

Marin Horse Council

2012 SPRING EQUINOX NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 110

Marin Horse Council | 171 Bel Marin Keys Blvd. | Novato, CA 94949 | 415.259.5783 | www.MarinHorseCouncil.org



The MHC's 27th Annual Horse Course was a wonderful day of awards and presentations. Thanks to all who came and presented!



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From the Saddle

Feeling Down. Saddle Up. - *Author Unknown.* As spring approaches, the cool, rainy weather of winter is slowly giving way to warmer and sunnier days. This gives us more time for outdoor activities – more time to spend in the saddle. Be sure to mark your calendar for the MHC Spring Ride and Fundraiser from the Novato Horsemen's facility in Novato on May 19 (details to follow).

In January, the Board of the Marin Horse Council decided to create a "Hall of Fame" to honor equestrians who have made outstanding contributions to the Marin equestrian community. The Board also determined that Connie Berto should be the first person to be so honored. Connie was a founding member of the Marin Horse Council in 1981 and has served as a board member continuously for the last 20 years. Connie is recognized by the equestrian community for her long distance riding achievements and also as a dedicated trails advocate. The Hall of Fame award was presented to Connie on February 18 at the Marin Horse Council's annual "Horse Course" (see article within).

Your council continues its efforts to build an e-mail list of all members. This will be used to pass on to you timely information about what is happening in the equestrian community. If you would like to be included, contact Marina Eisenzimmer at eisenzimmer@hotmail.com. Also, contact Marina if you have a story idea or an opinion about something you have read in our journal. Tell us what you think.

We need you. If you are not already a member, please join us and, if possible, join a committee. If you know an equestrian who is not a member, bring them a membership form (printed inside the last page of the newsletter). Your membership is the horsepower that drives our organization and allows us to continue our good works for years to come. Happy Trails - Monte Kruger | *President, MHC*

SAVE THE DATE: MAY 19
SPRING RIDE FUNDRAISER & BBQ AT NOVATO HORSEMEN'S



STARTING MARCH 30TH

Samuel Taylor Park

Starting March 30th Samuel Taylor Park will be open seven days a week to everyone for day use, including equestrians. Finally a chance to enjoy your favorite trails!!! The charge for trucks and trailers will be \$8.00 provided they park in the designated horse trailer parking location.

- Rose Blackburn, Supervising State Park Ranger

Marin County Park Contact Numbers

MARIN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT:
Mike Swezy - 945-1190

MARIN COUNTY OPEN SPACE:
Matt Sagues--507-2686

PT REYES NATIONAL SEASHORE: 464-5137
SAMUEL TAYLOR STATE PARK: 488-9897



Poisonous Plants are Everywhere

Spring arrived early this year and so did the plants. Poisonous plants are everywhere--near the trails, around your barn, and along the roads. The three common ones in our area are poison hemlock, oleander and stinging nettles.

Poison Hemlock is a weed with fernlike leaves and clusters of small white flowers. These leaves and stems contain potent neurotoxins that affect the nervous system. Linda Novy reports that if you smell something like Fritos Corn Chips, you know you are near this invasive weed. Most horses will avoid eating this weed. However, if a horse did eat the poison hemlock, signs will appear within two hours. Tremors, uncoordination, diminished heart rate, and possibly colic. Death can occur from respiratory failure. Sadly, there is no treatment.

Oleander bushes are everywhere and are often part of road and freeway landscapes. Oleander has dark green spear-shaped

{continued on page 3}



Equipment operators Jason Samansky & Ben Reich demonstrate the amount of rutting and erosion that has taken place on Willis Evans Trail prior to repairs. Marin County Parks staff use an excavator to reduce the abandoned road width to a sustainable multi-use tread.

Open Space Willis Evans Trail

Marin County Parks recently completed work on the Willis Evans Trail, a half-mile long route through the redwood forest in the San Geronimo Valley. The trail, though a popular route for equestrians looking to access the San Geronimo Ridge, was also notorious for being muddy, rutted, and in generally poor condition due to its history as a logging road before it was acquired by the Open Space District. In particular, erosion from the trail was contributing large amounts of fine sediment into Willis Evans Creek during storms. This sediment is harmful to the threatened Coho salmon species as it can choke them or smother their eggs.

