

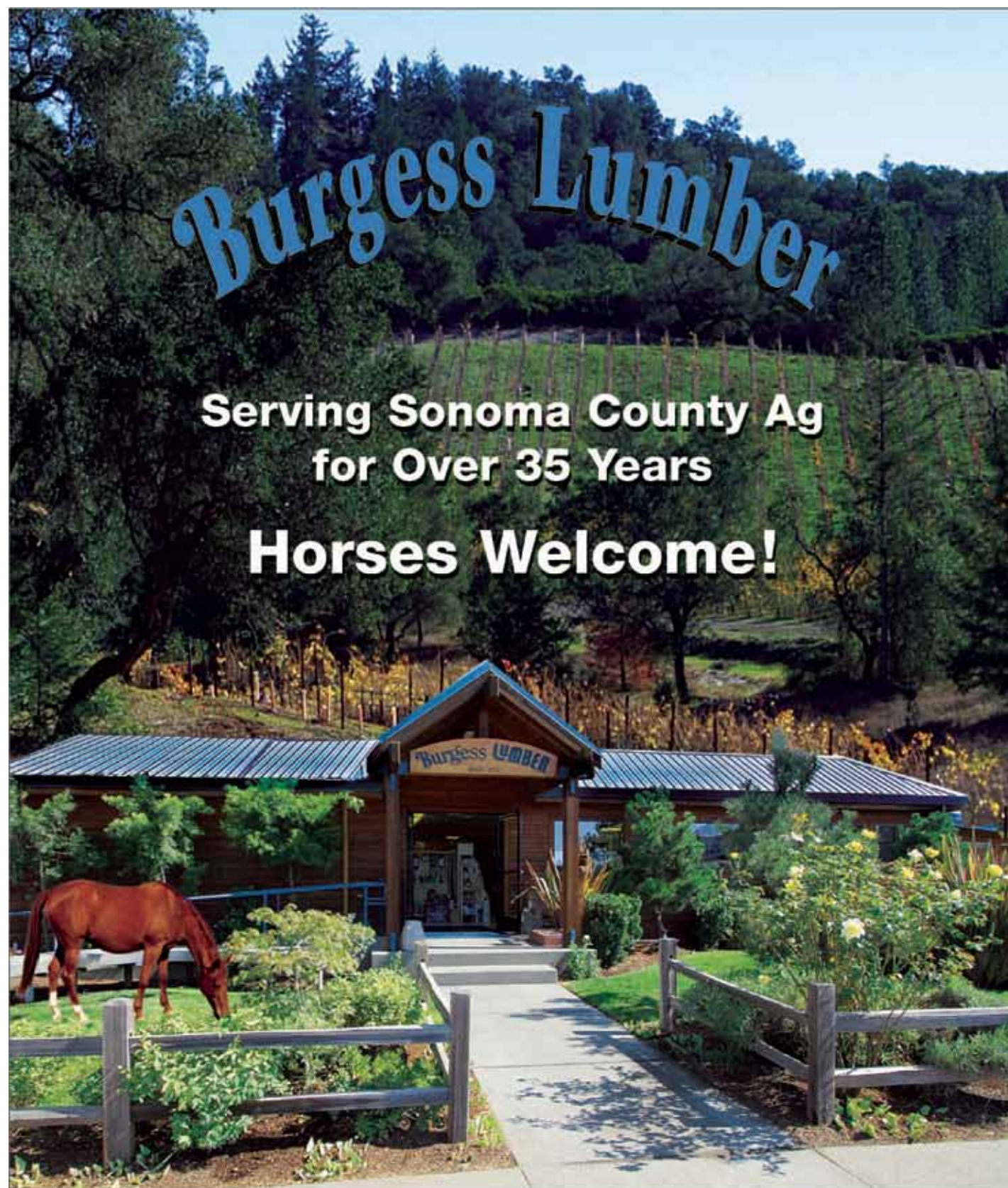
Sonoma County
Horse Journal

Volume 6 • Issue 4 • Fall 2010



Apples, Peaches & Cream and rider, Dawn Marie, are winners of "Your Photo on the Sonoma County Horse Journal Cover," a silent auction item at the 2010 Equus Awards Dinner.

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Cover Photo:
Nancy K. Varga / <http://web.me.com/nkvarga>

Apple, Peaches and Cream, carrying Dawn Marie, sports her well-deserved Hall of Fame banner awarded at this year's Bishop Mule Days. Read more about mules in this issue of the Horse Journal.

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A Message from the President



Karl & Dinero

Photo: Vanessa Bastian

This is a very important time of year. This is your chance to nominate a special equestrian or horse for the 2011 annual Equus Hall of Fame Awards. Use the nomination form inserted in this issue of the Horse Journal or visit sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org. The nomination and award process is fun! If your nominee is selected by the selection committee, we will arrange for council members to publically present the winner (your friend!) with a

frameable letter that acknowledges they have won. You can make a party out of the occasion, possibly at a barn or otherwise. Notify all the people who would want to see that person awarded, so that they would have a large contingent at the Equus event—two tables of ten or more. This is a chance for someone you know, admire, even love, to have the joy of receiving a very prestigious award in a large public setting. The Equus Awards event is jam packed with horse lovers, the energy is quite incredible. Your nominee will have the night of a lifetime surrounded

by people with the same passion. Move quick, though...the application deadline is October 15. We want to hear from you!

I want to report that progress on our Equestrian Center is moving ahead fast and smoothly. We have yet to even stub our toe. When a project is so needed, so good for the community, and so right, the wheels of progress just seem to be greased. Our project director, Wanda Smith, is a wonder. See our update on page 4. Call me at 707-974-8900 if you want to get involved.

At the very least join the Sonoma County Horse Council. We need your head count, to improve our economic and political power base. It's a mere \$30 a year that you'll be proud to donate, and we'll have the fire power to bring you this incredible Equestrian Center. We're calling this project "a fire that can't be put out!" If you can't afford to join, call me, I'll see what I can do.

Happy Trails,

Karl Bastian,
President, Sonoma County Horse Council



It's time...

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

Deadline October 15, 2010

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Your Horse Council at Work Choosing a Site For **CEPEC**

Written by Wanda Smith

In spring 2009, during the early conception of the California Equestrian Park and Event Center (CEPEC) we began discussion about location requirements for a large equestrian facility. We investigated large equestrian facilities across the United States, and conducted interviews locally to determine the best potential locations. Based on our research, we created initial specifications for the CEPEC facility and location. The location criteria included quite a list: a minimum amount of land, proximity to a major highway/corridor and surrounding counties, water availability and quality, climate, soil type, drainage, terrain variation, low flood, fire, and earthquake risk, low noise, and consideration of endangered species habitat.

Nationally, most similar equestrian facilities occupy at least 1,000 acres. For example, the Kentucky Horse Park occupies 1,200 acres, the Georgia International Horse Park has 1,400 acres, and Virginia's Morven Park contains 1,000 acres. Consequently, the land requirement for CEPEC was set at a minimum of 1,000 acres.

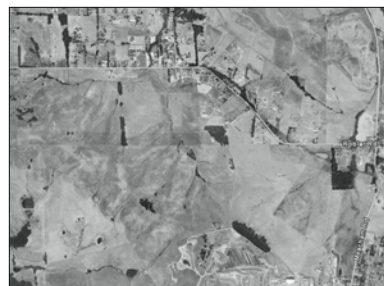
Proximity to a major highway is paramount for an event facility, especially when patrons are pulling horse trailers. Thus, a location close to Highway 101, was set as a priority to allow convenient access but not cause traffic congestion on the highway. Additionally, it was desirable to choose a central location for CEPEC that would be easily accessible by the residents of surrounding counties such as Mendocino, Lake, Napa, and Marin. Each of these counties has a large horse and equestrian population with no large equestrian facilities like CEPEC.

Water is a major requirement for any horse facility, especially one of the size projected for CEPEC. Horses drink an average of ten to twelve gallons of water per day in cool weather and more with heat and exercise. Water is also required for bathing horses, human use, dust control, and some irrigation. Cattle events also increase water needs. A regional horse show with 500 horses would require at least 5,000 gallons a day in cool weather and much more in hot weather. Thus, any location identified for CEPEC needed to have an abundant supply of water. Water quality was also an obvious important criterion. Salinity in ground water close to the bay, and chemicals from vineyard run-off reduced the desirability of many areas.

Although Sonoma County has a generally temperate climate, several local micro-climates can vary from cold and wet in the winter to hot and dry in the summer. The CEPEC location should exist in a micro-climate with moderate heat and cooling breezes in the summer, and protection from frost (e.g. in a valley) in the winter.

Drainage was also considered an important factor particularly during the rainy season, and depends on the type of soil and terrain. We needed a location with permeable soil with terrain that encouraged good drainage. Soil type was considered important not only for drainage, but also for footing and stability. Sandy soil would be best for arena footing, and a higher composite soil for trails. The stability of the soil was also important to minimize landslides, and land movement during earthquakes.

For CEPEC, we needed a parcel with varied terrain. An abundant amount of flat land was important for the building and arena requirements; slight inclines, rolling hills, and steeper terrain were



An aerial view of the potential CEPEC site

desirable for the different types of riding events, conditioning, and trails.

CEPEC needed to be located outside Sonoma County's many flood zones, and high fire risk zones. Since much of the county is in "earthquake country," one the criterion was that the location be far from a high risk quake fault. We wanted a relatively quiet area to allow event announcements to be easily heard by riders and spectators; this requirement eliminated locations immediately adjacent to major highways and airports. Lastly, the location could not infringe on habitat housing endangered species.

To find potential sites meeting these extensive criteria, we evaluated undeveloped land using aerial views, topography, hydrology, wetlands, earthquake faults, and environmental reports. Seven Sonoma County locations met many of the criteria. The best property is in the unincorporated area of northwest Petaluma, off Stony Point Road, between Roblar and Meacham Roads. This property is a few minutes away from Highway 101 but sufficiently close to allow easy access from the freeway. It has several possibilities for entrances and exits thus minimizing traffic congestion. The property is a composite of several parcels with the potential of 1,400 acres; it has a variety of terrain from flat lands to gently rolling and steeper hills of up to 650 feet in elevation. The lower terrain consists of about one foot of sandy soil on a clay base (excellent footing for riding) with more dense soil at the higher elevations providing stability. The drainage is excellent, and the property is not in flood or fire risk zones, or on a major earthquake fault. The property's primary use for generations has been as pasture with sufficient water to support large herds of cattle. Since most of the property is in a valley, it is also protected from frost, and its proximity to the ocean provides breezes in the afternoons will mitigate the high summer temperatures. Although the location is close to the Refuse Center, the southeast direction of the wind blows potential odors away from the CEPEC site, and the winter rains will drain south—away from the CEPEC site. The location is also quiet with the majority of the property outside limits of endangered reptile and amphibian species habitat. U

The next stage in the development of CEPEC will be to work with Open Space to secure the property.

For more information about the CEPEC visit the website at www.cepec.us or come to the next Sonoma County Horse Council meeting. The meetings are held the second Wednesday of every month at 7pm at the SCDRC Clubhouse. We'd love to see you there.

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Feature Article

Apples, Peaches and Cream

Written by Louise Roche (and friends of Peaches)

This is a story about a special mule by the name of Apples, Peaches and Cream. Peaches, as she is known around the barn, is a twenty-four year old dun molly mule. Peaches was bred by Veda Rose Pope (Equus Hall of Fame-2010). She was sired by Apple Jack, a mammoth donkey, and foaled in Santa Rosa in 1986.

Veda Rose remembers that Peaches was the mare's first foal, and unfortunately, the mare rejected the cute little long-eared, leggy, and hungry baby. However, Veda Rose, being the ever-resourceful, country-raised woman devised a clever solution. She had two milking nanny goats, so she built a platform with a ramp. The goats would take turns trotting up the ramp and stand dutifully while baby mule Peaches nursed her fill. Peaches grew into a glowingly healthy fifteen-hand molly, and to this day, she has a particular fondness for goats.

When it came time for training, Veda Rose was recovering from neck surgery, so she turned Peaches over to the very capable hands of her daughter, Dawn Marie. They proved to be a champion team. Dawn Marie states Peaches got her start in the show world competing successfully against horses, and has gone on to "give me her best in everything I've ever asked of her." Back when Peaches started her show career, there weren't so many mules of her quality around. Not only did she turn heads then, but she has been making a good name for mules for twenty years since.

