



New York State Horse Council

To create a strong unified voice for all interests toward
preservation of a future for horses in New York

**Third Issue 2020
(July, August & September)**



Photo provided by
fellow NYSHC member
Anne Zahradnik of her
horse Treetime

2020 NYSHC Officers

If you have any questions regarding the NYSHC feel free to contact the officers or the VP and Directors in your Region.

President: Shannon Budnik (2020) Email: shannon.budnik@nyshc.org Phone: 845-436-7669	Treasurer: Stephen Ropel (2020) Email: stephen.ropel@nyshc.org Phone: 518-366-8998
Exec Vice-President: Sue Knauer (2020) Email: susan.knauer@nyshc.org Phone: 585-230-3720	Recording Secretary Sarah E.J. Collier (2021) Email: sarah.collier@nyshc.org Phone: 585-709-6076

NYSHC Regional Contacts

Feel free to call or e-mail your regional contact person with any questions or problems you have.

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Sharon Young Slate – Director
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Pauline Burnes – Director
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Barb Cunningham – Director
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Letter from the Executive Board

2020 - THE YEAR WE ALL STAYED HOME

COVID-19 is still haunting New York – although we are currently in better shape than many other states.

On June 11 New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) re-opened horse barns and show facilities (with limitations), much to the relief of many. We are proud to point out that New York State Horse Council (NYSHC) was prompt in getting the word out to many people via email, our COVID-19 web page, Facebook, and Word Press activities. Detailed info is available on NYSHC.org, under News/Events:

<https://nyshccovid19.wordpress.com/>; <https://nyshc.org/post.php?pid=121>; also information about creating an emergency plan for horse care: <https://nyshc.org/post.php?pid=147>

Additionally, the NYSHC partnering with CCE Equine of CCE Saratoga County has completed a survey on the impact of COVID-19 on equine related businesses and is reported in this newsletter. If anyone has had serious problems maintaining their horses, please let me know: Susan Knauer (585) 230-3720 or Susan.Knauer@nyshc.org.

We regret to announce that our Annual General Membership meeting, planned for Oct. 24th at Houghton College, has been cancelled. The College needs to protect its students and does not want large groups. Although the in-person Annual General Meeting is canceled, the NYSHC is required to conduct certain official business at the AGM such as having its members elect Officers and Directors, approve the Treasurer's report and the minutes from the 2019 AGM at Brookfield - this will be done by mail and/or email, or a ZOOM conference. Please stay tuned for future communication from us via mail and email on information on our Virtual AGM.

The Madison County Fairgrounds, host of the NYSHC Fall Pleasure Ride on Columbus Day weekend (52 years!), has just notified us that it will be unable to hold the Ride this year, but hopes to do so next year.

It has been a frustrating year for everyone, but the NYSHC is proud to have served the horse community. As a statewide organization, recognized in Albany, we have been able to accomplish a lot. We hope to plan more activities for next year!

Sincerely,
Susan Knauer
Acting President,
Executive Vice President

Volunteers Wanted - NYSHC NOMINATIONS **2021 Officers, Directors and Committee Chairs**

The following officer and director positions will be up for election this year for 2021. There are usually five (5) board of director's meetings; two-three (2-3) in Binghamton, one (1) teleconference and one (1) annual general membership meeting per year that moves around the state so local members can attend. This years meeting has been canceled due to COVID-19.

These are the people helping horse people and activities in NY. State Issues: COVID-19 Guidelines and updates, horse boarding eligible for agricultural tax exemption, improvements to NYS Fairgrounds horse show facilities, supporting carriage drivers in NYC. Recreational activities: Brookfield Fall Pleasure Ride, Competitive Trail Ride clinic and ride. Educational: Annual general membership meeting. Chapters of the NYSHC operate clinics, trail rides and EquiFest in Hamburg NY. Our website nyshc.org provides listing of horse related businesses and horse trails in NY state.

Please either call me or send an e-mail if you are interested in a position or would like to nominate someone for a position up for election. You must be or become a current member of the NYSHC for a NYSHC position. Please correspond on/or before August 30, 2020.

Susan Knauer ~

SUSAN.KNAUER@nyshc.org

(585) 413-3775 - (585) 230-3720

Incumbents up for re-election are named below. Regions are also described on website nyshc.org under News/Events, click Chapter News.

