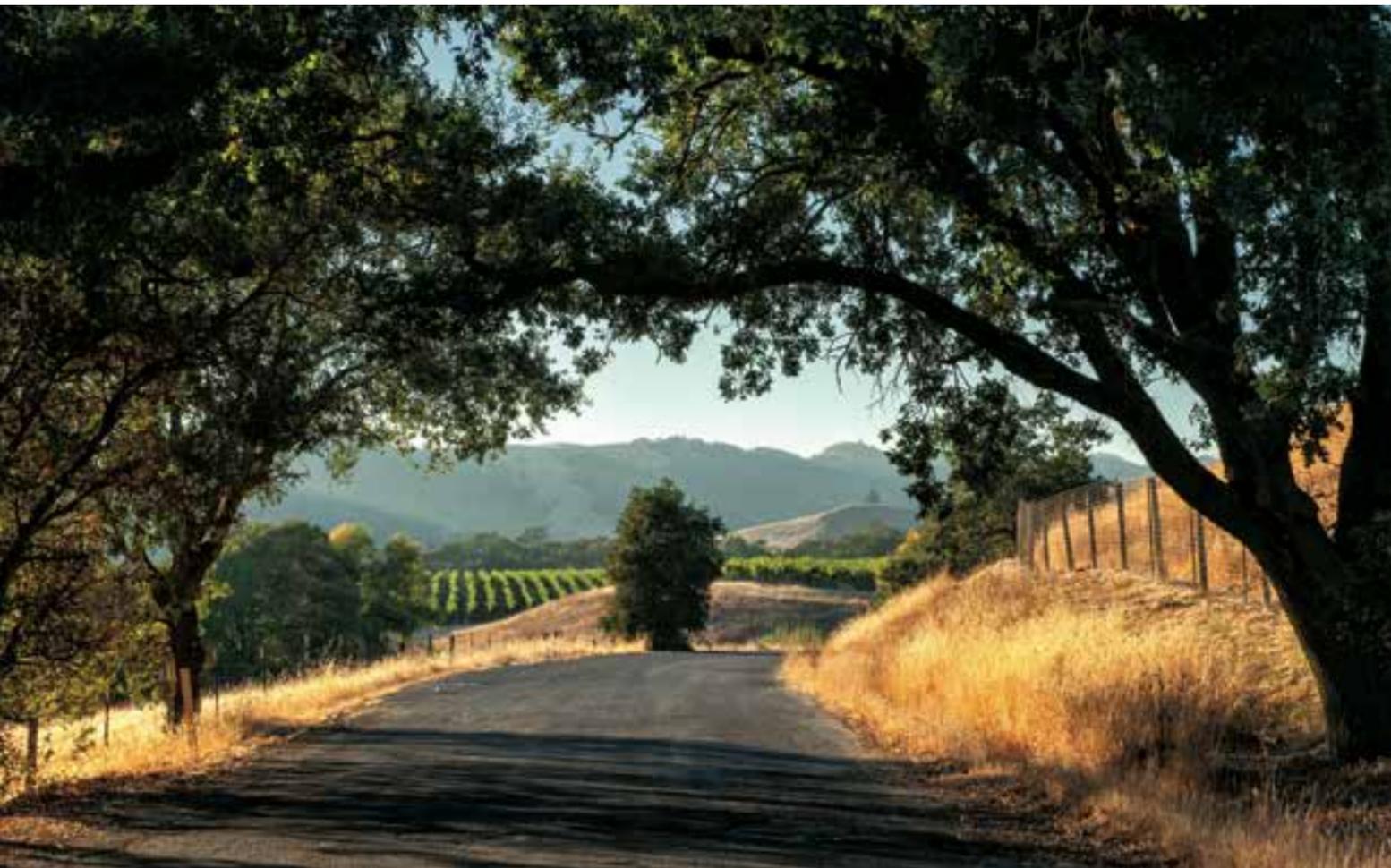


Sonoma County

COMPLIMENTARY

HORSE JOURNAL





Jennifer Knef approaches luxury real estate marketing from an investor's perspective even if her clients are buying or selling their primary residence. She helps homeowners sell at the highest possible price in the least amount of time and also helps buyers uncover hidden opportunities for upside potential. With a professional career that spans over 30+ years in Real Estate, Banking and Finance, Jennifer's focus is representing the most distinctive wine country, rural and equestrian estates of Sonoma, Napa and Marin Counties.



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Sonoma County Horse Journal
Two-Time American Horse Publications
National Award Winner

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Sonoma County HORSE JOURNAL

Volume 19 · Issue 3 · Summer 2022

Published by the Sonoma County Horse Council - Home of the Equus Awards

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COVER PHOTO BY SHERRY STEWART
Eventer Amber Levine Birtcil of Petaluma and her 11-year-old Cinzano compete in the show jumping phase on their way to winning the CCI4-L at Twin Rivers Ranch in April, 2021. Read how their career experienced a severe interruption on page 8.

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Rosemary Passantino was a city girl until a yearling mustang changed her life. She now lives outside the town of Sonoma, and works as a communications specialist for Marin County Parks. She enjoys gardening and having fun with her two horses, mustang Reno and Quarter Horse Zip.



In 2018, **Michelle Rogers** created Sonoma Valley Trail Rides in her hometown of Sonoma. She has been involved with horses for over 35 years. Her professional career involved traveling through out the U.S. and Australia managing professional horse barns, competing in the show ring and breeding Arabian horses. Michelle specialized in animal welfare, and she worked as the sergeant for animal services at a Marin County shelter as a animal cruelty investigator for 13 years. Sonoma Valley Trail Rides 707.343.5511 - sonomavalleytrailrides.com/



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Gwen Kilchherr is a longtime Sonoma County landscape consultant and designer. She hosts the Saturday morning KSRO 1350 AM "Garden Talk" show. Gwen is a member of Sonoma County Chapter of the California Dressage Society and has volunteered at many of their events. She recently purchased the nephew of her mare Cleo. His name is Quest and like Cleo he is a Holsteiner from Oregon. She is excited to have both horses and herself in training with Lori Cook.



Laurie Waissman is a freelance marketing professional with a stable of equestrian organizations as her clients. Raised on the Peninsula, she spent her youth trail riding an Arabian mare around Woodside, California, whom she shared with her mom. It was great preparation for the riding vacations they shared as adults, which inspired her to volunteer on an equestrian safari in South Africa. Laurie can be reached at www.laurielynn.com or 415-523-6723.



Mary Taft-McPhee is a farrier based in Port Orchard, Washington, who works part time in Sonoma County. Prior to entering the trade, she worked in San Francisco as a data scientist and in New York as a bond trader. She enjoys spending time with her retired polo ponies, Frenchie and Bayita.

Do you want to write for the *Horse Journal* or see your photos in print?

Please contact Patti Schofler at schc.pschofler@gmail.com

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Photo: Patti Schofler

2022 Equus Awards Winners

From left to right: Lee Walker, Barbara Walker, Cheyenne Cairns for Royal Crest's Rockappella, Andrea Pfeiffer, Tracy Underwood, Ted Stashak, D.V.M.

At the start of spring, the Sonoma County Horse Council celebrated the accomplishments of some of our friends and colleagues with the 13th Equus Awards at the Villa Chanticleer in Healdsburg. About 230 people enjoyed a fun cocktail hour and a wonderful family-style dinner from our friends at Elaine Bell Catering.

The Equus Awards was established in 2002 to honor those who have advanced the interests of the Sonoma County horse community either through outstanding competitive accomplishments or through public service that has grown the interest in and stature of the equine world. Because these people have been engaged in the community, the county is more welcoming to horses and horse people. The honorees have been passionately involved in their profession or hobby and they have chosen to make a difference by demonstrating leadership in the equine world. We are all grateful. Hats off to all Equus Awards winners.

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SCEC BOOK CLUB

Books and horses create community at Sonoma Coastal Equestrian Training Center, Petaluma, which has transformed the tack room in the old barn to a comfy living room setting for the SCEC boarders's monthly book club meetings.

The setting is also the place to borrow one of the many donated books or to donate a book, and to curl up for a good read—unless you prefer reading from on top of a horse as does **Marie-Charlotte Guion-Buechley**.

For the year the book club will read and discuss two books of a horse theme, two of historic fiction, two classics, two prize winners, and two books in translation.



Facility owner **Nathalie Guion-Buechley** (left) and book club organizer **Amy Wright** get a jump on the reading list which will include: *Pony* by R.J. Palacio, *Rough Beauty: Forty Seasons of Mountain Living* by Karen Auvinen, *The Friend* by Sigrid Nunez, *Wild Horses of the Summer Sun* by Tory Bilski, *Travels with a Donkey in the Cévennes* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and *Captains of the Sands* by Jorge Amado.

