



POOP SCOOP

Rusty Stirrups Riding Club Newsletter

February 2009

View From the Grandstand

As I sit and write this, it's a miserable day outside. The weather has been awful of late---snow, ice, rain, clouds.....COLD!! When will spring get here? I can't be the only one complaining. That's the trouble—I feel like all I do is complain when the reality is---life is still so very good. Recession aside, I have a roof over my head, food to eat, clothing to keep me warm, good friends....and my horse! What more can a person ask for?!?!? Well I am asking for Spring anyway! Warm weather and longer days can't arrive too quickly. I long for those evenings when I can ride and hang around the barn until 8pm, playing with my horse and my barn friends. I am tired of living in the cold and in the dark. That darn groundhog better not see his shadow and give us 6 more weeks of winter! It will be just our luck that the ONLY sunny day we'll have is Feb. 2nd!!! Ok...so how do we live through the next 6-8-10 weeks? What can we do when it's cold and rainy? Dark and dreary? Here are some of the things a few of us have come up with. Maybe give them a try and see if they help to pass the time.

1. Get out your favorite horse pictures and make a scrapbook. This can be done with friends to make it more fun. See who can make the most creative pages. Hit the craft/scrapbook stores and see how many horse-related items you can find. There really are lots.
2. Invite a couple of friends over to watch your horse videos. These can be the "how to" ones or horse movies---"Seabiscuit", "Dreamer", "The Black Stallion"---it doesn't matter if they are movies you first watched when you were 12!
3. Hit the tack shop circuit! A trip to Champion or The Complete Horse always cheers me up. Do what we did recently....head on up to Charlottesville to the Dover Saddlery---then have lunch out. Fun!
4. Clean your tack.....if you can't ride, play with your equipment anyway. I did this 2 weeks ago and had the nicest time hanging out in the barn, cleaning and spit polishing my saddle, bridle, girth, etc.
5. If you are lucky enough to have access to warm water at the barn, give your horse a bath. While you are at it---clip him and pull his mane! Try a hot oil bath---hot water with a short squirt of baby oil and rub it all over his body---going with and against the hair. He will look show ready with a bit of effort and smell good to boot.

6. Gather your horse friends at your house for lunch or dinner. We don't need an excuse to do this. Forget about the dust bunnies that have collected or the fact your bed hasn't been made in two days! Fix something easy (spaghetti and salad....chili)---anything easy that will leave you time to visit.

It won't be long before Spring is here. Hang on and try coming to the RSRC meetings. At least you can visit a bit with fellow horse folks. It doesn't get much better than that!



Please meet.....MADAME PRESIDENT!!!!!!

In January, our new President, Wanda Branson, took over the reins of RSRC. Since many of you don't know her, I asked her to give a brief "interview". If you haven't met Wanda yet, I urge you to introduce yourself to her at a meeting or event. She's going to do great things for the club in 2009!

Geri: How many horses do you own? Breeds, Sexes, Ages?

Wanda: 3 horses: paint mare - bay and white- 8 year old (Rainbow)
paint filly-bay and white- 10 months old (Sunshine who is daughter of Rainbow)
quarter horse gelding-golden palomino- 7 year old (Jesse).
I have three boarders at my home also. 2 quarter horses and a thoroughbred.

Geri: What types of things do you do with your horse? Do you compete?

Wanda: I mainly trail ride them for now. I used to show western pleasure and halter years ago. I would like to show Jesse in English and Western pleasure some this year. Sunshine I would love to get her in Paint halter classes.

Geri: How long have you been a member of the Rusty Stirrups?

Wanda: I think that this is my third year as a Rusty. I joined when Cindy W. was President.

Geri: What made you decide to run for President?

Wanda: I ran for President because I believe in being a team player. A lot of the same people in our club tend to do a majority of the work. I thought that as a fairly newcomer, I should step up to the plate and do my best. I took this position partially because Terri Escobar agreed to be our Vice President. We work great as a team and as friends. She has seen my best and my worst. Couldn't do it without her. Every President needs a great cabinet and I have been blessed with one this year. For that I am truly grateful.

Geri: What is your "vision" for 2009 with respect to the club?

Wanda: My vision for the club is for us to grow in the way that the membership wants us to grow. The club should be about its members. I want everyone to feel like they get something out of it as well as contributing to it. We should be doing a variety of events to include all types of riders and horses. I feel like we are successfully headed in that direction. I am excited at all the possibilities that lay before us in a new year. We can better ourselves and our horses. We just need to volunteer and work as a team to make things happen.

Geri: You have elected to continue with the "Pay it Forward" theme...why is this important to you?

