
The Mane Bit

www.harrogatehills.com

905-473-3847

Fall 2010



At Harrogate Hills Riding School it has always been our goal to give students the opportunity to understand as much about horses as possible. They really are wonderful creatures and it has been my experience that the more we learn about them the more we are able to appreciate what they allow us to share with them.

Since so many new students have joined us at Harrogate Hills in our 25th year, I thought it might be time to go over a few things that we should all practice in order to improve our horsemanship.

Let's begin with the moment we see which horse we are riding. Here is a list of things we hope to see when we first go to that horse's stall:

- The horse has at least a ½ bucket of water (please don't fill past ¾ full)
- He has finished all of his hard feed (grain etc.) and his hay

- He is bright and alert
- He may be resting a hind leg but never a front leg
- He has no visible cuts or scrapes or swellings

Here is a list of things we would tell someone about immediately:

- The horse is lying down and is not interested in getting up when we get to his stall
- He is pawing at the ground or looking anxiously at his sides
- He is standing in a way that allows him to avoid putting weight on one of his front legs
- His stall appears disheveled (this will get easier when you observe more horses)
- You can see a scrape, cut or swelling

Once we have determined that the horse seems fine on casual observance we will bring him out of the stall. The first thing I do is pick out his feet, because I would rather find out straight away if the horse is missing a shoe. It also gives me my first chance to run my hands down his legs and find out if there are any obvious swellings or cuts. As we groom him we should look for signs of heat and swelling (especially in legs) and any cuts that we may not have seen yet. We should groom the horse's legs as well as his body and any place we can't see we should touch with our hands. I will usually take off my gloves when I groom a horse's legs as I want to ensure that they are cool and that

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there is no unexplained swelling. It is important for the rider to look at as many horses as possible because they all have various lumps and bumps, especially on their legs, and some of those lumps and bumps are supposed to be there! Only by paying attention do we arrive at a point where we will know the difference.

After our ride we are still responsible for our horse. We should walk the horse around the arena until he is cool and his breathing has returned to normal and then we can take him back into the barn. If the weather is a bit cool we should remove the girth and saddle but leave the saddle pad on the horses' back while we groom him. I tend to brush everywhere but under the saddle pad, leaving his back until last. If the horse is damp or wet there are coolers that can be put on the horse. (The staff can show you where they are). Horses generate quite a lot of heat and, if they have a cooler on for a while, the moisture on their coat will be wicked away.

If your horse is wet, but cool, he can be put in his stall with a cooler on and you can go and look after his tack etc. The area where you worked can be swept and all of your equipment (helmet, gloves, crop etc.) should be collected. (It is very helpful if, after grooming your horse, you return all the brushes and hoof picks to their proper location.) Once you have finished that you should go back and check on your horse. The rider should stay until the horse is dry enough to be brushed but, if this is not possible, they must tell a staff member that the horse has been left with a cooler on as these are not designed to stay on all night. When a horse has worked hard, or if he has a particularly heavy coat, we can put an 'overnight' blanket on him. These also wick away moisture but because they have straps that go under the belly of the horse, and proper fasteners at the front, they can be left on all night.

If you have treats for the horse (carrots etc) you can put them in his feed bucket now that he is cool and relaxed.

Harrogate Hills welcomes all riders, new and old, to continue to learn about the horse. I've been at this for the better part of four decades and the horses are still patiently teaching me!

We're glad you have joined us.

MIKAELA AND HOLLYWOOD GO TO A CLINIC



Chris Irwin, who is he? That was exactly my question. So, on one of my great you tube expeditions, I looked him up. I then watched a video about how to lead a difficult horse from a paddock. This totally piqued my interest because after he was done working with the horse, he could walk around, and the horse would follow on a loose lead rope instead of taking off towards the barn. Later I decided to go to his website, and it said that there was a clinic on Monday, September 13th, and I jumped at it.

My morning began [pretty much] with unloading Hollywood at Blue Heron Stables in Barrie. I decided to take him for a walk to make sure that he was relaxed, but I soon found out how scary water fountains really are. All I could imagine was what Hollywood must have been thinking "HELP! HELP! THE BIG SCARY MONSTER IS GONNA GET ME! HELP!"

Then I tacked up, and went into the arena. And of course, the first thing I did was meet the teacher, Chris Irwin. He talked about inside, and outside legs. Then he took Hollywood's saddle off and felt around for a "button" on his side, which actually makes the horse bring his/her head around to you. After that, I put his

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saddle back on him, and hopped on. I must say, I thought that the class was going to be mostly about the horse, but it was really about the rider. Chris Irwin claims that horses are rarely bad; you simply are just missing their signals. He also says that if your horse is inverted, and counter flexed going into a corner, and you try to put them into true flexion, it jams their spine, and it hurts them, so in order to get out of the work, they rebel, i.e. kicking out, bucking, or any other nasty, disobedient thing they can think of.