USEF HONORS NORTH BAY COMPETITORS

North Bay competitors were well-represented among the 2021 United States Equestrian Federation annual awards. (AA - Adult Amateur; CH - Champion; RES - Reserve Champion; JR - Junior Exhibitor; HOY - Horse of the Year)

Hunter, **Wendy Webster**, Penngrove: Leading Eventing Sire Palisades Margarita, **Sandra Surber**, Calistoga

Hackney Pony Pleasure Driving, National HOY 3rd
Hackney Harness Pony Amateur, National HOY 6th
Hackney Pony Pleasure Driving, Reg.1 RES

TA Addicted To Roses, **Jennifer Magliulo**, Penngrove
Arabian Western Pleasure AA National HOY RES
Arabian Western Pleasure AA, Reg. 3 RES

Forever Eden M, **Hidden Gem Farms**, Petaluma
Arabian Halter, National HOY 4th place
Arabian Halter, Reg.1 CH

Arabian Hunter Pleasure AA, National HOY CH
Arabian Hunter Pleasure AA, Reg. 3 CH
Arabian Hunter Pleasure AA, Reg. 1 RES
Arabian Hunter Pleasure AA, Reg.2 CH

A Shocking Affaire, **Hidden Gem Farms**, Petaluma
Arabian Specialty Horse, Reg. 1 RES
Arabian Specialty Horse, Reg. 3 3rd
Arabian Country Pleasure/Driving, Reg. 3 CH

PS Huk Me Up, **Hidden Gem Farms**, Petaluma
Half Arabian Hunter Pleasure AA Reg. 3 CH
Half Arabian Hunter Pleasure AA, Reg. 2 RES

Diamant El Dakar, **Ashley Morgan Payne**, Petaluma: Half Arabian Hunter Pleasure JR, Reg. 2 RES

King of Hearts, **Avery Glynn**, Petaluma: Children's Hunter Horse, Zone 10 3rd

Avery Glynn, Petaluma: Hunter Equitation 15-17, Zone 10 CH
Applause, **Abigail Myers**, Windsor: Children's Hunter Pony, Zone 10 5th

Montecito, **Cherie Callander**, Sonoma: Green Hunter 3', Zone 10 4th

Impressionist, **Nicole Needham**, Tiburon: Green Hunter 3'3", Zone 10 4th

Griffindor, **Mika Gretton**, Santa Rosa: Green Pony Hunter Medium, Zone 10 Res

Greenley Achuck, Tiburon: Hunter Equitation 14 & Under, Zone 10 CH

Milan Hines, Kentfield: Hunter Equitation 15-17, Zone 10 6th
Esteban, **Sienna Faidi**, Belvedere: Junior Hunter 3'3" Large 15 & Under, Zone 10 6th

Utopia, **Nicasio Valley Barn**, San Anselmo: Pony Hunter Medium, Zone 10 5th

Out of the Blue, **Leadon Ridge Farm**, Tiburon: Pony Hunter Medium, Zone 10 6th

Orlena Z, **Chelsea Cain**, Petaluma: USHJA Hunter 2'3", Zone 10 3rd

Armani, **Ava Spinale**, Kentfield: USHJA Hunter 2'6", Zone 10 RES

Journey, **Sharon Mackenzie**, Glen Ellen: USHJA Hunter 2'6", Zone 10 6th

Diamond District X, **Joey Pedroni**, Santa Rosa: Young Hunter Five and Under, Zone 10 5th

Trewithian Hawkweed, **Cash Delia**, Petaluma: Pony Jumper, Zone 10 3rd

Wilde 13, **Cash Delia**, Petaluma: Pony Jumper, Zone 10 4th
Seaside Thunder, **Cheyenne Cains**, Santa Rosa: Saddlebred Country Pleasure Driving, Reg. 1 CH

HS Sense of Style, **D. MacCracken**, San Rafael: Saddlebred Country Pleasure Hunter, Reg. 14th

MOST HORSES ARE LEFTIES

What are the perils of putting symmetrical saddles on asymmetrical horses?

"We were not surprised to learn that 60 percent of the horses in our 490-horse retrospective study had larger measurements on the left side of their withers," said Dr. Katrina Merckies, researcher and associate professor at the University of Guelph (UofG). Empirical evidence backed up the hypothesis expecting more bulk on the left, based on what saddle fitters were already noticing in their day-to-day work.

Dr. Merckies explained in a video interview about the UofG study of thoracic asymmetry in ridden horses which can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=77bUmROJUZU.

Pressure points from an ill-fitting saddle can lead to pain and performance issues. A symmetrical saddle used on a horse that is not symmetrical can hinder progress, explained Merckies. "It could prevent the horse from developing its muscles in a balanced way."

The research study included many breeds, from fine boned

Arabs and Thoroughbreds to stocky Warmbloods and Drafts. They came from many disciplines. Surprisingly, breed did not have an effect on wither measurements in this study. While Thoroughbreds and Warmbloods had different skeletal structure, such as longer withers than the Draft breeds, that did not have an impact on the wither measurements, which were based on the horse's musculature.

Laterality also was considered for its possible role in muscle development. Laterality is the preference for using one side of the body over the other. The left hemisphere of the brain (logic and reasoning) controls the right side of body, and the right side of the brain (processor of fear stimuli) controls the left side. "You may notice horses often turn to view an object they are afraid of with their left eye," said Merckies. "They often step on or off a trailer with the left front leg first." Merckies also mentioned an Australian study noting a preference for grazing with the left front leg ahead of the right, a tendency that apparently increases with age.

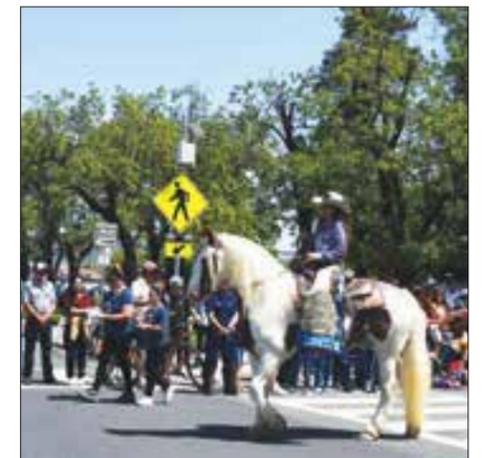
One unexpected finding was that the curvatures in the horses's backs were slightly more dipped in horses of medium height. Merckies hypothesized this may be because medium-sized horses are more frequently ridden by adults. Kids tend to move off their ponies as they outgrow them. Saddles for the adult rider tend to have a longer seat, which may not always fit the medium-sized horse's back. A saddle that fits past the 18th thoracic vertebrae puts pressure on the lumbar region, which can cause a horse to tense and drop its back muscles.

—Jackie Bellamy-Zions, Equine Guelph Center, University of Guelph, Canada



BUTTER AND EGG DAYS PARADE

The Butter and Egg Days Parade returned to Petaluma after a two-year hiatus, and horses were well represented by the Petaluma Riding and Driving Club Drill Team and Junior Riders including **Lisa Bacon** and **Heidi Schmidt Thompson**, Miss Wine Country Rodeo **Genoa Green** riding Drago, and a cow pretending to be a mini horse. Or was it a mini horse pretending to be a cow?



Resilient, Persistent, Enduring

Eventer Amber Levine Birtcil's Big Adventure

By Patti Schofler

Amber Levine Birtcil



Photo: Patti Schofler

Deployed in Kuwait, National Guard Major Sean Birtcil settled in front of the screen to watch live as his wife of less than two years ran the cross-country course at the CCI4* at Galway Downs, Temecula. Down the path Amber Levine Birtcil and her horse Cinzano galloped up to the second water obstacle, jumped in, and then flew around a bend to a narrow out jump. Exciting. Maybe they would repeat the victory they had enjoyed a few months before at the prestigious Twin Rivers CCI4*-L.

Next Cinzano swept through the brush jump that would be the destination of a freak accident with Amber landing on the ground and Cinzano coming down on her. He jumped right up. He was fine.

Amber was crushed like an accordion. She didn't jump up. She wasn't fine.

Sean saw it all from afar, in Kuwait.

The 34-year-old Petaluma eventing trainer answered the paramedic's concussion questions with flying colors, and her pain wasn't too bad. She wouldn't remember leaving the start box, or the ride to the hospital in Murietta, or the tests that showed her to have a crushing "earthquake injury," an open book pelvic fracture, in the front and in the back. Her pelvis was displaced and her right leg splayed out to the side. Both hip joints were broken. Nothing was holding her together.

Her knee had a small fracture. She suffered a crushed nerve in her right foot which would feel like it was on fire and cause screaming pain at the slightest touch. But the immediate danger was the major bleed. The doctors stopped it.

Her mom, Jenise Taylor, contacted the Red Cross to help get Sean home. Other friends jumped in. Dr. Lucinda Romero of Kleary Farm in Sebastopol researched the best trauma center in the area, and Amber was transported to Sharp Memorial Hospital in San Diego for several days of surgery that would affect the rest of her life.

Good and Bad

Though it seems fanciful, bad luck was in a way colored by good fortune. In this freak accident, not caused by either Cinzano's or Amber's mistake, had she landed on her back or her front, instead of her side, likely she would not be telling her story today. Was she not extremely fit, who knows what the result might have been.

First Day: fix the front of the right side. Second day: fix the back of the right side. Third day: fix the whole left side and stop another major bleed. Each of the three surgeries took 10 to 12 hours.