In 2009, the District received a grant from the California Department of Fish and Game's Fisheries Restoration Grant Program for \$208,000 to fix Willis Evans Trail and other problem fire roads in the Woodacre area. Last summer, District trail crews, under the supervision of geotechnical engineers, implemented those fixes along the trail's length. At several critical sites at which the creek crossed the trail, failing culverts were pulled and replaced with "armored fills", which are rock crossings that mimic the natural cobble bed of an active stream channel. The trail itself was also "storm-proofed" to allow water to drain from its surface without eroding and transporting sediment towards the stream. Users of the trail will notice that the surface has now been upgraded from a flat and rutted corridor into an undulating length of "rolling dips" which break up water flow into a more natural pattern.

The District greatly appreciates the cooperation and support they have received from the Marin Horse Council and Creekside Stables during this project. In order for the trail improvements to properly cure and set during the winter season, the District has closed the trail to equestrian and bike users to avoid any damage to the trail surface. The response and cooperation from the equestrian users has been impressive and is much appreciated!

Any questions about the project can be directed to Natural Resource Specialist Matt Sagues at msagues@marincounty.org or at 415-507-2686.

Laguna-Firelane Loop Trail (approx. two hours RT)

One of my favorite trails in Point Reyes is in the northern section of the park. You trailer your horse up Limantour road toward the Youth Hostel. You will park on your right at the Bayview lot. The Bayview parking lot is the entry point to many wonderful trails including Mt. Vision, Muddy Hollow and the Estero. For the purpose of this article, however, I will be focusing only on the Laguna-Firelane loop.

You carefully ride cross the road west on the Bayview trail and you will parallel the paved road for ten minutes. Soon after you will reach an intersection. Go right on the Laguna trail. At first you will have a gentle decline and be in the woods. The trail then becomes open space with lovely ocean views. On a clear day you can see over twenty miles and see the Farrallon Islands.

On your left you will see Hidden Valley trail which is a short dead-end trail. Continue on Laguna and go over a bridge and after fifteen minutes of a mild climb you will reach the Firelane trail.

Go left on Firelane. It is a narrow trail surrounded by pine trees. (If you want a longer ride there are many options. You can stay on Laguna to the Coast trail. You can go to Coast Camp, Arch Rock and the Bear Valley trail on weekdays or the youth hostel. From the top of Firelane at Sky trail to Coast Camp is 3.3 miles.)

Continue up Firelane until it ends at the Sky trail. If you have the time you can turn right on the Sky trail and go to Sky Camp twenty minutes away. To return to your starting point you would go left on the Sky trail. It declines and ends at a small parking area. Immediately across the lot heading north you will see the Bayview trail that you were on when you began. You will also be close to the paved road but you do not cross it.

From this point it is about a half-hour till you need to cross the paved Limantour road into the Bayview lot.

If you are up for a four-hour ride you can trailer to the Bear Valley Visitor Center, ride up Horse trail to Sky Trail. Once you reach the Sky Trail you will see Firelane on your left. Turn left on Firelane and head downhill until Laguna and then back up to Bayview.

- From *Riding the Point Reyes Equestrian trails*: written by horse and rider. Dennis Portnoy: www.createspace.com/3444575

Extra Gaits of the Horse

The Lateral Swoop: A sudden sideways leap with shoulder horizontal to the ground, leaving the rider hovering briefly over where the saddle used to be before descending to the ground. Can be precipitated by a tractor starting up outside the arena, snow sliding off the arena roof, a large rock that magically turns into a bear or a green plastic garbage bag.

The Omigod: Sudden backwards movement accompanied by loud, rolling snorts, ears stiffly forward and eyes bugging out, exhibited by a horse that has spotted a monster (invisible to the human eye) advancing on him from the front. Can be precipitated in visible form by riding up to a large blue tarp, which the wind then moves slightly.

The Shark Circling the Rowboat: Characteristic movement of lesson horse in ever-decreasing concentric circles around the instructor, until the horse is in the center standing on the instructor's left foot and further progress is impossible. (Old school horses tell new school horses how to do this.)

leaves and red or orange flowers. The wind pushes the flowers off and they will land in yards, trails, and your horse's backyard, if close to a road. All parts of the plant contain the toxins oleandron and nertin which can disrupt the beating of the heart. The leaves are also toxic when dried. Effects are seen several hours after eating and last over 24 hours. Signs include colic and difficulty breathing. Eating 30-40 leaves can be deadly to a horse. A horse can survive if treated early with activated charcoal and the use of anti-arrhythmic drugs.

