
The Mane Bit

www.harrogatehills.com

905-473-3847

Fall 2008

WHAT IS IT ABOUT HORSES?



A February 2000 survey (Equine Industry York Region and the GTA Statistical Report) discovered that in York Region alone there are more than 300,000 riders with almost 100,000 of those coming from outside of York Region. With the silver medal success of the Canadian Show Jumping Team in the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the interest in horses is bound to continue its exponential growth.

As a riding instructor for over 25 years I have watched hundreds of small children turn into confident, well rounded teenagers. So what is it about horses? This is a question that I am asked quite regularly. Teachers and parents notice a difference in their child/student, narrow down the cause and then contact us.

I think I can explain it by summing up what the horse demands of the rider.

First, there is the bonus of fitness that comes with riding the horse. In 2000 the German Olympic committee tested the fitness of all of their athletes. The two Olympic teams that ranked the fittest were the German Soccer Club and the German

Dressage Team. This helps explain why the Canadian government has included horse back riding in the list of sports that warrant a \$500.00 tax credit.

Secondly, self control and discipline is required if for no other reason than to keep the rider safe. The horse has little tolerance for erratic, uncontrolled behaviour and so the new horseman begins to practice this calm self-control out of necessity. As the horse responds positively, this behaviour is reinforced. Not only our actions on the ground, but also our behaviour on the horse needs to be calibrated and controlled. Posture as well as mental focus improves as the rider struggles to learn the horse's language and communicate his requests. Besides focus, horses definitely require that their rider is determined. The experienced school horse especially senses an opening and will always try to find ways to make the work easier for himself. The new rider learns to struggle through a battle of the wills and, through patience and determination, learns to convince the horse to oblige. The horse, perhaps more than any other animal, holds to his habits and that consistency in behaviour encourages consistency in the rider as well.

Thirdly, although large and strong, the horse is timid by nature. It requires empathy on the part of the new horseman to understand things from the horse's perspective. Things that seem non-threatening to us can cause great fear in the horse and, quite early on, the new rider finds himself in the position of having to console and encourage their large, apprehensive colleague. This empathy is rewarded by the gift of trust that the calmly handled, kindly treated horse bestows on his trainer.

Finally, the new rider also comes quickly to the realization that the domesticated horse totally relies on us for his basic needs. Since the rider began the process because of his fondness for horses, seeing to their care feels very little like work and is usually performed with great enthusiasm. The work and care that the rider's new found friend requires is quite substantive and encourages the development of a good work ethic. Perhaps more importantly, the reflex to put another's need ahead of their own is enhanced by working with the horses.

As riders learn to ride they continue to develop self-discipline, fine tune their empathy and develop a strong work ethic. Happily, over time, these habits seem to seep into the rest of their lives as well. I guarantee you could ask any of our Olympic Equestrians and they would relate their fond memories of a youth spent with horses. Winston Churchill once noted "there is something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man." It would appear that Sir Winston really was on to something.



QUIZZ #1

1. Do horses get lost?
2. How long do horses live for?
3. How do you tell how old a horse is?
4. Do horses have feathers?
5. How much time do horses spend eating each day?

(Answers on page 8)

NEW HORSES

Asia and Pebbles arrived at the end of June – just in time for camp! They are both used in the school and soon settled into the Harrogate way of life.



Asia is an experienced, mature, bay mare, about 15 hh. Her show name is Rated R.



Pebbles wins all the points for being "cute" (unfortunately he does not seem to be very photogenic!). He is a 23 year old chestnut pony and stands about 12 hh but is unaware of his diminutive stature.



Dallas is owned and ridden by Anne Sprineis but is also used in the school. He is a much loved palomino gelding.



Savannah is one big horse! She is a six year old Clydesdale/Paint mare standing 17 hh. She is gentle and easy going and looks very pretty out in the field – she also makes big Cheyanne look small and slim!



Intrepid (Trep to his friends) is our newest addition – his owner, Sol Freid, learned to ride at Harrogate Hills as a very small boy. He has grown considerably and is now at university in Missouri. Sol discovered that his studies have to come before his horse, so Intrepid is visiting Harrogate Hills while Sol completes his studies. Intrepid will do his best to teach us the finer points of dressage as he has many of the moves mastered. He is also a big boy, standing an impressive 18 hh. Does anyone have an extra high mounting block?

