

Hoof Beats North

The Newsletter of Competitive Trail Riding in Alaska



Fall / Winter 2013

The Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride...

From the Ride Manager's Perspective... by Laurie Knuutila

...the Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride was a success! When the riders come across the finish line after two grueling days on the trail in less than ideal weather conditions and are still smiling, the ride was a success!

The 2013 Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride was held on July 19-21, in Fairbanks, Alaska. It proved to be a little more challenging than the rides in Fairbanks have been in the past few years because of using a different trail system. The different trail system necessitated a different ride camp. The growth in popularity of competitive trail riding in Alaska in recent years meant that we had outgrown our previous ride camp and needed a larger space.

The owners of Movin' Free Farm, located on the west side of Fairbanks, were kind enough to allow us to use their farm as a base camp, which would allow us to use the trails in the Ester Dome area. Ester Dome is one of the highest hills that surround Fairbanks, and has an extensive trail system in place. The ride camp was an open hay field, which necessitated that we find some sort of shelter for meals and ride briefings. We rented a large tent and wonderful volunteer Beth Patterson was able to get two others donated for free. Several volunteers helped set the tents up (not a small task!), and when the rain came, we were certainly glad to have them!

The primary job of the Ride Manager is coordinating the logistics of the ride and finding the volunteers needed to put on a ride. Starting in October of 2012, I began contacting

prospective judges and other key volunteers. Some people that had helped with the ride in the past were unable to assist this year, but I was able to find some excellent replacements. Lezlie Wilfer was kind enough to agree to be the Ride Secretary again, and when long-time volunteer P&R Chair Julie Southwood was unable to help due to a family situation, Christy Everett agreed to fill that position. Christy worked diligently to find and train all the pulse and respiration crew members, and she did an excellent job as Chair.

An army marches on its stomach, and the same can be said for the small army of people involved in a CTR, be they workers or competitors. Lezlie and I both believe that providing food at the ride is important. And in past years we've been able to make the food a community service/fundraising project for a local 4H club. The club that had done it in the past was unable to do it this year, but the Starlight Flyers club, based at Movin' Free Farm, were able to take over and did a wonderful job of providing breakfasts and lunches for everyone. A caterer was hired for the Sunday Awards dinner, and a Ride Manager's worst nightmare came true when the dinner didn't arrive on time. Although the reservation had been confirmed a few days earlier, it had been misplaced. But the caterer, when contacted, pulled off a respectable dinner in about 20 minutes!

Finding, ordering and organizing the awards and ribbons is also a big job associated with putting on a ride. I tried to get all the items ordered during the winter, before the riding

season started. Since we live beyond the end of the earth in some company's minds, the shipping can be challenging. I was able to enlist Lezlie's daughter Lauren, who lives in Washington state, to act as a shipping point. And then when I wanted to order from a company that stipulated "Does not ship to Alaska," or "Add [insert ridiculous sum of money here] for Alaska and Hawaii," I used Lauren's address as a shipping point. This saved us a sizable amount on shipping fees.

So, after nailing down a ride camp, coordinating all the volunteers, contracting the judges and handling their travel arrangements, ordering all the awards, lining up all the food, fielding all the questions from riders and volunteers alike, and attending to the myriad small details that I can't even remember now, ride day came and the Ride Manager... (Continued on page 3)

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From the Editor...

Well, another summer is in the history books, and a fine one it was! Here in the Fairbanks area, we had record heat, very little rain, and lots of sunshine! Other areas of the state did not fare as well. But whatever your summer brought you, I hope it included lots of saddle time!

The Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride was well-attended, and I think everyone who was there had a good time. There were a few glitches here and there. But I have yet to attend or manage a ride that did not have glitches of some sort! The goal is to keep them to a minimum and/or keep them un-noticed by the majority. I hope my ride recap will give you an idea of what goes on behind the scenes of a ride, and maybe explain a few things, like the sudden reroute of the trail on Sunday!

Speaking of the ride, I am still in need of any photos that anyone took at the ride. Since we didn't have an official photographer, I'm relying on everyone who was there to supply me with any photos that were taken. I would like to be able to compile them all into one set of DVD's and make them available to all the competitors. So if you took pictures and you haven't sent them to me, please take a minute to do so.

With Fall winding down and Winter staring us in the face, I thought I would include in this issue some information to help you through the winter with your equine companions. I thought about what we need to do to help our distance horses the most through the coming months. And the things I decided would help them the most are to watch their weight, keep their minds active, and keep ourselves as fit as possible. Along those lines, I've included an article on equine obesity, one on designing a human fitness plan, and a couple of training articles.

This issue of the newsletter is a little late and I'm including more information and articles than I normally do. The reason for this is because there are some changes in store for this publication. I am also the Editor for two other publications. One is the NATRC Region 1 newsletter, The Leadline, and the other is the national NATRC magazine, Hoof Print. This past year has been a test to see how the issue dates for each of these publications would work out. Some adjustments need to be made.

Since the issue dates for the other publications are what they are, I am finding it necessary to adjust the issue dates for this newsletter. Therefore, this is the last issue you will receive until February 2014. The newsletter will continue to be a quarterly publication (four issues per year), but I'm changing the issue date to the middle of the quarter, instead of the end. So you will receive it in February, May, August, and November. I believe that these dates will allow me to get pertinent information out to everyone in a timely manner and yet keep the overlap with the other publications to a minimum. If necessary, I will send out extra information at other times, but not as part of a regular newsletter.

So, since you won't be getting another issue for a few months, I've loaded this one up to hold you over until the next one! As always, I'm open to suggestions for content, and I always need photos to include. So feel free to send me any ideas or photos that you may have.

