

# Marin Horse Council

2011 FALL EQUINOX NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 108

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

## From the Saddle

*She's Got a Ticket to Ride -The Beatles.* **You've** got a ticket to ride when you register for our Fall Fundraiser Trail Ride and BBQ on Saturday, October 8th from Willow Tree Stables in Novato. Riders will ride off between 9:30 and 10:00 AM. The gourmet BBQ will be served from 1:00 PM until 2:30 PM. Cost for the ride and BBQ is \$30 for adults (\$15 for kids under 16). Lunch for non-riding guests is \$15. For more information visit our website: [www.marinhorsecouncil.org](http://www.marinhorsecouncil.org)

The Marin Horse Council (MHC) was founded in 1981. Originally, the statement of purpose of the organization was "to promote and protect the general welfare of equestrians and equines in Marin County." The Marin Horse Council is looking out for all equestrians in Marin and the general welfare of horses and riders is of great concern to the council. However, open space issues and land usage are now most urgent. Vigilance is required to recognize potential threats to horsemen's continued use of traditional trails.

Recently, MHC wrote comment letters on Bill's Trail and on Marin County Open Space District's Road & Trail Management Plan. As a bit of background, the California Department of Parks & Recreation ("State Parks") recently released a Draft Environmental Impact Report on their proposal to open Bill's Trail in Samuel Taylor Park to mountain bikers. The Horse Council submitted comments opposing the project on safety and environmental grounds.

The Horse Council also submitted comments to Marin Parks & Open Space Department (recently renamed "Marin County Parks") on issues relating to the new Road & Trail Management Plan for the Open Space Preserves that the Department is developing. These letters can be viewed on our website: [www.marinhorsecouncil.org](http://www.marinhorsecouncil.org).

The Road and Trail Management Plan (RTMP) will direct future use and management of roads and trails on Marin County Parks 34 preserves. Public involvement is critical to the success of the RTMP/EIR process. A third public workshop on the RTMP will be held on Saturday, October 29, from 8:30 to 12:30, at a location to be determined.

MHC wrote letters supporting a grant application from Marin County Parks for the acquisition of the Morrison property on San Geronimo Ridge. This would help secure permanent public access to the Giacomini Open Space Preserve via the Manzanita Fire Road (see Delos Putz's article within).

Severe budget cuts will likely force the Department of Parks and Recreation to close or severely cut back services at many of California's State Parks. At Samuel P Taylor State Park, possible partnerships or alliances are being considered to keep the park open. MHC, along with other interested individuals and organizations, will have a voice in the process. A coalition of interested parties will meet over the coming months. We will keep you abreast of proceedings.

Your council continues its efforts to build an e-mail list of all members. This will be used to pass on to you information about what is happening in the equestrian community. If you would like to be included, contact Marina Eisenzimmer at [eisenzimmer@hotmail.com](mailto:eisenzimmer@hotmail.com).

We hope that if you are not already a member you will join MHC. A Membership Application form is just inside the last page. Your membership will allow us to reach out to a larger number of equestrians and represent our mutual concerns with greater numbers. It's a simple, inexpensive responsibility that ALL horse people can embrace.

Remember that some of our finest riding weather is in the Fall of the year. So get out on the land and enjoy this beautiful part of the world. Joel Bartlett | *President, MHC*

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### SAVE THE DATE

**Fall Fundraiser Ride  
October 8th at  
Willow Tree Stables**

**RSVP by October 5**

**415•897•8212**

## *Pack It Up Bring It Home*

The Superintendent of Marin Open Space has received numerous complaints from neighbors about equestrians who trailer to some of the Open Space trail heads and leave their horse poop on city streets. It may be a matter of time that manure removal will be required at many places. Perhaps some of the trail heads will be closed if we do not first take the initiative to change our habits. This could happen at Taylor Park and NPS. There are many people who do not appreciate horses as we do. Next time, pack it up, bring it home. - Vicki Englert

## *Summer of Wasps*

This summer was one of strange weather--days of spring, summer, fall, then back to spring. As a result, the wet foggy weather has created an outcrop of wasps and accidents for riders everywhere, but especially the Bear Valley and Five Brooks trail heads.

In early summer, a local riding instructor was headed down Meadow Trail, out of Bear Valley. Her usually calm horse was attacked by wasps, resulting in a bad accident. The horse fell on her, resulting in her pelvis being broken in two areas. She fell on the nest, adding more pain. She is now starting to walk on her own. Another equestrian was riding the same trail and broke her arms.