Stinging Nettles are growing everywhere, especially on the trails at Bear Valley and Five Brooks in the Pt Reyes National Seashore. Rangers are always working the trails to remove them. The plant resembles a mint with its square stems, and the stems are covered with hairs containing formic acid. However, these plants could also be near your horse's grazing area or arena. Horses do not usually eat stinging nettles but if they walk through them, lay down, or roll over the plant, the plant hairs will cause a painful stinging sensation that may last 24 hours or more. Signs may suggest colic, but swollen hives like a rash is the culprit. Avoid nettles. Where trails are overgrown with nettles, do not try to ride through them. Horses that are particularly sensitive may panic and become uncontrollable.

Spring is a great time to ride. Enjoy all the beautiful flowers but stay away from the bad ones. - Marina Eisenzimmer



Oleander, photo from wikipedia



Poison Hemlock



Connie Berto, "The Trails Lady"

In January, the Board of the Marin Horse Council decided to create a "Hall of Fame" to honor equestrians who have made outstanding contributions to the Marin equestrian community. The Board also determined that Connie Berto should be the first person to be so honored. Connie was a founding member of the Marin Horse Council in 1981 and has served as a board member continuously for the last 20 years. The award was presented on February 18 at the Marin Horse Council's annual "Horse Course" at the Marin County Humane Society in Novato.

Connie is a very private person—but her energy, dedication and persistence have made her a "public figure." She is widely recognized in the equestrian world both for her achievements as a distance rider and as a trails advocate.

CONNIE THE DISTANCE RIDER

As a distance rider, Connie has accumulated 11,320 endurance miles (AERC) plus another 1000 competitive miles (NATRC). She has completed four 100 mile rides, including the famous Tevis Ride, and fourteen five-day, 250 mile rides. She has ridden 231 AERC rides and completed 225 of them—a 97.4% completion rate. Most remarkably, she achieved this completion record on just two horses, both Morgan geldings, in a sport dominated by Arabians. The American Morgan Horse Association designated her first endurance horse, GNR Kid Pecos ("Billy"), as its National Championship Endurance Horse in {continued on page 5}

Circle Oak Equine Holds 2nd Annual Equine Health Fair

Circle Oak Equine, a sports medicine and rehab facility in Petaluma, will hold its second annual Equine Health Fair on May 5th. This free, comprehensive event is packed with lectures, exhibits and hands-on demos and runs from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm. Last year's event was attended by over 300 horse owners.

This year the fair will feature multiple venues, both inside and out, with a dedicated lecture hall, working demos in the round pen and a vendor fair that will last all day. There will be ample room for viewing and participating.

Lecturers will include Claire Thunes of Summit Equine Nutrition, Dr. Jamie Textor of UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, a panel of regenerative medicine experts and others. Nicole Rombach will speak about biomechanics, Dr. Robert Steere will do a dental demo, focusing on the importance of sound dental practices to your horse's overall fitness. Joanna Robson will speak about thermography, there will be farriers, body workers, and a return of the popular lower leg anatomy and painted horse demos. More speakers and demos are still being scheduled.

Because the fair is being held on the same day as the 138th running of the Kentucky Derby, Circle Oak is making plans to live stream it starting at 2 pm, so not only won't you miss the race, you'll be able to watch it with a lot of horse types!

Circle Oak will be posting the schedule and other information on its Facebook page, so if you're a Facebook user go to <https://www.facebook.com/circleoakequinesportsmedicineandrehabilitation> and 'like' their page, and you'll get up to the minute details about all of the offerings. More information about Circle Oak can be found at www.circleoakequine.com.

Don't miss this information-packed, free event! - Sara Malone

FIRE! at Marin Stables

On 03-03-2012 at approximately 05:30 PM, Marin Stables had a fire incident in the main barn of the facility, which involved the upper apartment living quarters. The fire was quickly reported and there were no injuries to humans, horses or pets residing in the main barn or other structures. Due to the quick response of the Ross Valley Fire District and other agencies, the fire was rapidly contained and extinguished. While the origin of the fire is still under investigation, there are no indications that any activities at the barn contributed to it.