Officers:

- Pres. -vacant
- V.P. -Sue Knauer
- Treas. -Steve Ropel
-

Regional V.P.

- Capital -Marsha Himler
- Central - Gary Slate
- Finger Lakes - Dru Malavase
- Southern Tier - Wendy Wakula
- Western - Lissette Ruotollo

Directors:

- Capital: 1 vacant
- Central: Dan Gruen
- Finger Lakes - 1 vacant
- Mid-Hudson: 1 vacant
- Northern: Mary Beth Green
-
- Southeast: 2 vacant
- Southern Tier: 1 vacant
- Western: Barb Cunningham

NYSHC Regional Map



HORSE COUNCIL REGIONAL REPORTS & UPDATES

Region – 1 Southeast

No report was submitted. Should you have any questions, concerns or need assistance, please contact your region's vice-president and/or director.

Region – 2 Mid-Hudson

Orange County Chapter (OCHC)

<http://www.orangecountyhc.com/>

Debbie Schiraldi



Eastern Hudson Valley Horse Council (AKA Putnam County Chapter)

<http://www.putnamhorsecouncil.org>

Shari Goodstein | shari@goodstein.com

Sullivan County Chapter

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/11893662481469>

Ron Thiele | thielelandscaping@yahoo.com | 845-557-8848

Ulster County Chapter

<https://www.uchc-ny.org/>

Donna Putnam | donnaputnam3237@gmail.com | 845-728-2164

Region – 3 Capital

Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Equine Related Businesses in New York State

July 14, 2020

Prepared by: Brianna Hughes, Resource Educator, CCE Equine

For the use of: Cornell Cooperative Extension Equine (CCE Equine) and The New York State Horse Council (NYSHC)

Survey Response Description

The New York State Horse Council (NYSHC) and Cornell Cooperative Extension Equine (CCE Equine)

partnered in mid-March 2020 to create a COVID-19 impact assessment survey for equine related business

owners and managers in New York State. This survey was released in April 2020 with the objective to better understand the perceived economic impact COVID-19 had on New York State Equine related businesses.

The target population was businesses owners or managers of equine-related business in New York State, including, but not limited to: feed suppliers, veterinarians, horse lesson or training facilities, breeding facilities and transportation services. The survey had over 500 respondents that indicated owning an equine-related business that serves New York State. The majority of respondents indicated their business and being either a lesson or training facility or a boarding facility.

Businesses owners and managers were asked to report their annual gross revenue for a typical year. Annual gross income was reported as being less than \$100,000.00 among 70% of the respondents. Respondents also indicated if their business was considered essential under the Pause Plan. Sixty-three respondents (13%) reported that their entire business was considered essential while 202 respondents (43%) reported parts of their business as being considered essential.

When presented the question “How severe do you expect the effects of COVID-19 to be on your business?”, 150 respondents (33%) reported the effects of COVID-19 to be “extremely severe”, 138 (29%) indicated “very severe” and 110 (23%) indicated the expected effects of COVID-19 to be “moderately severe”. Sixty-six respondents (10%) indicated the effects of COVID-19 to be either “slightly severe” or “not severe at all”.

There were 231 respondents (49%) that indicated they would be somewhat likely or extremely likely to make temporary or permanent reduction to staff due to COVID-19. While 131 respondents indicated “somewhat unlikely” or “extremely unlikely” when asked about temporarily or permanently making reduction to their staff, there were 105 respondents (23%) that responded “neither likely nor unlikely”.

There were 228 respondents (49%) that indicated their business will incur or has already incurred additional expenses. When asked “Will your business incur or has it already incurred any additional expenses due to COVID-19?”, 161 respondents reported “No” and 69 respondents reported they were unsure.

For the questions “Are you concerned that you may lose your business due to the COVID-19 crisis?”, there were 159 respondents (34%) that indicated yes, 162

respondents (34%) that indicated no and 150 respondents (32%) that indicated they were unsure.



Survey Discussion

The purpose of this survey was to provide an opportunity for equine-related businesses owners and managers to report the perceived impact COVID-19 had on their business. There is perceived financial distress among these equine related business owners. Over 30% of respondents indicated concern of losing their business while over another 30% of respondents indicated they were unsure if they would lose their business due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Despite the reported struggle equine-related businesses are encountering, 73% indicated not receiving any financial benefit for programs, loans, or tax credits to offset losses. Respondents reported they had “Applied for Funding but haven’t heard back” and “Applied for PPE but haven’t received any monies as of yet”. Thirty seven percent of respondents reported needing financial assistance to keep daily activities of their business going. This survey provides insight to the equine industry and the economic distress that is occurring.