Hot spots at Five Brooks include Greenpicker and Texiera. Last month I rode down the first Greenpicker and made it down unhurt but my horse was bitten 10 times, and I have heard similar stories. The National Park Service to its credit has put up warning signs and has evacuated injured riders.

Let's hope the cool Fall and Winter lead to better riding! - Marina Eisenzimmer



A few of the riders ready to set out on the trail.

## Marin Stables & Trails Ride-A-Thon

We are so grateful to all our supporters of the Marin Stables & Trails Ride-A-Thon, as it was a great success. Opportunities to be part of this fundraiser were extended to riders, hikers, their sponsors, and folks who made a contribution. They say, "It takes a village," ours really stepped up!

Under a warming sun and soon-to-be blue skies, riders from Marin and Sonoma Counties trailered their horses in early. Participants were also able to rent horses from among the fine string at Five Brooks Stables. Hikers turned out as well. After the ride, all enjoyed a delicious barbecue lunch cooked by our renowned chef, Robert Weems. Many thanks, Robert, for another fabulous feast.

Riders raising at least \$50 in donations were given Marin Stables and Trails buckets filled with horse cookies.

After lunch, we all enjoyed the raffle, which consisted of some really great prizes. All participants received a free raffle ticket and were offered additional tickets for a donation. Joel Bartlett, President of Marin Horse Council, read out the winning numbers. The most coveted prize was a beautiful saddle pad won by Tracy McDermott. Tracy and Jim McDermott (Manager of Marin Stables) were celebrating their wedding anniversary, so it was decidedly their lucky day. A great time was had by all.

Marin Stables will be celebrating its 75th birthday in 2012. The stable's first community outreach was to World War II veterans. It is now home to: *Horses As Healers*, a program benefitting Marin residents battling cancer, founded by Cindy Cantril and in collaboration with Marin General Hospital; the Cedars Group, which is a program that supports Marin residents who are mentally challenged; the Boy and Girl Scouts of America, which Marin Stables & Trails assists in obtaining badges; and the Marin Adopt-A-Family program, which Marin Stables & Trails supports in a Christmas gift-giving effort each holiday season.

Other continuing MS&T efforts include working side by side with the Marin Municipal Water District during "Trail Days" projects, which involve the maintenance of the trails for all users, and the continued pursuit of funding for major barn construction to meet the requirements of our lease.

We rely on and are so appreciative of your continued financial support. Your support is key in our ongoing effort to maintain our community, our constituency, and the historic home of our beloved horses.

Happy Trails to All! - Marin Stables Ride Committee

## MCOSD Gets \$450,000 Grant to Purchase Key Property

On September 22, the California Coastal Conservancy approved a \$450,000 grant to the Marin County Open Space District to assist the District in purchasing the Morrison property (formerly the Zangpo property) on San Geronimo Ridge. In August, Marin Open Space obtained an option to purchase the Morrison property for \$650,000 and has one year to complete the acquisition. This 22-acre property adjoins the Giacomini Open Space Preserve above San Geronimo/Forest Knolls and straddles the Manzanita Fire Road, a primary route for public access to the Giacomini Preserve. This property is one of four buildable parcels that were not included when the County acquired some 1300 acres of the Sky Ranch subdivision (now the Giacomini Open Space) from Hendricks-Horne in 1995. This parcel has been appraised at \$650,000.

The County has pledged \$100,000 toward the acquisition. With the \$450,000 grant from the Coastal Conservancy now approved, this leaves a balance of \$100,000 which the County hopes can be raised from other interested organizations and individuals.

### Purchase will ensure public access to Manzanita Road

This acquisition is important to all users of the Giacomini Open Space because, without it, future public access to the Manzanita Fire Road is threatened. In 2004 the County, over strong opposition from the Marin Horse Council and the San Geronimo Valley Planning Group, entered into an agreement with the former owners (Zangpo) to allow them to close the Manzanita Fire Road to the public in exchange for their giving the County an easement for Marin Open Space vehicles and personnel to continue to cross their property. MCOSD did not have a recorded easement over this property. Rather than litigate whether MCOSD had a right to cross the property to access the Giacomini Preserve, the County agreed to allow the owner to close the Manzanita Fire Road to the public in exchange for an easement for MCOSD. However, the owner's right to close the Fire Road was conditioned on construction of a by-pass trail for public use. The by-pass was never built. Morrison acquired the property in foreclosure and has agreed to sell it to Marin Open Space. If this property remains in private ownership, it is likely that the Manzanita Fire Road will be closed to the public as soon as it is developed. If the County is able to complete this purchase, the property would be added to the Giacomini Preserve and permanent public access to the Manzanita Fire Road would be assured.