Marin Stables was built in 1937, the same year as the Golden Gate Bridge, and has been in continuous use ever since. It hosted its first outreach program to returning veterans of WWII and has been a community asset ever since.

The fire has hugely impacted the 2 live-in employees, who maintain the safety of the horses and visitors to the barn and the Water District on a daily basis. They have lost their personal possessions, one of them losing everything they own.

We at Marin Stables are very grateful for the community support we enjoy with neighbors, friends, the Fire Department and the Marin Municipal Water District. We wish to thank all the first responders, neighbors, and the fire fighters from the Ross Valley Fire District, the San Rafael Fire Department, the Marin County Fire District and the Marin Municipal Water District. They were all absolutely terrific!

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To help us rebuild the barn or for more information about our community outreach programs, please visit our website: www.marinstablesandtrails.org and make a donation or send your check to:

Marin Stables & Trails P.O. Box 314, Fairfax, Ca., 94978-0314
- Anne Glasscock, President | Marin Stables & Trails, Inc

MHC's 27th Annual Horse Course

Our 27th Horse Course, held February 18th, was an outstanding success!! Over 100 equestrians gave up a beautiful riding day to attend -- including some from the Sacramento area, East Bay and South Bay. A very full auditorium!

In addition to the full day's presenters, The Marin Sheriff's Posse, Back Country Horsemen, and the California Horsemen's Association were on hand to talk about their current projects. Kudos to the Redwood Empire Pony Club, and Novato Junior Horsemen for the delicious pastries, fruit and coffee.

The following is a summary of the presentations:

"THE SCOOP" ON EQUINE SUPPLEMENTS with Dr. Grant Miller, DVM
With his usual acumen and humor, Dr. Grant Miller, DVM, gave a multimillion dollar presentation about a multimillion dollar industry – supplements. Essentially, supplements are nutraceuticals – not quite drugs, but not really raw nutrients either. They fall into an in-between category. There are four main categories of Equine Nutraceuticals: joint supplements, hoof supplements, digestive aids, and electrolytes.

The product market of nutraceuticals is only loosely regulated (regardless of whether you are giving it to your horse or taking it yourself). The FDA only gets involved when a nutraceutical product is reported to be dangerous or when it has a label that competes with a prescription drug.

Of the four most common categories of nutraceuticals, the largest is joint supplements, and within this category, there are both injectable or oral, as well as a number of different products and combinations of some (i.e., glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate and glucosamine/chondroitin, some with MSM added too). The main differences between injectables and oral are that injectables are 100% bioavailable, meaning that all of the product gets into the bloodstream and the inner compartment of the body and you only have to inject a supplement once every 3 or 4 weeks on average. Injectables are proven to work and their effects are powerful. Injectables do require a prescription, and if you are squeamish about giving your horse a shot, they may require a veterinarian to give (although most barns have someone who knows how to give shots!) Oral joint supplements have to go through the GI tract to be absorbed, which results in loss of product. Oral joint supplements definitely should be given daily. They can be purchased over the counter but can get expensive, especially as the dosage needs to be increased with advanced arthritis. The important thing to remember about oral joint supplements is that they need to be closely monitored when being fed to horses with metabolic disorders. Grant outlined the most common joint supplement products, both oral and injectable, and told us about a new injectable on the market – Pentosan with glucosamine, which is an anti-inflammatory and in some instances can be ten times (10X) more effective than the currently used injectables.

Responding to a question from the audience about the need to continue a joint supplement forever once it is started led Grant to note that what we do know is that joint supplements work better as preventatives than as "fix its" for an existing problem. At age 8 or 9, a horse is starting to be middle-aged, *{continued on page 6}*

{continued from page 4} 1992, 1993 and 1996. Her second endurance horse, Eco Stardust ("Dusty"), won the same award from the Morgan Horse Association in 2004.

CONNIE THE TRAILS ADVOCATE

In her role as a trails advocate over the last 35 years, Connie has been "the watcher on the wall" for all of us. She has attended literally hundreds of meetings of the boards, commissions, committees and agencies that manage the state, federal and county lands on which we ride. More than anyone else, Connie has kept the equestrian community in Marin County informed about threats to equestrian access to trails, and represented the interests of all of us who ride those trails.