One respondent wrote that the COVID-19 crisis was “crippling any source of income- but we continue to have all of our normal expenses as horses need to be fed and cared for which is a high expense...”. Businesses are clearly indicating financial concern; more information needs to be gathered to better understand the severity of the COVID-19 crisis has been on the equine industry in New York State.

For more questions on the data collected from the survey or interest in using the data, please contact Brianna Hughes Resource Educator with CCE-Equine of CCE Saratoga County at bh548@cornell.edu or Sarah Collier Recording of the New York State Horse Council at sarah.collier@nyshc.org



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Penny Ploughman
255 Quail Street
Albany, New York 12203
518-426-7022

Fox Hunting
Appointments For Sale
518-426-7022

Region – 4 North

No report was submitted. Should you have any questions, concerns or need assistance, please contact your region's vice-president and/or director.

Region – 5 Central

No report was submitted. Should you have any questions, concerns or need assistance, please contact your region's vice-president and/or director.

Region – 6 Southern Tier

No report was submitted. Should you have any questions, concerns or need assistance, please contact your region's vice-president and/or director.

Region – 7 Finger Lake

No report was submitted. Should you have any questions, concerns or need assistance, please contact your region's vice-president and/or director.

Region – 8 Western

I am pleased to announce that a generous grant award of \$49,200 was received from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Legacy Funds administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo by the Cattaraugus/Chautauqua Chapter of the New York State Horse Council, Inc. I completed the grant application in January of 2020 with sponsorship from the Cattaraugus/Chautauqua Chapter of the NYSHC, Inc.

The project is located on the West Almond Trail System of NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Turnpike State Forest, near the Stewart Forest Road campground. Although open to all campers, the campground was specifically designed for equestrian users, with covered straight stalls, fire rings, covered picnic areas and a wide gravel loop drive to accommodate trucks and horse trailers.

The grant is intended to be used to retain a contractor to make drainage and trail tread improvements to approximately one mile of Trail 4 which connects the campground with Trail 6 and access to a larger parking area and covered straight stalls on State Route 244. The design for this project was completed by Theresa Draves, Forester I Trainee and has been approved by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. The improvements will improve safety and access for

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equestrians, hikers, cross country skiers and snow -shoe users on this multi-use trail. It is anticipated that the project will be completed this fall for use in the riding season next year which is June 1 through September 30.

There is more good news – the Allegany County Legislature has appointed me to be the equestrian representative on the newly formed 11 member Trails and Outdoor Recreation Advisory Committee. I will send more information regarding that activity in the next NYSHC, Inc. newsletter.

As Submitted by Pauline Burnes, Region Director

Cattaraugus/Chautauqua Chapter

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/440051409383476/>

Brenda Wood | gaitedwood@gmail.com | 716-474-7722

Western Chapter

<http://www.wcnvshc.org/>

Peter Tarnawskyj | Tarnawskyj.Peter@yahoo.com | 716-655-1796

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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Colleen Segarra | phishmare@aol.com | 845-744-1728

Publicity / Publications Committee

Sharon Young Slate & Gary Slate | garysharonslate@gmail.com | 315-638-4868

Youth Committee

Lisette M. Ruotolo | Lmruotolo@yahoo.com | 203-809-9559

Scholarship: Youth & Adult

Debbie Schiraldi

Congratulations to this year's NYSHC Youth Scholarship and Adult Grant Recipients for 2020! The committee has reviewed applications from across the state we have selected this year's winners.



Maggie Herbert from Jeffersonville, NY and a member of Sullivan County Horse Council is the Youth Scholarship Winner. Maggie has been accepted to SUNY Morrisville for the Equine Science and Management Program this fall. Maggie is active in 4-H, a student at Stone Wall Farms and a member of Sullivan County

BOCES Animal Science Program. Way to go Maggie!

Kathryn Santoro from Cobleskill, NY and a member of NYSHC has been selected as the Adult Grant Winner. Kathryn is a hard worker, has glowing recommendations from her peers and is planning to attend Applied Whole Horse Hoof-Care Certification in Illinois. Congrats to Kathryn!



The NYSHC Scholarship & Adult Grant Committee is pleased with the applications they reviewed and encourage all to submit applications next year!