At the Sonoma County Fair in 1990, Peaches competed in an open qualifying Cal Grand Horse Show which was open to all breeds. Dawn Marie remembers competing against thirty registered horses in Western Pleasure where she placed 4th in her class. As they were accepting their awards, the gentleman behind her who was riding a very nice Quarter Horse and placed 5th said out loud, "You must be kidding . . . I placed behind that donkey." Dawn Marie knew then that she and Peaches were going to have to prove themselves.

This talented mule has demonstrated all the classic mule versatility, soundness, and stamina, by showing and consistently placing highly or winning in a variety of classes—Western Pleasure, Trail classes, Reining, cow working, Dressage, Hunter under Saddle, Sidesaddle, and several Driving events for two-decades at Bishop Mule Days.

Peaches has often excited the crowds with her fast precision performances in the obstacle Driving classes. In fact, one of her Driving action photos at Bishop graced the cover of the *Mules and More* July 1999 issue. Also, Peaches has been in Bob Mischka's mule calendar, the *Let's Show Your Mule* book, and in the video "Those Amazing Mules." No trail course has been too daunting for this special mule; she sails through, making it look easy, when other mules are snorting and shying. Peaches has always been an



Peaches and Dawn Marie display their versatility

elegant mover in any pleasure class, showing both horse and mule people how classy mules can be.

Peaches' many accomplishments include World Champion Performance Mule 1990, Reserve World Champion Driving Mule 1995, Reserve World Champion Western Performance Mule 2006, Top 5 in Western Pleasure Stakes 2009, and multiple wins in Trail and Gambler's Choice Driving classes through the years. In 1999 Peaches won the Trail Championship at the Houston Livestock Show and in 2002 Peaches traveled to the Denver Stock Show to compete in the Trail Challenge and again won a championship.

Peaches' enviable record at Bishop also earned her a special honor this year. She was inducted into the Bishop Mule Days Hall of Fame. This coveted award is bestowed on only one or two mules each year. These mules must have proven over time to be standout contenders who embody the best of the mule.

Although Peaches is well-known for her successful show career at Bishop and other shows around the country, Dawn Marie has used her mule for just about everything else one can do with an equine. Peaches camps in the mountains, pulls downed trees, moves cattle, and races at the beach. She is very intelligent, highly opinionated, and prone to making her desires known. For instance, at the LA County Fair show, she was stabled next to the pig barn. Peaches has no love for pigs and as soon as Dawn Marie turned her back, Peaches simply jumped over the closed door of her stall and went to look for better accommodations. Peaches developed a penchant for acorns and using her talent for opening gate latches, will escape for a snack under the oak trees whenever possible.

In 2010, twenty-years after Peaches started her show career as a young green mule she is enjoying a well-deserved retirement from the show ring. Her new job involves cruising on leisurely trail rides and teaching the young'uns (both mules and children) how it's done.

Peaches' lifelong companion, Dawn Marie, lives in Santa Rosa and her love of all things equine comes naturally to her. One of her earliest memories is riding atop a pack horse while her parents guided trips into the back country. She is a professional trainer of horses, mules, and donkeys, and also does barefoot trimming. Dawn Marie breeds a few quality mules each year, and often has mules available for sale. Her outgoing personality shows her enthusiasm and talent, and she is always willing to lend a hand, or her knowledge, to anyone who asks. Dawn Marie says, "If it sounds like I am boasting, I am. I am very proud of Peaches and her many accomplishments, and what she has done for the mule world." Dawn Marie feels very lucky to have Peaches who she describes as a truly once-in-a-lifetime mule and a truly big part of her life's journey. You can reach Dawn Marie at jusaywhoa@aol.com

Readers Write

Mule Ears

Written by Ishi LeClair

Here are some thoughts on mule ears inspired from my own thoughts and experiences, and those of other mule lovers.

Way out there on the happy trails (and I *am* always happier when I'm riding) the curious will frequently ask me this question: "Is that a horse with long ears?" I love that question because there are many more to follow. I answer, "This beautiful fifteen-three bay dun equine has long ears because she is a mule. Her name is Bonita. She gets those awesome ears from her daddy, a Mammoth Jack donkey. Her mama was a horse."

Those big ears aren't just for decoration, they represent Bonita's personality. . . And she has lots of it. When mules are relaxed and happy, riders can gleefully watch those ears swivel, bend, and flop every which way, keeping rhythm to their gait. When a mule spots something, those generous auditory organs point forward, tall as the nearest hay silo, toward the object of interest. This radar feature is real handy when you're out riding and are looking to see all the wildlife you can. I find the extra sensitive radar is especially handy to the search and rescue rider. Bonita is a proud member of the state and regional parks mounted units, and the Eldridge Mounted Posse.

But there's more! Some old timers say that mule ears account for their great sense of balance on narrow trails because they function like a balancing pole, like the pole carried by high wire acrobats. Mules are also sure-footed. Historically they have been trusted with carrying cargo and riders over the roughest terrain. This might be partly due to their tough, sturdy feet. Mules' ears, along with their boxy, upright feet are a combination that can't be beat. Mules can thank their donkey half for those parts. Also a mule will have less problem with heat on a hot day and those big ears help keep them cooler, like built in air conditioning.

It's true that mules look different than horses. Of course they're more interesting. I've read it's true that when shown a mule, donkey, or horse, poets, artists and engineers recognize the mule as



Bonita takes a break for lunch

having a better proportion to the head than either the donkey or the horse. Now, some horses are very, very curious about mules and want to move in closer for a better look (maybe it's those wonderful ears). Inexplicably, some horses get downright hostile when they see those great ears. Maybe, just maybe, that hostility you'll see from horses is just "ear envy." All I know is it is always interesting to watch the horses and their fellow equines get to know each other a little better. Some horses just fall in love. I know Bonita loves horses. Remember, her mama was a horse.

I hope you've enjoyed reading and learning a bit more about mules. When you see us out on the trail, pull up for a visit with Bonita and me. Remember this—if it ain't half-assed, it's a horse.

Ishi LeClair lives in east Santa Rosa. She has been a long ears lover since her first ride down the Russian River on a mule named Peaches (a.k.a. Apples Peaches and Cream, Bishop Mule Days, the 2010 Hall of Fame Mule). Ishi is currently bringing along her new mare mule DM Doc Cecilia, aka "Cecilia B DeMule," aka "SIS," to be the next mule ambassador along with her pasture bud, the elegant Bonita Bars. You can reach Ishi, Bonita, and SIS at mules-friend@yahoo.com.



About Mules

"If you knew a man who would rarely start a fight, but was always capable of finishing one, who had very good judgment, high intelligence, a tremendous work ethic, but would never allow himself to be taken advantage of or overworked, what would your opinion of that person be? Most people would say that sounds like a person with character. Well that perfectly describes mules. . . and that is why I like them. The longer I am around them, the more I respect them." — Dr Robert H Miller, mule enthusiast

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A Horseman's View Discipline

Column editor Art Grunig

A good horse owner must be able to say “no” and mean it.

You and your horse are a team; you are partners in the life you share together. You should be saying “yes” to each other most of the time. Remember that your horse should do what you want, but he should get to do what he wants, too. When the horse sees you coming you want him to think, “Here comes the best part of my day!” So why is “no” so important? Because a horse’s behavior must be acceptable to both the horse and the human. In order to accomplish this you must be able to communicate, and saying “no” to the horse is part of that. An important corollary is that it is just as important to hear when a horse says “no.” Find out what is behind the horse’s “no” in order to know how to approach the situation.

When to say no

Generally, I say “no” to hostile, negative, or uncooperative attitudes. I say “no” to biting, kicking, or pushiness, running through the bridle, rearing, and bucking. It’s a little trickier, but I also say “no” to refusing to try when I make a request. The obvious bad behaviors require a “no” which is strong and clear. The last one—refusing to try—takes a lot of tact. If a horse is not responding to a request, I insist that the horse work at the problem until it finds a solution. A good example is a horse that refuses to cross a stream. I will insist that the horse think about crossing until he finds the way to do it. I give him time to think and get his courage up. I will say “no” to attempts to turn away until he starts back. I increase the pressure if he looks away or stops thinking about the project to get his mind back on crossing the stream. Forcing the horse across the stream teaches the horse how to be forced. Letting the horse work through the problem teaches the horse not only how to cross a stream but also how to solve problems. He gains confidence and self esteem.

How to say no

When I say “no” I want to say it clearly and strongly enough that it is over quickly. Use techniques that the horse can understand and respond to in the state of mind and emotion it is in *at that moment*. All horses are born knowing how to respond to certain reprimands such as being bitten or kicked. A human version is usually a slap, a knee or foot to the body, or the use of a crop or a whip. Using “no’s” which involve equipment such as a bridle requires previous training for the horse to understand. Judgment and experience aid what is done, how it is done, and to what degree or intensity it is done.

To say “no” start subtly and work up the scale of physicality until resolution; say “no” to your horse like horses say no to each other. Escalate in this manner: 1) Send a thought, 2) Give a look or other appropriate expression, 3) Exhibit posturing and threatening actions, 4) Escalate to kicking and biting that misses or just barely touches, and finally 5) Vicious biting and kicking until the ‘negotiation’ has reached a conclusion. It is most important to follow the steps of escalation in communication, and to stop the “discussion”



Art and Cody saying yes

the instant the horse responds. At this point we want to resume the loving, enjoyable relationship that is normal to the horse. Your horse will understand being hit when it is within this pattern of communication and negotiation. One exception is that your physicality should match the level that the horse is approaching you with. A behavior that is potentially dangerous needs to be matched or trumped a level in intensity. I don’t meet a horse trying to kick me with a thought message. Keep this very important point in mind: As soon as the discussion is over no matter what level of aggression or physicality the negotiation has reached, immediately go back to a clean, clear energy state.

“No” is quick and gets quick results. This can lead to a tendency to overuse and be stuck in a negative place. Your horse cannot learn to respond to “yes” if we do not use it.

From no to yes

Saying “no” removes something and leaves a vacuum. Offer a behavior that will result in a “yes” rather leaving it up to your horse to choose. Say “yes” often to make it the dominant factor in your relationship. After you have the “yes” behavior you will need to spend a lot of time practicing, experiencing, enjoying, and cementing this “yes” in place. Practicing behaviors makes them a habit. Make the behavior you want a habit that does not allow room for the behavior you do not want.

Keep in mind that you are always negotiating with your horse. Make it a practice to negotiate honestly and consistently until you reach a conclusion. Maintain an energetic field with clarity, openness, and loving spiritual neutrality. If you do not, you will lose your communication and your relationship with your horse. M final words on saying “yes”: Feel good, appreciate, feel loving, show kindness, practice success, share joy with your horse, and repeat. U

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

Readers Write Mule Racing

Written by Selina Galick

When you see Jet Setter the mule on the trail, you’ll think, “Wow, what a nice tall animal with big, floppy ears.” And if you see the mule, then you are going to see his owner, Steve Demarta (of Sebastopol) on board. If you happen to strike up a conversation with him, you will soon learn that his mule used to be a racing mule... *Racing*, you say?

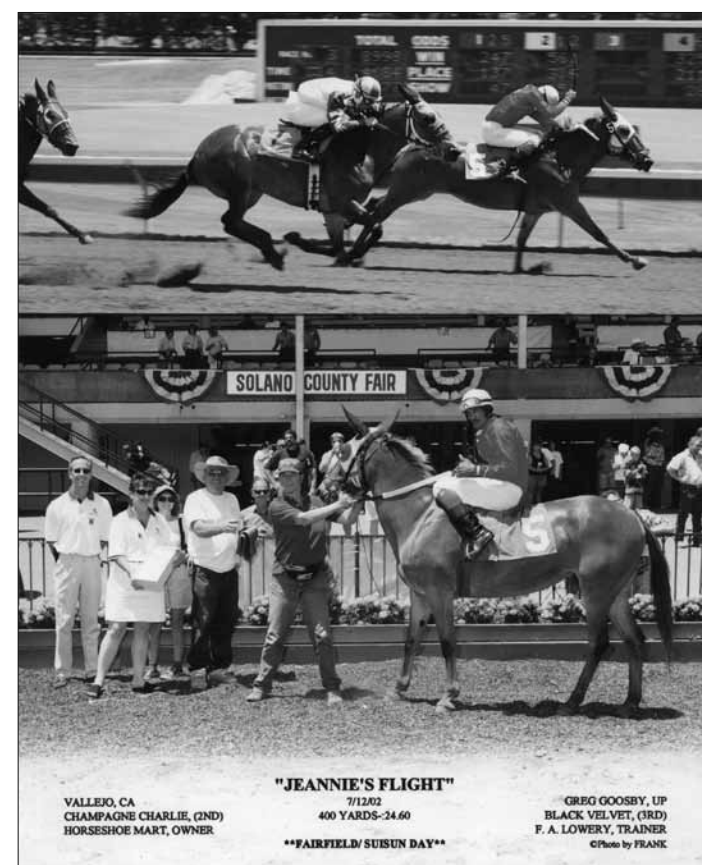
Well, yes. For eight years he raced on the same tracks and at the same fairs that the Thoroughbreds do. “Hmmm,” you say, “I never knew mules raced. Do people bet on them?” Well, yes they do. And Jet Setter, in fact, was a winner. He won over seventy thousand dollars. He flat out won over thirteen races. Jet Setter was awarded the World Championship as a three year old at the American Mule Racing Association Annual Convention in 2001.

