate food, water, shelter or any combination of the three. CHANGE works solely as a subsidiary to SCACC and only accepts horses in law enforcement custody. In this article, we will highlight a couple of our more recent cases that are looking for good homes.

Bob is a twenty-four year old Quarter Horse gelding who entered CHANGE nearly 300 pounds underweight with a body condition score of 1 out of 9. He had a severe injury to his sheath that, if left untreated, would have killed him. CHANGE transported him to a foster barn where he has received veterinary attention and twice daily medication and bandage changes. He is also undergoing a refeeding program and is thriving! After only three weeks in the program, he had already gained 100 pounds! He received powerfloating after week three which also greatly improved his ability to chew. He has also received vaccines—all of which are "standard protocol" for horses in CHANGE rehabilitation. His foster barn mom reports that he has his head down eating nearly 24/7 and virtually nothing deters him when he is hungry! He has received a high calorie diet of Elk Grove Milling senior pellets, alfalfa hay, and now, thanks to mother nature, he gets to enjoy green grass out in pasture. His injury is improving gradually, but it looks like he will make a full recovery. The type of injury that he has heals particularly slowly, but thanks to the devoted foster barn,



Bob is healthy and ready for adoption

it is expected that he will be completely healed by mid-February, which will make him ready for adoption by March. It is possible that Bob is a riding horse, based on the history provided to CHANGE through witnesses to his case. When he is ready, CHANGE will assess him and post any news on his profile page on the CHANGE website. To follow Bob's progress and get updates on his case, visit [www.sonomachangeprogram.com](http://www.sonomachangeprogram.com) and check out the "Cases in Rehab" tab.



Mindy – Day 1



Mindy – Day 60



Mindy is ready for adoption

Perhaps one of CHANGE's most successful rehabilitations is Mindy, a twenty year old Oldenburg mare that entered the program in 2010 severely underweight and suffering from a chronic wound on her lower limb. She was found standing in a muddy pen in Petaluma with inadequate shelter and feed.

The wet and harsh winter had really worn her down and she was approximately 300 pounds underweight (just like Bob!) when Sonoma County Animal Care and Control found her and requested CHANGE's assistance. She was immediately transported in the CHANGE truck and trailer to a nearby foster barn. She flourished during her rehabilitation and in a record sixty days, completely regained all of her weight. She also lost most of her hair coat due to a fulminant fungal infection that affected nearly all of her skin surface. But, with proper nutrition, she turned out to be a beauty as her coat grew back in smooth and shiny. CHANGE was delighted to discover that Mindy is a wonderful riding horse with formal Dressage training to first level! After Mindy completed her rehabilitation (complete with full veterinary care and shoeing) she found a home at a lovely barn in Sonoma. During her time there, Mindy was ridden by several young riders. Today, Mindy is now looking for a new loving adopter. She is suitable to ride but does require a rider with some experience. She is a friendly and safe mare. If you are interested in meeting Mindy, please visit her profile at [www.sonomachangeprogram.com](http://www.sonomachangeprogram.com) and click on the "Available for Adoption" tab.

For more information about these horses or about the CHANGE Program, please contact CHANGE at [sonomachange@live.com](mailto:sonomachange@live.com) or by calling (707) 570-7050.



*The Vet's Office*

Column editor Michelle Beko, DVM

## Rescuing a Horse...Should I?

There are many horses out there these days that need a new home. Some are in perfectly good shape and the current owner for one reason or another simply either no longer wants him or is able to care for her, and is willing to give him/her away. Others need to be rescued from serious neglect or abuse. Before adopting such an animal, there are significant questions you should ask yourself to ensure the best possible outcome for both of you.

***Can I manage this horse? Can I meet its needs?***

Many rescued horses require special care especially for the short term. A chronically starved horse (one fed too little feed over a long period of time) for example, may need small frequent feedings of forage that is not high in carbohydrates. That means grain and lush spring grass should be avoided at least for a few months. The new owner might need to feed the horse four to six times or more per day for the first week or two. An acutely starved horse (one that has been fed little to no feed over a short period of time) might not have a good appetite due to starvation induced liver problems and may need to be force fed through a stomach tube by a veterinarian several times before his appetite improves. After that he would also need multiple daily small feedings.

Conversely, an overweight horse or one with prior or ongoing laminitis (founder) may need significant calorie restriction and may be unable to safely graze spring pastures. Obesity is a significant health concern in horses, particularly because it dramatically increases their odds of foundering. It is best to promote gradual weight loss by decreasing their feed intake and exercising them if possible. Severe calorie restriction should be avoided, especially in donkeys and miniature horses as they are predisposed to hepatic lipidosis (a life threatening liver disease) under such circumstances.

If you do adopt a horse with severe nutritional issues, in either extreme, work closely with a veterinarian to determine to optimal feeding and exercise plan.

***What do I want from this horse?***

You may want to adopt a new horse to ride, be a companion to a horse you already have, or simply to be a "lawn mower." If you want a riding horse consider whether or not this horse's age and breed are suitable to what you might like to do. Is the horse trained enough for your riding abilities? Does it have any unsafe behav-

iors? Is it sound enough? If you want a companion for your first horse, is the horse you may be adopting overly fearful of or aggressive with others? Even if the horse is free or inexpensive, it may be worth it to have a basic prepurchase examination done, especially if you want this to be a riding horse.

***Can I afford to take appropriate care of this horse?***

Neglected horses in particular may need to be caught up on their veterinary and farrier needs. They may not have been vaccinated, had dental care, deworming, or hoof care for a long time. Some have lameness issues or other health care needs that must be tended to. You should also be able to afford to take care of the odd emergency that comes up, including wounds, the occasional colic, or foot abscess.

There are many wonderful horses out there that need new homes. Rescuing one can be a very rewarding experience for the horse as well as the rescuer. . . Just remember, there is no such thing as a "free horse."



*Michelle Beko, DVM, has been an equine veterinarian since 1991. When not working, she enjoys spending time with her husband and daughter, Eventing her horse Zeke, hiking, and travelling. You can reach her at Empire Equine at 707-545-3909, check her website ([www.empire-equine.com](http://www.empire-equine.com)), or on Facebook.*



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## Readers Write

## Fawn the Rescue

Written by Brittany Roemer

Living in suburbia, where young adults are obsessed with jewelry and shopping, it isn't too common to think of owning a horse. But moving to Pleasanton, Ca brought me closer to that dream. When I moved into their in-law unit, the owners told me if I wanted a horse I could board it right in the backyard and that got my wheels turning. I signed up for horseback riding lessons at a local ranch and soon one day a week was just not enough for me. I took as many lessons per week as I could afford and enjoyed every minute of it. I thought about leasing one of the ranch horses but the owners told me that meant I might have a different horse each time, and that didn't sit right with me; after all I really wanted to have a close relationship with a single horse. So....the stage was set to get my very own equine pal!



Brittany and Fawn

My dad brought up possibly rescuing a horse, which I thought would be a great idea. That same week I stumbled across SAFER (Sonoma Action for Equine Rescue) in Sonoma and saw a video of Fawn who had been rescued from the auction. She was the most beautiful horse to me; a tall 15h chestnut mare, Arabian-Quarter horse mix with a pretty little star on her head, right between her big expressive eyes. I hoped that we would be a good match. I called SAFER and set up an appointment to visit her.

When I told my trainers that I was going to look at a "rescue" horse they were horrified. They thought I was making a very bad choice and did not support my decision. I was distraught but I just had to look at Fawn anyways. I could not give up on Fawn without even meeting her. When I was able to meet Fawn there was an instant connection. I know it is conventional wisdom for newbies to get well trained horses and not green-broke ones...but there was that connection.

Fawn was indeed a "green" horse—a broodmare abandoned when babies were no longer needed. When I met her, she had just started saddle training but had been doing very well for her trainer, Shannon. I cowgirl'd up and took a ride on Fawn. She was very fast and the first time on I wasn't really ready for all of her get up! I came back to visit another time and rode her again, this time I was ready. She was very responsive towards me and Shannon could tell she liked me. I felt ready to take on my rescue project horse.