Until next time, stay safe, stay warm, and enjoy your equine friends through the coming winter. See you on the trail - next summer!

Laurie Knuutila

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(Continued from page 1) er was hoping and praying that she didn't forget anything really important!

After an extremely hot and dry summer, with next to no rain for weeks, ride weekend started off on Friday with gathering clouds, and on Saturday morning, the whole summer's worth of rain seemed to be falling on that day! But the riders were smiling and jovial as they left

the soggy camp, and after a day on the trail getting soaked and cold, they came back still smiling and jovial! And it seemed that, as a Ride Manager, I hadn't forgotten anything important (except coffee for the poor vet judge on Friday morning!), and when Sunday came with no rain and moderate temperatures, the weekend turned out great! Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and the smiling

faces at the end of the weekend told me that the ride was a success!

If the Ride Manager has everything lined out before the ride, on ride weekend, that person usually doesn't have a whole lot to do. And that's a good thing, because in this case, the Ride Manager was also the Trail Master.....

From the Trail Master's Perspective...

by Laurie Knuutila

...the Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride was a success! When none of the riders got lost (that I know of!), only a few ribbons got stolen, and the riders were smiling at the end, the ride was a success!

The primary job of the Trail Master is to lay out the trail system for the ride. This includes deciding which trails to use, mapping them, making accurate mileage measurements, timing the ride, and marking the designated trails. Also included in this is making sure that the P&R crews and the judges can get to designated spots on the trail to be able to assess the riders and horses. Coordinating the logistics of that is probably the hardest job on the entire ride. It's easy to mess it up and if it gets messed up, the horses cannot be properly checked and someone could get into trouble.

With the change of venue for the Challenge of the North ride from the Two Rivers area, where I live, to the Ester Dome area across the valley (approximately 35 miles from my house), this meant a different trail system and new maps. It had been 14 years since we'd held a ride on the Ester Dome trails, and I was able to locate some maps from prior rides. But a lot can change in 14 years, and I needed some "boots on the ground" to help me with the trails.

I enlisted the aid of two friends who both live in the Ester Dome area, and they were invaluable in helping put together the trail system. Leslie

Kitchin and Lorna Lounsbury spent lots of hours finding, clearing, mapping and marking trails with and for me. Leslie was able to take Fridays off work during June and July, and we spent every Friday and Saturday for about six weeks on the trails. Lorna allowed me to camp in her yard every weekend while Leslie and I rode the trails. Lorna joined us when she could and did a lot of work on other days clearing and marking trails.

I remembered from previous years that the trails seemed to be sort of like a maze, especially in a couple of areas, and my memory served me right! Fortunately Leslie was there to keep me on the right path when I'd get turned around. As we worked on mapping the trails using GPS and prior years' maps, it became apparent that we needed some way to make sure we were both talking about the same spot. So we came up with names for every trail and sometimes even for different sections of the same trail.

I decided to create all new maps, since some of the trails were not located very accurately on previous years' maps. Earlier in the year, I had created a master map, using a USGS topo map as a base, and over the course of the summer, I kept adding trails to the master as we GPS'ed them, until I had the "spider web" accurately mapped.

As Trail Master, I needed to be totally familiar with every trail in the area, whether we used it on the ride or not, because I needed to know what my alternatives were, both for redirecting riders if I needed to or being able to get an injured horse or rider out of the woods. So we rode a lot of trails that were not used on the

actual ride, but I had them on the master map, in case I needed them.

Part of the job of putting together the trails is determining if they are on private property. In the Fairbanks area, most of the trails are on State of Alaska or borough property, and can be used without permission. But in some areas, the trails cross private property and we needed permission to use them. I contacted several landowners and obtained permission for the riders to go through. But I missed one.....more on that in a moment.

Next came the job of putting together the actual trail system and making sure that I had enough mileage to meet the sanction criteria for an NATRC ride. The mileage and speed has to be balanced against the terrain, and in this case, the terrain was pretty brutal! If the riders were not going up an ascent, they would be going down a descent, some of them "butt-sliding" steep. There were very few level or nearly level areas on the entire two day ride. This makes for a tough ride on the horses. Adding to that, given the hot summer we were experiencing and the fact that most of the competitors were coming from the much cooler coastal areas of Alaska, I opted for a slower ride and minimum mileage.

After figuring out the route and the mileage, then came the timing. But there was a giant, 85,000 acre monkey in the works! The Stuart Creek 2 forest fire was threatening the area where I live and I needed to be at home, in case we had to evacuate. In the end, we didn't have to, but we spent several days in agonizing limbo, not knowing which way we should jump. It was especially agonizing knowing how (Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3) much work I still had to before the ride! So with less than two weeks to ride weekend, I was finally able to get the timing rides done and the maps finalized.

I still needed to mark them all, but I wanted to put that off until the last possible minute, since I didn't want to have any markers removed by vandals. Leslie had put up some markers in some areas where she felt they would not be disturbed, and we marked some areas on horseback that were inaccessible by ATV. Then I enlisted the aid of my friend Marilyn Dowding, who has helped me many times over the years with the trail marking job. During the week of the ride, we hung flags by ATV and were able to get everything marked in two days of riding. I just prayed that it would all stay up.

Leslie and I arranged between ourselves who would mark what trail and on what day. There was one short section of trail that Leslie would do by vehicle on Thursday, the last

section that needed done. That day, she called me on the phone with a note of panic in her voice and said we had a problem. A landowner would not let us through! I had missed one, thinking that all the property in that area was owned by another landowner, who had already given us permission. After some negotiations and a quick email to the insurance company to add the landowner to the liability policy, they agreed to let us through! Crisis averted!