"There was a lot of pain," Amber recalled about that first week of November, 2021. "My world became very small. I had to mentally live in the moment. This is what I'm doing at this time. My horse is fine. Everything is taken care of. The barn is taken care of. The eventing community is taking care of everything. I love the horses and I will get back to them."

With her was her mom, "a rock and a warrior". So too was best friend Libby Porzig and her friend and groom Gracie Causbrook. Sean was on his way. But then she was hearing words like wheelchair and non-weight bearing for a least three months.



Amber's x-ray taken after three surgeries shows an extensive array of pins and screws and plates.

Each day in the hospital had its victories. "After the surgeries I could move my upper body. When I could move my foot, it was a big deal. I lived for these moments. I was clear with people that this is my world and it's positive. I didn't feel like 'why did this happen to me?' I needed to see the way forward. but it had to be in little doses, not looking too far into the future. I had to be able to have control and on my terms. What wasn't in my control I let go.

And this came from a person who under normal circumstance can only handle so much chaos, and for whom order is necessary.

Ready for this? Four months after the crash, she was riding.

Step back. Home is a beautiful 80-acres in west Petaluma that Amber and Sean bought in 2019 and are developing into

a first-class eventing facility called Cellar Farm. On the Monday after Thanksgiving, Sean flew home with Amber strapped to a backboard on board a medical aircraft. This date marked a month in the hospital under pain management.

Friends had set up hospital equipment throughout the house. Their contractor had built ramps around the house. "The funny thing was my husband had said if this is going to be our forever home, someday someone will be in a wheelchair. Well, it happened 40 years early."

Stand or Not

After three months of good and bad days, the doctor instructed her to go for it, to stand up. "It took me a couple of minutes to wrap my head around it. Would my legs support me? It goes against what your brain is telling you. I had to learn how to walk again."

Now, in Amber's usual way to meet any challenge, she was going for it. She was told she could ride the stationary bike as much as she wanted and she began riding like a mad woman. It gave her structure.

As soon as she could, she returned to her old hot exercise classes with names like Yoga Hell and Inferno Pilates. "They are super hard and you're super sweaty. No one could get through a whole class without a break.

"It helped my physical and mental fitness. You learn to be able to take a big deep breathe when you're super uncomfortable and be ok with it. My saving grace was that I was so fit before. The workouts had been such a part of my life and routine and then to go back to the same people and mindset, positive can-do attitude, was so helpful. I may not be able to do the burpees or squats that I did, but I can do a little and that's all that matters."

Her determination to ride again did not surprise those who know her well, including her veterinarian Mike O'Connor who said, "She sparkles when she talks about horses."

Amber grew up in Temecula, not in a horse family. When she was four, her mother bought her riding lessons through a silent auction and she never turned back. Until she was 18 she rode hunter jumper and equitation

"She made clear to her doctor that if it had happened in a car, he wouldn't tell her not to get in a car."

with Dianne Grod and Susie Hutchison. She worked for hunter jumper barns, and evented on vacation time, taking her horse to the advanced level. For nine

years, she worked for event trainer Andrea Pfeiffer in Petaluma, until she and Sean started Cellar Farm where the plan is to train young, upper level, and sale horses.

"I was very upfront with my orthopedic doctor, telling him I'm getting on a horse and that will help me walk better and get my strength back. I told him that I've spent more of my life on the back of a horse than not, especially in the last 10 years. The muscle memory will come back so much faster if I just get on a horse. That's why they have therapy horses, to give people the sensation of walking."

She made clear to her doctor that if it had happened in a car, he wouldn't tell her not to get in a car.

"The odds of that accident happening in the first place were slim and are even more so for the second time. I told the doctor that if something like this happens again and we have to redo it, I will find another avenue in the horse world. I'll teach, I'll judge and I'll tell you that you were right."

On March 6, Amber got on her 11-year-old Cinzano, a horse that was supposed to be for sale.

A regular part of Amber's business was to purchase young horses in Europe, let them grow up out in pasture, and at four bring to Petaluma to be trained up the levels. —▷



Amber and Cinzano compete on the cross-country course on their way to winning the CCI4-L at Twin Rivers Ranch in April, 2021.

Photo: Marcus Greene



Cinzano, known as Zane, was a different story. A friend sent her a video of a five-year-old Holsteiner who was for sale in Hungary and she brought him over to train and sell. "I had seen him before and always liked him, but no one else did. So, I kept him. We call him Eeyore. He's very serious. One day a pasture horse pushed through the fence and was running around. You could see it made Zane so mad because it was so wrong.

"We're cut from the same cloth. We like order. Everything has its place and should be organized. And he loves to work.

"Zane had fallen on me but he's the one I got back on because I know him so well and he knows me so well and he will take care of me."

Her biggest concern was mounting. Would she have enough strength to push herself on with her left leg? Would her right leg with the nerve damage have enough coordination and strength to swing over the saddle? "I wanted to know if mounting was going to be so painful that I couldn't get out of a situation."

She practiced on a solid wood saddle stand. She stood in the stirrups. She sat in the saddle.

Despite the practice, Amber questioned what would happen. So many times, in the hospital the physical therapist would say to do some such thing with her foot, and she would say that she was doing it, and he would say she was not. Or when lying in bed, she wanted to bend her leg but nothing would happen.

Libby was with her and Zane, just as she had been at the accident and in the hospital. Amber stood at the mounting block in the round pen questioning if her body would do what she told it to do. And it did. And she and Zane even trotted.

Now she rides every day, and now she is sore all the time. "It sucks and it's terrible, but I've decided to move on."

Clearly, the U.S. Equestrian Federation recognizes that she will be back. They invited her and Cinzano to attend assessment sessions with development coach Leslie Law. Another goal accomplished was to walk the course at the Land Rover Three Day Event in Kentucky last May.

"I'd love to ride a five star. I would love to go overseas and compete and if that meant representing my country, I would love that. At the end of the day, I love horses. I love developing young horses. I love seeing them and my students learn and succeed and enjoy horses." Sounds like a bright future. 🐾



Photo Courtesy of Amber Birtci

Amber, Cinzano and Libby Porzig are all smiles after the win at the CCI4-L at Twin Rivers Ranch, Paso Robles, in April, 2021.

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Ukrainian Riding Horse Carries the Weight of Its Country's History

By Rosemary Passantino



Bay stallion of Ukrainian riding breed and black stallion of Russian riding breed

The bloodlines of the Ukrainian Riding Horse mirror the fraught and intertwined histories of Russia and Ukraine, providing a looking glass into European upheavals across centuries and today.

Officially recognized in 1990, this true mixed breed blends Hanoverian, Thoroughbred, Furiioso, and Arabian as well as remnants of Russia's lost imperial Orlov-Rostopchin horses.

The story of this hardy and elegant Ukrainian warmblood begins in the 18th century when in 1743 16-year-old Sophie Friederike Auguste, a minor German princess, married her second cousin, the dim-witted and neurotic Charles Peter Ulrich, the duke in line to become Russia's emperor.

Sophie detested her husband and for 18 years she evaded him by reading French philosophy, studying Russian language and history, participating in court intrigues, and indulging in extra marital affairs. Six months after he was crowned Peter III, Sophie and her allies in the military and Russian Orthodox Church orchestrated the palace coup that left Peter dead and saw Sophie crowned Catherine II.

The empress elevated her consort and co-conspirator Grigory Orlov to commandant-in-chief. Grigory's soldier brother Alexei was also part of her military junta. But the empress focused on the imperial ambitions that transformed her into Catherine the Great, and the Orlov family fell from favor.

ORLOV FAMILY DEVELOPS FAMED BREEDS

When Alexei Orlov retired from the military, he succeeded at horse breeding, using connections with Russian nobility to gain access to the finest European bloodlines. By the late 1700s he had developed the Orlov Trotter and the Orlov Riding Horse, both treasured by the Russian upper class for beauty, elegance, speed, and stamina. Dark bay or black in color, the horses were a cross of royal Danish and Spanish mares with Arabian stallions, adding touches of English Thoroughbred and Dutch Friesian. Orlov Riding Horses stood about 16 hands with lithe, athletic bodies, dished heads, and swanlike necks.

Inspired by royal French equestrian traditions, Russians embraced horsemanship as a status-raising, artistic pursuit. Breeders aimed to develop horses to suit the pleasures of the Russian court. In the early 1800s, Count Rostopchin, a Russian statesman, infantry general, and governor-general of Moscow, crossed desert-born Arabian stallions with Russian and European mares, creating black Rostopchin Riding Horses strikingly similar to Orlov's. The Rostopchin stable competed with Orlov family for sales, exhibition prizes, and competition medals.

After the death of both breeders, the Russian crown purchased their studs and the two lines were combined at a government-run facility in an area of Ukraine conquered by Russia during Catherine the Great's reign. Orlov-Rostopchin Horses became mounts for the nobility as well as the signature breed used in Russian military cavalry dressage. The finest examples of the breed were sent around the world as examples of Russian superiority and refinement. In the late 1800s, Orlov-Rostopchin Horses won exhibition prizes as far away as Chicago, as well as across Russia and in the capitals of Europe. Into the early 20th century, the Orlov-Rostopchin was among the most prized horse breeds in the world.