Mule racing can be traced back as far as 1835, and the public has been officially betting on mule racing since 1995. Mules have raced at Golden Gate Fields and Bay Meadows, but mostly race at fair tracks. Mules tend to be sprinters, not distance racers. They can generally run faster than Arabians and Appaloosas, but not as fast as Quarter Horses and Thoroughbreds. Males and females race each other. Mules race at a variety of distances, with ½ mile being the longest. Locals Mary and Sonny McPherson (of Healdsburg) are part of the history of the sport. They started in 1993 in Salinas, and were part of the original movement to get the pari-mutuel board to approve public betting on mule races. Mary and Sonny have a very famous mule named Black Ruby who has raced for thirteen years and won more races than most horses even think about. The New York Times wrote this about Black Ruby:

“To say that Black Ruby is the Secretariat of mules is a bit unfair. Secretariat never won fifty-seven races, nor was he named champion of his breed five straight times. He did not hold the world record at three distances. Black Ruby has done all that and more. She is one fast mule.”

Many others (including me) in Sonoma County have been bitten by the mule racing bug, as well. When you ask me, I’ll tell you that mule racing is not just a novelty. There is nothing better or more exciting than watching those mules dash 350 yards down the lane, and standing in the winners circle at the end of the day, knowing your mule has beaten seven other competitors that day. My best mule was Jeannie’s Flight. She won twice here in Santa Rosa in one year, and then the next year won at Vallejo going 440 yards. I raced her three years before she became a great trail mule. If you are interested in learning more about mule racing, you should check out the American Mule Racing Association (AMRA), whose mission it is to promote the sport. Visit them at www.muleracing.org.

The best part of working with mules is that once you take all that grain away you can do just about anything with them. Mules ride English and Western, they do Dressage, Jumping, Cutting, Roping, and just about anything. Jet just raced to work toward his retirement, including a twenty-five mile endurance race in 2008 in which he won best-conditioned. He was a novice mule with a young man on board. Today Steve just takes leisurely trail rides




Selina and her favorite winner

aboard Jet Setter every chance he gets. So next time you see them on the trail, stop and say, “Hi!” U

Selina Galick is a great advocate for mules. Selina finds there is

nothing better than going down the trail seeing those big floppy ears in front of you. She has three mules that she rides on the trail, and also in mule-only divisions at local playdays. Selina has been involved in racing for ten years, and each time she feels like quitting she finds another winner and is hooked again. Selina owns the Horseshoe Mart, which supplies not only horseshoers but also natural hoof care professionals, and the public. Stop in and she will gladly show you some “win” pictures, and talk with you about mules.

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Vet's Office

Column editor Michelle Becko, DVM

Parasite Control in Horses: Too Much of a Good Thing?

A brief history

Those readers who can remember the 1960's will also remember a time when veterinarians regularly visited farms for the labor-intensive process of tube worming horses. Since then, research has brought advances in equine parasite control through development of chemical dewormers (such as fenbendazole). Large strongyles were initially the primary target of parasite control due to their high prevalence and propensity for causing severe health problems including colic.

By the 1980's, newer drugs such as pyrantel and ivermectin had been developed. Paste dewormers became widely available, and many horse owners began purchasing these products and administering them to their horses on their own. Veterinarians continued to recommend that all horses be dewormed every two months, and rotation of different products was a common practice. However, over the preceding twenty years large strongyles had become much less prevalent and small strongyles had taken center stage as the most important parasite of horses. In addition, equine parasites had begun to develop resistance to the drugs used to control them.

Why should we worry now?

Today we are seeing widespread resistance to many dewormers currently available for use in horses, and there is no research being done to develop new kinds of dewormers. Although deworming horses at regular intervals with predetermined drugs is easy and convenient, this article will show why traditional rotational deworming programs are outdated, needlessly expensive, and may actually harm your horse's health in the long run.

Old concepts make way for the new science of parasite control

These days parasite control programs have a new focus. We are now dealing with a different primary parasite and treating with a variety of products. We also know more about the life cycle and transmission of equine parasites and the susceptibility of horses to those parasites. Finally, we are seeing parasites developing resistance to our dewormers. In the past, horse owners were told to deworm their horses every eight weeks, and parasite control programs aimed to kill all parasites with each deworming. Although this "no tolerance" policy seemed to work very well at first, it is now clear that the most realistic goal of a modern parasite control program is to prevent new infections by limiting the number of parasite eggs our horses are exposed to in the first place.

Traditional deworming programs treated all horses in a group at the same time on a regular schedule. However, we now know that some horses are quite resistant to parasites and do not need to be dewormed as often as other more susceptible horses do. We may actually be doing more harm than good when we deworm all horses according to a regular schedule; using dewormers more than we absolutely have to can encourage parasites to develop resistance. Central to the efforts to limit parasite resistance to dewormers is the concept of "refugia." Refugia refers to those parasites which have not been pressured to develop resistance from dewormer use. As these susceptible parasites interbreed with

Guest written by Sarah Schroer, DVM

more resistant parasites they slow the overall evolution of resistance. Why is all of this important? Because it shows that in order to minimize costs, optimize herd health and reduce development of resistance, a modern parasite control program must consider each horse individually.


Another consideration is climate, which influences the spread of equine parasites. At temperatures above 85°F small strongyle larvae on pasture begin to die. As a result, we can expect to see lower transmission of parasites during the summer months in Sonoma County, and this reduces the need to deworm horses at this time of year.

How often do horses really need to be dewormed?

That depends on the innate resistance of each horse to parasites, the life cycles of the various parasites we want to control, the season of the year, and the specific dewormer last given to that horse. In general, a horse which is relatively resistant to parasites may need to be dewormed only twice a year, while a more susceptible horse may require up to four treatments per year. Your veterinarian can perform a fecal exam to help determine how often your horse needs to be dewormed. The best product to use will vary by season, and most horses will need no treatment at all during the hot summer months.

Those readers who think it is cheaper to simply deworm their horses without having fecal samples analyzed should consider this: the cost of deworming every horse six times per year may actually be greater than the cost of performing fecal exams and strategically deworming horses on an individual basis. Plus, the cost of encouraging widespread drug resistance is immeasurable. Rethinking your parasite control program will pay off in both the short and long term.

The most effective way to control parasites

How can we control parasites in our horses and avoid the development of resistance to dewormers among equine parasites? The answer is simple: do not deworm horses at all! Short of this extreme, taking steps to limit fecal contamination of your horse's environment can greatly reduce the need for deworming. This means removing manure from paddocks every few days, not spreading manure on pastures, leaving pastures vacant for at least two months in the summertime, or grazing other livestock on the pasture while horses are out of the area. Horses kept in stalls from which manure is removed on a daily basis are at low risk for reinfection. After ensuring that pasture contamination is being kept to a minimum by good management practices, consultation with your veterinarian, routine fecal exams, and judicious use of dewormers will help you keep your horses healthy while limiting development of resistance as much as possible. 

Sarah Schroer, DVM, graduated from the University of California Davis in 2003. She has been working as a large animal veterinarian at Cotati Large Animal Hospital since 2007. Sarah shares her space with an old dog named Barney, and in her free time enjoys long bicycle rides through the Sonoma County countryside. To contact her with further questions or comments regarding this article please call (707) 795-4356.

Healthy as a Horse

Column editor JoDean Nicolette, MD

Medicine in Translation

Guest written by Jackie Skvaril, MD



Jackie and a robust Ana make it look easy

The vet tech poked her head into the exam room and said, "Ok, I have the chemo drawn up and put into two syringes, the other is for the snake." I was standing by while my horse, Ana, was dozing off to sleep, waiting for her first chemotherapy treatment. She had developed sarcoid of her cheek, which recurred after the surgeon attempted to remove it all a few months ago. The cancer specialist at UC Davis recommended four subcutaneous treatments of cisplatin injected under her skin over a series of eight weeks. So, here we were, waiting for the first treatment.

Being an internal medicine doctor for humans, I was fascinated by the whole process. We use cis-platinum to treat cancer in humans, but to my knowledge, it is always used in the vein—not in the subcutaneous tissue. This cancer specialist had designed this treatment himself (something else we would never do in humans), concocting a mayonnaise type base to keep the caustic chemotherapy from escaping into areas of the tissue other than right where it was needed...fascinating.

"What does the snake have?" I wondered out loud.

"Squamous cell cancer," the vet tech answered. So much for patient confidentiality, I thought. Another difference between animal and human medicine.

Okay, now I had to smile. The snake? Squamous cell cancer? Like humans? And they are treating it? With chemo?



Michelle Beko, D.V.M.

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Well, of course. Why not?

I couldn't wait to get back to work and tell my partner all about it. He thought it just as amusing as I did.

The second visit, I unloaded Ana and we walked back and forth on the asphalt, waiting to be called. I noticed a Penske rental truck with the back door open, surrounded by people in surgical scrubs. A forklift rolled up to the back door and began unloading a large, gray plastic box with ventilation windows near the top. The box was ominously quiet, but getting a lot of attention anyway. My horse paid close attention to the activities, flaring her nostrils, on high alert.

As we were escorted into exam room number three, which reminded me of Costco, I couldn't help myself. "What's in the box?"

"Tiger."

You're kidding me. "What's wrong with the tiger?" I asked, knowing they would tell me.

"He swallowed something that got stuck in his throat and has been unable to swallow and eat since. He keeps vomiting and trying to cough it out. The zoo has its own veterinarian, but they need a special scope to try to get out the impaction. That's why he was sent to us."

Well. My husband is a gastrointestinal specialist, so I know quite well what kind of scope and procedure they were talking about. I couldn't wait to get back to the office and tell the guys about this.

"Do you think my horse knew there was a dangerous animal in there? She seemed to be very interested."


The tech responded, "Definitely. Being animals of prey, they know who their enemies are and can smell them very well."

"A Penske rental truck? The zoo sent him in a rental truck?" Somehow, I imagined they would be more prepared for animal transport than that.

"Well, the zoo has been operating on a shoestring. And a frayed one at that."

I would really be sitting up and taking special notice of rental trucks in the future. You just don't know what may be coming down the highway.

I have had more trips to UC Davis with this horse than I care to admit. Fortunately, she is as good as gold when we are jumping our courses at home or at the shows. Recently, I asked her to be my trail partner, and she is willing, able, and sensible on the trails as well. Much as I hate to see her sick, or being made sick in the course of treating something worse, I am so fortunate to have her and to still be able to enjoy her company several times a week. And I love learning a bit of medicine from an animal's standpoint. I could have easily enjoyed being a vet.

With all of the health problems my horse has had, maybe she was meant for someone with a medical background. But, what were the chances of my Northern California Warmblood smelling the distinct scent of a tiger from Asia in her lifetime? 

Jackie is an internist in private practice in Santa Rosa who rides her horse Ana in Hunter Jumper competitions and on the trails as often as possible.

Editor's Feature

The Borax Twenty Mule Team



The Borax twenty mule team has become the registered trademark for Borax household detergent products. In addition to the commercial affiliation, the twenty mule team has come to iconify the American West, and symbolize strength, persistence, and reliability.

The origins of the twenty mule team began more than a hundred years ago in the heat and desolation of Death Valley. These mules played a primary role in the transformation of mineral resources into modern wealth and industry.

The twenty mule team was assembled to haul borax crystals, or "cotton ball" as the mix of boron, oxygen, sodium, and calcium was called. Previously, borax had been imported from Tibet and Italy and was used in goldsmithing and ceramics. When borax was discovered in vast shimmering fields on the Death Valley desert floor, its domestic uses multiplied. Soon Americans were using borax for laundry detergent, as a digestive aid, to treat dandruff, improve complexions, and to keep milk sweet. With this mineral in high demand, the primary challenge was to efficiently transport the crystals from the remote deposits to the railway, so that the Pacific Coast Borax company could make the products available to American consumers.

