



News Letter

AMWELL VALLEY TRAIL ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2010

WELCOME TO SPRING, OR IS IT?



When I begin this spring newsletter I always worry that if I say the trails are open we will have 3 weeks of rain and if I don't we will be in the midst of a drought by the time it gets to you and I will be getting nasty emails and phone calls about how stupid I am. Ah well! I have to bite the bullet and this time I go with "TRAILS ARE OPEN!" BUT please remember that there are always wet spots in the spring!

Do not go through them.

The deep holes you create now are the ones that will trip your horse this summer and make the trails uninviting for our hiking members. Lets all hope that this will be a long cool spring and not too hot summer with a moderate amount of rain.

The Eclectic Equestrian "To Vet or Not to Vet: That is the question!"

By Susan R.G. Lax

Spring is here even if it may not have sprung full force yet. That means our horses are moving off of snow, slippery ice, the challenge of drinking and other winter effects on their health and moving toward the problems Spring brings: cuts and scrapes from the trails or pastures in need of Spring mending, new grass, toxic plants, mud wrecking havoc on hooves and legs, and the Spring diseases brought on by the Spring bugs. The list seems endless. Someone remind me why we own these fragile beasts?

If we called the vet every time our horse came in from the pasture with a cut or a limp, many of us would not be able to afford including them in our lives. Those of us who have had the same horse for years have learned – sometimes the hard way – when to call the vet and when we can trust our own home remedy.

So, we stock our tack room or our lockers or our tack trunks with the accoutrements of equine home health care: vet wraps, ointments, Betadine, alcohol, sterile saline solution, equine bandages, human bandages, surgical tape, duct tape, surgical scissors, poultices, Epsom salt, rectal thermometers, flashlight, even an inexpensive stethoscope. Am I missing something? I'm sure you all have a list of items you've learned to keep on hand over the years due to some injury or ailment.

My first horse job when I was eleven was working for a farm owner named Patty Devine, an old Irishman who had been around horses, I think, since birth. He would never let us clean all the cobwebs out of the barn for fear of not having his indispensable medical tool: cobwebs. If a horse was bleeding – or a human – he'd scoop up three fingers of cobwebs and apply it to the wound to coagulate the blood. Worked like a charm and I have since used it on horse – and human, perhaps to the chagrin of both my vet and doctor!

We are miles away from Patty Devine's first-aid kit even in terms of the brand we now have and the diversity of product. Back in the day, it seemed we had that one tube of Corona, Betadine, "blueing" and cotton wraps and paper. When my horse needs leg wraps now, its designer all the way, with matching colors and the latest in poultice wear.

So when does home remedy step aside for the real McCoy and the phone call is made to your vet? Dr. Laurie Cameron, equine veterinarian and Sport Horse breeder, said typical emergencies tend to involve the eyes, lameness, colic and wounds. I would like to thank Dr. Cameron for responding to my questions.

Sometimes the decision to call the veterinarian depends on the horse's temperament. If the horse allows the owner to gently rinse debris from a swollen eye, that is all the care that may be necessary. For other horses that are extremely sensitive and unwilling to let an owner even get near them, it is best to have veterinary attention. In

general, eye conditions in horses can deteriorate rapidly, so when in doubt, it is best to have a veterinary evaluation.

Lameness depends on the severity and the history of the horse. For example, if the farrier just shod the horse, you may have him come out first to check for an abscess or a tight nail.

In the case of Colic, Cameron always prescribes a call to the vet. Let your vet hear the severity of the symptoms and make a determination as to whether you can wait it out or a barn call is necessary as soon as possible. "Early evaluation and treatment can often limit further complications," Cameron said. It is a good idea to have a bottle of Banamine in for refrigerator if you are comfortable with giving shots.

Wounds depend on location. Any wounds around joints and tendon sheaths should always be evaluated. Sometimes the smallest puncture wound enters a vital structure like a joint capsule. Early evaluation and treatment is the key to a successful outcome.

Waiting a few days can let an infection do permanent damage which can lead to chronic lameness. A problem such as excessive salivation that often occurs during the warmer weather requires the horse owner to evaluate the circumstances. If there are no other physical abnormalities but excess amounts of saliva when the horse opens its mouth, it could be due to a mold that grows on the Clover leaves found out in the pasture. The mold produces a chemical called "slaframine", which can be an irritant to a horse's salivary glands.