RUSSIAN EQUINE VICTIMS OF TWO WORLD WARS

In 1914, Europe plunged into the First World War. By the 1918 armistice, an estimated eight million horses, mules, and donkeys had been killed on the battlefields, or abandoned by owners. In the final stages of WWI, political unrest in Russia erupted into the 1917 revolution, overthrowing Russian nobility in favor of a communist regime.

Only ten purebred Orlov-Rostopchin horses were believed to remain, all of them in Ukraine.

In 1931, the Soviet government renamed the Orlov-Rostopchins as the Russian Riding Horse in an attempt to erase any connection with imperial history. Broodmares of various breeds were introduced to strengthen the line, but within a decade the horses again faced tragedy. During a World War II 1941 evacuation of Moscow, most of the prized Russian Riding Horses died attempting to cross the freezing Oka River. Only two Orlov-Rostopchin stallions and one mare carrying bloodlines back to the era of Catherine the Great were known to have survived the war.

In the 1950s, the Soviet Union again set out to officially rebuild the Russian Riding Horse breed at stud farms in Ukraine, introducing into the breed Trakehner, Thoroughbred, Anglo-

Hungarian, and Arabian stock. In Soviet documentation, the rare descendants of the Orlov-Rostopchins used in the program were referred to as Ukrainian horses.

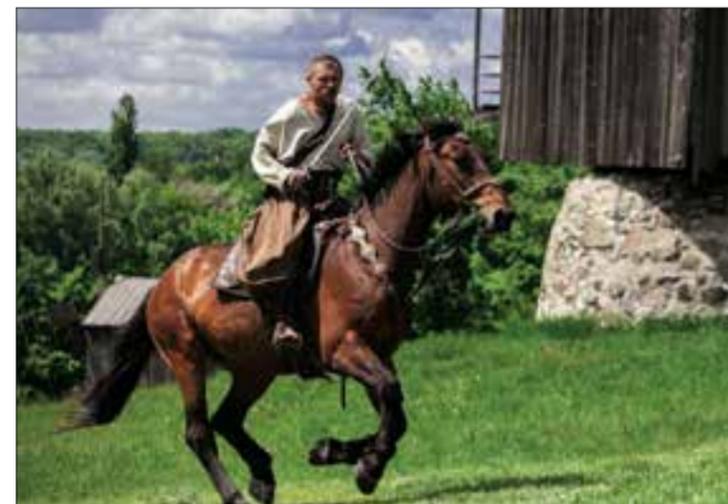
But support for the program to recreate the Russian breed standard also gave cover to Ukrainian horsemen who covertly set out to develop a distinctly Ukrainian warmblood. At the same time, at the same barns, utilizing many of the same bloodlines being used in the officially sanctioned Russian Riding Horse breeding program, the Ukrainian Riding Horse was quietly being developed.

HOW ARE THE BREEDS DIFFERENT?

What is the difference between these breeds? Both the Russian Riding Horse and the Ukrainian Riding Horse are warmbloods designed to compete in show jumping, three-day eventing, and dressage, as well as recreational sport riding. The Russian Riding Horse harkens back to the lost Orlov-Rostopchins depicted in paintings and illustrations. It stands about 16 hands, and is a refined, light-bodied horse, black or very dark bay in color, with a striking dished face and elegant swan neck.

The Ukrainian Riding Horse is more muscular and solidly built, bay or black, with a broad deep chest, a long, straight back, and a calm, friendly temperament. A working, modern breed, the Ukrainian Riding Horse does not rely on historical mythology of the Orlov-Rostopchins to claim its value. While following the sanctioned blueprints to rebuild the Russian Riding Horse, one imagines Ukrainian horsemen felt they had their own, and better, ideas.

Unfortunately, communist party boss Nikita Krushchev, who governed from 1953 to 1964, was no friend to the horse. During his regime he proclaimed horses useless because they did not provide milk or meat. Tractors were superior for farming. As a result, millions of horses throughout the Soviet Union, including many of the finest sport horses, were butchered to fulfill Kremlin meat quotas. A handful of top horses were quietly dispersed in sales across the world to save their lives and bloodlines. To this day some buyers of these exports claim they hold Orlov-Rostopchin heritage. —▷



Ukrainian Cossack horseman/actor performs at the Sich Cossaks Theater.

AID TO THE UKRAINIAN HORSE

The Foundation for the Horse - American Association of Equine Practitioners

Through The Foundation for the Horse, the charitable arm of the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), a financial gift can provide in Ukraine emergency relief and support to the veterinary organizations and the horses and animals they care for. www.foundationforthehorse.org/impact/disaster-relief/

USEF Ukraine Relief Fund

The United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) joined forces with the International Federation of Equestrian Sports (FEI) Solidarity Relief Fund, to establish the USEF Ukraine Relief Fund to aid Ukrainian horses and equestrians. www.USEF.org/donate



BREEDING LEADS OF OLYMPIC GLORY

In Ukraine, top breeders in the official Soviet program continued developing the Ukrainian Riding Horse under the cover of selectively seeking the handful of Olympic champions that even Krushchev supported, as a way to affirm communist glory in the eyes of the world.

Among them was the Ukrainian warmblood Ikhor competed by Ivan Kizimov. The pair's first success was to win team bronze and place tenth at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo when Ikhor was only six years old.

Ivan Kizimov and Ikhor at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City



Four years later, at the 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico City, the pair won team silver and individual gold.

Because Ukraine was under the dominion of the USSR, the horses in these Olympic competitions may well have been Ukrainian Riding Horses, but they were considered Russian.

The official studbook for the Ukrainian Riding Horse begins in 1971. In 1990, the Ukrainian Riding Horse breed received official approval of the State Committee for Food and Procurement

of the Council of Ministers of the USSR. Shortly after, in December 1991, the Soviet Union broke apart. Ukraine declared its independence as a sovereign nation, and they could now claim their own horse. As of 2004, 1393 Ukrainian Riding Horses were officially registered by 20 breeders in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Academy of Agrarian Sciences has determined there are seven lines within the Ukrainian Riding Horse breed, of which the Bespechny line most strongly follows the lost Orlov-Rostopchins.

The Ukrainian Riding Horse is emblematic of the country's forward-looking reaffirmation of its own cultural identity. The breed is a favorite at Ukrainian events, featured in Cossack trick riding called jigitovka, which translates as "skillful, brave rider." An annual Ukraine Cossacks Horse Show in Kyiv, held on Defenders of Ukraine Day, highlights these traditional acrobatic riding skills. The Ukrainian Riding Horse was featured on a Ukrainian postage stamp.

But Ukrainian horses continue to get caught up in ongoing geopolitical tensions. The former president of the Equestrian Federation of Ukraine, Oleksandr Onyshchenko, who represented Ukraine in show jumping at the 2008 Olympics and other premier competitions, is currently living in exile after being accused of corruption in a Ukrainian gas and oil industry scandal. In 2012, while serving as a member of the Ukrainian parliament, he aligned with Ukraine's former pro-Russian president, Viktor Yanukovich, who was ousted from office in what became known as the Revolution of Dignity. The Onyshchenko scandal had a wide-ranging impact on Ukraine's equestrian Olympic team.



Stamps celebrating the Ukrainian Riding Horse

OLDEST STUD FARMS MAY BE BOMBARDED

On February 24, 2022, Russia mounted a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. Horses in Ukraine again face the threats of war. Viktor Bukreyev, a notable Ukrainian racing trainer, has taken up residence at the Kyiv Hippodrome to help care for the nearly 400 horses, some racehorses, some horses abandoned by owners fleeing from Ukraine. Bukreyev reported that four of the oldest Ukrainian stud farms, one dating back to 1765, are in areas under heavy bombardment, and the fates of the horses there are uncertain.

An equine evacuation center across the border in Poland has taken in horses. But moving horses in a war zone remains incredibly difficult. During a war, horses without a wealthy benefactor or a famous pedigree are often left to fend for themselves. A large animal veterinarian in Ukraine noted that she previously had no experience removing shrapnel from horses, and now it is the bulk of her work. Until the shells of this war stop falling, we may not know what the next chapter of history will be for the horses of Ukraine, including the Ukrainian Riding Horse.





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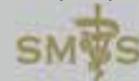
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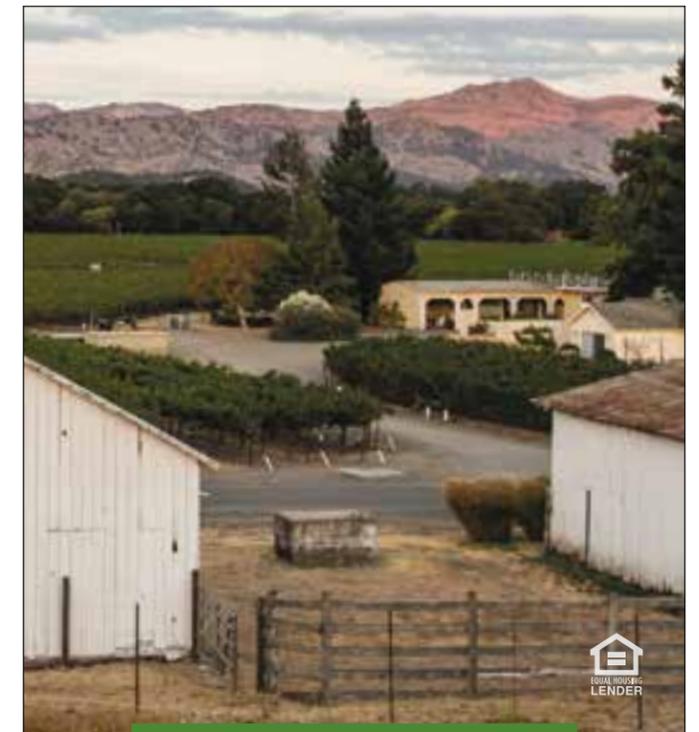
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Encountering Critters While Out on Your Critter

By Michelle Rogers

It's not on every trail that a rider shares the neighborhood with wildlife. Not every trail has the same wildlife, and a rider in California will see different animals than a trail rider in Montana. Even trails within the same county have different inhabitants. There are, however, similar themes as to how you and your horse encounter critters on the trail.