As Submitted by: Debbie Schiraldi, Georgiana (Chip) Watson & Karen Lassell

NYSHC 52nd Annual Fall Pleasure Ride Postponed to 2021

As noted in the letter to our members, the NYSHC 52nd Annual Fall Pleasure Ride has been postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19. We understand that this event is the highlight of the year for many of our members. While we remained hopeful that we would be able to host this event

this coming fall, the uncertainty of restrictions coming from state and local governments on large gatherings caused us to postpone this year's event. We hope we will see you next year!

Newsletter

Thank You to Lydia Visser

The Newsletter Committee would like to start by giving a huge shout out to our FIRST intern Lydia Visser. Miss Visser was chosen to be the Youth Newsletter Editor Intern for the first two issues. She spent most of her time working on her editing skills by assisting us in reviewing articles submitted to the newsletter committee, as well as past articles that have been posted our website under our new Articles section. We appreciate her contributions and look forward to her writing an article in our newsletter in the near future.

Welcome Morgan Hilbert

Approaching the second half of the year, we would like to welcome Morgan Hulbert as our Youth Newsletter Editor Intern for the third and fourth issue newsletter. Miss Hulbert will be attending Cornell Vet School this coming fall and has prior experience writing articles in other ag-related newsletters such as the Miner Institute Stable Sheet. Hearing about our internship opportunity post the deadline, Morgan took the initiative to reach out looking for other opportunities to volunteer in our committee. We of course accepted!



Morgan and Ollie

As a committee member, she volunteered her time contacting equine businesses cross New York State and informing them on what the NYSHC has to offer. As part of one of our goals to increase our business membership engagement, she reached out to businesses asking them to submit articles and assisted in putting together the Business Directory. Using her writing skills, Miss Hulbert also assisted in editing articles submitted, formatting and so much more.

Website Articles

Reminder, we have been busy posting articles to the NYSHC Website. Timeless articles can be found under

the [Articles](#) section of our website. There you will find articles that have appeared in past newsletters and some articles that are of longer content.



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Trails & Tails and Other News

NYSHC Membership Input on Trails Survey

In March we sent out a survey to our members (and nonmembers) requesting input on New York State Trails System in preparation for the annual NYS Trails Council Meeting. We would like to share with you all the information we received from those that participated. We also would like to thank all those that did participate, we received 115 respondents!

Do you own, lease or rent a horse for your trails activities: 113 responses

- 94.7% own their own horse
- .9% rents a horse, and
- 4.4% either own, lease or rent a horse

How often do you trail ride on public lands? 113 responses

- 12.4% ride 1-3 times a year
- 16.8% ride 3-10 times a year
- 64.6% ride more than 10 times a year
- 6.2% stated they have not ridden on public trails but plan on riding in the near future

What type of trail riding do you enjoy? 112 responses

- 18.8% Endurance
- 19.6% Competitive Trail
- 93.8% Leisure
- .9% All of the above
- Other:
- 1.8 % Group Rides
- .9% Driving
- .9% [Blank]
- .9% Fox Hunting
- .9% Trails enjoying nature
- .9% Dressage
- .9% Hunter Pace
- .9% XC Conditioning

In the survey we allowed for open response about what issues respondents would like raised at the NYS Trail Council Meeting. Some of these concerns include: Biker Awareness, lack of leash law compliance, trail expansion and maintenance with various trails, trail access, increase funding towards facilities in need, lack of maps and insurance.

Information, Spotlights, & More!

NYC Carriage Horses: A COVID19 Anecdote

Jill Adamski, NYC Horse Carriage Driver, Brooklyn NY

As New York City is approaching its' fourth phase of reopening during the pandemic, NYC carriage horses are still riding it out on pastures in Pennsylvania and upstate New York, where they have been residing since mid-March. NYC horse carriage rides can safely operate with precautions taken such as mask wearing and carriages being sanitized between rides, as they are private, outdoor tours. However, there are dilemmas - borders are closed, quarantine requirements are still in place, Broadway is still shut down, there is uncertainty of a second wave of COVID-19 and wide-spread economic struggles. As a result, this business has not been able to re-open due to the lack of customers to serve to cover operation expenses. While the horse owners are covering the cost of pasture board, their stall board and upkeep is much more expensive if they are brought home to their NYC stables. Many are hopeful for the return of the horse carriages in the fall, though it could be longer.