Horse owners should be aware that their horses are susceptible to this. The first time looks scary but if you know your horse, subsequent times are messy but not alarming. This is typically resolved over the phone with the instructions to remove the horse from the pasture for 24 hours.

On the other hand, saliva combined with food material coming out of mouth and nostrils, obvious discomfort, coughing, typically but not always after a grain meal suggests a scenario of esophageal choke, according to Cameron. She said the vet's initial instructions include placing the horse on crossties and gently massaging the left side of the trachea to reduce the obstruction. In about half of these cases this is all that is needed and will resolve as the veterinarian is en route. If it does not resolve in a short time period, the horse needs veterinary attention to resolve the obstruction as So, horse owners, be on the alert! Know your horse. When in doubt, call your vet. Remember, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure so vaccinations, mended fences, clean and safe barns and well-fitting tack should be included in your list of keeping your horse safe, sound and healthy!

AMWELL VALLEY TRAILFEATHERS

Save the Date: Saturday, May 15th



We will meet at the Hummel's at the entrance to the Sourland Preserve on Rileyville Road at 8:00. Coffee and snack will be available. We have decided to try to actually be a registered competitive team this year. Our good birder and former AVTA member Lynn Rosania is coming up from North Carolina to join us!

We will post more information on our web site in the next week or so please to WWW.avta.net to see what we are planning.

Big Redfellow, 1980 - 2010



He was too big, too old, too much horse, and was a "roarer". I offered the seller a silly price with an attitude of "I guess this one will do for now". How could I have known that this nameless horse would become my beloved Redfellow, life companion.

He was a brave trail horse who sometimes questioned my sanity but did it anyway, who would show anyone the way, who saved me on many occasions, and always wanted to go a little faster! He loved Hunter Paces and could passage and piaffe like a Grand Prix dressage horse on the trails, but strangely could not feel a spur on the flat in the indoor!!! He was a clown – with a well developed sense of humor, playing games with people who came to muck his stall and pretending to intimidate new riders. He could be aloof, and was very embarrassed when kissed in public, but he became a lesson horse extraordinaire. Young riders moving off ponies loved him and were always so proud to graduate to riding a big, long striding, forward but safe horse. He did not buck once in all the years we were together.

Despite advancing years and Cushings taking their toll and spoiling his looks he continued to work through last summer, and when I retired him in the fall he lived out his last few months at pasture as a respected Elder Statesman in the herd. He died as we would all wish for our old four-legged friends, quickly, in the field. Feisty to the end, he even tried to eat the hay we put under his head to keep it out of the mud! I am just thankful that he chose to leave us before the terrible weather of March 14.

We were together for 13 years, and he leaves a hole in my heart that will be impossible to fill. Goodnight old friend, rest in peace.

Di Huns



Are Those HORSES Ahead??

By Roni Decesare

So, you and your friends are out enjoying some rolling hills, beautiful scenery and farms. Nature at its best. But wait, up ahead, are those people on horses?? Did that last turn take us to Montana by mistake? No worries, let's just spin past them. They don't seem to be moving very fast; and they ARE taking up a good part of the road. And, hey, remember Mister Ed? Or, those slow, smelly horses at that dude ranch?

Well, whoa, yourself. Rural NJ and Pennsylvania are home to numerous horses and riders. And, since you may not have had many encounters with them, here are some suggestions to keep in mind when you might have to share the roads with horses.

Take size and weight. Bicycle--25 pounds or less, 3 1/2 feet or so high, comprised of lightweight metal and two tires. Horse—1,200 pounds, or more; height 5 1/2 to -6 1/2 feet tall.

Even more important, regardless of their size and weight, horses are prey animals. Despite centuries of domestication, their instincts take over and self-preservation rules when they feel real or imagined danger. From a horse's point of view, when something moves suddenly, or sneaks up from behind—all that he thinks about is getting out of Dodge pronto. In seconds, a horse can suddenly change from a peaceful animal, quietly walking along to bolting, spinning around, or doing whatever it takes to get away from the perceived threat. If that happens—the cyclist, the horse and rider—can all get hurt.