Generally, trail safety protocol dictates that you never ride alone. A group of riders naturally makes more noise than a solitary rider, and in most cases this deters other animals. When we trail ride, especially with inexperienced trail horses, novice riders, or in unknown territory, wearing a helmet is strongly recommended.

Although most wild animals are completely content to coexist safely with humans on horseback, their rapid, unexpected movements can cause our horses to spook. Animals you may deem harmless, such as geese, rabbits, and deer, can cause problems because of how fast they move, suddenly jumping or flying from under cover, or, as with wild turkeys, how much noise they can make.

A spooking horse can pose more danger than the wild animal itself by taking off in reaction to perceived danger. Trainers such as those who condition horses for mounted police units recommend teaching a horse to spook in place. Positive reinforcement and confidence building exercises at home with encounters such as that super scary rock or log near the arena will help them understand that running away is not an option.

Listening to your horse is equally important on the trail as in the arena. A horse will tell you something is up ahead, and this is where your hard work at home pays off. One of the mistakes I see is the rider immediately tensing up, becoming fearful while on their horse, causing the horse to react in the same manner. But if you've trained yourself as well as your horse at home, you can learn to regulate your reaction as well as the horse's.

Consider then the wildlife and domestic animals out among us.

BIG CATS

Coming upon predator animals such as mountain lions, who like to attack their prey from above, can be a frightening experience. These types of encounters, however, are extremely rare.

Mountain lions are most active at dawn, dusk, and during the night. Riding in canyons, near cliffs, and by wooded tree overhangs where these big cats hunt increases the chance of an encounter with them. Typically, a horse will sense a mountain lion, bobcat, or other predatory animal well before a rider will ever notice. In fact, a trail rider will most likely never see a mountain lion, as they stay well hidden, but they do emit a certain scent that our horses usually can detect.

Attacks on horses and riders are extremely rare. These animals do not see us as normal prey and avoid all human encounters as much as possible. Bobcats or lynx are very fearful and have never been reported to have attacked a horse and rider on a casual trail ride.

If you and your horse happen upon a mountain lion on the trail, the best thing you can do is move backwards slowly. Turning and running away feels like a natural response, but can trigger the big cat to chase you. Reassure your horse as best as possible and remain calm.

There are many variables to this type of scenario, and each horse and rider may react very differently, but mostly stay calm to avoid a fall from your horse at the feet of a mountain lion. If that does happen, stand up immediately, yell loudly at the cat, and back up slowly. Do not turn away or bend over for rocks and sticks.



BEARS

We don't see many bears in Sonoma County, even though one was seen in downtown Petaluma last year and they are making a comeback in our more desolate mountain areas. If you do encounter a black bear on your trail ride, safety protocols are like that of a mountain lion encounter. When riding in bear country, watch for tracks, avoid known bear trails, especially in cub season, and wear a bell on your saddle to lessen the likelihood of any surprises for you, your horse, and the bears.



HORNETS AND WASPS

Wasp and hornet nests are particularly worrisome to us trail riders. They can attack as individuals or as a group. Worst case scenario is if you or your horse accidentally bump a nest and the disturbed wasps or hornets attack in a large

swarm. Wasps and hornets can occasionally be angered and attracted to the horse's movement and the smell of the horse's sweat.

Your only defense is to get as far away from their nest as you can, as fast as you can, especially if they're stinging you and your horse. Watch your route and footing. You don't want to flee one danger and cause another by scrambling along steep or hazardous terrain.

Ground-dwelling yellow jackets are especially aggressive if your horse happens to step in their nest hole. They can sting as viscously and repeatedly as a hornet or wasp. If you are paying attention to the trail or footing, you may see the nest first. There'll be a small depression or hole in the ground with one or more of the black and yellow insects flying in or out of it. If you or one of your trail buddies is allergic to stings, carry an EpiPen and be sure that another rider knows where you keep it and how to administer it.



COYOTES

Occasionally, we encounter coyotes and domestic dogs. Though coyotes are most often seen at dawn and at dusk, they can be seen during the middle of the day. Coyotes are most aggressive during their mating season in late February and when they have pups in summer.

Turning the horse directly toward a coyote and yelling short, loud words like "Get!" will cause a coyote to stop and flee.

Most of the time coyotes will try to avoid human confrontations. Many coyotes are very comfortable around horses and will watch you from afar, not moving at all. Coyotes have no desire to attack you or your horse. If you are out riding and a dog or wild animal seriously threatens you, report the incident to local authorities. —▷



Photo: Michele Dodge





DOGS

Most dogs are fine around horses. Assessing the situation and the dog's behavior will help you make decisions on how to handle each particular encounter. Stay calm, control your horse, and stand your ground. If the dog has an owner who has let the dog off leash, politely ask the owner to leash their dog immediately. If your horse is afraid of the dog after it is restrained because it is barking furiously as you pass, it's often safer to dismount and walk calmly by until your horse gains his confidence.

In the event of a dog attack, your priority needs to be defending yourself. If your horse is spooking, the safer option may be to dismount, unless you anticipate the dog attacking you. Driving your horse after a dog may help to break up the fight,

and most horses instinctively will kick at an attacking dog. If you're in a public area, shouting for help may bring assistance. Avoid using mace or pepper spray; it may not stop the dog and may get into your own eyes. Also, blasting an air horn or firing a warning shot is strongly ill-advised.

COWS

Most cows and calves are curious but timid. They'll stare and maybe take a few steps towards you, but if your horse moves towards them, they will likely run off quickly. Cows with newborn calves can be especially dangerous as they have the instinct to protect their babies. Most cows do not like dogs or horses around their babies.

Bulls may be another story. Beef bulls, for the most part, are docile. Dairy bulls, like the Holstein breed, can be more threatening. Unless you are actively harassing the bull or his herd, you should not have any difficult encounters.



WILD BIRDS

Riding with wild turkeys and other birds can be challenging if the terrain is tricky. Most of the time you will hear a flock of turkeys making a ruckus up ahead on the trail. My trick is to make my own noises, a short outbursts to alert them that I am coming. I am also listening to my horse and reassuring him with my voice and hand strokes that he is fine. I avoid slapping the horse with my palm as we typically see some riders do. I keep us moving forward, staying calm and keeping my seat. My horse will likely settle down as soon as the birds fly away. If he spooks and tries to bolt, I circle him until I can halt, then calm him with a soothing voice and more rubs.



Photo: Michele Dodge

SNAKES

Snakes on the trail are quite common, especially during warm weather. Most rattlesnakes flee when startled, but when they're shedding or mating they may strike out at anything that approaches. If they feel cornered, they may coil and prepare to strike. They also may strike if startled when sleeping. Rattlesnakes are most aggressive when emerging from their dens in early spring and during their mating season. Being cold-blooded, their body metabolism slows in cool weather, preventing fast movement. On hot days, they're more likely to seek shade in tall grasses. After sundown, they may lie on dirt and paved roadways, soaking in ground warmth.

When you encounter a rattlesnake, stop and wait for it to move away. You can ride around it, but be aware that there may be other snakes nearby. If the trail is narrow and the snake doesn't move away, dismount, and prod it with a long stick, or throw small rocks at it. Stay out of striking distance.



Most rattlesnakes don't have enough venom to seriously affect your horse unless he's bitten on the face, perhaps on the nose as he reaches down his head to investigate. The resulting swelling can close off air passages, causing suffocation. A bite on your horse's leg may create swelling and infection but usually isn't life-threatening.

In rattlesnake country, pack DMSO gel and a short garden hose to create an emergency air passageway by inserting it into the nostrils if your horse's throat closes after a rattlesnake bite to the face. Prior to attempting this procedure, seek advice on proper emergency application from your veterinarian. Know that this could be lifesaving.

DEER

Deer generally inhabit foothill and mountain areas, valleys, waterways, and brushy regions. Most will run away long before you even see them. Occasionally, they dart out near you and your horse spooks. Remain calm and hold your seat, and your horse will calm down with reassurance from you. If faced with an aggressive deer that doesn't leave, such as a new mother, don't panic. If the animal challenges you, don't turn and gallop off; your horse can't outrun these animals. Instead, go around it, giving it a wide berth. On a narrow trail, follow slowly behind the animal, or stop until the animal returns to the brush. Keep your distance if you see an animal with signs of rabies like wandering in the open during the day, staggering, and moving erratically.