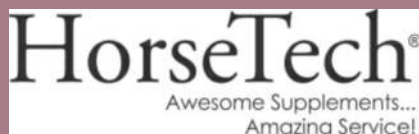
On ride weekend, Marilyn and I acted as point riders on the ATV's, making sure that all the flags were still in place. There was one section of trail that is used by mountain bikers, and on Saturday, all the flagging for that section was in place. But on Sunday, we discovered that it had been removed. The section of trail was inaccessible to the ATV's and we didn't have time before the riders arrived to walk the whole thing. So I had to use my knowledge of the trail system to reroute the riders a differ-



ent way, where we could hang flags by ATV.

Other than that, all the other flags were in place, everyone stayed on trail for the most part, and everyone came back to camp after a challenging two days on the trail with smiles on their faces and saying, "We love this ride camp!" and "We hope you use these trails again!"

As both the Ride Manager and the Trail Master, I'd say that makes the ride a success!



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Challenge of the North Ride Results

Challenge of the North A (Two-day ride)

7/19-20/2013 Region 1A-AK

A-O/CP Total Riders: 28

Chair: Laurie Knuutila

Judges: Kimberly Sargent DVM,
Natalie Morris DVM-Apprentice,
Kim Cowart

Open Sweepstakes:

Royal Prince Caspian/
Adkins, Jane-87

Open Heavyweight

1/3 Indy's Midnight Sun/
Boicelli, Victoria

2/2 Jasmine's Magic/Fisk, Colleen

3/1 Wild Ladys Nite/Dent, Susan

CO Genuine Arctic Attitude/
McDonough, Barbara

P Star of Excellence/
Halley, Catherine

Open Lightweight

1/2 Royal Prince Caspian/
Adkins, Jane

2/1 Willow Bey Star/Grogan, Brenda

3/3 Flash's Gentleman Jim/
Forrester, Donna

Open Junior

1/1 Poncho/Barkman, Elyssa

Competitive Pleasure

1/3 Filly/Bergman, Stefanie

2/ Sail Away/Kameel, Deidre

3/ Dillon/Norvell, Nancy

4/4 Rosie/Schamber, Pam

5/ Sierra/Sena, Tracy

6/ Nickel/Quinton, Michelle

/1 Luke/Onorati, Melissa

/2 Gunner/Allen, Mallori

/5 Future's Razzel Dazzel/
Luther, Natalie

/6 Cisco/Spangler, Gina
Calypso Orchid/Elsberry, Dorothy
Merrylegs/Luther, Cindy
Sargeant/Quinton, Reed
Biscuit/Spangler, Tom

P Cinch/Sands, William

P Duke/Cunningham, Cheryl

P Hat/Allen, Debbie

P Cobar/Romine, Rebecca

Competitive Pleasure DO

P Haidas Handy Lad/Carney, Katrina

Challenge of the North B (One-day ride)

7/19/2013 Region 1A-AK

B-N Total Riders: 4

Chair: Laurie Knuutila

Judges: Kimberly Sargent DVM,
Natalie Morris DVM-Apprentice,
Kim Cowart

Novice Sweepstakes:

Isa Perfect Dream/
Parsley, Renee-89.5

Novice Heavyweight

1/2 DC Tuff Enough/Parsons, Kristie

2/1 Marble/Haverlikova, Ivana

Novice Lightweight

1/1 Isa Perfect Dream/Parsley, Renee

Novice Junior

1/1 DCF Perfect Blizzard/
Parsley, Morgan

Additional Awards

High-Point Open Team (Horse & Horsemanship)

Royal Prince Caspian & Jane Adkins

High-Point Novice Team (Horse & Horsemanship)

Isa Perfect Dream & Renee Parsley

High-Point CP Team (Horse & Horsemanship)

Filly & Stefanie Bergman

Judge's Choice Awards

Colleen Fisk
Barbara McDonough

High-Point First Time Rider

Ivana Haverlikova

Red Lantern Award

Dorothy Elsberry

Safe Rider Award

Mallori Allen

High-Point First Time Horse

DC Tuff Enough

Senior Horse Award

Duke (age 25)

Breed Awards

Half-Arabian

Willow Bey Star

Quarter Horse

Royal Prince Caspian

Paint

Isa Perfect Dream

Gaited

Flash's Gentleman Jim

Grade

Sail Away

Saturday



2013 Challenge of the North Ride



The photos included in this issue were taken by a variety of photographers, including both volunteers and competitors. Most were copied from photos posted on the Internet.

Thank You to our Many Generous Sponsors!

You helped to make the 2013
Challenge of the North Competitive Trail Ride
a Success!!

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Dr. Kim Sargent, DVM

Sandy Davis

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Sunday



2013
Challenge
of the
North
Ride



Equine Obesity:

Change Management Gradually to Combat Weight Gain

By Kentucky Equine Research Staff · September 9, 2013

Recent studies have found that between one-third and two-thirds of horses are overweight or obese. An oversupply of carbohydrate-laden food coupled with a lack of appropriate exercise may have caused the epidemic of porky ponies, and the fix may depend on educating horse owners about better feed management options.

Examining horse-keeping style may help owners change their management regimen to encourage weight loss.

Most horse owners love their equines, and caring equates to feeding in many cases. Too much of this type of care, however, becomes a well-meaning disservice if the horse becomes too heavy. Obesity leads to or aggravates many health conditions including insulin resistance, chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, equine metabolic syndrome, arthritis, laminitis, and joint pain.

Horses can pack on too much weight because of one or more factors. Genetics (some breeds and individuals tend to gain weight more easily than others), access to high-quality pasture (horses evolved to graze forage of moderate to low quality), large meals of carbohydrate-rich grain (many horses don't need these calories), and a life-style that involves minimal exercise (hours in the stall, easy access to pasture, no regular training or riding) all promote the accumulation of extra weight.