I had a long talk with SAFER about my readiness. Kate was willing to give it a try if I had a trainer who was on board and both Fawn and I were under their supervision. After a home check by a SAFER volunteer, she finally got the ok to come home with me. My dad actually decided to rescue Fawn's buddy from the auction, Abby, so the girls went home together to my parent's one-acre property.

It has now been several months since I have had Fawn and the experience has been both very trying and very rewarding. I have a new trainer who has experience working with rescue horses, and

is excited about helping me improve my riding skills. For the first month we had our trainer coming out three times a week for training. Fawn was doing well longeing and riding in the arena, loading in the trailer, going out on a few trail rides, standing still for me to mount, and just being a peach. She was doing so well I cut back on training for a while to save money. I could saddle her up at home and walk her down to the arena or take her on walks around the neighborhood.

Cutting back on the training was too soon. She began to test me once the "teacher" was out of the room! So far we have had three bucking sessions in the arena...two steps forward, one step back. I decided to return to three days a week training, and I became a sterner leader. She is responding very well and is respecting me more. I have learned so

much about how horses thrive when they have a leader. Fawn continues to impress me and handle new scary situations bravely. She is my teammate and we are both getting better and growing every day. The lessons about boundaries and leadership can be applied in other areas of my life too! I would not have learned those skills with a more bombproof horse, so I guess that is a trade-off.

Owning my own horse has been a lot of work, but work I really enjoy. I love being her master, feeding her, cleaning her stall, grooming her, riding her, and taking breaks out of my workday to give her carrots. It has been an amazing experience, and so our journey continues...



*Brittany Roemer has a degree in communications from Cal State Long Beach, and is a notary public and deposition videographer. She has always had a love of horses. She and Fawn look forward to new friends and adventures.*



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## Readers Write

# Get it Straight: The Rider's Spine

Written by Lily Baker-Lubin

Riders need ideal spinal alignment to perform optimally and prevent injury. Because the vertebral column acts as the central organizing structure for the skeleton and provides support for up-right posture in the saddle, your spinal mechanics are important for transmitting accurate aides to your horse. Pilates exercises which strengthen and mobilize the spine are necessary components of your cross-training program.

The spine is composed of vertebrae connecting the tip of the skull to the tailbone. Your vertebrae are divided into five areas: cervical (neck), thoracic, lumbar, sacral (pelvis), and the coccyx (tail bone). Each area differs in degree of movement, lumbar and cervical vertebrae have the most freedom, but balance and symmetry are equally important throughout the spine.

In profile, your spine has four curves that differentiate each region. When I view a client's spine from behind, I am looking for lateral deviations that might indicate excessive side bending or rotation in one direction. Balanced spinal curvature allows your spine to act as a spring-like coil while absorbing your horse's movement. Irregularities between segments will compromise your functional movement, not only decreasing your effectiveness, but leaving your spine vulnerable to injury.

Sacral and lumbar curvatures most significantly influence a rider's seat, and asymmetry can cause problems. Riders with an imbalance in these areas may struggle with picking up one lead or prefer riding in one direction. Others issues might be easier lateral movement in one direction, or a sliding saddle. While our horses contribute their own asymmetrical patterns, I have often found that horse and rider mirror one another. For instance if your horse's right hind is weak, and needs more support, your right hip might be exhibiting similar tendencies. Pain can also be the result of asymmetry. Riders who lack stability and flexibility in their lumbar region lose its spring-like, shock absorbing quality, which sends concussive forces up the spine to the cervical vertebrae. As with your horse's spine and pelvis, one deviation in spinal alignment and flexibility can be carried through the entire kinetic chain and create compensations elsewhere.

I would like to introduce a Pilates exercise that allows riders to increase segmental mobility as well as pelvic and lumbar stability. New movements should always be undertaken with awareness. If you have any injuries, be sure to consult with a physician. If you have any questions about technique or modifications, it is best to contact a professional Pilates instructor for assistance.

The pelvic curl/bridge focuses on two major muscle groups: the abdominals and the hamstrings, both of which give support and stability to the spine. Strong abs are critical for both posture and rotation of the spine and pelvis, and can act as a shock absorbers. The hamstrings can create knee flexion and hip extension, which are especially helpful during a canter depart or maintaining proper leg position.

### The exercise

- 1) Lie on your back with your arms by your sides, your legs parallel, knees bent, and feet on the ground. Your low back should have a soft curve creating a small space above the mat. Your mid back or ribs should be in contact with the ground. This



The optimal "diagonal line" in the pelvic bridge

position will put your spine in a neutral position. Your head should rest on the ground, with a neck curve similar to your lower spine.

- 2) Inhale and expand your ribs out to the sides and deeper into the ground. Try to minimize your abdominal expansion (the focus here is on the expansion of your chest cavity, not belly breathing). During this first breath simply observe and feel where your spine likes to rest on the ground (Is it neutral?). In these first movements, use your exhalation to access your deep abdominal muscles to help stabilize the spine.
- 3) Exhale, and draw in the abdominals, curling your pelvis so that you have tucked your tailbone and "rounded" your low spine. Use the mat as feedback so that you no longer feel a space between your low spine and ground. Your neck should remain stable and unchanged. Peel your spine and pelvis off the ground sequentially. Be precise. A good guideline to follow is that the next vertebra does not come off of the ground until you access and articulate the one prior. Don't be surprised if you have less range of motion initially since you are trying to make sure that each vertebra is activated at the proper time. Ideally the end range of motion will be when you have achieved a diagonal line from your knees along your pelvis, ribs, and thoracic spine (see photo). Whether you achieve this diagonal line or not, pause at your peak for another inhale. Here you should have equal front and back trunk co-contraction, meaning your back muscles are not overworking.
- 4) Exhale and draw the abdominals in firmly, and roll the spine down sequentially to the neutral starting position once again.

Perform six repetitions with the goal of precise and accurate movement to and assess the mobility and stability of your back's segments. This exercise, when performed with regularity, can act as a comprehensive corrective tool or can act as part of your warm-up before you ride.

*Lily Baker-Lubin is an avid equestrian, and the founder and director of Top Training, a comprehensive performance enhancement program. Top Training offers athletes Pilates and Sport Psychology services. Baker-Lubin has a MS in Kinesiology and has completed Body Arts and Science International's comprehensive teacher training, Core Align 1&2, Ride Right's coaching certification as well as other extensive exercise science education. She has been a competitive athlete her whole life and has been an equestrian for over twenty-four years. You can contact Lily at rideright3@gmail.com.*



## Spitting Sand—A Learner's Journey Rescue Me

Column editor Jessica Boyd



*Sundance Kiddo with his new mom, Rio Rossame*

I have been working with Neigh Savers Foundation since April of 2012 and am now on the Board of Directors. I love what we do. We take Thoroughbred racehorses from the track (OTTBs), give them some down time—however long they need—and teach them to do something else. Being a part of this allows me to work with these amazing athletes, gain their trust, and help them transition to their new careers in whatever it is they turn out to be good at.

Unfortunately, this also requires me letting go of them once their rehab is done and that may be the absolute hardest part this job. Because working with them, grooming them, teaching them to walk calmly beside you without a stud chain—all of it leads to falling in love with each of them, all of them, just a little bit. Or maybe more than a little bit.

And then it's time to let them go to new homes where you can't see them every day. At least when they are under your care, you know that even if they are muddying someone (you) is paying attention to this quirk or that sensitivity. Someone (you) is watching what goes in and how much comes out.

But there is only one me and I cannot keep all of the horses that come through my care and I don't have enough FWNH (friends-who-need-horses) to adopt all my new EBFs (equine-best-friends).

So the task of finding the right home for each horse begins.

Sometimes, it's kismet. Someone shows up and wants to take the horse home in the backseat of their car. Sundance Kiddo's adoption went a little like that and he is off learning Dressage and how to be an Eventing horse with his new owner and apparently having quite a good time.

Sometimes, it takes a little longer and more thinking, as was the case with Summer in Dublin. He is actually in a long-term foster situation and is busy charming everyone around him. The hardest part with him was his stunning good looks attracting people who wanted him to be something he wasn't ready for, sooner than he would be ready for it. He is with a wonderful person who is taking time with him, letting him grow up into himself and whatever his new life will be (see related article, p. 15).

These were my first adoptions with Neigh Savers and all in all, those two people are like different versions of dream adopters.