From 1883 to 1889, the twenty mule teams hauled more than twenty million tons of borax out of Death Valley. The mules and wagons hauled borax 165 miles one way from the mineral fields, over the Panamint Mountains, and across the desert to the nearest rail station which was in Mohave. Built in Mohave, the wagon train consisted of two wagons, and a water tank. Each sixteen-foot wagon resembled a boxcar, and was carried by seven-foot high wheels with iron tires. These wagons had to travel over sand, gravel, rocks and mountain grades. Empty, the wagons weighed 8,000 pounds. The 1200-gallon water tank was necessary because the route traversed long sections without natural springs, including the last fifty miles to Mohave, itself. Loaded, the wagon train weighed thirty-seven tons, and the mules and wagon train measured more than 160 feet in length.

Mules were chosen to haul this extraordinary cargo because of their intelligence, sure-footedness, and stamina. The twenty mules were hitched to single and double trees, and latched to an eighty-foot chain running the length of the team. A rope called the "jerk line" ran on the left side of the team to aid in steering. A single tug meant turn left, and series of jerks meant turn right. The two front mules were aptly called the "leaders" and were chosen for their intelligence and alpha status. The next ten were called the "swing team." Next came the "pointers," "sixes," and "eights," a group that held the special skill of being able to jumping over the chain on corners. Finally came the "wheelers," or the last pair. These two, directly pulling the wagons and cargo, were actually usually draft horses, rather than mules. The draft horses were used in this position because they were strong

Written by JoDean Nicolette

enough to start the load rolling, and could manage turning the rig better than mules. Muleskinners, or drivers, hitched up the mules and outfit, and navigated the rig. Muleskinners also served as veterinarians, mechanics, and lookouts over the rugged and sometimes treacherous daily terrain. The Santa Clarita Valley Historical Society website reports this about a particularly hazardous aspect of the journey:

"Swinging the team around a curve in a mountain pass tested both driver and team: one mistake could spell death for all. As the team started around a sharp curve, the chain tended to be pulled into a straight line between the lead mules and the wagon. To keep the chain going around the curve and not pull the team straight over the edge, some of the mules were ordered to leap the chain and pull at an angle away from the curve. These mules — the pointers, sixes and eights — would step along sideways until the corner had been turned. Swinging a curve successfully was an awesome demonstration of training and teamwork."

Despite the heavy loads, desert temperatures of over 130 degrees, the poor terrain, and waterless stretches, not a single animal was lost in the history of the twenty mule train, and not a single wagon broke down.

In 1890, a new rail spur was constructed into Furnace Creek and the mule team was no longer needed to haul the borax over land. Since then the twenty mule team has been largely known as the symbol for the Pacific Coast (and now Dial Soap) Borax products, and a symbol of strength and reliability. You can read more about these special mules in the paperback publication entitled The Last Ride, the Borax Twenty Mule Team, 1883-1999, published by US Borax in 1999. The mule team still makes ceremonial appearances; They have been present at the World's Fair, the Golden Gate Bridge dedication, and in the Rose Parade. Currently, no further promotional appearances are scheduled. To read more about the Borax twenty mule team, borax, and Death Valley, visit the Twenty Mule Team Museum website at www.20muleteammuseum.com, or the Death Valley National Park site at www.nps.gov/deva. U

JoDean Nicolette is a family physician and editor of the Horse Journal. She is an avid trail rider, and president of the Mounted Assistance Unit for the California State Parks, Diablo Vista District. JoDean has three horses—Jimmie, Chance, and Bear. To contact JoDean about writing for the Horse Journal, email her at editor@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org.

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

The Perfect Mid-Life Crisis

Column editor Mark Krug

I'm a white male American, fifty-two years old, enjoying a comfortable and stable life. This can only mean one thing; it's time for me to participate in the time-honored public demonstration of stupidity known as the mid-life crisis. Being the contemplative and overly analytical type, I've given this some thought in advance and decided the way I personally need to do this is to buy a mule.

Yes, that's right; I'm going to express my mid-life crisis by buying a mule.

There are several reasons for this. Notice I didn't say good reasons. Having a mid-life crisis and good reasoning don't mix. One reason is that the traditional modes of mid-life crisis don't work with me. I don't have much interest in cars and I certainly don't self-identify with them, so a red sports car is out. Plus, I'm too cheap.

The blond and too-young bimbo route is out for more serious of reasons. I've already had amazingly good fortune in the mate realm, having married up in class to a beautiful, young-at-heart, and remarkably sane woman. So jeopardizing that relationship wouldn't be a mid-life crisis, it would be full-blown psychosis. So, no sports car and no bimbo, we're going with the mule.

Now, the mule-as-mid-life-crisis option isn't for everyone, clearly. But it does meet many of the criteria for a successful mid-life

crisis. First, the crisis needs to draw attention to one's self in a way that makes people shake their heads and think "what's up with that guy?" If I'm out trail riding on a mule, or participating in any equestrian event with one, the foot long ears will most assuredly draw precisely that type of attention. So that's nailed down.

Second, a successful mid-life crisis needs to be embarrassingly superficial, wholly self-indulgent, and as far away from practical as possible. Again, the mule option works in this regard. I don't need a mule for any legitimate reason and, on its face—it is a ridiculous and completely impractical choice.

Ah, but herein lies the beauty of my scheme. Unlike red sports cars and bimbos, mules only appear to be questionable choices and, in fact, are extraordinarily good choices.

First, mules need vet and especially farrier care less frequently than horses, and they tend to be consistently sound. They are easy keepers and have far fewer feed-related problems than horses—they rarely founder or colic. They almost always have sane minds and a strong sense of self-preservation. The stereotypical view as stubborn is many times just the mule trusting his own judgment over the rider's (ok, ok, it isn't just a stereotype, they can be very stubborn). You can't overwork a mule; they pull a Nancy Reagan and just say no. They don't panic and hurt themselves or others as often as horses.

Mules can provide more years of productive use than can most horses, a thirty-year old mule with a job is not unusual. Mules endure heat better than horses. They are also easier to manage in groups; it is much easier to keep, feed and manage, say, twenty mules compared to twenty horses.

And, of course, there's the bray. You just have to love that voice. The silliness of it is perfectly suited for a mid-life crisis. It's like a bad toupee—when confronted with it, it is nearly impossible to suppress the instinct to grin or roll your eyes.

So, I'm convinced I've stumbled upon the perfect mid-life crisis mode for horse-husbands like myself. One can simultaneously get the much-needed attention and, seemingly, demonstrate the all-important complete lack of sense by coming home one day with a brand new mule at your side. Then secretly, even though people around you are staring and whispering catty asides, you know you have the coolest, sanest, soundest, sturdiest, lowest maintenance, longest lasting, and funniest equine in the barn.

This is such a good plan; I can't wait to get my mule. I've already picked out her name. I'll call her "Bimbo" and drive her around in my new shiny, red horse trailer.

Mark would like to thank Paul and Betsy Hutchins of Rural Heritage for their "pro-mule" commentary (see http://www.ruralheritage.com/mule_paddock/mule_why.htm). U

Mark lives near Graton with his wife Cheryl, several small-eared equines, a dog with a comb-over, and an ancient cat. He can be reached at markkrug@comcast.net.

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Readers Write

Saddles, Horses, People, and Mules (...and then there were saddle donkeys)

Written by Veda Rose Pope



A custom saddle by Veda Rose

I have seen too many white spots on equine backs. I see them on shoulders, sides, and girths. These white spots can change the animal's personality from good to bad; pain will do that. White spots are due to poor saddle fitting, and this is unnecessary, so I am compelled to write my experiences with saddles, horses, people, and mules.

This best way to start this is to explain the different back shapes. Most horses have what I call a rocker back, like

the rocker on a rocking chair. Behind the withers the spine drops down two to four inches then slowly raises up to the croup. A mule might have an appearance of a wither, but then has a straight back all the way on back to the croup. Sometimes mules' backs are higher in the girthing area, which is considered conformationally normal for them.

To illustrate let's compare the saddles on a fifteen hand horse and a fifteen hand mule. The stirrup hanging from the mule will be two to three inches higher from the ground than the stirrup on the horse because the mule's back is flatter and higher. The stirrups will be even higher if the saddle has been placed up on the mule's shoulders. I'll explain this later. Consequently, if you put a standard, semi-Quarter or full-Quarter Horse tree on a mule's back, it will rock back and forth like a rocking chair on a floor because it was built for a different shaped back. No matter how you pad it, it will still have pressure points on the mule's back. A horse with high withers needs a tall gullet, making room for the high wither. No saddle should sit on top of the shoulders; mule or horse it will cause soreness and bad behavior. So many times I see people with their saddle sitting on top of the mule's shoulders. Mainly because they have horse tree saddle, and the rocking stops if you put it further up the back. The key word here is "up" on the shoulders and higher in the front. The riders are sitting downhill. Some mules having a good disposition will allow this, sometimes forever, but some will all of sudden throw off their rider who wonders why their good and solid friend did this.

Even if you never get tossed, or you never see sores or scars causing white hairs, you still might have a sore animal. Look at your animal's hair after a good ride. If the hair on your mount is wet with sweat evenly, you are ok. If there is a dry area, small or large, that is a pressure point from your saddle. Sometimes there is only one dry spot on one side or the other, which is caused by an uneven seat; this means more pressure on one side. Also consider that some

animals don't white out as easy as others, even with trauma to their skin, and sometimes the white hairs will come and go quickly if the pressure and soreness isn't deep. You can avoid most trauma to your mule by using a mule tree, with the ground seat built up in the front to give the rider a sit-up-straight ride when saddled properly, and the mule a good fit.

The cinch is another story. Sometimes when you put the saddle where it seems to fit the best, the cinch is in the wrong place. If your saddle has multiple cinch rings, you can correct the problem. But what if you don't? Some animals have a steep shoulder so the cinch needs to be placed far enough behind the elbow so the skin doesn't role up and pinch. A proper fitting cinch includes the correct length, taper, width, and style—depending on your use (this is a whole topic in itself). Let's just talk about position. The correct placement for the cinch on a mule should be three inches or so behind the elbow. Watch another animal saddled with the rider aboard. Watch the movement at the elbow curve. Each stride moves the elbow forward and back toward the cinch in a particular angle. If there is contact between the cinch and the elbow this might cause a rub or a sore.

One way to remedy the cinch angle on a Western or endurance saddle is called the McClellan Hitch. Use this only if the saddle is a proper fit. You don't move the D rings on the saddle, you move the latigo. If you have a back cinch D ring or inskirt slot for a back cinch you attach the latigo strap in the back cinch D. Then you run the latigo to the cinch, then up to the front D of the saddle, then back to the cinch ring once or twice depending on the length of your latigo. Before pulling up tight, position the cinch where



Veda Rose on her champion Bonita Bars (now owned by Ishi LeClair, see related article p. 7)

you want it to be. This procedure will pull the back of the saddle down first making the saddle flat and more stable on the back of the animal. It will make a V-shape appearance connecting to the cinch. The location of the point of the V will depend on where you put the cinch. Remember this will only work if the saddle tree fits the back it's on. And you must do it on the other side as well. No billet will work, it must be the same latigo as the cinching latigo. Historically, the McClellan Hitch was used on old military saddles. Riders were using many different sized animals and with varied backs and shoulders. But they used separate straps—one for the front and one for the back of the saddle—putting the cinch wherever they needed it to be. It is not complicated and after you do it, you will see the benefits. You will be able to move the cinch back away from the elbow and keep your saddle where it sits best.

Don't forget the saddle donkeys—I ride one. He is 14.2 and a pleasure on the trail. His name is Sunny and he has a mule-type back and a good slope to his shoulders. But some donkeys are made like a bullet, no wither, no shoulder...no problem? Haha! In this case, if you ride with a back cinch, use it. The back cinch will keep the saddle down in back, helping the comfort of the animal. Check it often while riding. A loose cinch is a dangerous thing. It's tough to keep your saddle in place if your ride is bullet-shaped. You might find your saddle going forward downhill and backward uphill. If this is the case, ride with a crouper or a britchen. Australian cowboys ride hard country chasing cattle, and they use a good fitting breast collar, as well. A saddle that slides forward and back is just as hard on an animal's back as a poor fitting one.