Examining horse-keeping style may help owners change their management regimen to encourage weight loss. Many habits are "just the way I've always done it" instead of being based on what is actually best for the horse. These include the following:

"I don't want to starve him." If you can't feel your horse's ribs with light finger pressure, the horse is not starving, regardless of what he tells you when he hears the feed buckets rattling. Check out a body condition score chart

to get an idea of what a healthy weight looks like; it may be quite a bit leaner than what you have in mind.

"He loves his pasture time and doesn't like the drylot." Pasture time is great, but if he's eating constantly, that's not so good. Use a grazing muzzle to restrict intake. Studies have shown that horses that wear a grazing muzzle only part of the time can go into grazing overdrive when the muzzle is removed, consuming just as much grass in a few hours as their unmuzzled pals eat in a full day. Best bet: Leave the muzzle on when the horse is turned out.

"I always bring him in at night." Overweight equines may benefit from more hours in the pasture, giving them a chance to move around rather than dozing in the stall for eight or more hours out of every 24. Just remember to leave the grazing muzzle on.

"I give him just a tiny handful of grain to keep him from fretting when I feed the other horses." While that handful is better than a bucket of grain, it's probably not that little, and a handful once or twice a day adds up to quite a few calories over the weeks and months. Try giving a ration balancer (ask at your feed store) instead of grain.

"I let him eat all the hay he wants, because it's a natural thing for horses to eat." Yes, hay is a good thing to feed, but it can also contain a lot of calories. Buy a low-carbohydrate hay (grass rather than alfalfa), taper down to feeding no more than 1 to 1.5% of the obese horse's bodyweight in hay per day for horses on hay-only diets (no pasture turnout), and consider soaking the hay for half an hour before feeding to remove some of the soluble carbohydrates.

"My horse actually gets a lot of exercise because I ride almost every day, so he needs grain." Not all exercise is the same. A horse carrying a rider

around the field at a walk isn't working hard enough to burn many calories, and even an hour of faster gaits is not going to wear out the average horse. If your horse is putting on extra pounds, cut his grain ration in half and weigh him or use a weight tape regularly to see what effect the change brings about. If he's not losing weight after a few weeks, cut the ration in half again, and stay with this plan until you see results. Maintain good nutrition by using a low-calorie balancer pellet instead of grain. Gradually increase exercise intensity and duration, building up over a period of weeks.

"I changed to a low-carb feed. That should help, right?" Some horses don't metabolize carbohydrates well, and low-carb feeds were developed to help these horses avoid muscle problems caused by this factor. Most of these feeds, however, are not low-energy because the formulations have replaced grain with high-calorie fat sources. These grain products are just as fattening as traditional horse feeds.

"If I cut way back on my horse's grass, hay, and grain, won't he get ulcers from having an empty stomach?" It's true that equine gastric ulcers may be caused or aggravated by many hours without food. However, you don't have to restrict intake that much. By using a grazing muzzle and offering hay in a slow-feeding device, you can allow near-constant eating at a greatly reduced rate of total intake.

"That sounds like a whole lot of changes!" Yes, that's true, but if you make these diet and exercise modifications gradually, your horse should stay healthy while losing some of his excess weight. Don't try to rush the process; a slow and steady loss of pounds is much safer than sudden drastic changes in his daily schedule.



Design Your Winter Training Plan

By Heather Sansom

Reprinted from
Dressage Today
Magazine
Courtesy of
Equisearch.com

Think in terms of a "training scale" for your own personal rider fitness and conditioning. The training scale in dressage gives us a system for training and helps align our activities at each stage of the horse's development to the goals of the dressage test. We know, for example, that even though collection is at the top of the training scale, we can't achieve collection without contact or rhythm, which are down near the beginning. In the same way, it may be helpful to think of your training time in terms of layers of activity types that build on one another to help you progress toward your goals. Using this metaphor can help you progress, even when you don't have vast amounts of time available to fit in everything you want to do. Like the dressage training scale, the rider fitness scale is not linear but cumulative

Elements of the Rider Fitness Training Scale: Flexibility, Core Strength, Stamina, Tone and Awareness

A complete rider fitness program can get very involved. But, I generally approach it with four main categories in mind. They have sub-categories, but there is only space here for the overview.

Flexibility: When riding, we aim to have the ability to use our bodies when we want to and to otherwise have a neutral position that can flow with the horse. Tension or tightness in your body does several things: a) it blocks your horse's motion; b) it creates strain across your spine and joints, which can produce repetitive strain injury; c) it pulls against you, forcing you to apply tension in response in order to sit correctly, creating overall tension in your body that you don't want. So, if you have time for nothing else, take 60 seconds before and after riding to do some basic stretching. Take a few minutes at the end of the day when you are unwinding in front

of the television to stretch out the areas that are of particular concern.

Try this: Before riding take two to three minutes for dynamic warm-up stretches to unblock tight areas. To increase range, do five to 15 minutes of dynamic and static stretching at the end of the day on a daily basis. Include hips, hip flexors, inner thigh, calf, chest and side bends.

Core Strength: Your limbs can only be as strong and effective as they are allowed to be by your core tone. Core is not just abdominals; it's everything from your neck to your hips. Since core strength controls the position of your hips and seat bones, shoulders and your posture, I consider it a basic foundation to all the rest of a rider's conditioning program. On its own, core training is not enough, because you still need strength in other areas as well as stamina.

I can't mention core strength without also mentioning nutrition. You should know that your core strength is significantly compromised when you haven't eaten anything for a couple of hours. So, even if you only drink a juice box, the consumption of something in the hour or half hour before you ride will make a difference to your self-carriage and accuracy.