This acquisition is especially important to equestrians. The Manzanita Fire Road remains open to horses during the rainy season, when several other access routes to the Giacomini Preserve are closed. It would also allow Marin Open Space to better manage the Fire Road to decrease sedimentation into San Geronimo Creek, and would afford protection for several rare plant species found on the property.

- Delos Putz

## Commentary Period for the GGNRA

The Golden Gate National Rec. Area's Draft GMP/EIS is available for public review and comment. The official 60-day public review period will run through November 7, 2011.

More info about the plans for Marin, SF and San Mateo County can be found at this link: [www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/gmp\\_update.htm](http://www.nps.gov/goga/parkmgmt/gmp_update.htm)

See "Part 5: Draft GMP/EIS, Vol I, Part 5: Alts. for Park lands in Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo Counties". A Summary Comparison of Alternatives for the stables in the northern GGNRA can be found starting on volume page 280, or pdf page 96.



## Tamalpais Trail Riders Trail Test

On September 25, the Tamalpais Trail Riders held their 71st Annual Trails Test at the Novato Horsemen's arena. The event was well attended with brave horses and riders! Ari Golan, Chief Parks Ranger attended to support the Mounted Volunteer Patrol who were participating.



### *Halleck Creek Therapeutic Riding*

Nestled deep in a valley about two and a half miles just east of Nicasio Square, Halleck Creek Ranch is a historic 60-acre ranch surrounded by hundreds of acres of West Marin rolling hills, open meadows and the shade of conifer trees.

Halleck Creek Ranch is dedicated to improving the lives of disabled Bay Area youth and adults by providing low-cost individual and group therapeutic horseback riding programs. Approximately 90% of the riders are children and youth ages 3-21 who come to Halleck Creek Ranch with a wide range of physical, developmental, and sensory disabilities, such as Cerebral Palsy, Down syndrome, Autism, and Muscular Dystrophy. Most riders receive scholarship support and no rider is turned away due to lack of funds. The ranch relies on the donations of caring individuals and foundations. HCR is the only therapeutic riding facility in the Bay Area to offer trail riding—a truly life-changing experience for people with disabilities who otherwise might not be able to access nature in this way.

Through its unique physical movements, animal-human bonds, and adventurous nature, therapeutic riding helps disabled individuals gain the skills needed to live independent, healthier lives. Riding programs build the physical strength, coordination, self-confidence, and social skills needed to reduce stress, increase co-ordination and improve each rider's quality of life, allowing them to reach their full potential, both now and long into adulthood. Riding helps develop core muscles, improving the rider's strength and coordination to sit, stand, or walk independently. Riding also helps develop better hand strength, coordination, and self esteem. The ability to form a bond {continued on page 5}

## Buying the Right Horse the First Time

As a trainer and professional rider, I cannot tell you how many horses have come to me because the owner purchased a horse and then a few months (or weeks) into it realize they are in way over their head. The horse may be too young, have horrible manners, look pretty but the personality doesn't match, they wanted to "save" one, not work in a suitable manner for the intended purpose, etc. Lo and behold their trainer can get on the horse and everything is fine, but when it is time for the new owner to get on, the anxiety kicks in because of the anticipation of another unpleasant ride. It's just not a fun place to be.

While I have received many horses and riders in this predicament, I've also had experience in purchasing horses correctly suited for my clients' needs. The perfect match is so fun to see blossom and succeed! The following are some tips and guidelines to help potential buyers find the right horse the first time!

Enlist the help of a professional! I cannot stress this enough. By arming yourself beforehand with as much knowledge as you can, and with the aid of your knowledgeable horse person, you'll be able to sort through the horses you look at and determine which will be a good match, and which won't. The best is to use the trainer you plan to work with in the future because they will have a vested interest in your success as well. There is typically a commission fee to be expected in the professional's pursuit and purchase of a horse, but it is a small price to pay compared to the devastation of coming home with the wrong match!

Always get a second opinion. If you took the advice above of bringing a professional with you, that's wonderful, but I recommend a second opinion from a friend as well as at least second try yourself. My trainer, Christine Rivlin (USDF Gold Medalist and experienced horse buyer in the US and Europe), warns "It's easy to buy something on impulse and let emotions take over. You might make a decision you regret later". We've all fallen in love at first sight, but with an objective other opinion it will help to keep a clear head.