HORSE SHOWS

On Sunday, July 13th the Harrogate Hills Junior and Senior Show Teams competed at Blue Star. Despite the fact that both teams were in the ring at the same time, but in different locations, they did very well (and Pat got her exercise running from one ring to another!).

The Senior Team consisted of Kandice Coates on Grandpa – congratulations to Kandice and Grandpa who were Reserve Champions, Geoff Bishop on Tobias, and Erica Clayton on Radley.

The Junior Team – who were all competing off site for the first time – were Nicole Pelrine on Scout, Jenn Hooper on Lily, Taylor Eakin on Wapiti and Taylor Cameron on Little Cheyanne.

Riders and horses all did a great job, appeared to enjoy themselves and were a credit to Harrogate Hills – we are very proud of you all!

On Sunday, August 10th there was a show at Pause Awhile. Rebecca Schweinberger rode Mandy and is invited back to the “Tournament of Champions” in December. Geoff Bishop also did very well on Grandpa.

Congratulations to all of you.



DOES THE SADDLE FIT THE HORSE?



How do you know that your horse is comfortable? Are all saddles created equal? What can be done to make the saddle fit better? Why does it matter?

As riders we are all quick to complain if the saddle is not comfortable for us – and some are very uncomfortable! But an uncomfortable saddle does not usually affect us for long after we have stopped riding. On the other hand can you imagine walking, trotting, cantering and even jumping with the weight of a person on your back sitting on a badly fitting saddle? It has been compared to a person wearing a badly fitting pair of shoes,

Many horses will struggle on under an ill-fitting saddle and we may not notice the small signals they give us that something is wrong. They might shake or nod their head, prefer going to the left (or right), appear to be obstinate and refuse to do what we want and sometimes they will “take off” and buck in an attempt to get away from the pain. It is frighteningly easy to attribute these different behaviours to a flaw in the horse’s character.

Mandy is a great horse who, along with Rebecca Schweinburger, was Reserve Champion in her class at Pause Awhile on August 10th. However, Mandy has not been used very much in the school over the past year as she has seemed “off” and was not “going well”. After acupuncture treatment and chiropractic adjustments she would seem better, but still, after a few rides, the same old problems would surface. After much trial and error the perfect saddle has been found for Mandy and she has found her natural championship form.

Newsletter

A horse can develop different muscles and change the shape of his back due to different types of work or no work at all. And so every year we schedule a visit from Joe Boustead from Canterbury Outpost Saddlery who checks each horse and saddle to make sure that it is still a good match. The following is an interview with Joe:

MB: How did you get started in this business – what inspired you to start?

Joe: I did my saddle fit training with a US based saddle fitter and was inspired by my love of horses.

MB: How long have you been in the business?

Joe: Over 10 years now!

MB: How can you tell a bad fit?

Joe: Some horses will tell you immediately by pinning their ears or being “girthy” while you are tacking up. Some will refuse to move forward while you are riding. Some are a little more stoic, and you may end up with the horse having a sore back, usually towards the rear of the saddle. In some cases, white spots will appear in the hair, which is caused by the rubbing of an ill fitting saddle. Something to watch out for is movement in the saddle while you are riding, such as slipping side to side or rocking back and forth. Also a change in your position. If you are having a hard time keeping your shoulder/hip/heel position, it might not be you!

MB: How can you improve a bad fit?

Joe: It depends on the type of saddle. If the saddle is foam stuffed you will have to purchase corrective pads. If the saddle is wool stuffed, then it is preferable to call out a qualified saddle fitter and have the saddle fitted to the horse.

MB: How do you know whether you need a cashel or pad?

Joe: If the balance point in the saddle is off, or, as mentioned before, if you are having problems keeping your position while riding. If you are being pitched forward a front rise pad is recommended. If you are being pitched back, then a rear rise pad. But again, if your saddle is wool stuffed it is highly recommended to have it adjusted to fit.

MB: Any comments on riders who use their own saddle (which presumably fits their rear end) on all horses they ride?

Joe: If their mounts are similar in body structure, for example if you ride mostly draft crosses, then you might be OK. But if you ride several different types of horses, you could be doing damage to some of their backs. You might need corrective pads for certain horses to ensure their comfort level.

MB: Do you find people are taking this more seriously now?

Joe: Very much so. 30 years ago no one even thought of saddle fitting. The trend started in Europe and thankfully has now reached here!

MB: Any suggestions on how to improve education?