Try this: Five times per week for about five minutes, include isometric exercises--like planks--and hip rotating exercises.

Stamina: Your body is like a big combustion engine. It needs two things to keep going: fuel and oxygen. Stamina is about the ability of your body to provide oxygen to your muscles at the rate required and for your muscles to contain enough glycogen stores to maintain activity for the amount of time required.

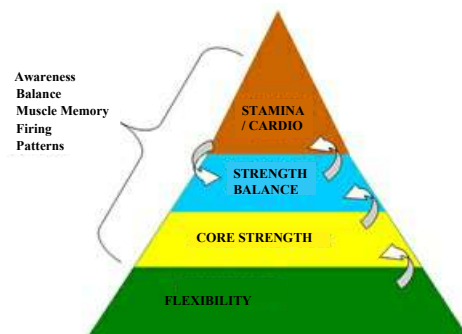
The good news is that you can improve your cardiovascular ability with just 15 minutes of fairly intense activity a couple of times a week. For the purposes of cardio training, the activity does not matter as much as the training intensity. Think in terms of having to breathe through your mouth. It should feel like a workout, but you should not be gasping for air. Using intervals is one of the most efficient ways to increase your cardiovascular ability in a short amount of time. An example would be speed walking or jogging for two to four minutes, walking to catch your breath for one, and then repeating the cycle. Another example is running hills or stairs: Repeat a cycle of running up and walking down.

Try this: Include cardio a minimum of two times per week for 15 minutes. Thirty minutes would be ideal. Also, include one long walk each week to keep your hips and joints mobile. Swimming is also an excellent cardio exercise.

Tone and Awareness: Once you are stretching daily, doing a few minutes of core work on most days of the week and squeezing in a couple of short power walks, you will have developed a knack for fitting training into your life and be more likely to stick to a program to help you target specific areas. A rule of thumb with strength training or toning for muscles is to work a particular muscle group at least twice a week to stimulate muscle growth. While Pilates can be a good start, I do like to see riders using free-weight and body-weight exercise as well, since we are not only concerned about self-carriage but must work with approximately 1,000 pounds of livestock on the hoof, as well as farm labor--even if it's just lifting your saddle onto your horse.

Try this: Tone twice a week, 15 to 20 minutes, concentrating on outer thigh, glutes and legs. To increase your awareness, incorporate balance work, such as leg raises and standing on one leg.

A note about nutrition as you embark on your plan: Glycogen, the essential fuel for your muscles, is carbohydrates broken down to useable form in your muscles. Very low-carb diets are not appropriate for athletes or for long-term health. You also need to eat regularly and in small portions to keep your blood sugar levels constant. Keeping your blood sugar more consistent and keeping glycogen supplied to your muscles will help regulate your metabolism and also provide your body with the fuel it needs to keep going. When muscles fatigue, you are not as accurate with your aids and you ask your horse to compensate for shifts in your weight that you may not even be aware of.



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Winter Health Care Mistakes to Avoid

By Toni McAllister

Winter is setting in, and while you may be tempted to wrap your horse in an overly toasty warm blanket and tuck him in to a heated barn for the cold season, avoid the urge. He's better off if you refrain from too much over-coddling. Of course throwing him out for the winter and forgetting about him until the spring thaw isn't the way to go either.

Ensure your horse stays healthy all season long by using common sense and avoiding these Top 10 winter horsekeeping mistakes:

1. Letting his waterer freeze over.

A horse will not stay properly hydrated if his water is frozen. Snow and ice are no substitute for clean, unfrozen drinking water. Your horse's risk of impaction colic is greatly increased if he doesn't have access to unfrozen water at all times. If you live in a region that experiences below-freezing temperatures, invest in a heating device specifically designed for horse waterers and troughs.

2. Not increasing feed rations when temperatures dip.

Talk to your veterinarian about how much feed your horse should receive during the winter months. As the temperatures drop, your horse burns more calories to stay warm. For some horses, this means considerable weight loss. If your horse isn't on a calorie-restricted diet, consider increasing his hay rations as it gets colder outside. Forage (hay) provides an excellent source of calories. Also, the process of digesting fiber (most hays are high in fiber) helps keep a horse warmer.

3. No exercise.

Just like we humans, horses need exercise all year long, even when it's cold outside! If possible, continue riding through the winter months. If severe conditions make winter riding impossible, turn your horse out daily in a large pasture or paddock daily; if it's safe to

do so, consider longeing him to keep him fit.

4. Overriding an out of shape horse.

If you only ride when the weather is good, chances are you won't be doing much saddling up if you live in a cold winter region. That's ok if you do other things to keep your horse fit, but if he's a stable potato most of the season, use caution: An out-of-shape horse is at a much greater risk of musculoskeletal injury if exercised hard. If your winter riding schedule is sporadic, based on weather conditions, stick to lighter workouts that won't over task your horse. Gradually increase his exercise level as his fitness improves.

5. Sequestering a horse indoors.

Horses will stay healthier and fitter if left outdoors for the winter, with a few caveats: All horses must have shelter from the elements. A three-sided shelter with a roof is a must. If you do bring your horse indoors, try to leave him out during the day and only bring him in at night. And don't close your barn up! Instead, leave it open to ensure good airflow inside; a closed-up barn leads to poor air quality that can affect a horse's respiratory health.

6. Over blanketing.

When it's snowing outside and you're inside enjoying a warm dinner by the fire, it's hard not to feel sorry for your horse. To ease the guilt, you may be tempted to rush out and pile yet another blanket on him. Stop yourself right there! Yes, a horse with a full or partial body clip does need blanketing during winter, regardless of whether he's kept indoors or out. But a horse with his natural winter coat probably doesn't need blanketing as long as he has shelter from the elements, is receiving proper nutrition and is in good health. Over blanketing a horse can cause him to overheat, which can lead to dehydra-

tion and a host of health problems. If you are concerned about your horse's comfort during winter, talk to your veterinarian about it.