A major part of what I learned was accepting what the horse can give you, rather than what we want out of them, because maybe in the next class your horse can give you more. Also I learned that if your horse can't flex one way or the other, then with certain exercises and patience, work with them until they can. That way, your horse will be happy, and you will be too.

Mikaela Grimble, age 12

Chris Irwin teaches how body language, balance and timing affect our message to the horse. Through two-day horsemanship clinics he helps participants hone skills and solve specific problems. He believes that by becoming better leaders and improving our skills, especially our own body language, we can positively influence our horses

"Ask not what your horse can do for you. Ask what you can do for your horse." Chris Irwin

Q: Why is an egg like a young horse?

A. Because it cannot be used until it's broken.

PAUSE AWHILE SHOW

On Sunday, Oct. 2nd four students took part in a Hunter/Hack Horse Show at Pause Awhile. It was a day not without drama as Mandy showed signs of colic soon after getting off the trailer and had to be trailered home to the vet without competing. Unfortunately this meant Alexa Boblitz did not have a ride but, in true Harrogate style, she handled this very well. She enthusiastically encouraged the others, hiding her understandable disappointment in exemplary style.

The other competitors all did well and earned ribbons. They were **Sarah Potter** on Cash, **Lily Coyle** on Sadie and **Taylor Eakin** on Pete.

Congratulations to all of you.

SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Please join us on Saturday, November 20th for the Santa Claus Parade in Newmarket!! We will be taking a couple of horses and would love you to join us. Please put your name on the list in the Lounge (on the fridge) if you are able to participate.

HARROGATE HILLS CALENDARS

2011 desk calendars, featuring pictures of your favourite Harrogate horses, photographed by Christine Bennis, are now ready to be ordered – they make a great Christmas gift!

A sample of the calendar can be found in the Lounge along with the order forms and envelopes.

Pricing: 1-2 Calendars - \$15.00 each
3 or more Calendars - \$12.50 each
(HST included)

HALLOWE'EN AT HARROGATE HILLS



DRESS UP YOURSELF
DRESS UP YOUR HORSE!

On Sunday, October 31st plan to come to a Halloween Party from 12 - 2 pm.

Please submit your name and preferred horse partner to Pat along with a brief idea of what you want to do so that she can reserve the horse for you and ensure the idea will be safe for both you and the horse.

\$5 PER PERSON

PRIZES - TREATS - FUN



What kind of horse only comes out on Halloween?

A: A nightmare.



Q: What do you get if you divide the circumference of a jack-o-lantern by its diameter?

A: Pumpkin Pi



Q: What is the best type of story to tell a runaway horse?

A: A tale of Whoa.



Q: What is horse sense?

A: Stable thinking and the ability to say nay.



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A DAY AT THE BARN

Have you ever wondered what happens at the barn while you are at school, at work or just going about your regular day?

Like babies, horses do best on a regular schedule. The day starts between 7:30 and 8 a.m. when they are given a small amount of hay to prepare their stomachs for what they consider to be their real food. Each horse has their own individual feeding plan selected from the menu which consists of grain, crunch, roughage, surmount and beet pulp.

- Grain is a mixture of oats, corn and molasses and is purchased by the bag
- Crunch, roughage and surmount are compressed pellets
- Beet pulp also comes in pellet form and is soaked in water before feeding.

After being fed, the horses are all turned out for the day, whatever the weather. There are 35 horses altogether – nineteen of them go out into the “big field” at the back of the barn while sixteen horses have to be led out to the front fields.

It is now about 9 a.m. and the real work begins! Every stall has to be mucked out, every water bucket has to be emptied and cleaned, every feed bucket has to be washed, every stall needs new shavings added to the bedding, every stall has to be supplied with hay, every bucket has to be re-filled with clean water and every aisle has to be swept. This usually takes about three hours for three people to do – if there are no interruptions (which is rare!). The workers now stagger to the lounge for some light refreshment.

The next couple of hours are easily filled with chores – hay may have to be thrown down from the hay loft, fences may need repairing, light bulbs may need replacing, the arena needs to be harrowed, cobwebs need chasing, the lounge needs cleaning, grass cutting/leaf

raking/snow shoveling - there is always something crying out to be done.

On Tuesdays the farrier visits as each horse needs to be shod and/or trimmed every six weeks.

At 2 p.m. the feeding regime begins again and each horse is provided with the same items from the menu they had in the morning. At 2:30 p.m. the horses are brought back into the barn – if anything is missing from their stall they are not shy to let us know!