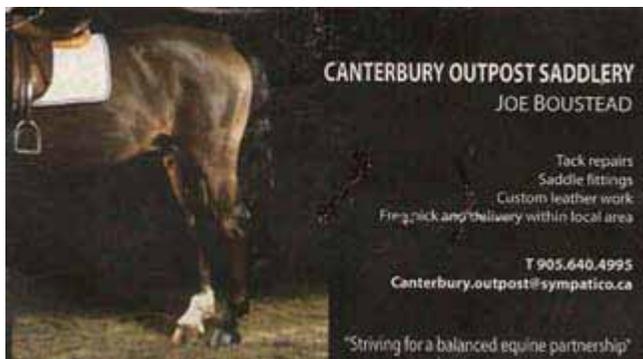
Joe: Basically attend as many clinics as you can find and do research in the internet, or in horse magazines. There are lots of articles out there regarding this topic. Also get a qualified saddle fitter in to teach you what to look for when buying a saddle or making sure yours fits correctly.

MB: Is there any sort of apprentice program or college course?

Joe: As far as I know there is one Ontario based Saddlery that offers an apprenticeship program.

MB: What would you advise someone thinking of becoming a saddle fitter?

Joe: Get as much training as possible. Spend time with established Saddle Fitters if possible. And just remember it takes a while to build a client base!! But it's definitely worth it.



BIJOU AND MURDOCH

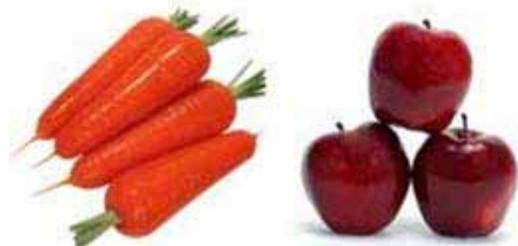


Bijou, on the left, and Murdoch, on the right, very sadly passed away on June 25th.

Bijou was put down due to complications from a severe case of colic. She was 30 years old and patiently taught many new riders during her career at Harrogate. She was owned by the Benson family who used to live next door to the farm before they moved to Calgary a few years ago.

Murdoch had Navicular Disease which could not be treated. It had become difficult to keep him pain free. He was certainly a good looking horse with an abundance of character.

They are both greatly missed.



SUMMER CAMP – NEVER TO BE FORGOTTEN



"Harrogate Hills is a lovely Barn on Mcowen road and the owner of the Barn is pat Gillis she owns 38 horses. My favourite horse is Atticus."

Amy Kennedy, age 8

"I love riding Babe and for these two weeks I get to be with her every day in camp."

Jessica, age 14

"In camp I rode Radley. He was so good. I loved his canter and his jump. I love Radley."

Nicole Pelrine, age 13

"During the first session I rode Nemo. What I love about Nemo is that he is a green horse and when I ride him I learn so much. Which makes it an amazing learning experience for me."

Jenn, age 15

"What I like about camp is to ride. My fafit horse is willie."

Kennedy Nuttall, age 9

Newsletter

"My name is Miranda and I have ridden in this summer camp for 10 years. My favourite part about it is that every year I learn something new. Camp is never boring and every day is different. We are challenged to improve our riding ability, while still having fun. I look forward to camp each summer."

Miranda DuBois, age 16

"My name is Sydney. My favourite horse is Atticus Finch. I have ridden him since last summer camp. This year I rode Atticus for the first day. Then I rode Cash and I really really really wanted to keep riding him but then on Monday I switched to Savannah, one of the new horses. Camp is really fun."

Sydney Neilly, age 12

"This week at camp I rode a horse named Cheyanne. She is my favourite horse. And the reason why she is my favourite is because of her personality and her colour white and brown."

Amanda Fine, age 11

QUIZZ #2

1. What is a snip?
2. What is meant by a 'green' horse?
3. What is the height measurement used for horses?
4. Why do you groom a horse?
5. Can you have a bridle without a bit?

(Answers on page 8)



Are Facial hair whorls clues to sidedness?

Irish researchers say that a horse's facial hair may indicate whether they prefer to go to the left or to the right. After analyzing the lateral preferences of 219 horses under saddle, and then examining each animal's facial hair whorls they found that 95 horses with a right-side preference had clockwise whorls which the 104 horses with left-limb preferences had significantly more counterclockwise whorls than would be expected by chance. These findings may enable trainers to design training programs to encourage the development of well balanced equine athletes.

from Equus, September 2008

QUIZZ #3

1. Do horses grow out of their shoes?
2. From which side do you get on a horse?
3. What does a red ribbon in a horse's tail mean?
4. What is a male foal called?
5. Do horses make friends?