7. Lack of hoof care.

Nothing irks a good farrier more than an owner who insists on foregoing hoof care during the winter months. Horses—barefoot or shod, ridden or not—need regular farrier care every six to eight weeks, maybe even more often, regardless of the season. Period, the end!

8. No beauty treatment.

Even if you don't ride during the winter, groom your horse regularly—daily if possible. Regular grooming and handling provides the opportunity to evaluate your horse and alerts you to problems such as illness, injury, weight loss, lost shoe, cracked hooves, et cetera. It's up to us, as owners, to intervene as quickly as possible when something is wrong. Catching a problem early on helps put your horse back on the track to good health.

9. Throwing him out to pasture and forgetting about him.

There's an old cowboy adage out there, "no rest for the horseman." Yes, the holidays are upon us, and yes it's darn cold outside, but you still have to keep up on your daily horsekeeping chores. Even if your horses are in pasture, you still have lots of work to do! Watering, feeding, grooming, exercising—get busy.

10. Neglecting your own health.

Most of us are responsible horse people who put equine health in front of our own. But remember, if you're not healthy, you won't be able to care for your horse. When tending to your horsekeeping tasks this winter, stay warm, stay safe and stay healthy because there's someone counting on you every day.



Did You Know?

By Wayne Tolbert

This article is reprinted from the Nov/Dec 2005 issue of "Hoof Print" magazine.

Did you know there are three types of training that a competitive trail horse should have in order to help keep rider and horse safe on the trail? These are physical, mental, and emotional training.

Physical training is achieved by progressively conditioning the heart, lungs, legs (tendons and ligaments), and muscles to perform efficiently at increasing levels of stress. An excellent source for developing a physical conditioning program for the long distance equine athlete is Nancy Loving's book, "Go the Distance: The Complete Resource for Endurance Horses" (Trafalgar Square Publishing, 1997).

Mental training involves a variety of techniques and procedures designed to produce a well-mannered and knowledgeable trail horse. The rider should teach the horse to load into and unload from a trailer, to behave when tied, to eat and drink at the campsite and on the trail, to lead in hand, to lunge, and in general to be respectful of other horses and people. The rider should acclimate ("sack out") the horse to a number of camp disturbances such as dogs, generators, small children and their toys, dropped water buckets and tack, plastic bags, and awnings flapping in the wind to name a few.

Mental training also involves mastering "technicals". I am indebted to Mary and Jack Brit for introducing me to this term. It involves teaching the horse cues to move various parts of the body. Learning the moves to perform various judged obstacles, both in-hand and under saddle, is part of technicals. So is working with the horse to produce smooth gaits, changes in gait (such as an up transition from walk to trot or a down transition from canter to stop), speed changes within gaits, and last but certainly not least, maintaining a desired speed

and gait until the rider requests a change.

Emotional training involves improving the horse's willingness to perform what the rider requests. Emotional and technical training are sometimes hard to distinguish from one another. But I think of it this way - if the horse knows **how** to do something but **refuses** to do it, then you are dealing with an emotional training issue. For example, if you have practiced doing an obstacle at home and your horse clearly knows how to do it, but at a ride he blows the obstacle, then you either mis-cued and confused your horse, or the horse is not sufficiently trained to handle the increased emotional stress posed in that particular situation. From my personal experience, observations, and discussions with many NATRC riders over the past 9 years, I find emotional issues to be the most difficult and time consuming to correct. In most cases, riders (myself included) have to guess what might work, and we experiment until something works. Horses that buddy, are herd bound or must race ahead are examples of problems at least some riders face at every CTR I have ever attended.

Of the three types of training, **emotional training is the most important for the rider's personal safety**. A horse that is disobedient and unruly poses a danger to the rider and to other riders and horses in the vicinity. Even a horse that is obedient most of the time may fail at a critical moment. One of the key diagnostic tools we have in NATRC rides to determine the degree to which our horses are listening and obeying (= safe) is the judged obstacle. A judged obstacle often serves as a surrogate for a potentially dangerous trail situation. For example, I have been asked to get my vet-in number from the llama man (with a llama standing beside him). In Vir-

ginia, where that ride occurred, llamas are used as pack animals and often share trails with horses. A few months later Sienna and I encountered an escaped emu (think 6 foot llama with feathers) about 200 yards from the barn. Sienna stopped perfectly still and waited until the emu saw us and reversed course. (I think Sienna said something about a mutant ninja turkey). The "stop and count to 5 while the horse in front walks away" obstacle may appear pointless. Pointless, that is, until the day a poisonous snake or some other danger is between you and your horse's buddy. Then the ability to stop your horse when he absolutely wants to continue potentially becomes a matter of life and death.

Some riders object to in-hand obstacles. A couple of years ago while clearing an overgrown section of trail as I led Sienna in hand, I heard an ominous buzzing noise and spotted a large bald-faced hornet's nest about 6 feet in front of me. As quickly and quietly as possible (and trying not to disturb the vegetation further) I backed Sienna about 10 feet along the curving trail, mounted (while she stood still - recall the judged mount), and beat a hasty retreat. I cringe to think about what would have happened if she had refused to back and had whirled sideways into the brush.

Ride safe - ride smart - and happy trails.



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Winter Training and Conditioning Ideas

By Laurie Knuutila

Are you trying to keep your sleek, fit, shiny trail horse from becoming a fat, furry paddock potato through a long, dark and cold Alaskan winter? Well, so am I! Or maybe some of you have given up on it and kind of like the look of fat, furry paddock potatoes. While some "meat" on their bones is not necessarily a bad thing in the heart of an Alaskan winter, keeping a little bit of fitness on your beastie will make your spring/ summer conditioning program go a little easier. Of course, fur is definitely a winter essential, so we must take that into consideration. But there are some simple things you can do to help keep a little muscle tone going even in winter.