One important point to remember is that one saddle will not fit all equines (no matter how much you paid for it) and expensive pads will not fix all the saddling problems. If you have tried different pads and different cinching methods, and none work for you, and you have even tried different saddles, then you may need a custom saddle. Twenty-some years ago I became so tired of changing and trying different things that I became a saddlemaker. I found out that sometimes you are better off getting a custom saddle before you spend too much time and effort and money only to go to a custom fit in the end. Happily this is not always so! Don't give up, ask for help. U

Veda Rose Pope lives in Santa Rosa. When she isn't riding, Veda Rosa does saddle fittings and makes custom saddles and custom Western boots. She also repairs leather. You can call and stop by if you can catch her at home, 707-975-9813.



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Readers Write

In Memory of My RC

Written by Veda Rose Pope

I do not cry for the one I loved
I do not cry for the one I lost

Under God's protection they can be found
So I know that they are safe and sound

I cry because my heart feels pain
And I truly long to embrace them again

I certainly know that in a while
I'll once again see their beautiful smile

Because I know that God never lies
I will once again gaze into their eyes

I know God promises to make things right
Soon I'll hold my loved one ever so tight

So if I cry it's not out of fear
It's the momentary loss that brings a tear

For God promises I'll constantly pray
And in His memory my love will stay



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Trails and Open Spaces From the Tail End

Column editor Sarah Reid

Road apples. Meadow muffins. Equine feces. Recycled vegetation. Dung. Excrement. Equine fertilizer. Fly-attracting piles of poop. Horseshit.

Just about any way you say it, it still ends up being manure. Probably every equestrian I know would rather scoop horse manure than dog poop or the kitty litter box. But there are issues about horse manure, and I am going to discuss several here.

Trails

Many hikers oppose equestrian traffic on trails. One of the main reasons I hear is the horse poop piles that hikers and cyclists have to negotiate on the trails. They don't want to step in it, nor ride through it. I can't blame them; who wants to step in poop? The question is: should we get off and push the manure off the trail or train our horse to sidestep off the trail to deposit, or do we leave it for the elements to dry and scatter in a few days.

Some equestrians advocate cleaning up after your own horse on any trail, be it fire road or single track. It seems the appropriate thing to do, even if it is inconvenient. Some hikers advocate that equestrians clean up manure and carry it out, which is somewhat extreme in this equestrian's point of view. Some of us clean up after other equestrians as we walk the trails, pushing manure off the trail with our foot or a stick. It is obvious that on some trails, horses participate in the "money-see-monkey-do" habit of pooping where other horses have. In this case, it is imperative that we clean up after the horses, so as not to leave a trail bed of manure behind for all others to negotiate.

Here's an important point: While horse deposits on the trail may be annoying and aesthetically bothersome to some trail users, they are organic material derived from a solely vegetarian diet, and, as far as we know, ecologically neutral. A recent study and report by the Department of Forest Ecology and Management (www.californiastatehorsemen.com/enviro/index) determined that foreign/invasive plant species do not germinate from manure deposited on the trail. If you find yourself still concerned about this issue, you can offer your horse "weed-free" feed, either regularly, or before any forays to other areas.

Other places

Off trail, it is just as important to clean up after our equine partners. Parking lots are visible to all users, and piles of horse manure are a disrespectful representation of our equestrian participation in parks. Thanks to the cooperation of the parks and the North Bay Unit of Backcountry Horsemen, almost all of the parks in Sonoma County now have manure bunkers. Because of the presence of a manure bunker, there should never be horse manure left in a parking lot. Every equestrian is responsible for carrying a manure fork in their trailer (or use one provided) and scoop their poop into the manure bunkers. Large groups or club rides should take manure with them, as twenty or more horses can create a lot of manure and should never be spread in nearby bushes. Bunkering your manure is the responsible thing to do, leaves a good impression on other park users, and puts manure to good use.



Annadel's Channel Drive bunker donated by Backcountry Horsemen's North Bay Unit

Bunkers

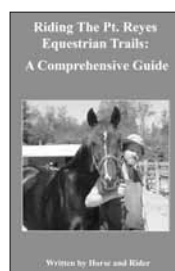
The manure bunkers are used by community members to collect for compost. If you check the manure bunkers in almost every park, they are usually cleaned out by early week after a weekend. This shows that our manure bunker program is working! Other Bay Area counties are struggling with this issue, and have not yet gotten this program off the ground (so to speak). Let's keep this program working, and be responsible users: clean up after your horse every time, be a good example for all equestrians.

On a personal note

This article has been "on the back burner" for a few months. What really got the fire built under it was my arrival recently at a regional

park equestrian lot where I immediately saw about a dozen piles of manure littering the parking lot. Yes, littering. This is generally a little-used equestrian lot, and it had only been a few weeks since I had been here, I rarely see anyone else here. Before we left, my friend and I cleaned it all up. While I was doing this, I was thinking, "Who do these people think is going to clean up after them... the 'manure fairy'?" Who cleans up after them at home? I think it is a bad reflection on our equestrian community when other park users see this mess. It is not too much to carry a manure fork and a garbage bag in your trailer and take it with you if there is no bunker to put it in. And remember to thank the club members who installed the bunkers and the Mounted Assistance Unit volunteers who often scoop up littered parking lots! U

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



Written by Horse and Rider

If you ride at Point Reyes, this book is a must have. The cover and title pages claim this book is written by "Horse and Rider" but the true author, Dennis Portnoy deserves a great deal of credit for this thorough, accurate, and entertaining book. In eighty-eight pages Portnoy covers all the equestrian trails and several loops in the Point Reyes National Seashore. Portnoy organizes his book into chapters entitled East, West, North, and South. Readers can find particular trails and sections indexed in the back. Portnoy also includes photos to complement the contents, including a useful photo of stinging nettle. Perhaps the most charming aspect of this book is the supplementary text in each chapter. In addition to his detailed description of rides and terrain, Portnoy includes the first person perspective of his trusty trail companion Phily, an eleven year old Morgan who has accompanied Portnoy on his extensive travels in the park. Phily is honest and witty, and adds a complementary perspective to the factual descriptions. To order a copy of Riding the Point Reyes Equestrian Trails, email Dennis at dennisportnoy@yahoo.com.

Readers Write

Crystal Lake Trail

Written by Andy Shapiro

What if I told you about a lake (actually three-in-one) where you can ride on the busiest weekends, and be all by yourself. You can throw off your clothes, take a swim, or a nap, and enjoy complete seclusion and privacy. This lake is a peaceful place, surrounded by lush, virgin forest. You'd ask, is this lake up in Oregon or in some remote corner of California? No! Crystal Lake is only forty-five minutes away from Santa Rosa, even closer to Petaluma, in the Point Reyes National Seashore.

Point Reyes National Seashore sits west of Route 1 between Stinson Beach and Tomales. Point Reyes is a multi-use park, open to cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians. The 150 miles of trails are very high quality and well-maintained. You can enjoy coastal rides, pasture lands, chaparral ridges, lush forests, and substantial climbs. Equestrians can park and ride from lots on Sir Francis Drake Highway, Limantour Road, Bear Valley, and Five Brooks Stables. Equestrians can camp at Stewart Horse Camp, near the southern end of the park. When you get there, make sure you swing by the Bear Valley Visitors Center for information because not all the trails are open to horses, and some trails change in status on weekends and holidays. Most of the trails at the southern end of the park, near the horse camp and the Five Brooks Stables, are open to horses seven days a week.

Crystal Lake Trail is in the southern section. To get to the trailhead, you start from the Five Brooks Trailhead, and take the Olema Valley Trail to the Bolema Trail. Cross the Ridge Trail to the Lake Ranch Trail. Pass Mud Lake to the south, and start looking for the Crystal Lake Trailhead sign on your right. If you take the Crystal Lake Trail, you will ride for a little more than two miles before you see the lake itself.

Unfortunately, you probably haven't taken the Crystal Lake Trail, or seen Crystal Lake. That's because right next to the trail sign is another sign that reads, "Trail Closed. Impassable." Believe me, this assessment of the trail isn't true. Recently, a few intrepid horse people spent several days clearing the trail. I rode it, myself, and while it is narrower than many Point Reyes trails, I considered it safe and passable. The trail winds through thick, dark forest at the top of the ridge, and down into a mysterious valley, then back onto a brushy ridge with spectacular views of deep forest and fog rolling in. You pass an isolated, romantic meadow, and then the lake. If you continue on past the lake, you'll hit the Coast Trail.



Andy and Katana enjoy the view at one of the Crystal Lakes

Crystal Lake, formerly known as Lost Lakes, is formed by underground springs, making the water an emerald green. One side has a sandy beach next to it. Wildflowers populate the lakeshore in the springtime, and many are visited by hummingbirds. The park abandoned the trail six or seven years ago, due to budget cuts. Horse groups and individuals petitioned to have it reopened, and many have volunteered to clear it and maintain it. So far, the park service has not responded to the requests. From time to time, visitors disregard the "Trail Closed" sign and make the journey. One retired lady who rode the trail said, "This is the way trails are supposed to be!" Other riders have said, "This is the most exciting and beautiful ride I've had in years!" Some riders who are used to wide trails and fire roads say it's a bit much for them. Others say it reminds them of the high Sierras below seven thousand feet.

I am not advocating that you ride a closed trail. I am writing this article to ask local equestrians, and equestrian groups to contact the Point Reyes trail crew and ask them to re-open this trail. I am urging you to make some noise, and to volunteer to help clear and maintain it. Several years ago, the park visitors and volunteers convinced the park service to re-open the nearby Old Out Trail, by committing to keep the trail clear and safe. We can ride this trail now, and it's a great way to get to the Wildcat Camp. You can contact Point Reyes to request re-opening the Crystal Lake Trail by calling the Bear Valley Visitors Center at 415-464-5100, or by emailing through the website at www.nps.gov/pore/contacts.

If you ever do get a chance to ride the Crystal Lake Trail, and you see a man swimming in one of the lakes, it's probably me. My horse Katana will be nearby, exploring the tastes of various plants. You can pet him. When I get out of the water, you might wait until I get my clothes on before you come say hi. U

Andy Shapiro lives in Santa Rosa and boards in Olema. After riding in his teens and twenties, Andy was horseless for a while. He is now fifty-five and owns an Arabian named Katana. Andy enjoys riding bareback in Marin, especially Point Reyes, and writing about his adventures. To contact Andy, you can email him at acepilot28@yahoo.com.

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Readers Write

A Glori Stori—The Feathered Intruder

Written by Heidi Fowler



The brave pair: Heidi and Glori

We had one more foot to trim on good ol' boy Doc, when our attention was diverted from his upheld leg to the flying giant fowl approaching our side of the three acre pasture. Glori, my Arabian trail riding partner, who stood freely a few feet from us, came to rapt attention; within a milisecond her head raised, her neck arched, her nostrils flared, and her tail lifted high. She watched the intruder with razor-sharp eyes as it touched earth fifty feet from where we gathered. She had not authorized this big turkey bird to land in her pasture, and her concern for our safety was great! She quickly glanced at us with a signal to stay put, and with a toss of her mane and a beautiful departure, cantered her way over to encounter the intruder.

The pack of dogs milling around us came to attention in synch with Glori, and stared curiously at this uninvited feathered guest. The sight of three long-haired Chihuahuas, a thirty-five pound Pit-cross, and her seventy pound brother sprinting determinedly beside my gray mare has left an indelible mark of delight in my mind's eye. Our harmless intruder watched with apprehension as the integrated equine and canine pack descended upon him, and wondered if he would live through the greeting committee's visit. Our new turkey friend, flustered, begged forgiveness for the intrusion, and asked (looking around nervously) for the best way out of this predicament. The dogs quickly lost interest and entrusted guardian Glori to dispatch Mr Turkey. They ambled their snuffley way back to Doc, Tiffany, and me. I continued to watch Glori, fascinated, as the scene unfolded.

Mr Turkey, as quickly as he could manage on only one good leg, hop-walked down the fence line away from us, while Glori assumed position as his personal escort. When they reached the length of the front north/south fence line, they turned and began the trek down the east/west fence line. Glori left the unexpected turkey's side to gallop back to us trumpeting and snorting all the while. She did not come to stay, but rather to check on us and report in that she was taking care of the intruder situation. Her

gallop maintained its speed as she swung by us and conveyed this information. She then returned to her job of escort. Mr Turkey didn't ask what took her so long; to be sure, her escorting him was not his request! Half way down that fence line, Glori once again left him long enough to gallop to us in the same fashion as before, snorting and trumpeting, and turning an arc by us. Assured of our well being, off she soared back to her escort service. When they turned to the back north/south fence line, once again Glori galloped over to check on us before returning to Mr Turkey. She continued this technique of escort-turkey-then-check-on-us, till the overly-escorted, flustered Mr Turkey was able to fly out at the same location he had entered. Whew! He was a much-relieved turkey to be free of the dominating grey mare escort service!