Connie first became interested in preserving horse trails in 1975 when bikers first proposed paving over horse trails to make a bike trail from Sleepy Hollow to the Pt. Reyes National Seashore. She became politically active, mobilized the equestrian community and defeated that proposal. In 1976 she was chosen to represent the equestrian community on newly formed subcommittee of the Marin County Parks & Open Space Commission known as the Trails Committee. Connie served on the Trails Committee from 1976 until 2003, when the Committee was eliminated by the Marin Supervisors.

Connie is enormously well-informed about trail issues. Her knowledge, together with her natural dignity, intelligence, and persistence, made her an extremely effective representative of the horse community. Every land manager in Northern California knows her. Her calls get returned. Her letters get read—and published. Her heroic and sustained efforts have played a large role in protecting equestrian access to the trails we ride on. All of us in the horse community are forever in her debt.

Board Meetings

Meet the Marin Horse Council Officers & Directors. Marin Horse Council Board Meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month, 7pm in the conference room upstairs at the Marin Sanitary Service, located at 535 Jacoby Street (off Anderson Drive) in San Rafael.



Dear Murray

Dear Murray,
I have learned that I am "for sale." I do not want to be for sale. How can I change my owner's mind? - Not for Sale

Dear NFS,
You may not be able to change being "for sale", but you can certainly keep people from buying you. Act like a spastic and forget all your training when somebody comes to try you out. Spook at everything. Stumble and walk in to walls. Canter sideways and act like you've never seen a crossrail before. Time yourself and see how fast you can make buyers leave. You get extra points if they leave skid marks.

- Dear Murray's answers come straight from the horse's mouth. Until iPads are built with bigger keyboard pads and shatterproof screens, Jody Werner assists him with the typing part.

and it is a good time to start joint supplements before the horse develops joint issues. Grant also commented that vitamins, minerals and trace elements are widely available in common food sources and supplement feeds, and different concentrations do different things but good hay has plenty in it. He did say that they shouldn't be given arbitrarily, but, with the exception of Devils' claw, horse tail, Boswellia and cat's claw (which can cause gastric ulcers,) only rarely have negative impacts. Another audience question made the point that joint supplements can be given or increased before a particularly long ride (endurance) or a competition.

Hoof supplements have good results but take time. If used, you should commit a minimum of three to six months to see results.

And finally, horses have both good and bad "bugs" in their intestines. Digestive aids (extracts of lactobacillus) try to force out bad bugs and allow good bugs to proliferate. Both Forco and Probios only work in the small intestine; Sport Horse also has yeast, which balances out the bad population in the colon. Electrolytes are extremely important to the physiologic function of the horse, and are not always adequate in feed. Giving electrolytes is a cheap colic insurance, but should not be squirted by tube into the mouth on long endurance rides, as that can cause gastric ulcers.

EQUINE METABOLIC SYNDROME (or killing your horse with kindness) with Jim Williams, DVM.

The term "equine metabolic syndrome (EMS)" is defined by the presence of 1) insulin resistance (IR), 2) obesity and/or regional adiposity (abnormal fat deposits), and 3) current or prior laminitis. Originally it was thought that hypothyroidism resulted in obesity and laminitis, we now understand that hypothyroidism is a result rather than the cause.

Horse owners feed their horses pretty well, lots of grain, expensive supplements, alfalfa hay, and lots of treats like carrots and apples. All of these well-intended actions can be killing your horse especially the "easy keepers." The most commonly affected breeds are: Mustangs, Morgans, pony breeds, Paso Finos and Norwegian Fjords, but all breeds can develop EMS. These breeds have evolved to survive in times of scarcity, storing fat when winter is approaching, surviving winter using those fat stores and then filling out again in the spring. Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds appear to be the least likely to develop EMS, but can do so under the right circumstances. Domesticated horses no longer experience times of scarcity and may easily be overfed and under exercised. EMS was first noted in pastured horses, too much fresh grass: high in sugar.

Fat deposits over the tail head, a cresty neck, fat deposits around the sheath (which may be mistaken for a swollen sheath) are all signs of obesity in the horse.