If your horse lives on a hillside, you have a definite advantage - but only if the horse actually moves up and down the hill! I have one who is perfectly happy to stand at the top his hill in his shelter and all the work he wants to do is to let his eyeballs look down that hill! So to encourage movement up and down the hill, or even to the far-flung corners of a flat pen, scatter your hay far and wide. Yes, you will have to walk up and down that hill too. But that's not a bad thing! By scattering the hay, you will get the horse to move around a little bit on his own. And if your hay and water are widely separated, say at the opposite ends of that hill, then you will encourage even more movement. Spending a few minutes a day actually making the horse move around will build muscle tone too. I have an advantage in that area, in that my dogs and horses all love to chase each other up and down that hill. So I let them do the work for me. Even a few minutes of making the horse trot around - not enough to get sweaty - will help. Turning the horse loose in a round pen or an arena is good too. Just don't let them tear around and work up a sweat or injure themselves. By doing it consistently, you will see a difference in muscle tone.

Any riding that you are able to do is always good, even if for just a few minutes in an arena, or riding up and down your driveway or road. You can

work on lateral movements while walking along a road or driveway, or work on transitions. If the footing is not good, just do walk - halt transitions, or walk - halt - back, or collected walk - medium walk - extended walk transitions. You will accomplish a lot of good just doing that. You can also work on teaching the horse to stand for mounting, dismounting, having their mouth handled and picking up feet.

Something you can do in an arena setting is to work over cavaletti poles, first flat on the ground, then elevated. You can elevate one end of the poles, or elevate alternating ends of three or four poles to teach the horse to pick up its feet. You can lay them out in a "pick up sticks" fashion to help teach the horse to look where he's putting his feet. You can put them in a fan shape around a corner (make sure the footing is not slick and don't make the fan too tight) and teach the horse to adjust stride depending on where in the fan you cross it.

You can also use poles to work on other trail-type obstacles, such as backing and/or sidepassing through an "L". You can set up a "Linda Tellington-Jones horse playground". Things in her "playground" include the fan or star, the "L", the maze and the corridor (please see the diagrams on the next page).

Perfecting your horse's response to backing cues is another exercise to work on. You can combine forehand turns and haunch turns with backing to eventually be able to back your horse in a circle. Use a cone or other object as the center of the circle and practice staying a set distance (say 10 feet) from the object as you back around it. Work for smoothness and fluidity.

An exercise I like to work on is keeping my horse guessing as to what is coming next. I use this especially if my horse is tuning me out or is staring off into the distance and not concentrating on me. In the arena, I'll walk for several feet, halt, turn right on the forehand, walk several more feet, turn left on the haunches, trot off for several feet, halt, turn left on the forehand,

walk, halt, back, walk, turn right on the haunches, walk, turn left on the forehand, trot off . . . You get the idea. The horse must continually be listening and I must be precise and quick with my cues to get the proper response. A few minutes of that and I have a much more responsive and attentive horse.

There are a myriad of in-hand exercises that you can work on. A few include stretching exercises, sidepassing, backing, forehand turns (both directions), haunch turns (both directions), standing still, and trotting in hand while being led from both sides. Space does not allow me to go into detail on how to train all these various things, but there are lots of books, Internet resources, trainers and other experienced people that you can turn to for the "how". I'm just giving you ideas on the "what" to get you and your horse through the winter months.

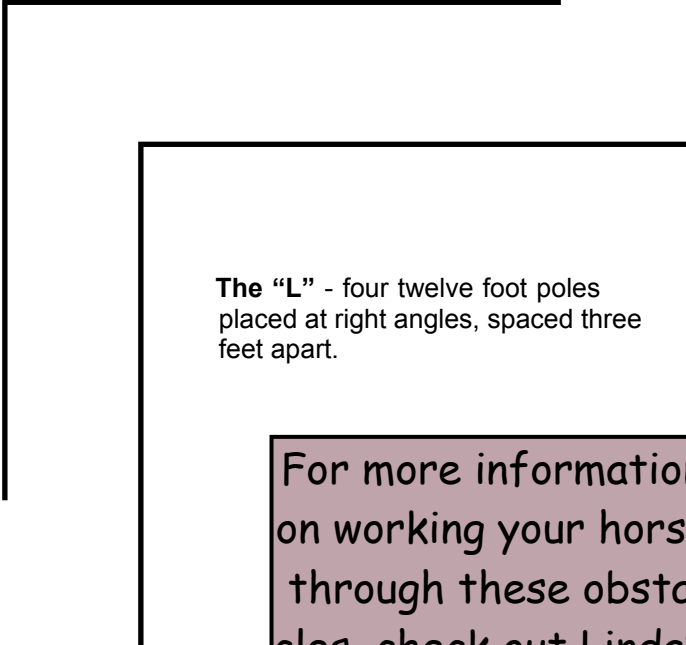
Something else that both horses and humans find enjoyable is trick training. You'll be amazed at how many tricks you can get your horse to do by the time spring rolls around. There are several books on the subject that can help you with that. Trick training also helps to improve your communication and relationship with your horse.

Winter is a good time to practice precision riding, such as dressage exercises (riding precisely from letter to letter) and riding precise geometric patterns. Some time just practice riding something as "simple" as a perfectly straight line or a perfectly round circle and you'll undoubtedly see that it is not that "simple"! Fresh snow in an untracked arena is great for doing these types of exercises. Try walking your horse on a straight path, and then look at the tracks behind you and see how straight you actually went.