A lot of people are not quite so easy to work with or want guarantees. "I just don't want any major problems down the line." While I can see their point on one hand, an abscess does not necessarily indicate anything dark looming on the horizon. Not to mention that life in general has no guarantees and certainly not life with horses—except the guarantee that this horse will imprint your heart if you let it.

I suppose my attitude is fueled by my own experiences with Calabar. We had a lot of ups and downs—some of them painful—but only once did I consider giving him up and that was very early on, day two to be exact. Every experience we've shared has been part of this journey—including mysterious injuries for him, not so mysterious injuries for me, and achy winter-time joints for both of us.

So it is hard for me when someone comes to us wanting the perfect, sound ex-racehorse with no baggage and no vices. Because part of the joy for me in working with each of them is learning their personalities and quirks, and figuring out how best transition them to their new careers. When I make a tiny breakthrough with a horse, watch their ears perk up because they recognize we've connected and communicated effectively, it's like gold. I get practically giddy. Okay, not practically. I get giddy right down to my toes. There is even giggling on occasion.

This is why some of the things I hear things from potential adopters just make my jaw drop. They want a quieter horse, not nervous, and I tell them how calm and wonderful this three-year old, never-raced gelding is, how easy he is to handle, how affectionate. Then they turn around and ask me if perhaps he is sickly and that's why he's so calm. Really? Maybe he is just that way and needs someone to inspire him to silliness? When that same horse senses my energy and decides to pick up his pace to get closer to me, well that's just golden.

If you want to compete right away, don't get an OTTB that is recovering from a mild bowed tendon or hairline fracture. But if you want to build a relationship with a horse—a partnership that may last the rest of both your lives—give an OTTB, or really any rescue horse, a chance. They may not be perfect, but they all seem to know when you care and notice exactly when you make the investment in them. After that, they may even decide to make that investment in you.

Only when that happens—and it can be in the first fifteen minutes or months down the line—only then can I stop worrying about whether I let that horse go to the right place.

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



*Readers Write*

## To the Rescue—Dublin's Story

Written by Joan Rasmussen, Editor at Large, Treasurer, SCHC

Back in the dark ages (the 1960s and 1970s) when I was taking riding lessons and hanging out at stables and horse shows, retired racehorses typically found second careers as show horses in the Hunter/Jumper arena. While I never owned one of these horses, I was always taken by their elegant good looks, their intelligence, and their dispositions. The fact that Secretariat was stunning the world wasn't hurting the Thoroughbred allure, either.

As Warmbloods were introduced to this country, the popularity of ex-racehorses as show horses waned. Retired Thoroughbreds no longer had a good chance of going on to Hunter/Jumper or Dressage careers. And recently, the tanking economy has made the outlook for off-track-Thoroughbreds (OTTBs) bleak.

Meanwhile, my riding has centered around Quarter Horses and Western riding. The last few years have been spent with my Quarter Horse, Cowboy, working our way through the Parelli Natural Horsemanship program. We've made good progress, to the point where we are ready for some of the more advanced moves.

Cowboy, a fresh-faced nine year old when I got him, is now nearing seventeen. While he's in good shape, he is starting to show a few age-related issues and it's starting to look like some of those more advanced moves may not be in his best interest. I was lamenting this to my friend Jessica Boyd (on the board of Neigh Savers Foundation, see related article, p. 14), who promptly told me that I should take a look at one of their rescues, Summer in Dublin.

Dublin, as it turns out, is not only a stunning four year old jet-black gelding with plenty of white "chrome," he is also a Secretariat great-grandson on both his sire and dam's sides. He just doesn't happen to like to run. He's more of a thinker. His spectacularly unsuccessful racing career left him with sore feet, a bone chip that was successfully removed, and a cranky attitude toward many people. Being a sucker for a pretty face and glamorous pedigree, I made arrangements to visit him.

The gentle treatment Dublin had received under Neigh Saver's care had improved his attitude to the point where he followed his caretakers around like a puppy dog. He was also the polar opposite of the stereotypical "crazy Thoroughbred" with his laid-back demeanor and lack of spookiness.

I wasn't ready to snap him up. Taking on the responsibility of another horse is not something I take lightly, and Cowboy's soundness outlook was uncertain. Dublin was not ready to jump right into work, and if Cowboy turned out to be unusable, I would be left without any horse to ride until Dublin could be brought along. So the decision dragged out for a few months.

Cowboy became sounder and it looked like I would be able to use him while bringing Dublin along, and finally I arranged for a soundness evaluation for Dublin. His feet were still sore and it was impossible to do a good evaluation. My veterinarian, seeing I was a goner for him, suggested fostering him at my place while his feet healed. So in early December, I brought Dublin home to live with Cowboy. This freed up a slot for Neigh Savers to take on another horse, and let me evaluate Dublin more thoroughly as a good fit for me. And the accountant part of me likes that the expenses of



*Dublin is a charmer*

fostering him are tax-deductible as a charitable donation, since Neigh Savers is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization!

Dublin's feet are improving steadily. He's a gorgeous mover and has a steady temperament. I have experienced some "attitude" from him that left me with teeth marks, but as time goes on and we work out who's the leader around here, I am getting much less "pissy face" and a lot more "kissy face." I'm hoping that we will be able to do a good soundness evaluation on him soon. He's carried my Western saddle with no issues, even when the stirrups thumped him on the sides. I'm starting him out with natural horsemanship techniques and he's a fast and willing learner.

Cowboy has bonded with Dublin in a way I haven't seen before. I think he feels protective toward "the kid." Cowboy is actually more flighty than Dublin and occasionally goes into drama mode, trying to convince Dublin that the chainsaws next door mean that the sky is falling. Dublin tries hard to follow his lead and panic, but you can tell that he can't quite figure out what he is supposed to be scared of! He looks like he has the makings of a good trail horse, which is a must if he's going to eventually be Cowboy's replacement as Cowboy nears retirement.

When I first started looking at Dublin, my trusted advisors were shaking their heads and advising me not to consider him. Now they've met him, they have fallen for his charms and are solidly on "Team Dublin." Dublin is looking like a great addition to the herd around here!

*Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten, and now enjoys trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy. Joan supports her horse hobby by providing bookkeeping services (In Balance Bookkeeping Service). She occasionally blogs about her horse experiences at [cowdex.blogspot.com](http://cowdex.blogspot.com). To reach Joan, email her at [joan-ras795@gmail.com](mailto:joan-ras795@gmail.com).*



## Trails and Open Spaces

Column editor Sarah Reid

# Spring Lake Regional Park: Have You Explored Horse Trail Yet?

Equestrians often use the Spring Lake Regional Park entrance as their jumping-off place for rides into Annadel State Park. Many riders, however do not realize that Spring Lake itself has a specially designated horse trail with much to offer. This county park offers an abundance of natural beauty, wildlife, local history, and varied trail all in one.

### The park

Spring Lake, once located on the eastern boundary of Santa Rosa, now offers a park experience in an urban setting. This 320-acre park was originally simply a marshy area of ranch land, later purchased by the Sonoma County Water Agency. Sonoma County Regional Parks developed and began operating the park in the mid-1970's, opening trails and other recreational opportunities to the public. When visiting the park on opening day with my Girl Scout troop, the ranger-led talk included information about the lake as a flood-control project; the buildings are designed to withstand going completely underwater. I did not believe I would see that happen in my lifetime. Only a little more than ten years later I observed the buildings completely submerged. Now allowing the lake boundary to expand, holding back runoff that would otherwise flood neighborhoods downstream on Santa Rosa Creek, is a regular winter occurrence. Normally, the seventy-two-acre lake provides opportunities for boating, fishing, and wildlife viewing. The property holds a campground, swimming lagoon, concessions, picnic areas, and the Environmental Discovery Center. A 2¼ mile paved trail navigates around the lake for multi-use.