"Isn't a young horse a better investment than an older horse?" If you still dare use the word "investment" and "horse" in the same sentence, you probably haven't had enough years in the industry. Unless you are a well-experienced rider or trainer and can move a horse along the levels of training quickly, you may find yourself and your horse stuck at a certain level, where the horse's value does not increase nor does your riding. The best option for the amateur horse owner is to get a horse which you can learn on as well as having it in a training program to further its education. We all want to get on and go when we purchase a riding age horse, and often are over matched when buying a young horse.

When talking to a seller, ask tons of questions! Pick the current owner's brain (and previous owner's if possible). Ask about health, soundness, how the horse stands for farrier and veterinarian, temperament, exposure to various situations such as dogs, children, other horses, experience, show records, current condition, vices, does it load and trailer well, is it registered. Ask his or her best quality and worst quality or worst behavior. Discuss the horse's conformation for your intended purpose (this is also helpful with a professional and veterinarian), quality of gaits, size, and just about anything else you can think of.

Test the horse out in environments similar to where you will be riding. If your prospective horse lives in a place where there is only arena, and you want to trail ride, discuss the option of the seller hauling the horse to a place with trails (maybe go for a ride together). Another example, if you are looking for an eventer ready to show, make sure you can see the horse through water, over ditches, solid fences as well as in a dressage court and show jumping arena. {continued on page 5}

## AT THE BARN

Also see the horse in its home. Does he get along with neighboring horses? Is he an alpha personality? How does he or she react during feeding time? A horse that kicks the walls is prone to injury.

Finally: Always, always, always have a pre-purchase veterinary examination done on the horse you have decided meets all your other requirements. I highly recommend clients have any age horse radiographed (x-rays) as part of the exam. As well as a physical and soundness examination, a good veterinarian will also further discuss your intended purpose and the suitability of the horse to your needs.

Remember, no horse is perfect. They all have some shortcomings that are not always apparent to the prospective buyer. Occasionally a seller will allow a trial period away from their farm. If this is an option, expect to assume financial responsibility for a potential loss or injury, and a written agreement should address the concerns of both parties and be agreed upon. If a trial cannot be arranged, work out several visits to evaluate the horse over several days or weeks, and bring a video camera. Keep in mind not to let this time go for a long time as a courtesy to the seller, but a methodical approach will demonstrate your commitment as a serious buyer.

Still not sure you are ready to buy? Leasing a horse is a wonderful option to prepare you for the responsibility involved, without the expense of the purchase.

And remember to have fun!!!! - Erin King Jackson is head trainer of **All The Kings Horses and Rockin' Ponies** riding program located in Marin County.

## Looking Back: San Geronimo Valley Horse Shows

There aren't many of us who remember the San Geronimo Valley Horsemen's Association, which dates back to the late 1950s. Grace Dickson Tolson was a charter member, and remembers winning a trophy in gymkana on her horse Bo D on their first time out! Grace was a teenager!

The SGV Horsemen's Association had a lot of members, and built a giant arena on leased land where Creekside Stables is now. The large arena {continued on page 6}



The best show jumper around! Chuck Tolson at Dickson Ranch, 1979.

{continued from page 4} and interact comfortably with horses increases the rider's ability to trust, and in the long term improves personal relationships.

HCR's therapeutic riding program also supports the families of its riders. The ranch offers families the opportunity to socialize and network with one another in a welcoming environment, and gives families peace of mind as their children gain critical life skills, become more independent, and make new friendships. In addition, HCR's riding programs builds important connections between the disabled and non-disabled communities, giving volunteers the opportunity to interact with youth who have disabilities. Through their experiences, volunteers gain valuable perspective on their own abilities, develop stronger interpersonal and leadership skills, and discover the unique joy of helping others.

Halleck Creek Ranch pioneered therapeutic riding, "opening its doors to the great outdoors" in 1977, using the four strong legs of a horse. The organization began with the vision of Duane Irving and Joyce Goldfield who, through their work at the National Park Service Morgan Horse Ranch at Point Reyes National Seashore, realized that a gentle horse could easily carry children who use wheelchairs into outstanding natural areas, allowing them to experience the unique sense of freedom and mobility of horseback riding therapy.

Mr. Irving and Mrs. Goldfield created a special environment where disabled children could experience life without barriers for the day. They taught volunteers to treat the special riders as their friends and peers, creating true and lasting friendships. For the past 13 years, the Executive Director of Halleck Creek has been Julie Cassel, who recently retired. Barbara Hill is the new Executive Director, and can be reached at 415.662.2488 or [bhill@halleckcreekranch.org](mailto:bhill@halleckcreekranch.org).