Wanda: The "Pay It Forward" theme is dear to my heart and I have chosen to continue it for this year. For you to take your knowledge, monetary funds, or material goods and pass them onto someone that can truly benefit from them, gives you a feeling that can't easily be described in words. My mentor and trainer has done so much for me over the last few years that I could never begin to repay him. He has given of his time and talent on many occasions and I am a better horse owner/rider because of it. If we can share of ourselves in any way to reach out and help someone else that is deserving but maybe can't afford it or won't ask, then we have done our part in paying it forward. As you do these sometimes little things, the chain of kindness, love, and compassion continues to grow. In hard times like last year. .. I feel that it is important now more than ever to help anyone in ways that we can and are comfortable doing. Who knows, they may even pay it forward on your behalf.

Geri: If someone wondered why they should join RSRC, what would you tell them?

Wanda: It is a great place to be with other horse loving people. It gives you time for you and your horse. The opportunities for fun, learning, and fellowship are endless. And of course, let's not forget the food (lol).

Geri: What message would you like to pass along to the membership?

Wanda: The message I have for all Rusties this year is: Make this a year for you and your horse. Do more fun things with them and your friends. Learn or try something new that you have always wanted to try but have been scared to do. Call me and your board members, we will try new things with you. (must be on horseback of course and within reason.) Make 2009 your best year ever!

That concludes my interview with Wanda! I think you can see that Wanda has some great ideas for this year and we can make them all a reality. Please consider volunteering to help at the planned events. The more the merrier. You can meet some of your fellow Rusties and have a great time.



Wanda and her horse Jesse.....



UPCOMING EVENTS

February, 2009

Hunter Mini Schooling Show Series

When: February 7

Where: Coventry Farm, Ashland

Website: <http://www.coventryfarm.com>

Dressage Clinic with Catherine Sutton in indoor arena

When: February 7

Where: Oakdale Farm, Powhatan

Website: <http://www.oakdalehorsefarm.com>

Summerhill Winter Series

When: February 7

Where: Summerhill Farm, Powhatan

Email: shairf3182@aol.com

USERL Meeting, Dr. DeChant speaking

When: February 12

Where: Richmond, VA

More information: [Flyer](#)

Hidden Haven Hunter Show

When: February 15

Where: Hidden Haven, Mechanicsville

Website: <http://www.hdnhvn.com>

CVACTA CT and Dressage Show

When: February 21

Where: Campbell Springs Farm, Chesterfield

Website: <http://www.campbellspringsfarm.com> or <http://www.cvacta.org>

Summerhill Winter Series

When: February 21

Where: Summerhill Farm, Powhatan

Email: shairf3182@aol.com

Dressage Clinic with Catherine Sutton in indoor arena

When: February 22

Where: Oakdale Farm, Powhatan

Website: <http://www.oakdalehorsefarm.com>

Fox Horn Hunter Show

When: February 28

Where: Fox Horn Farm, Chestnerfield

Email: summerhillstable@aol.com

TIP OF THE MONTH

For many of us, winter riding is challenging, so we tend to look for other “horsey things” to do. *Horse and Rider* magazine suggests the following things to do this month:

Monitor your Senior Equines. Stay vigilant for weight loss and other signs of dental problems (abnormal chewing, dropped feed, refusal to chew hay stems). Have teeth checked if you suspect a problem. Dress your old horse in a warm blanket if he can't eat enough to maintain body weight in cold weather.

Prepare for Foaling. Get foaling stall/area ready, assemble foaling kit, record vet's office/cell numbers.

Clean/Disinfect Grooming Tools. Soak in solution of one part household bleach to 10 parts warm water. Allow to dry before using on about-to-be-shedding horses.



REMINDER---2009 DUES

As the new year begins, this is a reminder that it's time to pay your 2009 dues. Allyn Linas is serving as Membership Chair, so you can get your payment to her. The dues are \$35. if paid timely. Similar to last year, there will be a late fee of \$5. if payment is made after the deadline of March 1st, 2009. Info will be on the website shortly regarding dues, so keep an eye out at <http://rustystirrups.com>



A Valentine for Your Horse

If you want to show your horse how much he or she means to you this Valentine's day, here's something you can pamper him with---courtesy of Lynn Palm..

Combine the following in a feed bucket:

- Your horse's normal grain ration
- 1 lb of bran that's been soaked with warm water
- 2 large carrots, diced
- 1 large apple, cut into eighths
- 5 of your horse's favorite treats
- 1 stale roll or piece of bread, crushed to make crumbs

Pour the feed into your horse's grain bucket and top with 2 ounces of molasses. Serve immediately.

As always, if your horse has any health issues, consider them before feeding anything different to him/her.



Do You Have Some Good Ideas?