### The Horse Trail

A four mile trail, named "Horse Trail," is designated for equestrians, and almost completes the perimeter of the park. The trail is signed with horse icons, but the rider might come across occasional intersections without directional information. The trail is interesting taken either direction for variety, and is a circuitous route. For a clockwise ride, begin at the western end of the equestrian parking lot, following a rock-lined path to the paved entrance road. Cross this, bearing left over the dam (you'll see the entry kiosk to your left as you look down). At the far end of the dam, stay right on the dirt trail to just above the boat launch parking lot. Watch for the trail to run slightly uphill to the left, following this and signs all the way past the big water tanks. Go straight across another dam, which forms the boundary of Spring Lake Regional Park and Howarth City Park. Horses are not allowed in Howarth Park. After crossing this second dam, take a steep trail down the right face, then across the paved path just left of a bench. You will follow this trail at the water's edge around to the east side of the lake. When



View of Spring Lake from Horse Trail

you come out of the little forest to the paved path again, turn right across a short paved causeway, then immediately turn left up onto a dirt path again. Follow this across the east park access road to another dirt trail all the way to a wooden fence. Turn right through the wooden fence, through a group picnic area to the big ditch. Turn right on a paved path, then left across the ditch, an immediate left on the fire road back to the equestrian parking lot. Horses are not allowed along the paved trail or other non-equestrian designated dirt trails in the park.

### What to expect

This trail offers great views of Spring Lake, the western hills of Annadel State Park, Hood Mountain, and Gunsight Rock. Osprey are common visitors, as are Golden Eagles, hawks, green herons, migrating waterfowl, egrets, cormorants, and otters. Great Horned Owls often nest along the shores of the swimming lagoon. Lemon yellow iris blooms along the north shore of the lake in spring. Bobcats, including cubs, and coyotes have been spotted on several occasions. Expect to share the trail with runners, cyclists, hikers, dog walkers, and baby strollers. The trail is not technical, but has a variety of surfaces including a very rocky patch above the boat launch. It can be slippery when wet heading down the face of the dam, but is covered with nice dirt most of the way around.

### Facilities and getting there

Equestrian access to Spring Lake is from Newanga Avenue, off Hoen, with easy access from Highway 12. From the kiosk, turn right up a slight incline and bear right at the sign directing you to equestrian parking. The large gravel lot is located on the end of this loop around Oak Knoll Picnic Area. The equestrian parking lot is complete with water trough, spigot for water or hose, manure bunker, and hitching rails. The lot connects through the yellow gate with a fire-road to trails into Annadel State Park. Day use fee is \$7 or use your Sonoma County Regional Park membership pass (\$69 per year). The park is open year-round, however Horse Trail gets boggy, muddy, and slippery after the first big winter rains and is not recommended for reasons of both safety and trail preservation.

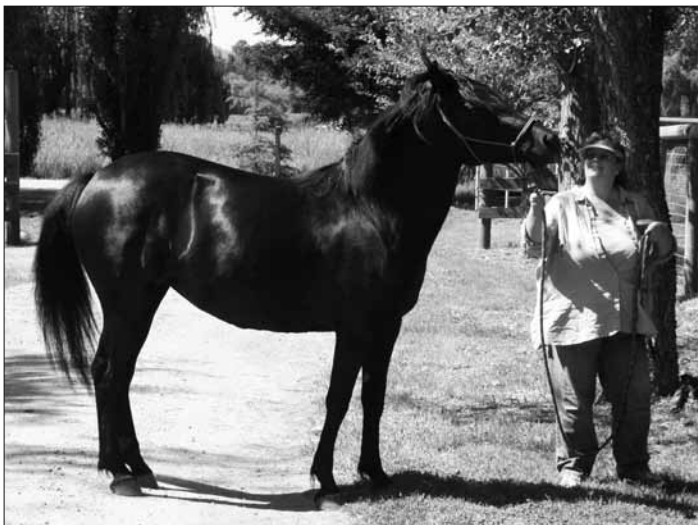
Please remember to clean up after your horse in the parking lot. I hope you have an enjoyable experience in another one of our wonderful Sonoma County Regional Parks.

*Sarah Reid (Equus Award-2012) 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@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:trails@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org).*

## Readers Write

## Who's Rescuing Whom?

Written by Michelle Buegeleisen



Michelle rescued Shadow's mother...two for one!

Each person who chooses to rescue a horse does so for their own reasons. Everyone gets something out of rescuing that really isn't about the horse. There's nothing wrong with that, until the person's "need" to rescue is greater than the horse's "need" to be rescued. The question then becomes, is the rescue effort about the horse or is it about the rescuer?

Some years back, I received a call from a friend who wanted to rescue a horse. She asked if I would mind taking an intuitive look at the horse and give my honest opinion of him. The instant I intuitively looked at the horse, it was clear to me that something had happened in his life that had so scarred his perception of humans, that saving him was not really possible. This was a case of the horse having no real interest in our version of rescue. My friend became even more determined to save him.

The day of the horse's pick up did not go as planned. The person donating trailer time, wanted to lead the horse into the trailer but that was not possible, as the unhandled horse could not be touched. Some sort of disagreement occurred between the parties involved. The owner of the horse changed his mind about the rescue and refused to surrender the horse to my friend.

My friend was crushed by this news. She felt she had let the horse down. I tried to explain that this was a gift in disguise. Basically, the

universe was stepping in and stopping something that wasn't in the best interest of the rescuers or the horse. My words didn't matter to her, she was sad, which was understandable.

A few days later she stopped by my ranch. She was radiantly happy. She let me know that a new agreement had been made and the rescue was on again, a different person would be transporting the horse the next day.

The following morning the horse was successfully loaded into the trailer. Once in trailer, they noticed that this horse was a stallion, not a gelding, not a big surprise. Since the horse turned out to be a stallion, the original foster home would not be able to take him as planned. Calls were made and a local trainer agreed to work with the horse for one day, to get him "handle-able." My friend asked if I wanted to come and watch. I did.

The trainer had a clinic going on the day the horse was delivered to his ranch. So there were many people standing around watching the "training." The horse was unloaded into the round pen and the show began. I think what stunned me the most was watching all of the people watch this trainer "fix" the horse. It was so clear to me this horse was in total terror. Dripping sweat, frantic, a mess, the horse was almost all reaction. There was little time for the horse to do any thinking. It was clear that the trainer was getting something out of this that had very little to do with the long term well-being of the horse. I left after an hour.

My friend called me that night to let me know that the training was complete and that horse was to be gelded in the morning. She said that the trainer had saved the horse's life. I was underwhelmed, and she asked why. I said, you can push a terrified and exhausted horse to do almost anything once, but to expect a trained and compliant horse the next day, is not only unreasonable, it's highly unlikely.

The following morning I received a phone call from her. She was very upset and said to me, "You probably already know this, but the horse had to be put down this morning." She said no amount of sedation would even come close to quieting the horse, he had become even more unmanageable and frantic than the day before and the only thing left to do was to put him down.

I think what was most significant for me in regards to this particular rescue incident, was the number of people involved, and the way the energy built moment by moment, without much notice of what was going on for the horse. It was as if, the "high" of being able to save such a damaged horse was so great, that it was worth the try at any cost.

I believe in rescue, but only for the right reasons. Rescuing a horse in the right spirit, with adequate ability, knowledge, and a workable circumstance can, and generally does, have a wonderful outcome. The most successful rescuers know it's about the horse, not the person.



Michelle Buegeleisen is an Intuitive, an Energy Worker, and a horse lover. She lives and works out of her ranch in Sebastopol, a place where she has woven her passions together to create Harvest Moon Ranch. Readers can reach Michelle at 707-292-4308 or at [www.harvestmoonranch.net](http://www.harvestmoonranch.net).

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## Readers Write

# Love of Horses Connects Fun and Service

Written by Jean Setzer

When novelist John Irving was asked why he writes in a recent interview reported in TIME magazine (May 14, 2012), he reflected, "If you presume to love something, you must love the process of it much more than you love the finished product." For Equi-Ed Program volunteers, a love of horses and all that goes with it, answers the similar question: Why volunteer?

How do people who volunteer choose where and how...And self select into roles and programs suitable to their needs and talents? This is an especially important question given the multiple organizations offering service opportunities in this community and known for being horse friendly. Interviewing a group of Equi-Ed volunteers suggests that in addition to the love of horses, people from many walks of life find themselves drawn to Equi-Ed because of a desire to share love of horses and riding with others, and an intuitive knowledge of the therapeutic relationship horses can provide. Bev Winton, a volunteer for over five years, expressed the satisfaction that comes from being with others "who are on the same page in wanting to share a connection with horses." As an experienced volunteer, Bev celebrates helping new volunteers learn the ropes. Reflecting on her years with the program, she adds, "Perhaps a bit selfishly, I get back as much or more being outdoors, sharing in the fun of the horse experience with others."