Photo: Michele Dodge

Don't chase or corner any animal. Don't try to get a closer look. Even a small creature may attack if it feels threatened.

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The Scoop on Equine Herpes Viruses

By Michelle Beko, DVM

Hope by the time you are reading this, the concern regarding an outbreak of herpes virus this past winter and spring will be long gone. In all likelihood, however, we will be hearing about it again.

Equine herpes viruses 1 and 4 (EHV-1, EHV-4) are serious pathogens (causes of disease) in horses all over the world, with estimates reporting that over 80 percent of horses have been exposed to these viruses and have a latent infection.

EHV-4 primarily causes respiratory disease, aka colds, in horses. EHV-1 also can cause respiratory disease, but additionally it can trigger late term abortions in pregnant mares and neurologic disease.

Most horses are infected when they are foals or weanlings. On breeding farms, the foals usually can get snotty noses, fevers, and a mild cough. When the disease runs its course, rather than the virus being eliminated from their bodies, the infection becomes latent. The virus can hide in nerves and lymphatic tissue where they remain indefinitely. In this state, the virus doesn't replicate or affect the horse in any way and latently infected horses are not contagious. It can recrudesce and cause an active infection where the virus is replicating and makes the horse contagious. Thus, latently infected horses serve as a reservoir to maintain the virus in the horse population and we are unlikely to ever eliminate it. Why the virus reoccurs is unclear, although stress is thought to be a factor.

Severity Varies

EHV-1 and EHV-4 are one of the most common causes of infectious equine respiratory disease in the world. Most cases are not severe and will resolve with rest and symptomatic treatment. However, if the virus goes into the bloodstream, more serious disease may result.

Pregnant mares infected with EHV-1 will likely abort their foal late in their pregnancy or have a foal born that dies soon after birth. The mare is usually not sickened and her fertility is

not impaired. EHV-1 can cause abortion storms in which over 50 percent of the mares on a farm can lose their foals.

The most severe form of herpes virus infection in horses is the neurologic form, Equine herpes virus myelitis (EHM). If the virus infects a horse's spinal cord, it can cause vasculitis (inflamed blood vessels). It tends to affect the lower portion of a horse's spinal cord. Symptoms such as weak, wobbly hind limbs, urine dribbling, and a weak tail tone often predominate. Some infected horses are unable to stand. Many will need to be euthanized.

During an outbreak, viruses are spread primarily through respiratory secretions, i.e., through the air. However, fomites (inanimate objects) are also likely carriers. The virus can likely survive and remain infectious on clothing, leather, water troughs, bedding, and brushes for about two days. It may last on horse hair much longer.

The most common way to diagnosis EHV infections is to do a PCR test on a nasal swab and a blood sample to detect viral DNA. Monitoring horse's temperatures when they are at a show and after they return home can help detect cases early.

Outbreaks

In an outbreak of EHV-1, many horses won't get infected. Some infected horses will not show any symptoms, while others will have a fever

and no other signs. About 10 percent will get EHM. Rapid diagnosis and strict quarantine can limit the extent of the outbreak. In California, the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Animal Health Division must be notified and will assume control when EHM is diagnosed.

In February and March of this year there was an outbreak of EHV-1 in California with some neurologic cases. It started at a large hunter/jumper show in Thermal in February. From Riverside County it spread to several premises in Orange County and included cases of EHM. At the same time there were cases of EHV-1 with some EHM in San Diego, San Mateo and Sonoma Counties. Other counties also had confirmed EHV-1 cases but no EHM. The case in Sonoma County in late March was



Photo: Amanda Humphrey

Many horses with EHM will have weak tail tone, making it unusually easy to lift their tail.

unrelated to the outbreak that started in Riverside County.

All premises that had confirmed cases of EHM were placed under mandatory quarantine by CDFA; no horses were allowed to leave or enter the properties. Additionally, CDFA recommended that all equine events (shows, rodeos, clinics, etc.) where horses from multiple locations congregated be cancelled through the end of March. As of late April, there have been 23 confirmed cases of EHM in California. Eleven of those horses were euthanized and 12 survived.

BIOSECURITY IMPORTANT

Prevention of EHV outbreaks is difficult. Vaccination helps prevent respiratory disease and abortion but does not prevent EHM. Biosecurity at all equine events is important and often relies on good behavior by horse owners. Horses from one barn should remain separated from horses from other locales as much as possible. We should always avoid letting our horses sniff noses with others. Avoid petting other horses and then touching our own horse. Avoid sharing equipment such as water buckets, tack, and grooming tools. If we know our horse has been exposed, we should follow CDFA recommendations even if the horse appears to be healthy.

Fortunately, most horses who do get an EHV-1 infection will recover uneventfully. 🐾

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Joel Bartlett (2/3/41—3/31/22)

Joel Bartlett who worked as a meteorologist for more than three decades at KPIX and KGO-TV, has died at 81 at home in Santa Rosa surrounded by his family and animals.

Bartlett joined the U.S. Air Force in the 1960s and studied to become a meteorologist. He became a familiar weatherman in the region, working at KPIX for 14 years from 1974 to 1989, and then spent 17 years at KGO-TV, retiring in 2006. Following his retirement, Bartlett focused his time on helping charities in the North Bay.

The day before Joel's passing Mayor London Breed of San Francisco declared the day Joel Bartlett Day to honor his career of weatherman in the Bay Area.

The horse community knew him well as the president of the Marin Horse Council as well as an avid supporter of horses and the horse world.

The community knew him as the beloved husband and partner of Sahar Bartlett, Sonoma County Horse Council vice president.

Joyce Lashbrook (1/8/42—4/30/22)

Joyce Lashbrook's twitter handle, dutchhorsewmn, only begins to describe her life, her equestrian knowledge and her joie de vivre. Teacher, Marin Tack and Feed owner, artist, and mom, Joyce grew up in the Netherlands where after World War II she enrolled in the Teachers Training College, earn her bachelor of education degree and taught in Amsterdam. The International Institute of Education awarded her a scholarship at the University of Texas where she studied American literature and met her future husband, Bill Lashbrook, who was serving in the U.S. Air Force.

The newlyweds moved to Southern California, and then to Marin County where daughter Jessica was born. Joyce studied art at the College of Marin, taught school at Montessori, and later became a travel agent.

As riding was missing from her life, she exercised Sophia Drum's Lord Jim at what is now Creekside Equestrian Center. Eventually buying Simon, a dark bay running Quarter Horse, her rides became infamous as she and Sophia took on the most challenging trails and sometimes made new pathways with their steeds. They were frequent participants on the annual Ridge to Bridge Ride where they were often seen galloping in the lead.

As a next step, Joyce partnered with neighbor Joanie Gash to purchase Marin Tack and Feed Store in Fairfax. Joanie knew everything about farm animals, and Joyce had the equestrian knowledge. Neither had any retail experience. The shop was small, but one filled with Joyce's big-hearted enthusiasm and love of the horse community. If you walked into her store, you were greeted with a friendly hello and an abundance of customer service. The Patch, in 2010, wrote, "In the early days, Reddy the rabbit ran around loose in the store and Miles the husky wolf mix decorated the windows." For every item they sold, Lashbrook told the Patch, they bought two more, and the store slowly grew from a hobby into a real business.

Joyce contributed to the horse community throughout her life, serving on the Marin Horse Council Board of Directors, sponsoring events such as Dressage in the Wine Country, acting as an equestrian role model and running Marin Tack and Feed to provide a local alternative to online sales.

In 2012, the Fairfax store's lease ended, and Joyce retired. Jessica relocated the store to Forest Knolls in a beautifully renovated facility and carried on the Lashbrook tradition of presenting a friendly smile and enthusiastic greeting to all who entered. Simon was retired to Spirit Rock and Joyce moved to Lake County with her mother, Joepy, where she pursued the creation of pet portraits and other art pieces. She continued riding into her late 70s when health issues forced her to hang up her spurs.

As she did in all aspects of her life, Joyce savored the final chapter. She spent time in nature drinking eggnog and enjoying the company of her dog Lucy, Jessica, son-in-law RT Goodrich, and her extensive family of friends.

The many tributes from clients and friends were like these.

"You helped my daughter get her first helmet and riding boots. You were so enthusiastic and joyful about our new path to the horse world, laughing and directing us to put the zipper of our half chaps on the outside of the leg. It was always a treat to walk in the shop and visit the pack of wolf dogs plus your sleeping mother on the back couch."

"I started riding at age 48 at Dickson Ranch, and Joyce always graciously answered my questions and through Marin Tack and Feed, helped me feel part of the equestrian community. She embraced her end journey with creativity and thoughtfulness. It was a privilege to live in her universe."

In my final conversation with Joyce, she reminded me, "Life is meant to be lived to its fullest. Don't waste a precious second of it."

Linda Novy



Photo: Patti Schofler

SONOMA COUNTY THEN AND NOW

By Gwen Kilchherr and Patti Schofler

An Irish Sporthorse named Fun, a 1911 home-made aircraft, and the green fields of Petaluma are the stars of the outdoor wall mural stretching 10 feet by 75 feet across the west facing wall of the Wilco Farm Store in Petaluma and celebrating Sonoma County's agricultural history and culture.