Because obesity and EMS compromises the blood flow to the lamina that hold the hoof wall to the coffin bone these horses are at risk for laminitis. The lamina do not get the nutritional support needed to maintain the bonds necessary for a healthy foot. If these horses are exercised too vigorously it can initiate a bout of laminitis. Care must be taken in a weight loss program, exercise is important but over exercise can be devastating.

Dietary management should include removing any feeds that are high in sugar. All concentrates should be removed from the diet as well as treats such as carrots and apples. Hay with a low non-structural carbohydrates of less than 12% should be fed at 1.5% of the horses ideal body weight. This is 15 pounds of hay per day for a 1000-pound horse. Grass hay is the diet of choice. Hay may be soaked in cold water for 30 to 60 minutes to remove simple sugars. *{continued on page 7}*

AT THE BARN

A vitamin/mineral supplement (I have used Target IR by Lloyd Pharmaceuticals) may be fed in a low carbohydrate supplement. If your horse has to be kept in a pasture a good quality muzzle can significantly reduce intake. If diet and exercise don't seem to be getting the desired results medical intervention with a thyroid supplement (Thyro-L, Lloyd Pharmaceuticals), is used to turn up the metabolism. A weight loss plan should be discussed with your veterinarian from whom these supplements are available.

Testing for insulin resistance is easily accomplished and the results can be available on site in less than a hour. Not all obese horses have EMS and rarely even thin horses may have EMS. If you think your horse may have EMS or be obese without any other signs, i.e. laminitis, you should contact your veterinarian before laminitis occurs, the results of which can be devastating.

HOOF PHYSIOLOGY LAMENESS & KEEPING YOUR HORSE SOUND with RT Goodrich, AFA Certified Journeyman Farrier

I want to take this opportunity to thank the Marin Horse Council for inviting me to speak at the recent Horse Course. If you were one of the many that attended you know I had much more to say than there was time for!

The art and science of farriery has been my passion since I was 16 years old and working for a large animal veterinarian in eastern Washington State. It was not until much later and after college that I was able to make the shoeing of horses my career.

I shared several case studies and examples of both quality and poor work. With no education or certification requirements in the United States as horse owners you are at a disadvantage when it comes to choosing proper hoof care and knowing what it should look like. It's important to be pro active. It IS your business! Everyone in your equestrian circle will have an opinion about your horse's feet. Find a shoer/trimmer you trust and ask questions he or she is the person that shoes/trims over 5000 hooves per year.

I hope your horses stay healthy and sound. Perhaps I'll see you again next year.

HELPING PEOPLE UNDERSTAND SADDLE FIT, David & Susan Hartje.

About 30 people attended the saddle fit demo that went from 2:15 to 3:45 in the paddock. The presenters were David and Susan Hartje. Their web site is saddleshatfit.com. Monte Kruger used her gelding Cabo as the demo horse. Cabo was chalked and had saddle trees placed on his back as examples of how saddles should not fit and where the proper fit would be. The visual chalk marks made it interesting, and Cabo was a gentleman. David and Susan are not affiliated with any saddle maker and they were all about educating people on properly fitting their horses.

NORTH COAST EQUINE PHYSICAL THERAPY

North Coast Equine Physical Therapy presenters, Cindy Krout, RVT, CET, and Wendy Albrecht, RPT, RVT, are in the business of healing horses with therapeutic ultrasound, lasers, and electrical currents. For 17 years, with Veterinary referral or approval, they have treated horses with diagnoses such as: bowed tendons, sore backs & necks, suspensory ligament sprains, stifle injuries, nerve damage, muscle strains, fractures and wounds. They electrified the audience with a video of a colt, injured during the birthing process by predators (possibly mountain lion) resulting in paralysis of the right front leg and multiple severe wounds. With their treatment, supervision and treatment from the veterinarian, and a brace made by an orthotist, Panache's recovery astounds all who see this work of love. While Panache retired, reserve champion region 7 three-day event, Cindy {continued on page 8}



Photos from the MHC's 27th Horse Course.
Top: Maggie Metzker, Equine Epiphany
Middle: RT Goodrich, Certified Journeyman
Bottom: Susan & David Harije, Saddles That Fit