Volunteers are integral to every aspect of the Equi-Ed program. From early morning to nightfall, they perform the daily tasks of stable management, horse care, and client lesson support, including handling the horses and side walking. Volunteers also participate in special events and fund raising. These activities make possible the program's mission of using the power of the horse to enrich the lives of individuals with disabilities. In participating in this mission, the lives of volunteers are immeasurably lifted as well.

Safety for the rider, horse, and volunteer are the bedrocks of the program's culture. All volunteers complete a seventeen-hour comprehensive training program that includes didactic and hands-on instruction on horse behavior and care, emergency procedures, and benefits and practices of therapeutic riding. "The training is wonderful," explains a new volunteer Lesli Fullerton-Pacis from Lake County. "The weekend of learning was the craziest kind of fun, giving me a chance to see and do the kinds of things the program offers, a chance to experience it first hand, even including mucking stalls." At Equi-Ed, everyone mucks!

Equi-Ed volunteers come from diverse backgrounds. On the roster of over forty volunteers, there are folks with backgrounds in teaching, nursing, animal science, and research. Some have ridden all



*Instructor Sade Cain (left), Jean, and a student*

their lives (there is even a former jockey); others are new to horses. Volunteers span the age range from high school students to others enjoying retirement. Cheryl Smith, who completed the training in March 2012, sums up her journey to Equi-Ed, "I missed being around horses. It has been twenty years since I last rode, and I missed the smell, the sounds, the movement of the horse. With a background in childhood development...this is a natural for me."

Riding since the age of four, Willow Teske, began studying equine science at the Santa Rosa Junior College and became a volunteer in early 2012. She volunteers in many program tasks including horse care. She enjoys coming to the barn early, because "the early morning feeding allows me to start off my day with mental clarity and get a great workout as well."

Others, like Jessica Warner, express what it means to participate in others' growth by saying "I volunteer because I love to help others and enjoy working with horses. I really like the role as horse handler as part of a lesson the most, because I can slowly see the riders grow out of the need for us (the horse handlers and spotters) to control the horse for them. Then they become more skilled, more confident in their abilities, and I can see them become more independent. This makes me happy."

Regardless of whether we come from a Western or English riding background, volunteers and staff share in this sense of being at home at a barn and with the program's sense of purpose. But volunteers also share a desire to grow themselves in their mastery as equestrians. When asked what makes a good volunteer, Sade Cain, Equi-Ed instructor, replied, "Someone who is not afraid to take a risk, to be wrong, and who is open to accepting direction from a perspective of safety and commitment to everyone's growth and enjoyment."



*Volunteer Bev Winton and Tooley*

Located on the border of Santa Rosa and Calistoga, Equi-Ed is nationally recognized in its use of the horse in supporting the mental, emotional, and physical growth and development of its clients. The program, now in its nineteenth year, is an accredited center of the Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International and serves the communities of Northern Sonoma and Napa Counties. Further training is available through Santa Rosa Junior College courses. For more information on how to join in the fun, contact Equi-Ed at 707-5-HORSES (546-7737) or email infoequied@aol.com.

*A Horseman's View*

Column editor Toora Nolan

# Longeing Safely and Effectively: Technique (Part 2)

In my last column, we talked about the basic equipment and work space that are ideal for correct and safe longeing. Today, I'll go into detail on longeing techniques that will allow you to clearly communicate with, and control your horse as he's working.

So you have your longe line attached to the bridle and your longe whip in hand. Now what? If you're going to longe with the horse travelling to the left, carry the whip and longe line in your right hand. This leaves your left hand free to easily feed the line either longer or shorter as the circle changes in size. Work on developing the coordination and timing to adjust the line, keeping it off the ground, so you won't have to worry about the horse accidentally getting a leg tangled up. Be sure to have any extra line folded in your right hand, rather than wrapped to avoid injury. When working to the right, reverse your hands: left hand holding the whip and line, right hand feeding the line longer or shorter to adjust to the size of the circle. Correctly working with the whip and line can take a lot of practice, so I usually advise my students to practice at home so that things don't turn into a tangled mess when you add a horse to the equation!

When beginning the session, I expect the horse to remain at the halt until I've stepped far enough away to be out of "kicking range." Sometimes it's just too hard for horses to contain a buck as they start working and you want to be at a safe distance! To visualize the correct placement of the handler, think of an isosceles triangle. The three sides are composed of 1) the whip pointing to the horse's tail, 2) the horse's body, and 3) the longe line travelling from the horse's mouth to the handler. The handler faces the horse's girth and makes up the central point. Your position is important. Moving more in line with horse's hindquarters encourages him to move more forward, while lining up with the horse's shoulder can help him become more settled. Stepping too far ahead might encourage your horse to spin around changing directions.

The neutral position for the whip is lash resting on the ground so as to be unthreatening to the horse. I prefer to still keep the point towards the horse's hindquarters, rather than behind me, as I want it in the correct position should I need to communicate. Dragging the tip from behind my back causes a delay. If I want a little more energy or an upward transition, I will raise the whip parallel to the ground. If this isn't enough to get the response I want, I will "swish" the whip towards the horse's hindquarters in a snaking motion. If I still haven't gotten a correct response, making some noise should do the trick—either moving the lash quickly to make a "whoosh" sound, or lastly, one quick crack to get his attention. As soon as I get the response I'm looking for, the whip goes back to neutral position. Your whip can also be very helpful to control the size of the circle. If the horse is trying to make the circle smaller, use the whip at his shoulder to block him. Another common problem is when the horse tries to cut the circle smaller on one side, and then tries to pull the circle bigger on the other side (usually the bigger side of the circle will be in the direction of the barn, or their buddies, of course). To encourage the circle to stay truly round, I will shorten up my line to match the size of the circle where the horse is cutting the turn. I will then hold that



*Correct longeing position and use of the hands*

size circle on the side where the horse wants to drift out. I will only let the circle get bigger when the horse asks to move out on the side of the circle where they were previously cutting in. This bit of reverse psychology usually does the trick!

When the horse and handler are confident and relaxed while working at all three gaits in both directions, you can start to think about whether the addition of training aids could be beneficial to your horse's education and development of his musculature: side reins, a *chambon*, or *de gogue* are some commonly used tools. They can be fantastic aids to help the horse develop strength through his topline, teach acceptance of the bridle, and improve suppleness and straightness. However, they can do more harm than good if used incorrectly, and can lead to fear and panic if they're not introduced gently to the green horse, so please work with an expert trainer when adding new equipment to your horse's repertoire.

I hope these articles are able to fill in any gaps in your basic longeing knowledge. Enjoy your time playing with your horse!

*Toora Nolan runs her business, Raydiance Eventing, from the Santa Rosa Equestrian Center in west Santa Rosa. She works with horses and riders of all levels in Dressage, Show Jumping, and Cross Country. You can contact her at [toora@raydianceeventing.com](mailto:toora@raydianceeventing.com) or 707-292-8365, or through the Horse Journal at [horseman@sonoma-countyhorsecouncil.org](mailto:horseman@sonoma-countyhorsecouncil.org)*



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## Readers Write

# Rescue 101

Written By Ilene Zauderer



Isaac and Olivia

Though I have been involved with horses most of my life, I was called to rescue only recently when an ancient, emaciated horse named "Piano" appeared to me as I drove the back road between Fairfax and Petaluma. He was literally on his last legs having been left to fend for himself for way too many years. Due to his level of neglect and extreme old age, there was not much left to rescue but I resolved to do what I could even if it meant euthanizing him. His owners were not even willing to do that for him. Despite his poor treatment he was still full of life. At Lone Willow Ranch, he received the care, love, and attention he'd long been missing from a team of devoted individuals including Dr Grant Miller and Jane Mesics. We fed him appropriately, did what we could for his teeth, feet, and severe arthritis pain. It was plain to see he enjoyed his new world where he had shelter, food, and friendship. Piano was a fighter but he could not entirely over-come his difficulty getting up and down on his own. With winter rain and cold approaching, the decision was made to euthanize him in the sunshine instead of waiting for the bad death that comes to old horses when they are no longer ambulatory. We were sad to see him go, but glad to send him off in the best way possible. He touched us all with his nobility and spirit.