Whatever you find to do with your horse this winter, make it fun for both of you, don't overdo it, stay safe and we'll see you on the trails come spring!

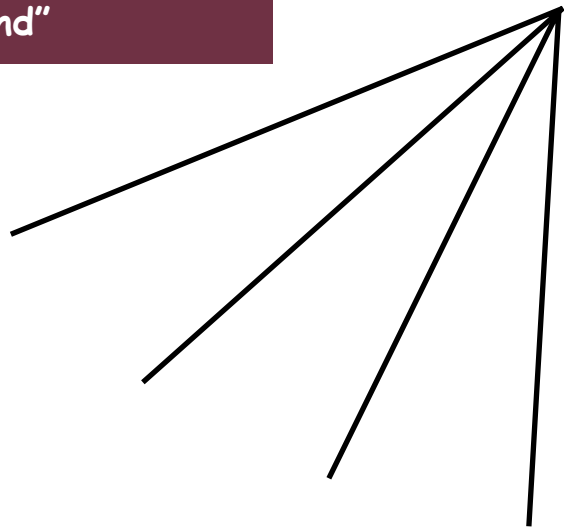


"Linda Tellington-Jones Playground"

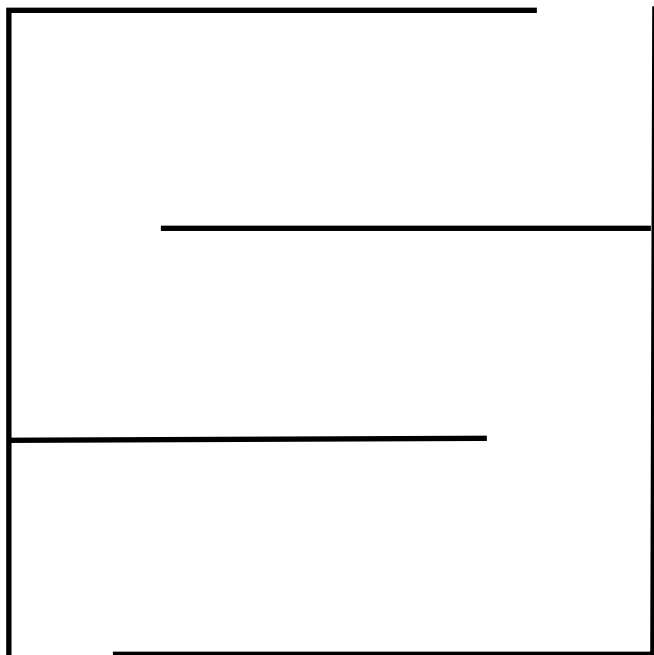


The "L" - four twelve foot poles placed at right angles, spaced three feet apart.

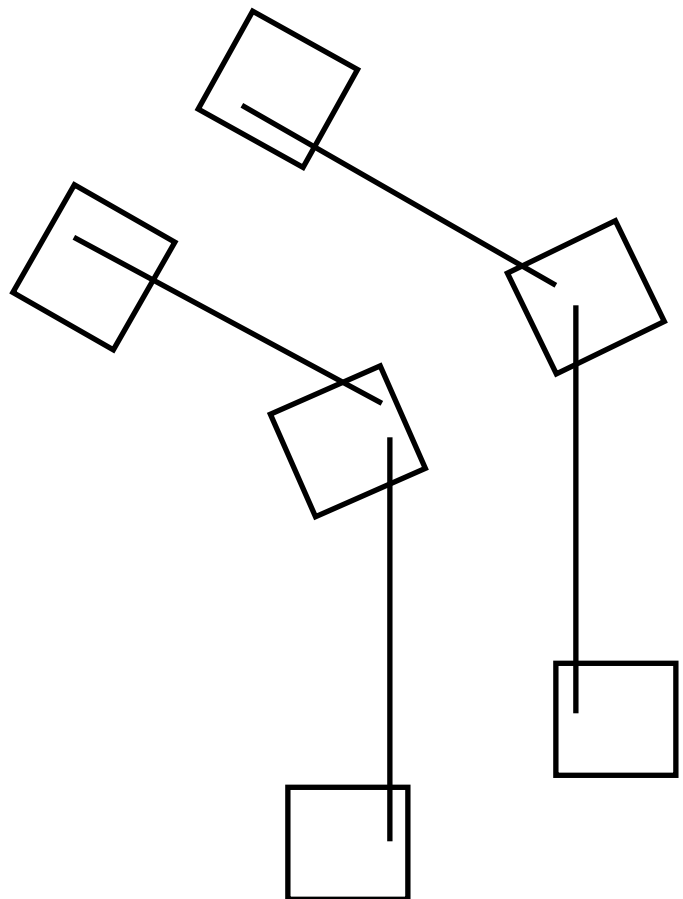
For more information on working your horse through these obstacles, check out Linda's books and/or website.



The Fan or Star - four twelve foot poles with the ends touching. The opposite ends should be about three feet apart. The pointed end can be elevated on a bale of hay with the other ends on the ground.



The Maze - arrange four twelve foot poles in a 12' X 15' rectangle. (The openings at diagonal corners add three feet to one dimension.) Space two more poles four feet apart inside and parallel to the long sides. Stagger the poles so one butts to the right and one to the left.



The Corridor - turn three pairs of hay bales on end and place four poles between them to form an angle. The channel between the poles should be about three feet wide

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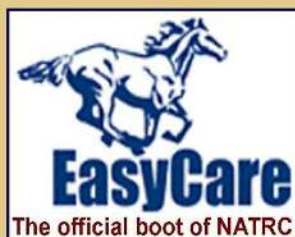
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