Two years ago, Petaluma was added to the list of locations that display the works of muralist Dave Gordon of Sebastopol, who has painted over 65 murals world-wide and in Sonoma County.

As he often does, Dave engages in a painting technique known as "trompe l'oeil," meaning to fool the eye of the viewer. At the Wilco store, 1350 N. Petaluma Blvd., he sought to create the illusion that the viewer is looking through the building to view this setting.

"By creating this historical scene, the viewer can step into the mural and step back in time," described Dave, who attended the San Francisco Arts Institute and UCLA and studied painting at the École des Beaux Arts in Bourges, France. From there he hitchhiked across Europe, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal painting small murals. When he returned to the U.S. in 1983, he moved to Southern California to assist on the Los Angeles Olympics mural. The next year he was commissioned to paint an 8,400 square foot retaining wall in Santa Monica that is entitled "Unbridled" and depicts escaping carousel horses frolicking on the beach.

Today Dave has lives in West County with his wife Siri Larssen, a hunter/jumper trainer at Equus Springs in Petaluma. The gray horse Fun in the Wilco mural belongs to Siri's client Lena Cullen of Greenbrae, now a student at University of California at Davis and a rider for the equestrian team. The dog was modeled after Dave's dog Mac, a McNab, which is a breed that originated in Hopland, Mendocino County.

Fred Wiseman's 1911 historic flight from Petaluma to Santa Rosa, on which he carried a letter from Mayor George P. McNear of Petaluma to Mayor James Edwards of Santa Rosa, represented the first airmail flight in the United States.

Children living life on the farm in the mural are Anya Myers and Casey Grace, who ride at Equus Springs. Tom the goat greedily eats the tasty wisteria leaves.



Curious about how such a huge art piece can be made? **Artist Dave Gordon**, standing before his mural, explained.

"The mural design starts by factoring in the site, local landscape, history, and potential resonance for the community. In developing the design, I take in consideration that this is a public space, and that big walls should be open to big ideas. Composition is worked out at a one inch to one foot scale. In the studio, the non-woven polyester sections are primed, the sketch is executed, and the painting begins. I use Novacolor acrylic paints for their excellent light fastness qualities and good color selection. The painting is eighty percent finished in studio and then installed onsite with an acrylic adhesive. The process is similar to rolling out 25-foot sections of wallpaper. Since in this mural, the image is 10 feet high, two sections of painting are used to cover the wall, using double cuts to obscure the butt edges. After working out the final details and highlights of the painting onsite, an isolation coat is applied, followed by two coats of a UV resistant satin finish varnish."



For the Love of Animals and Their People

By Laurie Weissman

Horse Journal • Summer 2022
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When disaster has caused emus, African cranes, alpacas, llamas, koi, dogs, cats, horses, donkeys, mules, goats, chickens, pigs, sheep and ducks to escape to one place, it hasn't been just to Noah's ark. In Sonoma County, disaster has brought these creatures together in an equally significant form of rescue under the wing of Sonoma Community Animal Response Team (Sonoma CART).

In the past few years, Sonoma CART has sheltered and rehomed more than 10,000 animals with care from over 200 days of volunteer deployment, with an estimated 5,000 animals from the 2019 Kincadee fire, 2,500 from the 2020 Walbridge and Meyers fires, and 4,000 from the 2020 Glass Fire. During that time, over 1,000 animals were provided with free veterinary care.

According to its mission, Sonoma CART is a volunteer, community-led, non-profit organization whose goal is to ensure the best possible outcome and welfare for every animal in our community that is affected by a disaster. Through the partnership with Sonoma County Animal Services, local animal response agencies, and other non-profit organizations, they work together to aid in animal evacuation, transport, sheltering, and re-unification during and immediately after an emergency, accident, or disaster.

As advocates for animals during disasters, Sonoma CART has an all-hazards, all-species approach, which has meant caring for all critters that need their assistance. The Sonoma County Fairgrounds has been a sanctuary for large animals and uniquely offers cohabitation sheltering for domestic pets and their people. Sonoma Horse Park has been and continues to be a haven for displaced horses during emergencies, offering a valuable home away from home when disaster strikes.

OUT OF THE ASHES OF TUBBS FIRE

Sonoma CART was formed out of the ashes of the 2017 Tubbs Fire. During that disaster, Amber Bowen, D.V.M., was called to the Sonoma County Fairgrounds large animal shelter to care for burned and sick animals. The impromptu shelter was severely disorganized, and local community members were trying to help but didn't know how.

For more than 25 days, and with assistance from other local professionals, the Sonoma County Horse Council, the Sonoma County Fairgrounds, retired fire and emergency responders, and key volunteers, over 2,000 animals were sheltered. Approximately 850 animals were treated for burns, stress, and colic. Many were transferred to local animal hospitals or the University of California, Davis.

After the disaster, approximately 50 community members and representatives from local animal agencies and non-profit organizations met to review the incident and the effect the disaster had on animals and the animal community. At that time, Dr. Bowen was elected to spearhead Sonoma CART, and in 2018, with the critical help of Sonoma County Animal Services Director Brian Whipple and Napa CART Director Claudia Sonder, Sonoma CART was born.

Today, Sonoma CART has seven board of director members, 15 team leaders, and more than 400 registered volunteers. Standing ready to activate in assistance to Sonoma County Animal Services, Sonoma CART's specialized teams are led by local veterinarians, vet technicians, nurses, paralegals, and others with more than 10 years of animal handling experience who have taken required Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) training courses, while also contributing to Sonoma CART's own volunteer training curriculum.

WORKING WITH COUNTY SERVICES

"Hands down our greatest accomplishment is working directly with our county and emergency services to provide the same services to animals during a disaster that humans receive. By implementing the animal-disaster service workers program,



Photo: Patti Schofler

Despite the difficulty of the disaster, some evacuees tried to look their best.



Photo: Patti Schofler

A gathering of goats at the fairgrounds

we are able to coordinate trained and safe community volunteers, side-by-side with emergency responders to safely rescue and care for our community's animals," said Dr. Bowen, president of Sonoma CART.

On the other hand, "the greatest need is for volunteers to organize behind the scenes and in non-disaster times. Our volunteer training courses are inspiring examples of our community's compassion towards animals, led by experts, taught to capable, generous, caring volunteers."

Last January, new and returning volunteers attended ZOOM meetings to stay engaged, while trainings are now in-person at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds. By June, Sonoma CART had provided 10 volunteer training courses in preparation for the next disaster. Hands-on experience has included learning to halter and haul horses, pigs, and goats, how to wrap a kitty in a blanket burrito, and proper in-take protocols to ensure that animals and owners feel safe and receive the support they seek.

Thanks to generous donations, Sonoma CART has stocked emergency trailers expertly organized with essential equipment to assist with animal evacuation, veterinary care, and emergency sheltering. These trailers require regular replenishment as incidents occur. During a disaster, Sonoma CART provides 24-hour care, food and water, and veterinary care for the animals at their shelters with no cost to owners.

"Our goal is to continue to support our community and educate the public on the importance of animal disaster preparedness and response. We are pushing for recognition at the state emergency service level and a future statewide animal disaster plan," explained Dr. Bowen.

Among the ways to become involved with Sonoma CART are:

- Register to volunteer and get trained to assist when Sonoma CART is deployed by Sonoma County Animal Services
- Help behind the scenes with administrative duties
- Work the telephone hotline
- Volunteer for the dispatch team, large animal sheltering team or the companion animal sheltering team
- Get trained, get certified, and join the animal search and rescue team
- Donate
- Get started at www.sonomacart.org.

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"Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet" is the first line of an 1892 poem by Rudyard Kipling. If we substituted the word "east" with English and "west" with western, we might ask ourselves if Kipling's statement applies to these two seemingly different ways to enjoy horses. Or, are horses simply horses?

EAST MEETS WEST



For this issue we wondered how East and West approach backing up or the rein back. To find out we asked cutting trainer Chris Brown representing the western horse arena and dressage trainer Bethany Wallace describing the English horse world.

CHRIS BROWN (CB): For over 30 years Chris has trained and shown cutting horses while focusing on instructing non-pro riders to be successful competitors. He has been active in building local cutting associations and was a founder, past president, and a lifetime member of the Vintage Cutting Horse Association. Further, Chris has served as a National Cutting Horse Association AAA-rated judge.

Hailing from Australia, Chris spent eight years as a jackaroo (an agricultural intern) in the Outback learning ranch operations. In 1972, he came to the United States to expand his knowledge of the training and breeding of American Quarter Horses. During his travels in the U.S., he learned the cutting horse trade from Leon Harrel, one of the cutting industry's top trainers and competitors. After a few years, Chris opened his own cutting horse training ranch in Santa Rosa. He is the recipient of the Sonoma County Horse Council's Equus Award and the Best of Santa Rosa Award.