What to do? When coming up behind people on horseback or driving a horse and cart, be safety-minded and courteous. Slow your speed, ride single file and alert the riders to your presence. A simple "hi" or "coming up behind you" will do. Often horseback riders, upon seeing upcoming cyclists, call out a greeting. Please respond! Not only are they being friendly, but they want the horses to know that bicyclists--although moving along the road on strange, quiet, shiny devices, wearing helmets and making no noise-- are humans, and not a pack of predators.

Please don't try to sneak by or try weaving between a group of riders. Horses have exceptional peripheral vision, as do most prey animals. The most experienced horse-person is relatively ineffectual in trying to control a scared horse on a paved road. In fact, when horseback riders see on-coming cyclists or vehicular traffic, where possible, they will generally relinquish the road until it has passed.

BTW: if you transport your bike by car or truck, remember that it's the Law in New Jersey and in other States that, "when approaching or passing a person riding or driving a horse, the driver of the vehicle must slow down to 25mph or less and proceed with caution. And, at the request of, or signal from, the person riding or driving the horse, the operator of the vehicle must stop until the horse passes. "

Whether on horseback or on bicycles, or in vehicles, we all have something in common, we love the beauty and tranquility found in this area. Let's share it with consideration for all.



HORSE CAMP AT TOY BOX FARM

My great-niece, Lexy, is crazy about two things...horses, and writing. Lexy is twelve years old, and carries a pad and pencil everywhere she goes, constantly jotting down words and ideas that describe her experiences, writing stories and poems for and about her friends, teachers, and family members. She lives in Pittsburgh and comes to visit us here in NJ with her family in the summer. Her favorite thing about her visits has always been spending time with our horses... feeding them, petting them, grooming, bathing and leading them...writing poems about them. She'd beg to ride them, but we never allowed it because it wasn't a safe thing to do.



Two years ago we thought it would be fun for Lexy to have riding lessons, so that year she came to NJ a week earlier than the rest of her family so that she could go to horse camp. After searching all around the area for an appropriate situation, we made arrangements with Di Huns for Lexy to attend horse camp at Toy Box Farm. It was a good decision. The group of students at camp was to be very small, and became even smaller when some of the girls dropped out and left only two in the class, Lexy and Emma. It was perfect, almost like private lessons. Emma was a little younger than Lexy, but had had lots of riding experience with Di at Toy Box already, so she took Lexy under her wing and showed her all around the barn, introduced her to all the horses, showed her where to stow her things and where to find everything she'd need.

The horse Di selected for Lexy to ride the first year was Jack, a small, steady lesson horse, perfect for a beginner. Lexy learned that Jack was a thoroughbred who, because of his diminutive stature, had not done well on the race track. He then became a polo pony, but lost sight in one eye when he was struck with a ball or mallet, moved on to become a therapy horse, and now teaches beginners and timid riders at Toy Box Farm.

After dropping Lexy off at the farm on the first day of camp, I stayed for a little while to watch. Di and Emma took Lexy to the tack room where they chose a saddle. Lexy learned how to put Jack on cross-ties and groom him. Then she attempted to saddle him. Having never seen an English saddle before, she couldn't tell one end from the other and put the saddle on backwards. "Look at the saddle, Lexy," Di said, "and tell me what's wrong." Lexy looked and looked, but couldn't tell what was wrong. They all had a good laugh when she finally figured out the problem.

Lessons were done in the big indoor ring at Toy Box, but along with riding time, Lexy also learned about grooming, bathing and leading, cleaning tack, picking hooves and picking up manure, as well. She helped feed the horses and got to know all of their names. When I'd pick her up at the end of each day, she'd take me all through the barns and tell me who each one was, which she liked best, and why. She was in heaven.

At the end of the week her family arrived for their visit, and we all went to the farm to watch the last day's riding lesson. I was thrilled. Lexy had gone, in one week, from putting the saddle on backwards to posting at the trot. Di is a good and infinitely patient teacher, and seemed to have worked wonders. She encouraged Lexy's parents to continue with riding lessons at home, which they promised they would try to do.

This past summer Lexy went to horse camp at Toy Box for the second time, and once again enjoyed a small class. She rode a bigger horse named Clay this time and rode in the outdoor ring as well as the indoor. The end of the week found her cantering and steering a varied course as well as riding the circle of the ring. Her biggest challenge was riding from the barn to the ring at the beginning of the lesson, and riding back to the barn at the end. This sounds like a simple thing, but it was the first time she had ridden outside of a ring and had to control the horse without being enclosed by walls or fence rails. She was nervous, but she did it and was so proud of herself.