In early September 2011, I received an email from the rescue grapevine concerning 150 horses from a Quarter Horse breeding farm that was "liquidating" its stock by dumping them at the feed-lot in Fallon, Nevada. I call this horse hell. Mares with foals, orphans, pregnant mares, yearlings, and others were waiting to be shipped to Canadian slaughterhouses.

I offered to adopt one orphan and soon agreed to take another on the advice of more knowledgeable people so he would have a friend his age. I named the colt Isaac, and the filly Olivia. Our facility was not quite ready so they were sent to a ranch owned by Cindy and Yves Sauvignon. They generously agreed to house them as long as was necessary. Unfortunately, these babies turned out to be quite sick with unknown diseases, including the possibility of strangles. Lesson number one in rescuing horses: keep them in quarantine. Rescued horses are coming from bad situations, poorly cared for, and in questionable health.

We were all gravely concerned about the welfare of these vulnerable little creatures as well as other horses they had been in contact with, given the presence of highly contagious diseases. The challenges were many as they were stressed, malnourished, and had never been handled. Everything you would want to do with young horses, especially sick ones was impossible as interventions would have likely compromised their immune systems further. Worming, vaccinations, gelding, hoof trims, handling, even getting a correct diagnosis would have to wait until they were stronger. It was heartbreaking to see them suffering and not be able to jump in and do something to make it all better. Lesson number two: veterinary medicine is a dance between human technology and letting nature take its course.

Everyone worked together for five anxious, patience-trying months of worry, inconvenience, expense, an intimate relationship with bleach, and vet bills. We also found delight and joy being in the presence of these adorable babies. Isaac was a bright spot and approachable from the beginning. He loved being petted and was unfazed by everything we threw at him, from his first hoof trims to being poked and prodded in undignified ways. Olivia was the terrified one, but always curious and interested. She seemed to be taking notes, the way she watched us whenever we handled Isaac. I will never forget the thrill the first time she let me touch her. She is every little girl's dream now, a life-size "my little pony" ...so sweet and friendly.

To see them thriving when I think of where they came from and where they could have ended up fills me with a sense of wonder, magic, and gratitude for being able to participate in their journey!

Thanks to Robyn Spector who rolled up her sleeves to gentle Isaac and Olivia; Cindy and Yves Sauvignon who graciously housed the babies during their quarantine; Drs. Katherine Szabo and Robert Steere who skillfully treated the horses, patiently listened to my concerns, and answered all my questions; Melissa Benjamin and Michelle Helberg who with their rescued babies, Cooper and Annie, made excellent company in the life boat!

*Ilene was born in Maryland and moved to the bay area in 1985. She is an artist, musician, and horse rescue advocate. Ilene has participated in the Hunter/Jumper world for the last twenty-five years and currently lives in two houses with one husband, four horses, one dog, and two cats. She also has two geriatric horses who reside in Grass Valley at a wonderful retirement village.*



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## Readers Write

## Rescuing Each Other



Written by Patty Berg

*Smokey waiting for his forever home*

I am a breast cancer survivor. Smokey is a horseracing survivor. We met online, back in March of 2010, on the Sonoma Action for Equine Rescue's (SAFER) website. It wasn't love at first sight, but a second look made me curious. Seeing this tall, dark, and handsome bay "in person" convinced me. I had to have him, even if he proved to be a pet, and not a riding horse.

Now you would think I would have learned something having just resolved a previous horse situation. But I was fragile from my cancer experience, and waiting to exhale, so I found myself driven to get a horse again.

I had always been "horse crazy" as a little girl and got my first horse at age ten. At twenty-four I lost "Tony," who had always steered me clear from making a lot of bad choices. Then at twenty-five I got married and raised a family with my husband Ralph. Both my kids took horseback riding lessons, but the interest never stuck with them. After finishing my treatment for breast cancer at fifty-five, I impulsively purchased Bo, a dark bay BLM Mustang captured in eastern Oregon. Bo had issues which four others riders before me weren't able to resolve. We all were all bucked off! But I did not give up and tried every safe and sane intervention I could think of. It's funny how I almost forgot I had survived cancer. But after breaking my ribs twice and receiving warnings from others, I finally found him a home at a wild horse sanctuary. Undaunted, within two months I was looking for another horse...

In March 2010 I saw Smokey on SAFER's website. He was a dark bay, like both my childhood horse and Bo, but he really was not much to look at at the time. Smokey and his track buddy Jazzy, were two lead ponies off the Bay Area track circuit. Their owner lost his job and had to give them up. Smokey had been trained to race, but life threatening injuries (in the track business) got him pulled. It was decided he was worth something still, so they turned him out to heal, retrained him to be a lead pony for the racehorses. He worked at this job for ten years.

After viewing Smokey twice on the internet, I went out and looked at him. This is when I fell in love despite everything, including my

*Smokey and Patty thriving together*

better judgment. Smokey had significant dental problems and had lost a considerable amount of weight. His eyes were dull and he just did not want to be touched. It was apparent he had "old and cold" front leg injuries, a significant barbwire scar running from his front coronet band back to his heel, and his back right pastern was swollen. I was told he was sound and I wanted to believe it. Smokey was a gentleman towards me, but hypervigilant about new surroundings. A second visit convinced me to take the risk again, and led me to look for boarding and transportation. By early April, Smokey was with me, at a new home.

It's been about 2½ years since then, and although is hasn't been perfect, it has been pretty wonderful. Needless to say we have had our trials. Shortly after Smokey arrived at his new home, we discovered him in a field swollen from head to withers—bitten on the nose by a rattler. The owners of the property had discovered him and quickly intervened with therapy recommended by a vet. Smokey was lucky, because horses can suffocate when swelling obstructs their windpipe. We also had to relocate three times, to find acceptable boarding that I could afford. Finally, Smokey has colicked twice, but thank goodness our vet, who is also a vet that tends the SAFER horses, Dr Robin Kelly, was available and able to pull him "out of the woods."

Six months after getting Smokey healthy and happy I finally got on him. I was anticipating a horse that would be taking off and bucking, but Smokey was calm and responsive to my simple requests! He had been ridden Western on his last job, and now I was trying a Dressage saddle on his back and an English bridle. He took it all in stride.

Smokey offers a perfect level of challenge to refocus my life in a healthy way. I guess we both got healthy together! We are engaged in Liberty training, ride in the arena, trail ride, and basically hangout together. It is such a good thing. For both of us!



*Patty Berg's family moved to Marin County when she was eight years old. There she started riding and got her first horse at age ten. Patty taught special education over twenty-three years in Santa Rosa, but a diagnoses of breast cancer lead to early retirement. She now tutors privately. Married since 1976, Patty and her husband, Ralph, love to spend time with their kids, grandkids, and hike.*



## Readers Write

## Back in the Saddle

Written by Katie Geary

While you're sitting in a hospital bed, the only thing you can do is think. The week before, I was perfectly healthy, running around, and working, not ruminating and watching episodes of "Shark Week." At twenty-one, you don't really believe anything like this could happen to you. I didn't see myself as invincible necessarily, but I definitely didn't see this one coming.

I was at work as a trail guide with two guests. Everything was going great until my horse started rushing back to the barn. I tried to slow him down and he reared up a little. Awesome. So I started making him work a little. I explained to the guests what I was doing. He began rushing again we headed out, and reared again, this time going over backwards. I'm not really sure how I got far enough from him that he didn't land on me. The horse and I were both getting to our feet and he started to step on my right hip. Luckily, I managed to get out from under him. As I stood up, the horse turned around and kicked me in the thigh. Unhappy, I climbed back on, forced a smile and apologized to my customers, "I wasn't planning on such an 'exciting' ride."

On the ride home, as I was contemplating the post-ride conversation the horse and I would be having, suddenly my vision faded into yellow hues and I started feeling nauseated. Crap. I held it together until the end of the ride. We repeated the rearing, going over backwards, and me getting back on. When we finally got back to the barn, I hobbled over to the guests, but my body said, "NO," and I had to ask for help. I knew I had go to the hospital. I figured I'd hit my head pretty good, and assumed that was what was making me feel so sick. A friend brought me to the ER.