Over 160 children with disabilities from Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, Solano, and Sonoma Counties are able to attend the weekly therapeutic riding program, including both Group Riding and Individual Riding Sessions. To volunteer, donate or find more information go to their website [www.halleckcreekranch.org](http://www.halleckcreekranch.org).

- Carol Whitmire

## *Woofs & Whinnies*

Equestrian applause go to Jim McDermott, Marin Stables, and Anni Black, Marin Humane Society Dog Trainer, whose course "Woofs and Whinnies" enables hikers who walk with their dogs to understand the horses they meet on the trail, and keep themselves, their dogs, the horse and its rider as safe as possible. Anni is assisted by Holly MacArthur, also a dog trainer and horse owner, and everyone is assisted by Dixie and Rudy and their owners, Marlia Berg and Ann Glasscock. Gerri Holcomb also assists the class.

The course, offered several times a year for about 8 dogs and their owners at a time, takes place at Marin Stables in Fairfax, and is limited to "dog friendly" dogs. Dogs and owners start the class with a 15 or 20 minute dog-bonding hike behind the stables, followed by an explanation by Anni of historic canine psychology: the dog sees, stalks, chases, kills, and eats – in other words, the dog is a predator. Jim then explained the horse's psychology: fright and flight – and demonstrated how a horse's vision affects his response to what he perceives to be a predator. To a horse, people, dogs, bicycles, -- anything moving – is a predator.

Anni and Holly stressed the importance of the owner being aware of when his dog is focusing on something he is going to chase, so that the owner can distract the dog before it breaks. Using a key word, like "follow" and moving in a different direction offers the dog the opportunity to reconnect with the owner and redirect its attention.

A "yes!" tells the dog that his owner is pleased with his response, and a treat follows. As soon as a hiker sees a horse coming, he should get his dog's attention and distract the dog (with food or a movement in another direction, if possible) or block the dog's vision. When the equestrian and hiker are passing, the hiker should always keep his body between the dog and the horse.

The class practiced horse/dog interactions using Dixie and Rudy, two wonderful horse/teachers from Jim's stables. The dogs learned to follow a horse, and to have the horse walk past it. Communication between dog owner and horse {continued on page 7}

{continued from page 5} was adjacent to a smaller arena, the two separated by a judge's stand. Shows there continued throughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s, and the area was used for Fourth of July Celebrations even into the '80s.

The 500+ acre Dickson Ranch across Railroad Avenue from the Horsemen's arena, had been the Woodacre Dairy. When Grace's Grandfather died, in the 1950s, the heirs sold off pieces of the ranch and the Dickson Mansion, leaving the 50 acre ranch we know today, with the many of the existing buildings. Grace boarded her first horse, owned by a San Anselmo man, in the mid 1950s, when she was only 12. By the early 1970s, she had about 30 horses boarding at Dickson Ranch, including those of 18 year old Marian Nelson, who gave riding lessons using the SGV Horsemen's arena because Dickson Ranch didn't have one. Marian became the first Dickson Ranch Trainer and enthusiastically encouraged Grace and her partner, Chuck Tolson, to build their own arena and hold horse shows. Even today, Grace and Chuck remain indebted to Marian for her early advice and work at Dickson.

Chuck hand dug post holes, used fallen tree trunks as poles and old cattle fences to enclose the early arenas. The first arena was the present "white arena", which had excellent drainage; after that, Chuck built a large arena where the round pens are now, but the area was too wet for decent arena footing. He then built a very large arena that encompassed the area of today's covered arena and "brown" arena. The drainage for such a large arena also didn't work well, so that area was separated into the two present arenas.

Grace and Chuck had no money for expensive ranch improvements, but they had energy, talent and creativity. Footing for the first arenas was the dirt on which they were built. Wanting better footing for the horses, but lacking the funds to bring in sand, again Marian Nelson headed Chuck and Grace in the right direction -- "Put on a show to raise the money!" Marian urged. So, in 1974, Grace called different stables and invited everyone to a show; and everyone came. There were no trainers bringing in their clients in those days, people just showed up. They were charged \$1.50 per class, and there were some 20 classes. Each class had about 40 riders. Grace got ribbons from Doc Lapkin, who also MC'd the show. The first ribbons were stamped "Dixon (oops!) Ranch 1974"! The food booth was picnic tables surrounding a barbecue. The show was hugely successful, and Grace and Chuck were able to buy the sand for the arenas from its proceeds.

After he heard Doc Lapkin MC that first show, shy Chuck Tolson, who had married Grace in 1975, decided he could do it himself, and thus was born the wonderful announcing/commentary that continues to the present day.