AT THE BARN

Horse Shows & Events

DICKSON RANCH

Contact Grace Tolson 415 488 0454

- 5/5 Old Fashioned Playday
(rain date: May 12)
- 5/19 Schooling Dressage- Western
Riders Welcome
- 6/2 English/Western Schooling Show
- 7/14 English/Western Schooling Show
- 8/11 English/Western Schooling Show
- 9/8 Old Fashioned Playday
- 9/15 Schooling Dressage- Western
Riders Welcome

KILHAM FARM

Contact Kilhamfarm.com

6/27-7/1 Summer Pony Camp

MARIN COUNTY FAIR

Contact CBarboni@marincounty.org

6/30 Working Ranch Horse Class
7/1 Dressage, Equitation & Jumping

MIWOK STABLES

Contact liveryoffice@miwokstables.com

3/28 Multi-disciplines Horse Show

NOVATO HORSEMEN

6/3 CSHA Approved Gymkhana

Contact Judy Merrill
horses1sr@earthlink.net

6/16 CSHA Approved Gymkhana

Contact Judy Merrill
horses1sr@earthlink.net

LEARNING ABOUT YOURSELF WITH HORSES

4/13 Contact 707 237 5330
Transitioningfamilies@gmail.com

WILLOW TREE STABLES

Contact info@willowtreestables.com

3/17-18 Maggie Matzer Clinic

WOODBRIIDGE FARM

Contact Cynthia Hall - challins@aol.com

4/28 Schooling Show
5/26 Schooling Show
6/30 Schooling Show



North Coast Equine Physical Therapy's presentation: Panache's recovery astounds all who see this work of love.

and Wendy are still helping to heal other horses. If you missed this presentation be sure to see them at Circle Oak's health fair in May this year.

EQUINE EPIPHANY with Maggie Metzker

Learning the horse's perspective teaches the rider the why of its behavior. 12 years ago, Maggie Metzker had an awesome warmblood, but a trainer's nightmare. She travelled extensively, studying behavior science with a number of people – a blend of current knowledge from the global world of Equine Behavior Science, Equitation Science, traditional riding and non-traditional riding training – to develop a strategy to work with her own horse. The pivotal point was the realization that the horse needed its person to be something for it. Today she teaches how to accurately read horse behavior to prevent problems. Maggie's goal as a professional Horsemanship Coach is to transform horse/rider relationships.

She works with the sensibilities of BOTH the horse and the human, as a translator between the two species. The goal is to empower people to truly see their horse's behavior as communication, and to understand why the horse is behaving the way it is. "Once you really see it, you can never un-see it. Once you know it, you'll be empowered to keep the communication with your horse flowing. Most folks don't seek help until the horse has already shown extreme behaviors like bucking, rearing, refusing, bolting, cribbing, aggression, pushing, biting, or kicking. While these behaviors can be minimized through re-training, earlier intervention can help avoid them altogether. These extreme horse behaviors are the human equivalent of having a conversation by temper-tantrum. That tantrum isn't necessary if someone is listening and both parties are understood."

At the MHC Horse Course, Maggie gave three hands-on presentations, using at each one a different horse that she had never before met. She demonstrated at each clinic how to read a horse's level of confidence (or lack of it) by its behavior, how to approach the horse using that knowledge, and then how to convince it to work with its human. Ninety percent (90%) of a horse's physical communication is in its body language; the other ten percent (10%) is vocal sounds. The horse's primary means of communication is through intention. Horses read and use the energy of intention; they literally take us at our intention. Using that power of intention as a focus, we humans can read and respond appropriately to our horse's behavior.

Maggie Metzker's Equine Epiphany is experiential learning and training for hands-on horse owners who seek visionary, cutting-edge education in a lighthearted, supportive atmosphere. Maggie explains preventative horse behavior saying, "I coach horse people to expand what they already know, to sharpen their ability to read their horses' subtle behavior, and to respond in an appropriate way. The result is a horse that's a connected, responsive collaborator in any equestrian activity." Our horses teach us patience, empathy and partnership.

Maggie concluded her remarks saying, "When a horse and its people are not working out, I enjoy helping the owners see that the horse of their dreams is already with them, waiting to be brought to light."

Put Your Best Footing Forward

Footing is often the last element in constructing a ranch, which means it is facing the end of a budget. However, it is one of the very first components of a facility potential arena-riding boarders will look at, when deciding a place to house their beloved horses.