While it isn't unusual for the horses to be on pastures (NYC regulations require they receive a *minimum* of five weeks on them each year) it is out of the ordinary for them to all simultaneously be taking their vacations and have them out there for such an extended period of time. Visiting the horses isn't an option open to the public, for security reasons, but the owners and drivers of the horses have been able to spend time with their horses throughout the past few months. I personally took a five-hour round trip drive to check on them at one farm this week. I'm happy to report that they all appeared to be in good condition, though a little out of shape from the lack of work.

It was an interesting experience visiting the farm because I noticed most of the horses that lived there didn't pay much attention to me as I walked by their various paddocks. However, when I reached the paddocks with NYC carriage horses (typically grouped together with their familiar herd from the hackline and stall neighbors) it was a bit of a different story. While they may have recognized me as their coworker, it was clear that they



NYC Carriage Horses Jessy & Nick On Pastures 7/16/2020

had much more of an interest in people approaching them. Their ears perked up and they began to gather around the fence where I stood. I assume it's because they miss the amount of attention they got from street passers, stablemen, their drivers, and stable tour visitors they received in NYC. Their spoiled routine of associating with people regularly bringing them treats in the city has been disrupted but isn't something they have easily forgotten.

The horse I can read the easiest is my own. He knows my voice and approaches the fence as soon as I call his name. I led him to an

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empty paddock, checked out his hooves, and scanned his body for small scrapes that typically occur when horses are left together on pastures for some time. (It's generally a safer and more pampered life to have the horses working and stalled in the city under constant watchful eyes and protection from the other horses and outdoor elements.) Satisfied with his condition I pulled out the little surprise I'd come prepared with for him (in addition to the bags of carrots). I brought his bridle! Eager for some work after all these months he easily picked up the bit and patiently waited while I pulled it over his head. I hopped on him bareback and had to question which of us missed our job more. He isn't typically ridden and therefore he only understands voice commands from being driven but he responded to them as if the last drive we'd taken together had been that morning rather than four months ago. On the ground I used the hand signals I'd taught him to follow me and stop. He displayed such pride in showing me what he could do; he followed the signs flawlessly with determination on his face. I asked him for a kiss and his

face lit up with recognition, as if to say "I know that that's the trick we do together and I know that you give me a treat after I do it." Some question if our horses prefer working and living in the urban city or vacationing on the rural pastures, but when you spend as much time around them as I do, I think the answer becomes quite obvious.

Interested to learn more about the NYC carriage horses and their history in the big apple? The New York Adventure Club will be hosting a webinar called "400 Years of Horse Power: The Engine That Built New York City" led by Christina Hansen on Tuesday, August 18th at 11:00 AM. Cost to attend is \$10. Click on the [LINK](#) to learn more about this webinar and to register or go the their page at www.NYAdventureClub.com and search under Upcoming Experiences.

Yellow Pages for the Horse World

by Gary Slate, Central Region Vice President, New York State Horse Council

Years ago there were community bulletin boards in several places around my small village where you could put up a notice if you had something to sell, or you found a lost pet, or you wanted to announce an event that the public was invited to attend. With the advent of computers and cell phones, it seems like fewer people use the bulletin board to get the word out. But here we are in this black hole called 2020, quarantined, isolated, and not going out so much. Horse people have always relied on word of mouth, or on the farrier spreading interesting news, and on catching up with friends at breed shows, clinics, and trail rides. Today, when so much has been cancelled, where do you get your horse news? I say your first step is to check the website of the New York State Horse Council (nyshc.org).

The Horse Council website has lots of information that you can use, even if you are not a current member. The state is divided up into 8 regions, basically clusters of counties, one of which is where you live. A map showing this is found in the front of the Horse Council newsletter, (on the menu bar of the home page, click on "News/Events", then on "NYSHC Newsletter"). Now that you know your region, click on the menu "Contacts", and you have a list of officers and representatives of every region and every "chapter" or affiliated horse club, as well as the contact information (phone number and email) of each of those people. If you really want to find out what's going on in your region, there's probably two or more people near you that you can reach immediately with your question. As hard as it may be for some of us in "upstate"

MOUNTAIN HORSE FARM HORSE CLINIC SCHEDULE

AUG 21-22: TERRY CRISAFULLI	EQUINE MASSAGE & MORE CLINIC
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SEP 29-OCT 4: HEIDI POTTER	HEIDI POTTER HOLISTIC HORSEMANSHIP CLINIC
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to believe, Region 1 includes the counties of Long Island and the Metropolitan New York Area, and is populated by very many horse people.