The first shows were All English and All Western on Saturday and Sunday of the same weekend. As noted above, there were 20 classes each, and they had a huge turnout. Marian then encouraged Grace to do Horse Trials, a one day event that included Dressage, Cross-Country, and Stadium jumping. There were 4 divisions of each event, and almost all participants did all events, which was great fun for the riders but a judging nightmare! Dickson Ranch held 4 Horse Trials each year, and people came from as far away as Reno.

When 3-day events became very popular and other venues began have 3 day shows, Dickson gradually stopped the Horse Trials, and now hasn't done them for the past 8 or 10 years, but still do two Dressage Schooling Shows each year. Playdays have also decreased from 4 to 2 recently, as the horse world shifted from fun days to more point oriented events. And as showing interest shifted, Dickson dropped the All Western shows and combined them with the English Show. Today, Dickson has 4 English/Western shows a year, and 2 playdays, and 2 Dressage Schooling Shows, the last reminder of the glorious days of the San Geronimo Valley Horsemen's Association. - Carol Whitmire



Grant Miller, DVM, working on a horse's teeth.

## Dental Work and Your Horse: Getting to the Point

As horse owners endure the slings and arrows of a troubled economy, many of them ask if they really need to have their horse's teeth floated. With fuel and hay prices rising beyond what any of us thought possible, veterinarians and lay dentists truly sympathize with client concerns. However, dentistry, like foot care should be performed in order for the horse to maintain weight, to perform well, and to be comfortable. The following is a series of commonly asked questions regarding dentistry that may assist horse owners in their decision making process when they are planning their management approach for their horses.

### Why does my horse need its teeth floated?

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

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

Hand floating is a more traditional method of filing teeth in which a dental rasp is reciprocated across the tooth edges to reduce points. Powerfloating represents an advancement in this practice by incorporating motorized equipment into the filing process. There are several types of powerfloats on the market, all of which usually cut down on the time needed to complete a dental procedure and often times also result in less collateral trauma to the mouth. In addition, powerfloating gives the dentist or veterinarian the ability to change the occlusal surface (a.k.a. chewing surface) of the teeth. For that reason, powerfloating makes the correction of dental malocclusions such as wave mouth, caudal ramps, step defects, and overgrown incisors more easily possible.

### Is my horse awake during floating?

Yes. Horses generally receive an intravenous sedative before floating which makes them tired and groggy, but allows them to remain awake during the procedure. Sedatives also provide pain control (also known as analgesia) to aid them with any minor discomfort that may occur during the procedure. Horses stand throughout the procedure and their heads and mouth are supported by special equipment that the dentist or veterinarian provide. In many cases, your horse will

*{continued on page 8}*

*{continued from page 6}* rider is critical.

The rider appreciates a person with a dog calling out, such as "Hi! Shall I pass you or is it better for you to pass me?" Dog owners should remember that their calm attitude will key the dog to its behavior. The owner should remember to breathe and have calm, confident body language!

### As an equestrian, remember:

Young horses, and horses not familiar with multi-use trails, are more likely to perceive a dog as a threat. A horse who has had a bad experience with a dog or who has not been around many dogs may be fearful of any dog, regardless of how friendly and calm the dog is. If an unfamiliar dog approaches in an overly exuberant manner, any horse may see this as a potential threat. Be calm but prepared. Just as the dog will look to its owner for behavior cues, the horse will look to its rider.

County Ordinances require dogs to be on leash. The owner should allow his dog to admire the horse from afar, especially far from the horse's rear end. Remember that horses cannot see directly in front or behind themselves.

You may want to pick up your small dog when you meet a horse on the trail. However, to a horse, you may appear to be a two-headed monster, especially if your dog is barking. It may be better to let your dog back down, keep it close to you, and let it bark from the ground. If possible move away from the horse to a distance where your dog can stop barking. Try asking the rider what the best thing to do is.

Dog owners should avoid throwing toys and sticks around horses, and particularly on trails. Fast moving objects, and dogs chasing them, can startle a horse.

We equestrians have a lot to thank Jim McDermott, his horses, and Anni Black and Holly MacArthur for!

Future workshops will be announced.

- Carol Whitmire



## Congrats!

Congratulations to MHC member Pippa Murray of Sausalito who finished fourth of 20 in the 3-Day Eventing Sr. Training Amateur division of the Woodside Horse Trials in August. She enjoys eventing because she can work on all three disciplines: dressage, stadium jumping, and cross country on her horse Bella. Pippa rides out of Hugh White's barn at Sonoma Horse Park in Petaluma.