At last Glori, freed of her duty to protect her tribe, galloped her victory lap, tail high, snorting and bellowing her greatness to her waiting (now safe) group, which consisted of her fellow horse, and assorted dogs and people. She came to a beautiful sliding stop a few feet from me. I gave her abundant complements for her bravery, and cooed sweet words of appreciation that I knew such a fine mare. She proceeded to walk around and stand at my back, sides heaving from her exertion, neck still rigid with muscle. She looked out to where the harmless turkey had last been seen; I too, turned to study the spot. Satisfied he was no longer a threat, she reached forward and touched her soft muzzle gently on my back, rested a back foot, and yawned.

Glorious. U

Heidi Fowler and her guard horse, Glori, live in Fulton. Heidi and Glori enjoy it all—trail riding, endurance, parades, camping, liberty agility and more! The fearless pair share their home with Glori's pasture buddy Doc, an assortment of dogs, cats, chickens, ducks, and various wildlife visitors. Heidi's understanding husband, Steven, and their three adult kids also live there. To contact Heidi about this article, her intrepid horse, or anything else, email her at heidiwindrdr@aol.com.



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Colts and Fillies

Column Editor Kelly Henson

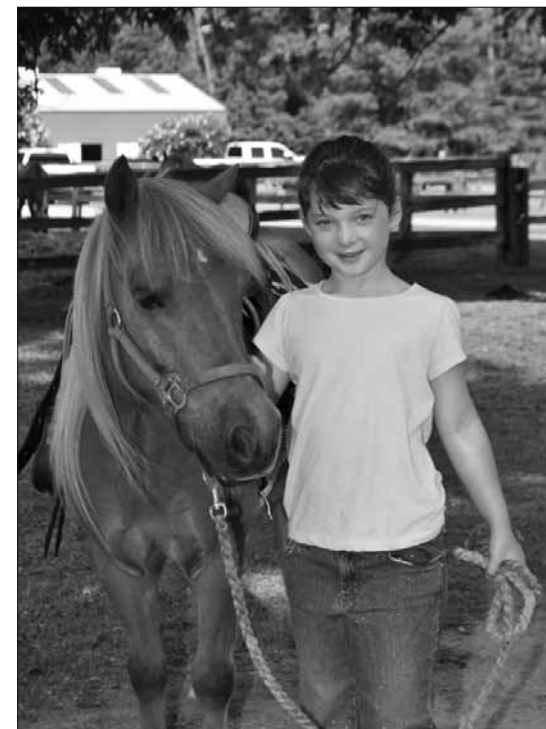
Pony Pals

"Buster bucked me off again!" Not the words parents want to hear from their child as they come home from riding their pony. The amazing part is that kids always want to get back on Buster, or... (insert name here)...again. What is it about kids and horses?

Well, as I think back on my first pony and all the ridiculous, frustrating—sometimes painful—things he put me through, I can't help but feel good inside. Those were some of the best times I have ever had and it was because I had a pony that challenged me and helped me forget about the troubles that life can bring, even to a child.

I believe that kids love their horses and ponies because they are part of a dream land where you get to run around and get dirty and you never get in trouble for it; it's what's expected. There was something magical about summer evenings spent on the back of a horse. As the sun went down and the air got cool, I could feel the warmth of sweat and skin as we rode around bare-back. It was a time when all I cared about was having enough change to get an orange soda out of the vending machine and riding around all day. We would wash our ponies, braid our ponies' tails, ride our ponies, groom our ponies, race our ponies, and even trade ponies for the day. We had days of endless fun.

A pony provided a best friend who was always available to play no matter what time of the day it was. Ponies always had time to listen to our crazy stories about traveling to far away places, or troubles at home because mom and dad were fighting. The pasture was a home away from home, where we could truly be ourselves. Our ponies were babysitters so that Mom could go to the grocery store and Dad could work on the car without being interrupted.



Having that first pony meant trailering out for our first horse show. Boots all shiny like they were new again; butterflies in my stomach because I wanted to do well. After getting up at 5am to get myself and my pony cleaned up for our "big day" of showing, it would take forty-five minutes to get that pony into the trailer he had been in a hundred times before. But at the end of the day when I would come home with all my ribbons, none of which were ever blue, I was happy and tired—a good combination for a kid.

I hope that for those of us who were lucky enough to grow up with horses, we still carry the drive to enjoy every crazy day we have with them. And for those of you who have started your horse experience later in life, I hope that you play and keep an open mind with your horses just like kids do. In kid's eyes, there is no such thing as a bad day

when you're with your pony. That pony could break away, buck you off and go running down the road but it was still a good day. That pony could chew a hole in your new boots but it was still a good day. Or that pony could bite you on the back when you weren't looking and it was still a good day. You know why? Because being around horses makes kids feel free and adventurous. There is a bond between child and horse that people just can't deny. At the end of the day that runaway, mean, old pony still means the world to that child because he proved that he didn't always have to do what others wanted him to do. That he could stand up for himself even if that meant having to buck off a few bad apples along the way. U

Kelly Henson is a Sonoma State student and creative writer. Kelly and her National Show Horse, Tobi, are best friends. If you would like to contact Kelly about a story, email her at kids@sonomacounthorsecouncil.org.



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Mule Tales

Teaching Your Equine to Ground Tie: A Lesson Learned

Written by Jeff Wright

Time in the saddle is a great time no matter where you are riding. In the arena or on the trail—I enjoy them both about the same. While doing trail work and leisure riding or even in the arena, you always seem to be stopping and getting off your horse or mule for any number of reasons. Sometimes you need to clear an obstacle, other times adjust tack...you might even need a “personal break.” You’re likely often in a position of having to find someone to hold your animal, or trying to find a strong and convenient branch or tree to tie to, which are never quite where you want them. If you’re riding in the arena, or even out on the trail without the foresight to bring a halter and lead rope, how do you tie safely using just your reins? My solution is to teach your animal to ground tie, and here’s my story.



Jeff and Britches at Lake Sonoma

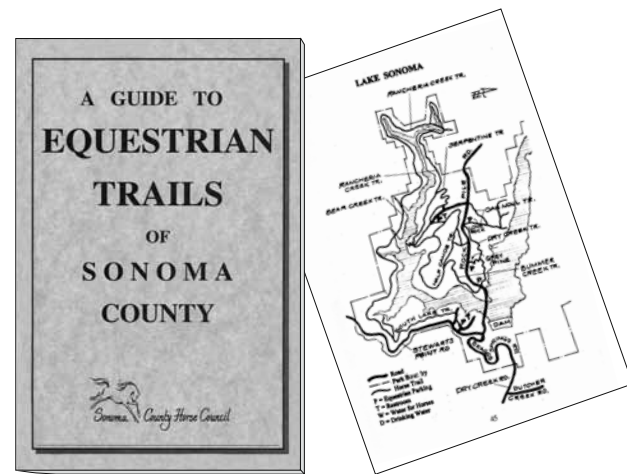
This story takes place at Lake Sonoma on one of the Backcountry Horseman trail work parties. I don’t know why they call them work parties, because they are usually a lot of work, and not so much party...well, maybe a little party. I found myself that day on a single track trail with friends and family on our way to Strawberry Creek to clear some blockages. We needed to shore up the edges, trim and clear branches, and clear rocks. And we weren’t drinking either. Our group of horse and mules was walking single file on the narrow trail with a steep rocky uphill bank to the right, and a steep downhill to the left. Horses, mules, and riders had stopped in front of me, and behind me, and were waiting for me to clear some rocks and boulders that were in the trail. Well I looked for a branch to tie my mule Britches to, but...no branch. Well, I thought, where was he going to go anyway? We were situated between two lines of equines and two hillsides. So I threw the leads over and around the saddle horn and started clearing rocks. It didn’t take long for old Britches to figure out that I was not in control of him. And, being as sure-footed and confident as mules are, down the embankment he dove. Holy smokes! (Or maybe it was a cuss word that came out of my mouth, I am not sure about that.) Everyone sat in amazement as Britches made his way a hundred or so yards down, skidding on his butt. Was that as fun as it looked? He stopped when he reached more stable terrain, not far from the water’s edge. I stood in disbelief and yelled at him to get his “half-ass” back up here. He looked at me, and then around. I really think that he wanted to come back up, but it was too steep for him to climb straight back up. Or maybe he didn’t find the raucous laughter on the upper level too appealing. He stood there looking at me and braying up a storm when he realized that no one was following him, and that he was going to be sitting down there all by himself. He’s smart, and worked himself back and forth to find a possible way back up the bank, but it was no use; the terrain was too intimidating even for a sure-footed mule. Boy, what a pickle he was in! So skinning my way down to him, I led him across the hillside a little further along and cautiously zig-zagged us back up to the trail.

All my tack and gear was still intact and in place, so I hiked a ways back and tied him to a tree behind everyone, and finished moving all the rocks. My friends were too busy laughing at me rounding up Britches to have finished the rock-moving trail improvements, so it was left to me. I learned three things that day: 1) Britches can go down steep grades, 2) I can’t trust my mule, and 3) Tie him to something or teach him to ground tie. Ground tying conjures up the image of throwing the lead rope on the ground, and counting on your animal to stay put. But really it means if you tell him to stay, he plants-all-four until you give another command, no matter where the lead rope or reins are. You can probably teach your animal to do it yourself by offering him the choice of staying put or working, but check with your trainer

to see what works best for your equine. One final note, even though we were working hard, it was good day to be had by all. On our work days we always seem to make good friends, and get to hear a good story or two. U

Jeffrey Raymond Wright lives in Santa Rosa and owns two mules, three horses, and a pony. He enjoys trail riding and horse camping. Jeff lives on his ranchette with his wife Ronda, and family Courtney and Cooper. To reach Jeff about this story, mules, or anything else, email him at jef-fwright2459@sbcglobal.net.

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Horse Tales

No Hard Feelings

Written by Joan Rasmussen

Two horses live in my pasture. Cowboy came to me through the usual channel (online shopping). Dexter’s journey to my back yard was more convoluted and involved two injuries, one far more devastating than the other.

I met Terri Wright about four years ago through a mutual friend while trail riding at Point Reyes. Terri and her horse Dexter came along on one of our rides, and we were impressed by her quiet demeanor and by Dexter’s apparent steadiness. He was the kind of “company horse” we wished we owned.

Dexter was Terri’s first horse. She was working with other peoples’ horses when she was introduced to Dexter. While she liked him, it was not really love at first sight. Terri recalls that Dexter, a Montana transplant who had been used as part of a ranch string, would turn his back to people and walk away. But Terri was ready to own a horse, and the six-year-old strawberry roan Appaloosa seemed like a good fit. Dexter became her horse, and she set about turning him, as she puts it, into a “big puppy dog”. Dex was agreeable to this and soon Terri was working on keeping him out of her space, instead of getting him engaged in human contact!

Although Dexter was a young horse and Terri a relatively inexperienced and unconfident rider, they seemed to be well matched. But in June of 2007, everything went horribly wrong. Terri saddled Dexter up for a ride and mounted him. She remembers adjusting the saddle, then it seemed like the saddle horn was coming up to meet her, and then she was on the ground, unable to feel her legs. Nobody witnessed the event and it is still unclear exactly what happened.

Fortunately, others were present at the boarding facility and Terri was airlifted to the hospital. The diagnosis was a spinal fracture that severed the spinal cord—a “T3 Complete” fracture, meaning that the fracture occurred at the 3rd thoracic vertebrae (mid-chest), with a complete loss of nerve function below the fracture; Terri was left a paraplegic. Terri has little recollection of what followed next due to the effects of pain medication, but two surgeries were performed to stabilize her spine.

Surgery was followed by rehab in Vallejo, which took longer than average as Terri suffered from various complications and relentless nausea during the entire period, slowing her recovery. “Rehab” consisted of physical therapy and training in the skills she would need to live her life under her new restrictions—learning basic skills such as dressing herself, hygiene, and how to maneuver a wheelchair.

Finally, Terri was allowed a two-hour visit home. Her first stop, before going to her house, was to Dexter’s stable. While she was unable to get out of the car, Dexter was brought to her. He put his head in the window to get his carrots, and Terri was able to get a long-awaited whiff of “eau de horse,” that magic fragrance that all horse lovers crave!