Palm Drive did a CT scan of my head, an ultrasound on my leg to check for blood clots, and an X-ray to check for any fractures. Everything came back clear, so I went home and expected to be back to work on Monday. And I was—but only briefly. Monday, my leg was so swollen and sore I ended up needing to go home early. Tuesday I sucked it up and worked my full shift but both the pain and swelling were worse. I was hoping with some ice and elevation it would go down, but Wednesday just standing up caused my leg to swell. There was also a pain in my abdomen that I couldn't figure out. I broke down and made a doctor's appointment for the next day... still with the mindset it was a quick fix and I could get back to my three jobs in short order.

Thursday morning I was in so much pain it was hard to walk, and I was feeling nauseated again. Thankfully, my mom was able to drive me to my appointment. The doctor wasn't immediately able to find out what was wrong. She was going to try to schedule an appointment to get a CT scan of my abdomen, but I had a fever. That changed things dramatically.

The doctor arranged for an urgent CT scan and ultrasound that

*Katie is back in the saddle again*

same day. After what seemed like hours of waiting, increasing pain, getting stabbed multiple times with needles, I got "scanned." The studies revealed that I had a blood clot that went from my knee to my groin. I was admitted to Sutter... Apparently these blood clots are pretty serious—serious enough to surgically remove them.

After more needles, morphine, panicked family members, and chest X-rays, I went down for surgery. Having never had surgery, or even really been in the hospital before, I was terrified. Unfortunately, the surgery didn't go as planned. When they injected the dye, I woke up from anesthesia with a pain in my back. It was caused by internal bleeding in my abdomen from the injury. The mystery of the abdominal pain was solved.

I spent a few days in the ICU. Finally, when I was stable enough, I was started on blood thinners and moved upstairs into the general population. The nurses and doctors at Sutter were great. I joked with

them and tried to be as cheery as possible.

Sitting there in the hospital I realized how lucky I was. I'd walked around on that leg for almost a week. The horse could have kicked me and burst an artery or actually broken my right hip. I had so many questions for the doctors, some of which they couldn't answer, like what activities are ok to do while I was taking my blood-thinning medicine, and when I could ride again. It made me think about what I wanted out of life and what I needed to do to get it. Mostly, I need to do what's best for me, and never let someone bully me into thinking I can't get what I want. I want to appreciate my mom more, because she was there when I needed her.

I'm back to work and riding again. I found a doctor who rides, so she'll understand me better and what I want to do. I was on the blood thinners for a while and I wore a compression stocking to reduce the swelling in my leg, but it was okay with me. I'm happy to be up and running around, but most of all, happy to be back in the saddle.

**Greg Harder**

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## Readers Write

# Nala

Written by Donna M Diaz

I adopted a five year old off-the-track thoroughbred (OTTB) who was rescued by SAFER from the Petaluma auction. She was being bid on by the pound; nameless and probably hopeless when she was saved by this local rescue organization.

I have rescued many pets over the years, and I was motivated to find a horse that needed help. I was warned about the risks of adopting a rescued horse, since nothing is known about the animal's history or training. What I was not told is that there are so many wonderful, needy horses waiting for good homes and a second chance!

SAFER named the horse Alice Westfilly, in remembrance of a volunteer's mother who passed away and donated the money for her rescue. SAFER listed Alice as "a puppy dog type that responds swiftly to gentle leadership." I was immediately intrigued. But I had not thought of adopting an OTTB, so I did not call right away. A few weeks later, I saw her picture again, and felt drawn to the picture and description, so I made the call.

Kate at SAFER advised that a pending adoption did not receive final approval, so she was still available. I was excited and I traveled from San Jose to Petaluma to meet the horse. When I first saw her she was beautiful, but thin, with a handsome face and a kind and soulful eye. She was in a pasture with two other horses where she was being fostered at Stable Acres in Petaluma. Here she was given the opportunity to heal from the unfortunate experiences that led her to the auction.

Kate formally introduced me to the horse, and told Alice that I was here to meet her and would not hurt her. She stopped grazing and gazed at me, then walked toward me and allowed me to stroke and halter her. Although her feet were sore on the gravel road, she walked with me calmly and politely. Alice allowed me to groom, longe, tack up, and briefly ride her. We made an immediate connection and a bond was formed. Although she was accepting of me, she did remain aloof and guarded for many weeks, as if afraid to trust she was really safe.

An essential element of my decision to adopt was input from my trainer, who rode and evaluated her, taking into consideration my skill level and riding plans. She observed that Alice had a good mind, was friendly, willing, and kind. Although we knew nothing



Donna and Nala

about her background, it was clear that someone had invested time and training to develop her after she left the race track. My trainer advised me that she was not a finished horse, but that she had lovely gaits and movement. I was cautioned to consider whether I wanted to put time and training into a green horse. I welcomed the opportunity to learn and grow with the horse... That is what I wanted a horse for!

SAFER cleared me for the adoption and the next step was the recommended pre-purchase veterinary examination. SAFER's vet examined Alice before she was offered for adoption and identified evidence of an old injury on her right foreleg. The pre-purchase exam revealed that she was a healthy five year old, but she was clearly lame that day, when trotted out at the time of the examination. Due to the apparent lameness the vet recommended that we put on front shoes. I took her home anyway.

When she got home, I named her Nala – meaning "Beloved." Since living with me, Nala has shown no evidence of lameness, and she has only been off one other time when she injured herself in the pasture! We began work with a trainer, four days each week, in addition to my weekly riding lesson. There were times during the first year that I questioned my ability to handle the horse, but I worked through it with my trainer's guidance. During this time critical self assessment and consideration of what was best for the horse, allowed us to get through the tough times. I had to acknowledge how my actions affected the horse and figure out the mistakes that I was making which confused or frustrated her. Nala is now a sound and healthy energetic mare. I absolutely love her and feel fortunate to work with her each day. I still work with a trainer in the arena learning Dressage and we take many relaxing trail rides.

*Donna is a fifty-something, married attorney. Nala filled her empty nest when her son went off to college and her daughter was away for a semester. She is a lifelong animal lover who lives in San Jose with her husband of twenty-six years, two children, and two rescued dogs.*

  
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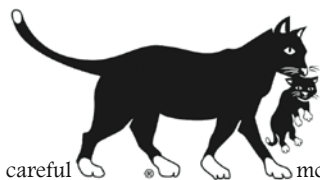
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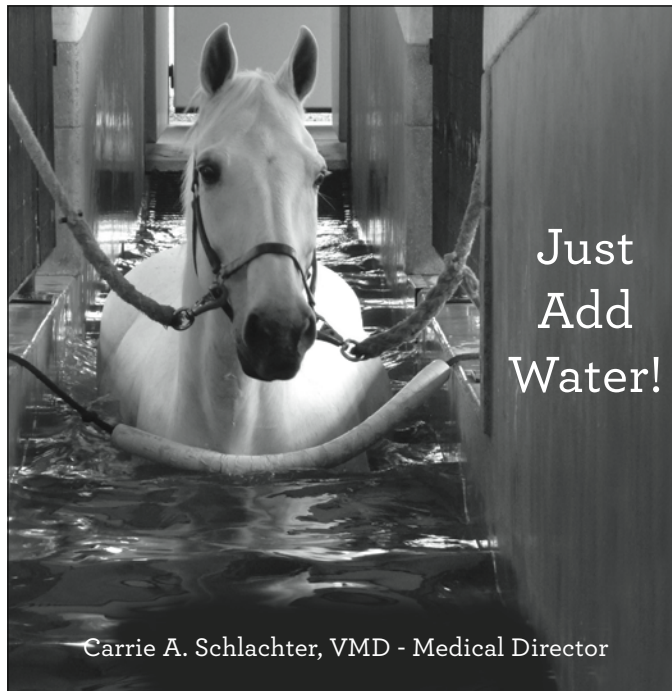
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## Readers Write

## Carmencita: A Fight for a New Life (Part 2)

Written by Ted Draper



Ted and Houdina

nut mare, out of Mother's imported Spanish mare, Memphis, and by her stallion Caravan. She exemplified the type of Arabian horse my mother wanted to develop.