J.L. Werner. [www.cafepress.com/JLWdesigns](http://www.cafepress.com/JLWdesigns)

{continued from page 7} not even have to leave your property since dentistry is commonly performed on a mobile basis.

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

In the vast majority of cases, horses are sedated only for about 45 minutes and the entire dentistry procedure is completed within that time period. Most horses go back to eating right away and are back under saddle the next day. In rare instances horses develop jaw soreness (usually emanating from the temporomandibular or TMJ joint.) For those horses, veterinarians may administer an anti-inflammatory or provide acupuncture to the horse. Most of these horses only show jaw soreness for a couple of days during which time they may require moistened feed fed at chest level or higher to avoid discomfort.

### Do older horses still require dentistry?

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

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

Again, every horse is different in their dental needs depending on what they have in the way of dental problems. In general, veterinarians recommend that horses at least have their mouth checked on an annual basis. Most horses will require floating on an annual basis, but exceptions can occur in either direction.

### How much does floating cost?

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

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

Floating can either be performed by veterinarians or lay dentists. Many veterinarians have professional dentistry training and certification and are able to sedate your horse and perform dentistry without assistance. In the case of lay dentists, some have official dental training and certification and some do not. It is important to inquire about dental training when you are considering either a veterinarian or a lay dentist to work on your horse's teeth. Also, a lay dentist is not able to sedate a horse, diagnose any condition in your horse's mouth, or extract teeth. California State law prohibits intravenous injection or tooth extraction unless a person is either a licensed veterinarian or a registered veterinary technician being supervised by a veterinarian. Only a licensed veterinarian can make a diagnosis. Therefore, should you choose to use a lay dentist, it is important to inquire about which veterinarian they will be using to accompany them.

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

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

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

## AT THE BARN



This well-loved Medicine Horse Ranch retiree, Nomad - a Morgan gelding, lived into his later 30's. Photo: Jennifer Sauer

### Thinking About Retirement?

Your horse has worked his heart out for you and is now ready for retirement, but are you? Often the decision to retire your horse is an obvious one. An injury or personal turn of events may force you to stop riding and begin to consider retirement options. Sometimes the decision isn't as clear.

Many healthy, happy horses are now living much longer than they use to, some well into their 30's and on rare occasion their 40's. These statistics represent almost twice the expected normal life span. With so many horses living well beyond riding years, how do you provide for your senior companion?

If you have a horse and retirement time has arrived, there are many options and a number of misconceptions to consider. The most common misconception is that a senior horse requires less care. The reality is that an aged horse may have more requirements to maintain good health and comfort. Stacy Johnson has spent the last 15 years focusing on the retired equine and she stresses the importance of owners looking down the road realistically. She says that, "Having personally had a mare live to be 46 years old, I know that owners need to understand that most horses, cared for properly, can live a very long time. It is important to budget for their care, and the likelihood that they may still require some costly attention as they age normally".

According to Dr. Jim Williams DMV, there are three major considerations in a senior horse health care program. " 1) Make sure the horses mouth is as comfortable as possible. Even if teeth have expired or have had to be extracted due to gingival disease the horse can have a good quality of life with minimal discomfort. Gingivitis and/or loose teeth can cause poor weight gain and even weight loss. 2) If your horse is arthritic, injectable anti-arthritic drugs can help improve mobility. 3) Although not all retired horses need to be shod, proper hoof care such as trimming and shoeing when necessary are essential." Dr. Williams also encourages routine check-ups with your veterinarian and immediate calls if there is a sudden change in the horses behavior or physical condition.

Many people (including myself) feel that pasture life and a return to freedom is the kindest gift we can offer a retired horse. While this may be true for many horses, it is not a lifestyle suitable for all. Senior horses can fall to the bottom of the pecking order and may therefore not be able to fight for their food. This could result in detrimental weight loss. Older horses also often require a longer period of time to eat their feed and if so it is important to keep younger horses away from the senior food supply. And, a show horse that has lived in a box stall his entire life might find transition to pasture too drastic and stressful. If they do not adjust quickly to the new and strange environment with a new herd of horses they may also experience additional stress and weight loss during an extended period of adjustment.

{continued on page 10}



This barn at Miwok Stables was built in the 1920s, and used for stable and auto storage.

### Barn Raising

The small red barn at Miwok Stables is undergoing a long needed face-lift. In a separate agreement between the NPS and CSU Chico, College of Engineering, Concrete Industry Management Program, the barn is being rehabilitated from the ground up. Future uses of the building will be compatible with the historic stable and auto storage use, and follow the recommendations of a new Equestrian Plan for the GGNRA (which is currently in development).