Also, on the “News/Events” menu is the New York State Calendar of Events. Right now, there are a lot of blank spaces, but normally there are entries of horse events that are sponsored by NYSHC, or that are organized by NYSHC members, or that have no connection to NYSHC. That is why this is a bulletin board, available for the use of horse people in New York State. When horse shows and events are once again organized, we hope to be deluged with details and dates, and that our calendar becomes your first stop when you start planning your year with your horse.



If you are the rugged individualist that throws your horse on a trailer and heads for a trail, check out “Trails” for information about trails throughout the state, as well as news about current legislation, pending trails, and where help is needed to insure that trails are available and maintained. Trails don’t just happen, and you could help us help you by learning what we do to advocate for trails.

The most important bulletin board of the website is the “Directory”, which can be viewed “by category” or “by name”. If you are looking for a specific service, such as training, boarding, therapeutic horse program, horse

clubs, breed organizations, etc, this is the “Yellow Pages of the Horse World”. People and groups list themselves on this site for a set fee (I believe \$75 for a year, but this may have changed) and some have renewed for many years. I have been contacted by groups such as horse clubs and breed organizations who wanted to be listed because their membership has declined in recent years and they wanted to publicize their group to people in their area and to the state at large. While this year has taken a toll on horse activities, many groups would be wise to use this involuntary vacation to reorganize and plan for a better next year.

We provide other ways to advertise services and activities. Our quarterly newsletter offers advertising space in one or more issues per year. Details are at “New/Events”, then “NYSHC Newsletter”, then click on the link “Newsletter Ad Subscriptions Info”. More immediate posting of events is also available on the NYSHC Facebook page. The nice thing about the Horse Council Facebook is there are very few things you would want to delete.

Some members of New York State Horse Council might be horrified to have it announced that much of the website is available to non-members. We are a nonprofit that operates largely on the dues of members, and virtually all board members and officers are volunteers. (We do pay a “webmaster” but who would do that for free?) But people join Horse Council because they care about horses, and they want to share and cooperate with other horse people. We advocate on horse issues that we are passionate about, and all benefit by the participation and support of members and non-members. It’s like Public Radio that you listen to even if you haven’t become a supporting member. Yes, we can do more with more members, but we won’t try to make you feel guilty. We would like to help you post your notice on our bulletin board, and you won’t even need any thumbtacks.

Rescue Spotlight!

Meet Harley the Mule

Harley is a sweet Mule who recently came to Equine Resource Rescue Inc. As a part of a larger complaint received being handled by NYSHA, Columbia Greene SPCA and the Catskill Animal Sanctuary, ERR responded to a request for assistance. On July 19th, they removed Harley to provide him the shelter and care he needed.

Equine Rescue Resource Inc. (ERR) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization helping horses in need. We strive to prevent cruelty to equines, educate the public on equine welfare issues, facilitate rescue efforts and help horses in need.

We are dedicated to fostering a cohesive environment within the equine community and strongly believe that

education, cooperation and networking are the keys to making a difference for horses in need.

We are not a law enforcement agency. If you see any animal being kept in violation of New York State cruelty laws, please call your local police department and file a report. Anonymous calls



and messages are not an effective means of “reporting a problem”. In the event guidance, education, shelter or rehabilitation of an equine is needed, law enforcement is welcome to call upon us as a supporting agency.

ERR is 100% volunteer based, and the volunteers are the lifeblood of our organization. Horses are housed at a variety of foster homes throughout the Hudson Valley region of New York.

Volunteers are always needed to help care for our rescued animals. If you have a few hours to spare

mucking, grooming or maintaining fences/shelters, we would love to hear from you. To fill out a volunteer application or schedule a day/time, please contact us.

For more information about Equine Rescue Resource Inc., check out their Facebook page or their website at <http://www.equinerescueresource.net/>



BUCK BRANNAMAN 2020
scheduled for Sept 4-6 has been CANCELLED.
All deposits and payments will be refunded.
Clinic will be rescheduled in 2021.
Thank you to the WNY Community for your support.