BETHANY WALLACE (BW): A US Dressage Federation bronze medalist, certified member of the American Riding Instructors Association, and a professional trainer for 19 years, Bethany has focused on dressage while including in her program cross training on the trail and work over cavalletti and jumps. After competing as a teen in hunter/jumper shows in Virginia, where she grew up, she became passionate about dressage as a young adult and pursued her passion when she moved to San Diego, where she trained with Grand Prix trainers Suzan Strahan and Sandy Burns-Gardner, whose coaching helped her move up the levels to earn scores in the mid-sixties at Intermediare 1. Currently she clinics with Paul Belasik.

In 2015, Bethany moved to Northern California where she operates her business Dreamtime Sport Horses at Hawkwood Hill Farm in Petaluma.

We asked our experts:

Why train a horse to back?

CB: As most of what I do is toward working cattle, turning is an important move. Backing is the basis for the horse to turn around

on the hindquarters as opposed to their front end. It's a must for what we do. Backing can get you out of dangerous situations, especially in cutting. You have to be able to back up. Otherwise, your horse will have too much forward motion going into the turn and you end up on top of the cow. It's a definite part of getting them collected and getting them working off their hocks. Also, this move can help to bring your horse together if he gets upset or nervous about something.

My whole theory of training horses is based on pressure and release. By having a horse back off the bit, bridle or hackamore, you teach him how to give to you and giving is the basis of all my training efforts.

BW: The rein back improves maneuverability and provides an element of safety under saddle. In the dressage test the rein back is included so the rider can demonstrate the horse's obedience. However, what I find most important is the way it teaches the horse to rebalance. If you have a straight rein back with the horse soft in the jaw and mouth, and rounding underneath you, you can get a nice weight shift back on to the haunches. Then horse can engage the thoracic sling muscles and lift the shoulder, which is fundamental for collection.

I use the rein back as a step in teaching the half halt, our ultimate rebalancing tool. If the horse gets on the forehand, I begin with trot-walk-trot transitions so the horse understands shifting weight to the hindquarters. Sometimes I go down to the walk and the horse still doesn't rebalance and is on my hand. Then I will halt. If the horse still leans on my hand, I do a rein back as the final link for the horse to find a way to shift weight to the hindquarters. When he does, we can go forward in balance. There is a fine line between using that as a correction in a calm way and in getting after the horse. I do use it in half halt training, but it has to be handled in a patient and calm manner, not in a rough or punishing way.

The beauty of the whole exercise is when the horse gets that

weight shift back to the haunches, then you can go forward with energy for at least a few strides, if not more, without the horse going on the forehand. With repetition the horse will anticipate the rein back in the downward transition and sit more, at which point you can start to develop a more subtle half halt.

How do you train a horse to back?

CB: I don't call it backing. I call it giving. Often when people want to back a horse, they just pull. The more you pull, the less the horse gives and then people pull harder or they change to a bigger bit and keep pulling until the horse gives in and backs up. With most horses, if you just pull on them, they will resist you. You have to get a horse's spine to raise in order for it to back, and he can't do that if he's braced.

I have found that if I teach a horse to bend one way or the other from a little pressure from my inside leg, he moves his feet, and moving the feet is the main part of backing. I found that if I bent him and got him to move his feet, he would back. And then he gave to the bit. This method avoids that resistance and keeps him light.

When I start horses from the get go, I teach them to give to pressure, to give their head and draw back into themselves. I teach them to back by teaching them to bend first, and then I'll softly hold on to the head with my reins. With my inside leg, I'll push the hindquarters over. This way you teach the horses that every time you put light pressure on them, they give.

It's all about giving to pressure, whether it's your leg or your hand. The point is to get the horse more collected. Once the back comes up and the head drops a little, you'll find the horse gets light enough in the mouth.

BW: I start teaching the rein back on the ground first. It's important to me that the horse has a light feeling backing up in the halter before I do it in a bridle. I work on the horse giving to pressure and I provide a release as soon as the horse tries. Often using a rope halter, I start with pressure on the nose, asking him to soften, drop the nose in, arch the neck a little and then move back with nice energy. Then, in hand and with the horse in a bridle, I do the same thing, this time with the horse learning to give to pressure from the bit instead of on the nose.

Only then do I look for under saddle yielding to the bit and backing with the same quality. Teaching first the ground gives me the option that if the horse becomes confused under saddle, I can hop off and re-explain it to them on the ground.



How to Keep Farriers Happy

By M.A. Taft-McPhee

A list of what to do for your farrier usefully starts with any number of “don’ts.” Don’t let your kid run under the horse. Don’t throw your dog a tennis ball over the horse’s back. Don’t let your horse bite the farrier’s neck. Don’t expect the farrier to do “just a couple of extra horses” when you scheduled one.

And yet these examples barely touch the possible ways a farrier’s day could go from good to bad, and say nothing about what makes a positive experience for her. Even with the best intentions, it can seem like a mystery how to keep this hardworking and sometimes mercurial figure happy. So what does your farrier actually want?

The single most important aspect is safety. It’s easy to forget that horses can be dangerous and unpredictable when we spend so much wonderful time around them without an incident. As a farrier, however, I am reminded daily that it’s a dangerous job by nature, which can be made much more so by the conditions in which we work. My colleagues and I crave the opportunity to do our best for your horses without having to worry unduly about keeping ourselves safe from harm.

Given how many pieces of this puzzle we can’t control, like a deer popping out of the woods next to the barn, it becomes that much more important to control the things we can with good horsemanship. Buckle your halters fully. Always tie with a safe release. Never wrap your lead rope around your hand. When someone is underneath your horse with a burning hot piece of steel, these are more important.

A SAFE PLACE

We need a safe space to work, one with secure and level footing and space enough to get away from the horse if something goes wrong. We need good lighting, preferably away from major barn traffic, and, ideally, not used while other horses are being fed or turned out. If this has to happen, or if other potentially scary disruptions are imminent, giving your farrier a heads up so they can be mindful is much appreciated.

We need a safe horse who is trained to tie or stand properly. Feed him before the appointment. If your horse gets anxious in cross ties, hold him until he can be trusted on his own. Holding your horse means being attentive to what is going on around you, not smoking or playing on your phone or getting deep into a conversation about barn gossip. Pay attention to where you stand while your farrier is working. I like my client on the opposite side for a front foot and the same side for the hind. Or ask her what she prefers. Be aware that movement of his head and neck can significantly change his weight and balance while the farrier is holding his hoof.

Young horses are more difficult because everything is new, and that’s OK. But don’t expect us to train your horse for you while we are working. They should regularly get their feet picked up and held for a while to get them used to what needs to be done. The training issue applies to all horses. If yours doesn’t stand, hire a trainer to help you until the horse does, and tell your farrier what to expect so she can make appropriate decisions.



PATIENCE ABOUT SCHEDULING

When it comes to scheduling, we ask for patience and understanding. Almost everyone who has owned a horse has had the experience of waiting what seems like forever for the farrier to get back to you about a simple question. Often, however, it’s not that simple. Your farrier is likely balancing existing appointments, emergency situations, waiting to hear back from other clients and trying to schedule stops in reasonable geographic proximity while leaving time for the inevitable last minute changes. They’re often without cell service or working under a horse. Honor your appointment if at all possible and make sure your

horse is ready when the farrier arrives. If you’re not hearing from her, consider that she may be trying to set up what will work best for all. When you do call, please leave relevant details for better results. This includes schedule contingencies, any flexibility you may have, and if the horse lost a shoe, from what foot and whether you were able to find the shoe.

KEEP US IN THE LOOP

Most of us go into this business because we like horses and want them to be sound and happy in their jobs. Let us know about the horse’s training, what may have changed, and include us in conversations about their hoof care rather than passing on instructions from the vet, the chiropractor, or the clinician. We have insight into how his hoof is growing and loading and what is possible to achieve mechanically and would love to discuss this with other professionals while getting their valuable feedback. We do not, however, need to hear about the random person at the barn who has an opinion on heel height or toe length or whatever it may be.

Please consider that we have trained and apprenticed to gain knowledge that the average person does not have, and that farriery works over time. If you have questions about why we’re doing something a certain way, we are happy to explain.

Communication is key in all things, but it can often be difficult when talking about tough topics. If you’re consistently finding yourself on the short end of the stick with your farrier, maybe there’s an unstated reason. Have you been late with your bills, forgotten appointments or failed to train your horse to stand quietly? If you aren’t responding to their requests to change the conditions they’re working in, they may be tired of asking or resigned to the situation. If you don’t know what your farrier likes, take a moment to ask her. Perhaps a simple change can make things better for you both.

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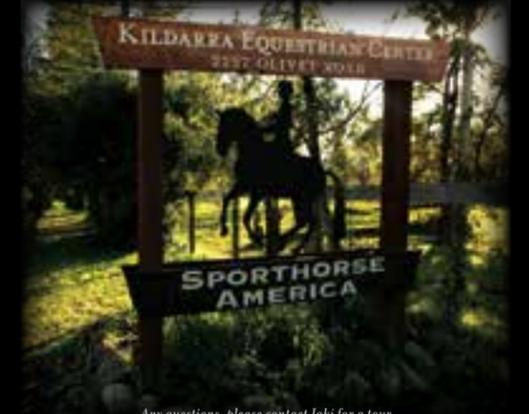
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