Over the next few months, the visits home became longer, and almost always included a visit with Dexter. But the physical and financial challenges were becoming more apparent as time went by, and Terri started to think about what was best for both her and Dexter.

About that time, Cowboy sustained a hock injury that put him out



Terri and Dexter

of commission for several months. Dexter came to live with me on a six-month lease agreement. Six months turned into a year, and finally Terri was faced with the reality that she could not keep Dexter. My neighbor Laura became his new owner, although he continued to live at my house as he and Cowboy had formed a strong bond. Dexter became the horse with three moms—Terri, Laura, and me. Whether this is a blessing or a curse is up to Dexter!

Terri continues to recover and has been able to accomplish much of what the physical therapists predicted she would. She visits Dexter when she can. Her goal is to one day be able to ride again through a therapeutic riding program. Her injuries are severe enough that special equipment would be required to put her on a horse and support her once she is mounted, but her surgeon has assured her that the activity would not further injure her spine. Her passion for horses is undiminished. One of her concerns is that others will be afraid of horses after seeing her injuries, but she knows that what she experienced was purely accidental and Dexter is not to blame. She does caution riders to be completely aware whenever they are around horses.

Dexter, meanwhile, has continued to develop his personality under the influence of his indulgent caregivers. He gets out on the trail on a regular basis and is becoming more confident and expressive as time goes by. He has demonstrated a fondness for beer (to the delight of Laura’s husband), and exhibits the flehmen response (raised upper lip) to express displeasure—his equivalent of thumbing his nose at us! U

Joan Rasmussen grew up in Sonoma County and currently lives in Sebastopol. She got her first pony, Tiny, when she was ten. In her twenties, she showed both English and Western, but has abandoned competition in favor of trail riding with her Quarter Horse buddy, Cowboy. She enjoys Parelli Natural Horsemanship and has achieved Level 2. Joan supports her horse habit by running a bookkeeping and tax service (In Balance Bookkeeping Service). To contact Joan email her at joanras@att.net.

Readers Write

Wild Horse Destiny – Decision Time

Written by Jyoti Germain



The Bureau of Land Management, ever the institutionalized and mechanized predator of herds of wild mustangs in America's West, is now in their summer phase, pursuing an additional 6,000 wild horses between July 1 and Sept 30, 2010. Among them is the Twin Peaks Herd of Northern California.

Advocates and organizations such as Equine Welfare Alliance and The Cloud Foundation fight for change, arguing for the correct and legal application of the Wild Horse and Burro Act which mandates management on the range of this historic and cultural resource. At odds are the entrenched self interests in the form of corporate oil, gas, mining, and ranching which bully their way through our federal government and usually prevail against humane and public interests. The BLM fails to acknowledge that it would be far less costly to use best management practices to restore the habitat, and change our governments grazing policies than to continue to sacrifice of our public lands to private companies. The privatization of the public domain may serve private and foreign corporations but does not serve the American public, the long term ecologic health of the land, or the horses.

As the political battle continues, the BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program continues to gather "excess" wild horses and remove them from their legal herd areas. Other on-the-range management practices, such as securing available water or reducing livestock grazing are largely absent. Recently Senator Mary Landrieu (D-La) stated, "The image of hundreds of wild horses freely roaming the open terrain in the American West is reminiscent of times past and our country's trailblazing heritage. However, on July 10, the 200 wild horses galloping frantically across a breathtaking Nevada plain, with dust swirling around their sweaty bodies, were running in fear. With dry summer heat reaching 95 degrees, these horses were forced to run for miles over rough volcanic rock in an attempt to escape the government's low-flying helicopter in pursuit. It is foaling season and many of the mares and foals were weak from their recent pregnancy or from giving birth. The offending helicopter was part of the US Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) effort to round-up and relocate 1,200 of our nation's wild mustangs from this area. It is just one of

dozens of planned roundups to permanently remove and relocate thousands of our wild horses." (07/28/10 07:01 PM ET) Landrieu is one senator who understands what is happening here. Our Senator Feinstein knows, but doesn't act. Senator Boxer is sympathetic but is now distracted by her campaign for re-election. Our wild horses need these people to step up, if justice is ever to prevail for them.

California has seen a steep reduction in wild horse herd area acreage since wild horses were granted legislative protection in 1971. The state's original 6.6 million acres of herd areas has been reduced to 2.4 million acres, while livestock are allowed on 8.1 million acres of federal lands in California, an area which also happens to include acres allocated to our wild mustang herds. The current population of California wild horses and burros is approximately 4,950, though BLM wants only 2,201. Meanwhile approximately 43,750 livestock graze on California's public lands. These policies do not come cheap and tax revenues make up an annual loss of \$123 million dollars spent to support corporate public lands ranching, aka "welfare ranching." This does not include the annual cost of warehousing captured wild horses to accommodate those private cows and sheep—an additional 40 million plus in tax dollars annually—nor does it include the cost of their capture, a huge sum that is paid to government contractors.

No surprise then, that on July 8, 2010 BLM issued their "Decision" (available on the BLM website) to "gather as many of the total population as possible (2,300 horses and 280 burros)." Of those, an estimated 450 horses and seventy-two burros would be returned to the range and the remaining captured horses would either go into the adoption program or be put in "long-term pastures." Where and what those long-term pastures are exactly is not described. The horses to be released will be treated with fertility control drugs and the BLM will manipulate the horse sex ratio to 60% males. The planned roundup on this 800,000 acre Twin Peaks Herd Management Area is to "take place in August and September, using helicopters to move horses and burros into capture sites." Does it matter that 10,460 cattle and 22,000 sheep are permitted to graze on the Twin Peaks Area? Or that the cost of the proposed roundup is \$4.2 million – thirty-five times the annual grazing revenues?

Recently the BLM has opened up a public comment period regarding their ongoing management of wild horses and burros. The Humane Society of the United States has gotten involved and crafted a letter which concerned citizens can download, sign, and send to Washington. It addresses almost every aspect of the Wild Horse and Burro Program and represents the views of most advocates, which are opposed to current practices. For more information please visit www.grassrootshorse.com, www.hsus.org, www.equinewelfarealliance.org, or email equindeliverance@aol.com.

Jyoti-Annette Germain is a writer and a long time animal and horse lover. She is best known for her book entitled Wild Horses, Wild Innocence, which documents the history and plight of wild horses in America. Jyoti lives in Kenwood. To find out more about wild horses and burros, or to order her book, contact Jyoti at Equindeliverance@aol.com.

Facilities Focus

The Chocolate Horse Farm

Column editor Debby Bailey

When I decided to report on the Chocolate Horse Farm, I thought it would be an easy. Instead it turned out to be difficult, because it was hard to get into contact with the operator of the ranch, Andrea Pfeiffer, and let me tell you why. Andrea is a wife, the mother of two children (ten and thirteen years old), and an equestrian that runs a world class training facility. When she is not at the Chocolate Horse Farm giving instructions, she is traveling all over the United States and the world. In retrospect, I think I was quite lucky to share the time with her that I did; when I explain her schedule and what she has accomplished, I think you will be just as impressed with Andrea and her equestrian center as I am.

According to their website, www.chocolatehorsefarm.net, the Chocolate Horse Farm (CHF) is "an equestrian center specializing in Eventing and Dressage." CHF is owned by Jean Stokes and Bridget Dulfer, and is operated by the renowned trainer Andrea Pfeiffer. I classify myself as a pleasure rider who enjoys the trail, and I have always considered myself to be a fairly "accomplished equestrian." There has never been a situation that my equine buddies and I have confronted on the trail that we could not overcome. But, I must say that after talking with Andrea, I feel I need to reassess my talents. I would like to share what Eventing and Dressage involves, and what an "accomplished equestrian partnership" really means, and also tell you how it relates to the Chocolate Horse Farm.

Three Day Eventing, or "Eventing" is an equestrian event which combines Dressage, Cross-Country, and Show Jumping. Andrea offers training and lessons in eventing for equestrians all levels, and boarding is available for students and horses in training. In Three Day Eventing the first day features a Dressage phase in which balance, rhythm, and suppleness, as well as harmony between horse and rider, must be demonstrated. Riders demonstrate exercises such as the half pass at the trot, shoulder-ins, medium and extended gaits, single flying changes, and counter-canter. (Well, my horses and I can do a few of these things). A second day features Cross-Country exercises. This phase requires both horse and rider to be in excellent physical shape and to be brave and trusting of each other. Riders traverse twelve to twenty fences which consist of solidly built natural objects (e.g. telephone poles and stone walls), as well as various obstacles such as ponds and streams, ditches, drops, and banks. (My horses and I could walk around these objects, and very carefully cross the ponds and streams, but the equestrians in this event are really supposed to jump and cross these objects at a gallop!) The third day consists of Show Jumping. In this phase competitors must jump twelve to twenty brightly colored fences. Furthermore, this phase is timed! So, in addition to normal jumping skills, Eventing Show Jumping tests the fitness and stamina of the horse and rider. (Again, my buddies and I would just enter the arena, look at the pretty jumps, and then walk around them. Unfortunately, if we tried to jump, both my horse and I would probably end severely hurt and in the hospital). As you can see, Eventing is an amazing sport which requires an extreme level of athletic fitness of the horse and rider, as well as an amazing bond of trust. In my opinion, the team that performs well together in this sport truly demonstrates "accomplished riding."

Andrea is very modest, but she has twenty-five years of experience training horses in this discipline. She has coached top riders in the



The lovely Chocolate Horse Farm

Olympic Circuit, and last year at the World Cup Final in Poland, her horse finished sixteenth out of forty-eight. She is BHC (British Horse Certified) and has made her mark in Eventing and Dressage as both a rider and trainer. Many students have been successful due to her dedication and understanding as a teacher. Andrea worked in England and learned the horse "trade" from the ground up. She has been a stall cleaner, a groom, a competitor, and this certainly contributes to her ability to be such a wonderful teacher. Her students range from young riders to adult amateurs to working professionals.

I asked Andrea why the ranch is called the Chocolate Horse Farm. She said it is because her parents bred dark bay Arabs on their ranch when she was a child; her friends would come to visit her they would say that they were going to visit the "chocolate horses." When Andrea came to Jean Stokes and Bridget Dulfer's ranch back in 1992, she brought her Chocolate Horse Farm name with her and it stuck. The Chocolate Horse Farm has been in existence for the last eighteen years and Andrea feels it is due to the great partnership she has formed with Jean and Bridget. Today, the Chocolate Horse Farm can accommodate fifty-four horses. Currently, there are a few openings and "trailer-in" lessons are always available. The ranch features large covered and jumping arenas, a cross country course, and galloping tracks. Board includes graining and blanketing. Andrea is assisted in training by Kelly Prather. Kelly also trained in England and has brought along several Eventing and Dressage horses with great success. Andrea's husband, James, is available to help with farrier needs, and Dougie Hannum, Corky Panarisi, and Grant Sholwalter are available to help keep your horses in prime condition. The Chocolate Horse Farm also sponsors community events.

For more information about the Chocolate Horse Farm, call 707-778-7544, or visit their website at www.chocolatehorsefarm.net. You can also check out the facility which is on Jacobsen Lane in Petaluma. Visitors are always welcome. Sonoma County is very fortunate indeed to be home to such a world class facility with such dedicated professionals.

Do you know of a Sonoma County facility or event that you'd like to read about in the Horse Journal? Contact Debby Bailey (Equus Hall of Fame -2009) at facilities@sonomacountyhorsecouncil.org

Readers Write

Local Expert: Wilderness Rider

Written by Nadine Lavell

Donna Meier remembers being mesmerized by the stories and photos of packers, pack trains, pack mules, and just about anything else related to getting away from most people for as long as she can remember. Her grandfather was a "mule man." He died shortly before she was born, but his life stories seemed legendary to her. She spent every spare minute growing up doing cowboy things with her uncle, an original "Marlboro man" type cowboy in Northern California's Modoc County. Ironically, Donna's father hated anything with four legs. Animals reminded him too much of work, he would say.



Donna in her Wilderness Rider uniform with Penny

Her father left the family ranch in 1942 to join the Navy. He returned in the early 1970's to raise sheep, proving you can run but you can't hide from destiny. Donna's father had the rare gift of passing at age seventy-three in the same room in which he was born, on the family ranch in Boonville. Donna's eighty-three year old mother still lives on the ranch—still raising sheep!