Gail Pearles, Clinic Host

Practice Doesn't Make Perfect

By Lynn Acton

Practice makes *permanent*. Only Correct Practice makes Perfect. Incorrect practice just ingrains bad habits. That's why lots of repetitions or time in the saddle doesn't necessarily lead to improvement.

When we let the horse make a mistake, then “correct” him for it, we are actually practicing the mistake, followed by a correction, *then* maybe the behavior we wanted in the first place. For example, horse barges ahead, handler tugs leadline, horse slows down. The horse isn't practicing good leadline manners; he's practicing “slow down when you feel a tug.” This cycle can be repeated indefinitely without significant improvement.

Our first foster pony arrived with the impression that his stall door was a starting gate; he shot out the instant it

Meet the Author

Lynn Acton is a certified riding instructor and author of *What Horses Really Want: Unlocking the Secrets to Trust, Cooperation and Reliability* (www.horseandriderbooks.com). You can read more about her horses on her facebook page or website www.lynnacton.com

opened. I could have corrected him each time he tried to barge past me, but “correction” really means punishment, and that is the slowest way to train a horse, because...

1. Punishment does not teach the horse what we *do* want him to do.

2. Punishment creates anxiety, especially when the horse doesn't understand why he's being punished.
3. Punishment erodes trust, which is the foundation of reliability.
4. The severity of punishment may need to increase over time to have the same impact.

The solution is Correct Practice. We teach the horse what we *do* want, and make that the easiest thing for him to do. Once the horse understands what *is* expected, misbehavior is more easily pre-empted or redirected with a calm reminder. We can practice the correct behavior, or as close as the horse is capable of in the moment, and skip the punishment. This provides opportunities for rewards which speed learning and improve reliability. Dog trainers use this principle routinely. How do you stop a dog from jumping on people? Teach him to sit-stay instead. Reward increasingly reliable sit-stays.

A horse who charges ahead on leadline is relying on halter pressure to guide him. He needs to learn to watch his handler and maintain his position relative to her, without waiting for pressure to notify him he's out of position. The clearest, most detailed instructions I have found for teaching this are in *The Horse Agility Handbook* by Vanessa Bee (Chapter 6 "Leading the Horse").

With our foster pony, I didn't give him a chance to shoot out the stall door and get in trouble. I slipped in and shut the door behind me, haltered him, and backed him up a few steps to get his mind on me instead of going full speed ahead. If he started to barge out when I opened the door, I backed him up again. He soon decided that an open stall door meant back up.

Even when no punishment is involved, incorrect practice not only builds bad habits, it can build muscles to support the bad habits. Consider, for instance, teaching a horse to canter in balance. This is typically approached by cantering in circles. Round and round. Nothing is teaching the horse to balance himself, so he is just developing the muscles needed to compensate for being out of balance. Equipment like draw reins, bits, or tie-downs do not magically balance the horse. Unless used with skill and subtlety, they can actually compound the problem.

Again we need to show the horse what we *do* want, this time by helping him balance before he canters. This is done with exercises that require the horse to engage his hind end, and thus balance himself. For example, trot 5 steps, halt, back 2 steps. Repeat 3 times. Canter. Or ask for the canter from a slow, balanced trot. Or have him leg yield to the outside a step before cantering. At first the horse canters only a few steps before his balance falls on the forehand. Then we bring him back to a trot or walk, and repeat whatever exercise works best for him. Soon he will be cantering more and more steps in balance because that is what he is practicing, *not* how to compensate for being off balance!

Practice makes Permanent applies to people, too. I sometimes hear riders say things like, "You'd think I'd ride better after all these years." Nope. If we're practicing the same wrong things, we are reinforcing the same bad habits. Good riding, no matter what the discipline, involves 3 fundamentals: Move in balance with the horse, give clear cues, read the horse's response so you can release or adjust cues accordingly. Without this foundation, improvement is limited no matter how many hours we spend in the saddle. This is why effective instructors are less concerned with how the rider looks than with balance and communication with the horse.

Only Correct Practice makes Perfect. If we want improvement in our horses or ourselves, we need to practice as correctly as possible. We must take the time to show the horse what we want instead of "correcting" what we don't want. Then take the time to set him up to do the right thing. For ourselves, we must learn what we need to change so we can practice better ways of riding or handling. This time and attention is an investment that speeds the learning process so that we accomplish more with less time and repetition.

In the words of a Tai Chi master, "Once with focus is worth 50 times mindlessly."



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