That is because footing is so important to the performance and soundness of horses, and to safety of both horse and rider. We want a surface that makes it easy for our horses to do their job. Proper footing builds a horse's confidence when it is even and consistent, with no threat of holes, dips, slippery base or uneven texture.

Scott Holmes of Absolute Innovations states that "Eighty percent of soundness issues are due to bad footing." Footing that is too hard increases the concussion or impact on the horse. Most impact shock affects the lower limbs, but can also cause soreness in shoulders. In racehorses, hard footing shows up in long bone fractures, but we see sporthorses develop arthritis (such as navicular syndrome) over time from repeated concussion on the hard surface. To avoid injury, the horse's toe needs to rotate forward in the footing, otherwise there is more extension of the fetlock, pastern, and coffin joints which puts tension on the distal check ligament and deep digital flexor tendon in their navicular area.

Deep footing is also a danger to the horse. When the surface gives way, the horse's muscles work harder for the same amount of propulsion, causing fatigue. It is similar to what we would experience running on the beach in dry sand. Injuries seen in deep footing are usually soft tissue related, such as bowed tendons, suspensory damage or pulled muscles.

Horses' muscles also need to be conditioned to work in the footing they will be in. For instance if you have hard footing at home, go to a show or clinic and your horse is in new deep unfamiliar footing, risk of injury is greater.

Proper footing helps horses push off the ground. Training can improve daily in good footing, whereas it is inhibited in improper footing because horses lose confidence when an uneven surface or slippery spots are underfoot. A rider's safety is also at risk when there is potential of a horse falling due to irregular footing.

Unfortunately, there is no universal answer to what is the perfect footing. Perfect footing should provide cushion to absorb concussion, provide traction and resistance, have minimal dust, not be abrasive on hooves, and be easy to maintain. That said, the footing is only as good as the base and sub-base it rests upon. For this article I will focus on the top footing which is loose, well drained, and typically 2-4 inches deep.

Materials used for footing fall into two categories: the primary footing material and additive materials. There are several types, but most primary footing is made up of sand. Sand is available in angular and uniform size. Most professionals will recommend angular sand as it compacts better, where the uniform or round sand (like beach sand) will be very loose. The angular particles create stability to the footing because the different size particles will nest together instead of rolling around. Quartz is a durable composition that will not break down as quickly. Having about 5-10% "fines" (silt and clay material) will provide some binding activity. Dirt is also commonly seen as a primary footing, however the downside is that it compacts very fast.

Additives such as rubber, natural fiber or synthetic textiles are used in many arenas to give a springy quality to the footing. These additives can be pricey but are well worth the investment, *{continued on page 10}*

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as they can reduce compaction of the sand or primary material and decrease concussion impact on the horse. "The synthetic footing in the dressage and hunter-jumper world has taken over other types of footing because it is generally viewed as easiest to maintain in most locales, and the most all-weather-proof in these areas", says veterinarian Dr. Carrie Schlachter of Circle Oak Equine. "Some of the most beautiful arenas I've seen have been concoctions of different types of dirt, rice hulls, sand, rubber; mishmashes of different particle sizes."

"No matter what type of footing you use," Dr. Carrie Schlachter continues, "the number one important thing is maintenance." Normal maintenance requires watering and dragging an arena. Water should be used to reduce dust levels and to put stability into loose footing (wet sand has more traction than dry sand). Watering should make an arena uniformly moist, so there are not slippery spots posing a safety risk to horse and rider. Traffic in arenas from horses, where a trainer stands, or lunging circles make the footing material uneven. The track along the rail usually sees the most wear, but depending on disciplines, areas around barrels, on center-line or around jumps may also very compacted because the lighter footing is thrown off the path. If horses make contact with the base, they can leave permanent ruts that are expensive to repair. To avoid this cost, dragging the arena with a drag or harrow appropriate to type and depth of footing should be done before traffic patterns are noticeable. This is at least once daily in high traffic arenas, less for personal arenas used infrequently. Average footing can be made better with the right tools and maintenance, and conversely, good footing can be ruined if not taken care of.

Every discipline has their own recipe for what type of footing works best for their purpose. All arena owners should be prepared to manage the footing over time, re-do or add materials, and listen to feedback from those riding on the surface. For performance success and sound horses, the best possible footing is an investment that will last years and protect the horses.

- Erin King Jackson

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