Growing up, Donna learned as much as she could about horses and mules from old timers in the area; she learned a lot of hardcore cowboy ways. Not all her memories are good ones, as some of those old boys weren't too tolerant of the horse's mind. In essence, the spirit was broke right out of them. They weren't too respectful of the wilderness, either. When they horse camped, it seemed they would most often leave a big mess. They'd burn and bury garbage, tie the horses that pawed all night to trees—leaving ripped bark and holes in the ground—wash dishes in the creek, even just throw out left over food for the wildlife to find and feast on. Even back then it just didn't seem right to her. As she started doing trips on her own Donna tried to do things differently. She pretended she was the first one to go where ever she was going and didn't want anyone to know she had been there. As she started taking her own kids out it was just natural to teach them to be kind to the outdoors, and clean up their messes. Donna thought, "They don't throw trash on the floor at home so why throw it out on the ground?"

Fast forward over numerous adventures and many years. In 2003 Donna found and participated in the "Wilderness Rider" training with Backcountry Horsemen of California (BCHC). She had heard of the program, and its ideals and government agency partnerships and wanted to get involved. What a perfect match! Over the years Donna had been increasingly frustrated with the closing of some public lands because of the misuse by a minority of insensitive and uneducated public. She felt that if she was going to complain, she had better be ready to help create a solution. According to Donna, "The Wilderness Rider training seemed like a great way to educate, learn by doing, and set an example for a specific population of outdoor users about a more gentle way to enjoy what this glorious Earth has to offer." Donna completed the five-day course offered by BCHC in collaboration with The National Park Service (USFS), the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. She mastered

many skills, including proper and responsible stock use, and backcountry and camping gentle use techniques. The training also prepared her to educate other users. After twenty-plus years in the classroom teaching ABC's it was absolutely wonderful for her to be sharing her passion, dedication, and knowledge with others.

Eager to learn more for her educational workshops she applied to the Center of Outdoor Ethics in Boulder, Co for a slot in the "Master Educator Stock User" course in May 2008. The Center of Outdoor Ethics (COE) is a spin off of the National Outdoor

Leadership School (NOLS) that educates stock users in the Leave No Trace (LNT) practices. Donna was one of four in the class of twelve who were chosen to receive a 25% scholarship award towards tuition. She was likely chosen because the Center for Outdoor Ethics noted she already had Wilderness Rider status, and established local government contacts. She was no doubt one step ahead of the game with access to an audience willing to learn more about Leave No Trace. The class is held at the only accredited stock user training facility in the nation, the Nine Mile Remount Station in the Lolo National Forest near Missoula, Mt. This week long interactive course consisted of students from Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Alaska, Montana, and California.

Now with a "Master Stock User" rating Donna was able to join the trainers in teaching the May 2009 class of Wilderness Riders in Henry Coe State Park. Trainers include USFS personnel, and other Master Stock Users. Locally, Donna was asked by rangers at Lake Sonoma to join the board of the Friends of Lake Sonoma to represent the equestrian community—a tremendous honor. Donna also serves on the newly formed Volunteer Multi-User Patrol for Lake Sonoma. In addition to her Master Trainer level in stock and wilderness practice, Donna is certified in CPR, Basic First Aid, and Wilderness First Aid. She notes that, "Here in Sonoma County we are quadruply lucky to have over fifty miles of diverse riding trails, tail gate camping, and pack-in camping at Lake Sonoma. Public access and use of our lands comes with responsibility. This means responsibility to ourselves, to other users, and to future users. I have witnessed over usage and abuses of our public lands; these lands may or may not recover. I don't want to be responsible for any negative impact, and challenge everyone to join me in that goal!"

When she is not riding, packing, or lazing around the hills, Donna lives in Cloverdale. She enjoys trail riding on Quarter Horse Stanley or mule Penny. During the off (winter) riding season, Donna is a facilitator for Grief and Bereavement Support Groups and provides End of Life home care for Memorial and North County Hospices. You can contact Donna about BCHC, responsible stock use, and Leave No Trace practices at knewcaptn@aol.com. For more information about Backcountry Horsemen visit their local site at www.northbayunit.com. You can learn about Leave No Trace practices at www.lnt.org.




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From the Horse's Mouth

Local Equestrian Qualifies for the 2010 World Equestrian Games

Contributed by Joan Rasmussen

Local horseman Guillermo Recio qualified for the 2010 World Equestrian Games (WEG) in Reining on his Paint Horse stallion, Bonnie's Smart Chic (Charro). A dual citizen of Spain and the US, Recio will represent Spain at the WEG, to be held in Lexington, Ky from September 25 to October 10, 2010. The Games are the world championships of eight equestrian disciplines recognized by the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI), and occur every four years. Reining was first part of the WEG in Jerez, Spain in 2002 and proved to be wildly popular. The event is dominated by Quarter Horses, and Recio believes that Bonnie's Smart Chic is the only Paint Horse entered in the event. Purchased as a Reined cowhorse in 2005, the Recimos put the horse in training as a Reiner primarily to balance out his training, but he proved to be a talented Reining horse. After suffering a severe tendon injury in late 2008, he spent most of 2009 in stall confinement, followed by hand walking and light work. He resumed light training in December 2009, and overcame the injury and late start to qualify his rider for the World Equestrian Games early this year. The Recios own Sonoma Mountain Equestrian Center in Petaluma. For more info about Charro and the Sonoma Mountain Equestrian Center, visit www.sonoma-mountainequestrian.com. For more info about the WEG, visit www.alltechfeigames.com.



Proposed California Legislation

Limiting Equine Health Professionals

Currently proposed legislation (Bill AB 1980) would make it illegal for any non-veterinarian health care professional to charge for services rendered on equines. This would include massage therapists, body workers, dental workers, and possibly chiropractors. Horse owners may be concerned about this because many equine management issues fall outside the scope of traditional veterinary practice. In addition, even conditions managed well by traditional veterinary practice benefit from supplemental services offered by massage, body work, cranio-sacral therapy, and other non-veterinary services. This bill, if it passes, will limit owner choices on who can provide services to horses. In addition, many well-trained, well-respected professionals will lose their income and vocation. To read the proposed bill, visit www.leginfo.ca.gov and search for bill 1980. If you would like to voice an opinion about this legislation or similar proposals, contact your senator. For SF/Marin/Sonoma, Senator Mark Leno can be reached at 916-651-4003, or via website <http://dist03.casen.govoffice.com> and choosing the listed office locations for email contact.



California Dressage Society Performs at Rotary Benefit

Contributed by Tressa Boulden

On 25th of July the Cheval Noire Friesian Drill Team, including volunteers from the local Sonoma Chapter California Dressage Society (CDS) Board, partnered with the Petaluma Rotary Club to fundraise for the Rotary Club, and in particular, the children's

mentorship program. In this fun and exciting program the Cheval Noire Friesian Drill Team rode to the Talking Heads' "Burning Down the House," and Robert Palmer's "Some Like it Hot!" The team members included drill team captain Tressa Boulden, designer and choreographer Tracy Underwood, who provided her facility for team practice, Annika Leet, Amber Ludwig Blanton, and Chrystine Hulac. Gina Sierra helped locate costumes for horses and riders. Tressa Boulden also performed the Andalusian breed exhibition on her gelding Cazador with her side kick Fruit



The Fruit Basket Girls

Basket Girls (Annika Leet, Amber Blanton, and Chrystine Hulac), who were a roll of laughs as they did their routine to a Caribbean theme with a twist of Lucille Ball humor! Susan Hall made it possible for Cheval Noire Team and the breed demonstration to attend this event, she is the team event coordinator...Thank you Susan! For future interest in the Friesian drill team feel free to contact Susan Hall at hall1011@pacbell.net, or Tressa Boulden at tressaboulden@comcast.net.



Local Mounted Assistance Unit Wins Statewide Award

The California State Parks Mounted Assistance Unit, Diablo Vista District, received the California State Parks Foundation's Grass Routes Championship Award for 2010 for its activities "protecting and advocating" for the California State Parks. The state park Mounted Assistance Unit (MAU) was among several organizations staging events and demonstrations which raised awareness and helped to defeat a plan for state park closure. Among the MAU activities was a Special Patrol Day during which uniformed riders turned out as a group to ride Annadel State Park; the participants held a rally at Lake Ilnango offering park visitors and riders a chance to share opinions, perspectives, and stories about state parks. The event was part of a larger State Parks Advocacy Weekend, sponsored by the California State Parks Foundation. Several posters documenting the day's activities were sent to Sacramento as part of a campaign to impact the Capitol. The local MAU which serves Annadel, Sugarloaf Ridge, and Jack London State Parks, consists of seventy-five active equestrians and twenty cyclists. These riders are docents and park stewards, and serve primarily to extend the eyes and ears of the understaffed rangers. For more information about the MAU, contact unit president JoDean Nicolette at jdnicolette@earthlink.net. For more information about the California State Parks Foundation and how to advocate for state parks visit www.calparks.org.



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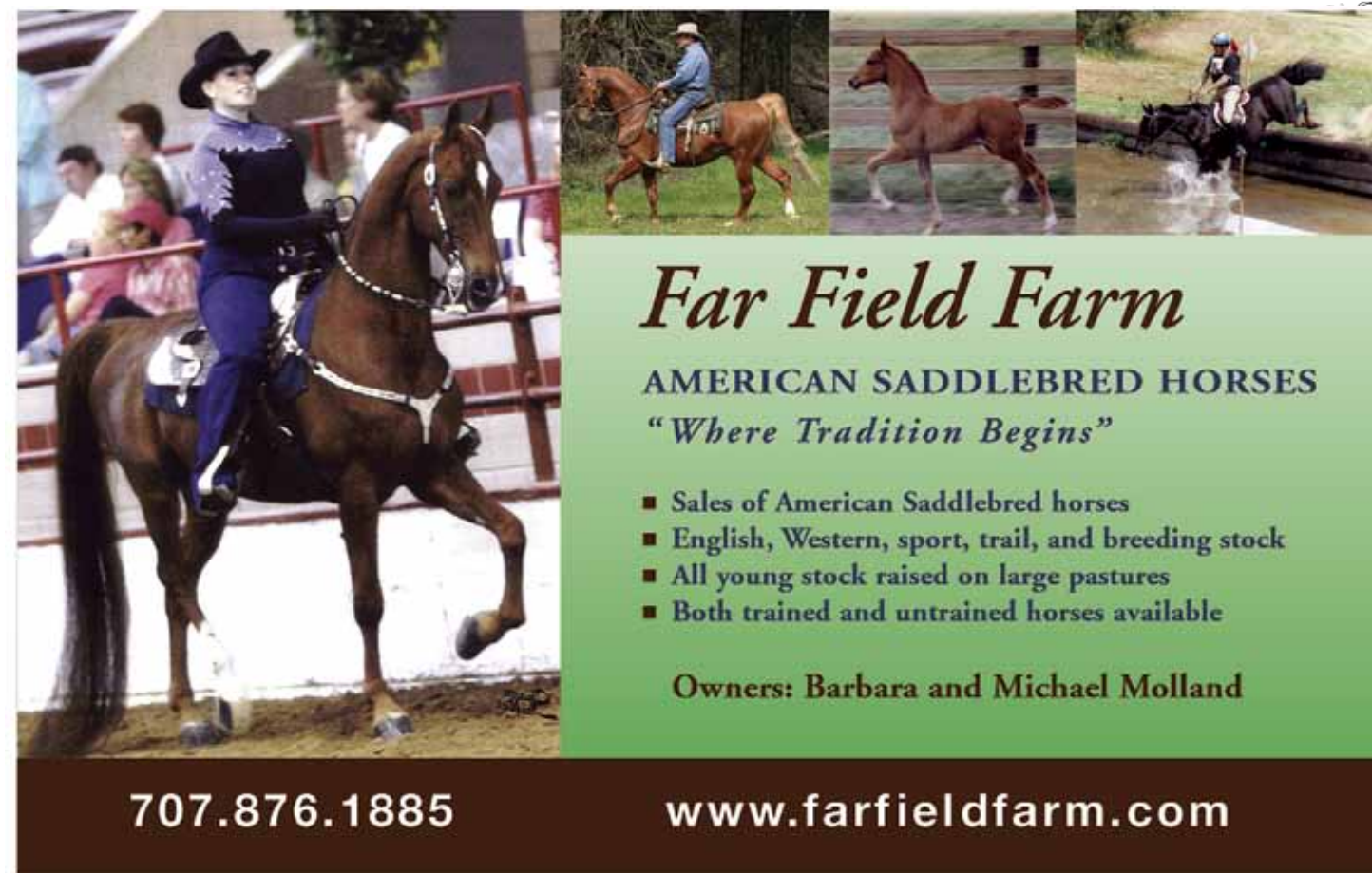
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