Answers on Page 8

WHAT DO I NEED TO RIDE?

Shoes or boots with half inch heel

Comfortable long pants, preferably stretchy

Gloves – selection available in the Lounge

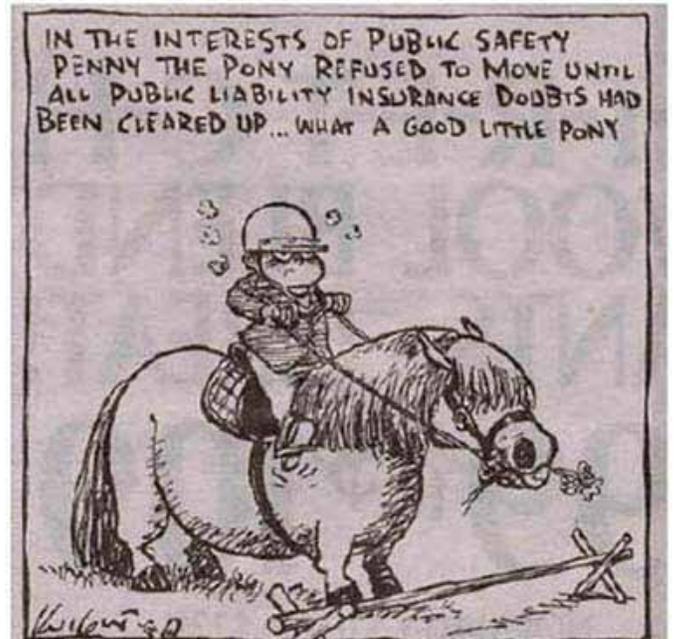
Helmet – selection available in the Lounge

Crop – selection available in the Arena

Grooming Kit – selection available in the Barn

A love of horses
 Sense of humour
 Good attitude

YOU must provide the last three items!



HARROGATE HORSES



Jake is a 23 year old, bay, quarter horse gelding. He was on stall rest for most of the winter due to a bowed tendon. He is now enjoying the freedom of a field by himself and will soon be out in the big field with his friends and back to work.



Kerry has reached the ripe old age of 31! He is a chestnut quarter horse gelding who spent many years teaching the basics of riding to small children. He recently taught his last lesson and is now enjoying retirement, along with his best friend Heather. In his youth Kerry was a winning race horse under the name Three Caravans.



Legacy is a 19 year old, chestnut, Hanoverian gelding who has resided at Harrogate since he was a 3 year old.



Lily is a 10 year old, red roan, Apaloosa mare. She is ridden by both beginners and more advanced riders.



Little Cheyanne is a privately owned 16 year old paint Pinto mare who came to Harrogate as a 4 year old with attitude. She is now ridden and loved by all ages and abilities.

QUIZZ ANSWERS

QUIZZ #1

1. Horses have very good "homing" senses and can find their way back from a very long way away.
2. The average lifespan of a horse is around 20-25 years. (But of course some Harrogate horses live much longer than this!)
3. Experienced horse people can tell the age of a horse by looking at its teeth.
4. Yes! Feathers are the long hairs on the back of a horse's 'ankle'. They help to drain water away from the hoof.
5. Horses at grass spend around 11-13 hours a day grazing.

QUIZZ #2

1. A snip is a face marking.
2. A green horse is one who has not been broken in very long
3. The measurement used for horses is 'hands high' or 'hh' (1 hand = 4 inches or 10 cm)
4. You groom a horse to keep it clean and to enable its skin to breathe properly.
5. Yes. A bridle without a bit is called a hackamore.

QUIZZ #3

1. A horse's hoof is always growing, just like your fingernails, so shoes need to be re-fitted regularly.
2. You should always mount a horse from its left (near) side.
3. A red ribbon in a horse's tail indicates that it may kick, so you should stay away.
4. A male foal up to three years old is called a colt.
5. Yes, horses do make friends and will often have a special 'buddy'

+++++

Horses and children, I often think, have a lot of the good sense there is in the world.

~Josephine Demott Robinson

It's always been and always will be the same in the world: The horse does the work and the coachman is tipped.

~Author Unknown