Thank you NPS and Chico State!

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*{continued from page 9}* Stacy Johnson is well versed in the requirements for a period of adjustment and she advises that "It is of great importance to introduce the new horse gradually and allow for what I call the "meet and greet to be done over a common fence line -- one sturdy enough to withstand a lot of noisy and sometimes pushy 'hellos' and 'who are yous' with your current herd. New horses should have a space of their own to acclimate to their new environment, future roommates, and of course their new caregiver. Once horses can share a common fence without any squealing, striking, or carrying on, the new horse can usually slip into the herd without any fear. It also greatly reduces the possibility of any "formal" initiation from the current Alpha equine in the already established group."

And, lets not overlook the fact that all pastures are not created equal and may vary drastically in the quality of their forage. Even with excellent forage, horses without back molars cannot process tall grasses and so will require supplemental feeding all year long. And during the spring when the grasses are rich in protein, horses need to be monitored closely to prevent founder and should often only be allowed to graze for a few hours a day.

These days, there are a number of non-profits as well as for profit retirement facilities that cater to senior horses and their special needs. If you consider a specialized horse retirement facility, make sure you investigate it fully. Take a close look at the lay of the land, drainage, quality of feed and storage, knowledge of caretakers, emergency care, shelters, adequate room for your horse to roam and visiting hours. Don't put your senior horse in a place where they will be confined to a stall. Older horses need to be able to move to maintain muscle tone and flexibly and keep joints limber. Arthritis will be much worse for a senior horse living in a box stall.

Before any such move it is wise to consult with a team of equine professionals -- including your veterinarian, farrier, and trainer -- for assessments regarding what kind of retirement situation will be best for your horse. Your horse's soundness, dental condition, and previous environment all need to be considered. A good retirement facility will evaluate each new resident carefully and design a customized health care plan with each horse's best interest in mind.

Therapeutic Riding programs may be another option for retirement if your horse can still be ridden and has a gentle disposition. Equine Guided Education programs often need horses that can work in a variety of situations such as youth-at-risk, corporate team building, and leadership development. If your horse is accepted by this kind of specialty program you can be sure the horse will lead a life of value, being well cared for and loved.

If a retirement facility or a therapeutic riding program aren't right for your horse don't give up. There are other possibilities. You might consider putting the word out that you have a retirement horse available as a companion horse. If someone only has one horse in their backyard they might welcome a buddy to provide company. And, there are also a number of non-profit horse rescue organizations offering adoptions and sponsorships to cover the costs of care and feeding. Normally these organizations cater to rescue horses, but if you cannot maintain your horse, you might explore this option.

Retiring your horse doesn't mean having to sell or put your beloved equine partner to sleep. With solid, realistic planning and competent senior horse care, your cherished companion can continue to thrive in a safe, healthy retirement situation. And you can rest in the knowledge that you have given your best efforts to your old friend who deserves to live out the last years with comfort and dignity.

- Alyssa Aubrey, CECE, is the Founder and Program Director at Medicine Horse Ranch, Tomales CA, a retirement facility for senior horses. She teaches Equine Guided Learning Programs year round, including Equine Guided Certification for those incorporating horses into professional offerings. For more information please visit: [www.medicinehoseranch.org](http://www.medicinehoseranch.org)

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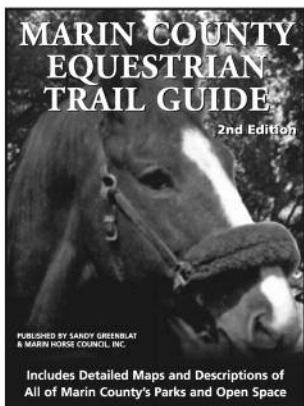
Updated April, 2009

This Equestrian Trail Guide covers all trails within approximately 200,000 acres located in the Point Reyes National Seashore, the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) including the Marin Headlands, various California State Parks, the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed and lands of the Marin County Open Space District. It contains all the trail updates available as of the end of April, 2009.

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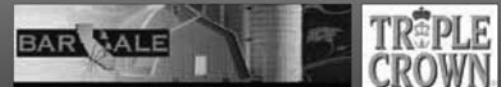
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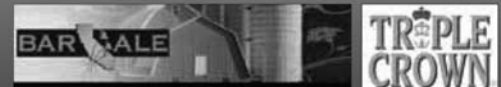
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