My sister, who lives in Pittsburgh, says that I've "created a monster." All Lexy talks about at home is horses, horses, horses. Lexy called me on the phone a little while ago. "Aunt Lynn," she said excitedly. "I just read an ad in the paper. There's this guy that owns two horses. He works and doesn't have time to ride them very much. The ad says that he needs someone to ride and exercise them every day!! He lives near Heartwood Acres, (a big park near her home, with lots of woods and fields and trails) and the horses can be ridden on the trails there. It says that the person can have full use of the horses at any time !! What do you think? Should I do it ???!" I think my sister's right.

It took a while to convince Lexy that two weeks of horse camp didn't make her an independent rider as yet, along with the fact that she doesn't drive and can't get to the barn on her own. She was pretty disappointed, but was happier when my niece, Kathy, found a farm in the outskirts of Pittsburgh where she took trail riding classes on Paso Finos, and invited Lexy to join her. Now they both go trail riding together with an instructor once a week, and once again, Lexy is in heaven.

Classifieds

TO SEE MORE CLASSIFIEDS GO TO WWW.AVTA.NET

STALLS AVAILABLE:

Crosswinds Farm Rileyville Road East Amwell 1 stall available \$600 plus tax amenities include indoor and outdoor rings, daily turnout and direct access to AVTA trails. Call Trishka Waterbury (609) 466-1717

TOY BOX FARM East Amwell

(609) 466-0720 or (609) 466-0629 Carol Blackman 3 stalls available includes daily turnout, newly renovated and expanded indoor ring, outside dressage ring, outside jumping ring, cross country jumps and trail access just outside door. Lessons available for all levels.

EQUINE SPORTS MASSAGE THERAPY

Denise Gonsiewski C.E.S.M.T. (973) 650-1975 denise@equineathleteusa.com PO Box 243 Franklin Park, NJ 08823 Call to set up a consult and 10 point check of your equine friend

at no charge. Canine massage is also available.

HORSE FOR SALE

Back Surgery has made me unable to continue to ride Topaz, my 11 yr old, 15.3h, Quarter Horse mare (palomino). She is well-schooled (Toy Box Farm), good on trails (in groups or alone), likes to jump, lower level dressage. She would be a good Pony Club and family horse. She is for sale for \$5,500. I also have 2 County saddles (dressage & all-purpose) fitted for her which would be available for sale. A YouTube video of Topaz is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IRZN1vS1YBo> If interested in providing a new home for my golden girl, please contact: Edlyn Meringolo at (609)-466-6717 (H), (609)-206-1293 (C) or emeringolo@comcast.net

STALL BOARDING

Keona Farm now has stalls available. Private farm in Ringoes, NJ. Full care 10x12 matted stalls with shavings. Excellent care and relaxed family atmosphere. Perfect for retired horses or mature riders. \$250+/month. Call (609) 397-6598 or email info@keonafarm.com web site: <http://keonafarm.com/index.shtml>

QUALITY HORSE HAY FOR SALE

*Discount offered to AVTA Trail Members *

MADE FOR HORSES BY PEOPLE WHO OWN HORSES. 1ST cutting timothy/orchard grass mix, \$5.00 per bale. 2ND cutting orchard grass (ALPACAS LOVE IT TOO) \$6.00 per bale. Contact carl @732-735-6109 Saturday Pickup at Barn10:00AM-4:00PM LIL' RR FARMS LLC, FLEMINGTON, N J

Minumal Charge for Delivery within 10 miles. For quantities of 100 bales or more call for price.

BEAVER CREEK EQUESTRIAN CENTER "UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT"

46 Wertsville Road Ringoes, NJ 08551 We are a boarding facility with the following amenities: Full-Board at \$650/month, Available soon Rough-Board at \$300/month 12 x 12 stalls, 300' by 110' indoor riding arena with new footing, 100' by 300' outdoor riding arena, full-scale dressage arena, 60' round pen, generous amounts of grassy turn-out. Direct access to the Amwell Valley Trail System. Many clinics will be offered this year starting in April 2010. Contact: Jen Pollard (732) 485-6173

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