Now hay has to be put out in the fields and outside water supplies have to be cleaned and filled so that all is ready for the next day. Meanwhile the horses digest and rest up to be ready for students to start arriving at 5 p.m. – some of them may have had to work during the day giving private lessons.

At the end of the day, about nine o'clock, they are given more hay, water and a few carrots to get them through the night.

Being a Harrogate horse is not such a bad life!

YOU ARE INVITED



**TO THE ANNUAL
HARROGATE HILLS
POT LUCK CHRISTMAS PARTY**

ON

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12TH
FROM 4 P.M. TO WHENEVER
LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING
YOU THERE!**

COOLER WEATHER

. . . . is inevitable, we do live in Canada, eh? There is no need to stop riding for the winter but there are a few extra things to remember both for the horse and for yourself. At Harrogate Hills we always think about the horse first:

- When putting on the bridle ensure the bit is not too cold. You can warm it in your hands or run warm water over it.
- Give your horse a little more time to “warm up” in the arena by walking on a long rein for a few minutes longer than usual. The older horses especially will appreciate this.
- After you have ridden, make sure you take time to cool down the horse by walking it around in the arena.
- The horse may still be warm and sweaty and it’s a good idea to leave the saddle pad on when you take the saddle off so that the cold air doesn’t get to its back.
- It may be necessary to put a cooler on the horse before you put him in a stall. If you don’t know how to do this, please ask a staff member. Always remember that a cooler cannot be left on all night and it is your responsibility to take it off before you leave, or be sure to mention that this needs to happen if you have to leave before removing the cooler. (Blankets, which have straps to hold them in place, can be left on overnight.)



Nemo enjoying the snow in his blanket

It is just as important that you look after yourself! In order to be warm and comfortable you should **dress in layers**, because you definitely will warm up – the only cold person will be the instructor!

- You should have a synthetic layer of clothing next to your skin (nylon, polyester, etc.) followed by an absorbent cotton layer. The synthetic material will wick the moisture away from your body and the natural fibres of the cotton will absorb the moisture. This really does work! You can then put as many layers of sweaters and/or fleece as you want and even top it all off with a windproof layer. Don’t worry what you look like as long as you are warm.
- Winter riding pants can be purchased, or you can wear tights or thermal underwear under your regular riding pants and perhaps top them off with a pair of chaps.
- It is very important to keep your feet warm and the same principle applies – the best thing is to wear a pair of nylon tights or “knee-highs” under a pair of wool or thermal socks – again the moisture will be wicked away from your feet and will be absorbed by the thick socks.
- Should you need extra socks there is always a supply of both “knee-highs” and thermal socks in the Foot Locker under the window in the Lounge. Please borrow as needed and return for the next person.
- Rubber boots are the coldest – leather boots are warmer – or you can ride in winter boots, as long as they have a ½ inch heel. Be sure the boots fit well.
- Riding gloves come in winter weights – and can be bought at a tack shop or North York Farmers. There is always a bag of “lost and found” gloves that you can investigate if you forget or lose your own.

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So, ride on through the winter – you will learn a lot, have fun and keep fit! Someone told me she believes it also keeps you healthy, that may be so but I have no proof. Perhaps we should do a study

Q: What is the difference between a horse and a duck?

A: One goes quick and the other goes quack!



Q: Why is horse racing so romantic?

A: Because the horse hugs the rails, the jockey puts his arms around the horse and you can kiss your money goodbye.



Santa Claus Parade in Mount Albert, 2009

SECRETARIAT – THE MOVIE



Have you seen all the race horse pictures in the Lounge, Pat's office and even the washroom? Most of them are of Secretariat! There is a new Disney movie based on the life of Secretariat which you might be interested in going to see.

“Based on the remarkable true story, “Secretariat” chronicles the spectacular journey of the 1973 Triple Crown winner. Housewife and mother Penny Chenery (Diane Lane) agrees to take over her ailing father’s Virginia-based Meadow Stables, despite her lack of horse-racing knowledge. Against all odds, Chenery—with the help of veteran trainer Lucien Laurin (John Malkovich)—manages to navigate the male-dominated business, ultimately fostering the first Triple Crown winner in 25 years and what may be the greatest racehorse of all time.”

Pat had a great friend in Jim Gaffney who was Secretariat's exercise rider. Unfortunately he passed away last June and so was unable to see the movie.

“As an exercise rider known for his great hands and the ability to get the best out of a young horse, Jim was one of the first to recognize the talent and potential greatness in the Bold Ruler colt he affectionately called “the big red machine.”

(Taken from secretariat.com)



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