Just then, the headlights of a car shined into the barn. I went out to greet who I hoped was the vet and to show him to the mare's stall. The vet, with his bag in hand, stepped into mud and in a harsh voice said, "Where is the mare?" I beckoned for him to follow me and we hurried through the darkness toward the dim light coming from the stall. I opened the stall door and Mother was clearly glad to see Dr LeDonne. We stepped into the stall. The mare, still lying down, looked up at us with an eerie look in her eye. She laid back down, after exhaling a big, deep breath. The lantern's light was very weak, and it cast an eerie sadness to the predicament. Carmencita drew her legs up and rolled half way over onto her back, experiencing another contraction. She then slowly let herself back down to lie flat, just content being still.

I turned up the wick in the lantern for more light. Mother and the vet discussed the situation. She explained what had taken place the last four hours. He didn't say much, as he studied the mare. Dr LeDonne's quiet and calm demeanor reassured my mother.

Dr LeDonne was from the old school of veterinary medicine. They didn't have modern drugs or technologies to help pull them through a difficult situation. Field experience and *trial and error* were his teachers. He needed to assess the problem. He washed his arms quickly and approached the mare with his stethoscope. He was talking softly and reassuring the mare all the while he examined her. He listened to her heart and flanks. He could not tell if the foal was still alive. Dr LeDonne reached into the birth canal, and began palpating for the foal. I was holding a flashlight, which was getting dimmer. I looked at Mother; she looked at me. I saw a very frightened and pained look on her face. Just then Carmencita had a contraction, and the vet calmly said, "I've got one of the foal's front feet." The foal's foot had been sticking straight up towards the mare's spine.

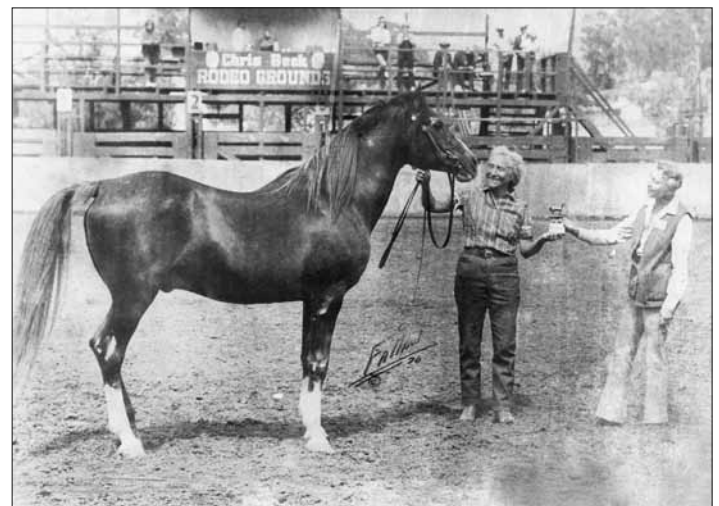
He told Mother to wash her left arm and reach in and hold the

foot, while he felt for the other foot. The mare could have gotten up at any time, but I felt she knew we were trying to help. Carmencita was bathed in sweat, with steam rising into the cold air. The vet found the nose of the foal, and he felt it was in the correct position, but where was the other foot? He pulled his arm out and slid his arm under Mom's arm. With a good hold on the front foot, Mom slowly moved around to reposition herself out of the vet's way. He reached into the birth-canal as far as he could, feeling for the other leg. He withdrew his arm and told Mother that he could not find the other foot. He felt that the foal was not in the uterus. The tear in the birth-canal must extend into the uterine wall, and the foal must have slipped through the tear, and that was why the mare could not give birth. They needed to pull the foal up closer so that he could reach the other leg.

The sweat was popping out on Mother's forehead, even through the temperature was in the low forties. The rain had quit, but the wind continued to blow, although not as hard as when the storm first hit. We had another problem; water was seeping into the stall, forming a puddle where Mother lay. We could not disturb the mare. Mother had a hold of the foal's foot and didn't dare let go for fear that she would lose it for good. She was determined to save the mare and foal, even though we still did not know if the foal was alive.

Dr LeDonne reached back in, taking hold of the one front leg, and with Mom's help, pulled the foal up closer, so that he could reach the other leg. Mom then repositioned herself to get the circulation back into her arm and shoulder. The vet had the pelvic bone in his way, which made it difficult to palpate for the foal. Their arms were side by side in the birth-canal and he kept telling Mother to move the foal's leg here, push it back slightly, or raise it up, all in the limited tight space. The work was hard, causing the vet to break into a sweat. I could tell the situation was very tense and frustrating for him. I was bundled up, fighting off the cold, feeling totally helpless, and sympathetic to the dilemma.

With the limited working space and the pelvic bone in the way,



Edna Draper and stallion Caravan



there was no way the vet could reach the leg. The foal's rear end was down in the lower stomach cavity. Dr. LeDonne instructed me to find the foal's rear-end and push the foal up without disturbing the mare, so he could feel for the leg. I had to push hard into the mare's stomach, feeling for the foal's rump. I finally found a firm place and pushed real hard, and I felt a slight movement. The vet said I was pushing in the right place. I kept pushing the foal higher up in the stomach. The curled down leg was getting closer for him to reach.

Carmencita would occasionally raise her head up, look at us, and then lie back down, letting out a deep breath. She was experiencing a considerable amount of pain and was breathing very hard. The steam was rising from her entire body. Mother was laying in about four inches of water, which she said was quite warm. The water was warmed by the body heat of the mare. The vet was also lying in the water and was not even aware he was soaked.

I kept pushing, and the foal moved higher into stomach cavity. The mare had another contraction. Her legs raised off the straw, and she rolled up a little higher onto her back, repositioning the foal. Dr LeDonne was now able to feel the leg. Ever so slowly he started working the leg up and forward. They almost withdrew their arms when Carmencita rolled up, but they stayed with her. He got his hand back of the foal's knee and was able to bring the leg forward and soon both front legs were together. This was very tedious and took a great deal of effort with just one hand.

The foal's nose was between his legs and it was in the foaling position, ready to be pulled. The vet told Mother to start pulling,

and they slowly worked the foal's feet and head into the birth-canal. The mare had another contraction, but it did little to help push the foal. We still did not know if the foal was alive. They had to rest, and then, as they started pulling again, the mare had another contraction and rolled up again, and all of a sudden, the legs appeared. That was the most beautiful sight. Maybe we had a chance to save the mare and the foal.

The rain had started again, with lightening and thunder booming over head. This was by far the worst storm we had that year. I quickly went up to Carmencita's head, talking softly, ready to hold her. It was critical that they get more of the foal out before they could relax. The vet reached in past the front legs to feel for the nose, and it was in the right place. The mare had a contraction, and the vet told Mother to start pulling. They were able to pull the foal's head out of the birth-canal. The vet cleaned the placenta away from the foal's nose and head. They rested a bit. We still could not tell if the foal was alive. The vet was sure the mare would not try to get up with the foal in the birth canal. He wanted me to help pull the foal. The three of us pulled, and the foal slid out and lay there with steam rising into the cold air. There was no movement; the foal just lay still. Then all of a sudden, the foal took a breath and started moving his head. He was alive! I know Mother thanked the good Lord.


The storm had intensified. The wind and rain were pounding, making it difficult to hear. I helped Mother up onto her feet. She had been down in the water for an hour and was wet and cold. The vet treated the navel cord and listened to the foal's lungs to see if there was any problem. The lungs were in good shape, and the foal did not seem affected by the long delivery. Carmencita was exhausted; she just wanted to lie still. The Vet was worried about the tear in the mare's birth-canal and uterus and wanted to examine and repair the damage. He asked for the lantern to be brought closer. Part of the uterus had come out with the foal. The uterus had shredded beyond repair, but he did what he could to repair the birth canal.


Carmencita had remained calm throughout the ordeal. We had pulled the foal up to her head, and she was licking and nipping at her new baby. As Dr LeDonne was closing up his doctor's bag, he looked over his glasses at my mother and said, "Your mare will never carry another foal, but she fought hard to give you her last one." The colt was pitch black with a star on his forehead. Sur Knight was born on March 31, 1958.

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