This year, Rusty Stirrups has an Events Coordinator. Paula Steindler has graciously volunteered to chair the Committee that will be responsible for coordinating the Club events. She will not be replacing the actual Event Chair (i.e. Rally Chair), but she and her committee will work with the groups that put events together to assist as needed. If you have an idea for an event that you would like to see happen....or if you want to plan one yourself....please contact Paula at pasteindler@comcast.net



I received the following from several folks and thought it would be appropriate to put in the Poop Scoop as a sort of Valentine to our horses. Remember how special they are...but don't forget those special "significant others" in our lives who put up with our crazy love for horses. They are the ones that help muck stalls, fix fences and lots of other broken things (including our bodies)...and support us every step of the way. Here's to all of them.....

And to Timmy.....my favorite and all time BEST VALENTINE.....this one's for YOU!!!

TO HAVE A HORSE IN YOUR LIFE

To have a horse in your life is a gift. In the matter of a few short years, a horse can teach a young girl courage, if she chooses to grab mane and hang on for dear life. Even the smallest of ponies is mightier than the tallest of girls. To conquer the fear of falling off, having one's toes crushed, or being publicly humiliated at a horse show is an admirable feat for any child. For that, we can be grateful.

Horses teach us responsibility. Unlike a bicycle or a computer, a horse needs regular care and most of it requires that you get dirty and smelly and up off the couch. Choosing to leave your cozy kitchen to break the crust of ice off the water buckets is to choose responsibility. When our horses dip their noses and drink heartily; we know we've made the right choice.

Learning to care for a horse is both an art and a science. Some are easy keepers, requiring little more than regular turn-out, a flake of hay, and a trough of clean water. Others will test you - you'll struggle to keep them from being too fat or too thin. You'll have their feet shod regularly only to find shoes gone missing. Some are so accident-prone you'll swear they're intentionally finding new ways to injure themselves.

If you weren't raised with horses, you can't know that they have unique personalities. You'd expect this from dogs, but horses? Indeed, there are clever horses, grumpy horses, and even horses with a sense of humor. Those prone to humor will test you by finding new ways to escape from the barn when you least expect it.

Horses can be timid or brave, lazy or athletic, obstinate or willing. You will hit it off with some horses and others will elude you altogether. There are as many "types" of horses as there are people- which makes the whole partnership thing all the more interesting.

If you've never ridden a horse, you probably assume it's a simple thing you can learn in a weekend. You can, in fact, learn the basics on a Sunday, but to truly ride well takes a lifetime. Working with a living being is far more complex than turning a key in the ignition and putting the car or tractor in "drive."

In addition to listening to your instructor, your horse will have a few things to say to you as well. On a good day, he'll be happy to go along with the program and tolerate your mistakes; on a bad day, you'll swear he's trying to kill you. Perhaps he's naughty or perhaps he's fed up with how slowly you're learning his language. Regardless, the horse will have an opinion. He may choose to challenge you (which can ultimately make you a better rider) or he may carefully carry you over fences - if it suits him. It all depends on the partnership - and partnership is what it's all about.

If you face your fears, swallow your pride, and are willing to work at it, you'll learn lessons in courage, commitment, and compassion in addition to basic survival skills. You'll discover just how hard you're willing to work toward a goal, how little you know, and how much you have to learn.

And, while some people think the horse "does all the work", you'll be challenged physically as well as mentally. Your horse may humble you completely. Or, you may find that sitting on his back is the closest you'll get to heaven.

You can choose to intimidate your horse, but do you really want to? The results may come more quickly, but will your work ever be as graceful as that gained through trust? The best partners choose to listen, as well as to tell. When it works, we experience a sweet sense of accomplishment brought about by smarts, hard work, and mutual understanding between horse and rider. These are the days when you know with absolute certainty that your horse is enjoying his work.

If we make it to adulthood with horses still in our lives, most of us have to squeeze riding into our over saturated schedules; balancing our need for things equine with those of our households and employers. There is never enough time to ride, or to ride as well as we'd like. Hours in the barn are

stolen pleasures.

If it is in your blood to love horses, you share your life with them. Our horses know our secrets; we braid our tears into their manes and whisper our hopes into their ears. A barn is a sanctuary in an unsettled world, a sheltered place where life's true priorities are clear: a warm place to sleep, someone who loves us, and the luxury of regular meals. Some of us need these reminders.

When you step back, it's not just about horses - it's about love, life, and learning. On any given day, a friend is celebrating the birth of a foal, a blue ribbon, or recovery from an illness. That same day, there is also loss: a broken limb, a case of colic, a decision to sustain a life or end it gently. As horse people, we share the accelerated life cycle of horses: the hurried rush of life, love, loss, and death that caring for these animals brings us. When our partners pass, it is more than a moment of sorrow.

We mark our loss with words of gratitude for the ways our lives have been blessed. Our memories are of joy, awe, and wonder. Absolute union. We honor our horses for their brave hearts, courage, and willingness to give.

To those outside our circle, it must seem strange. To see us in our muddy boots, who would guess such poetry lives in our hearts? We celebrate our companions with praise worthy of heroes. Indeed, horses have the hearts of warriors and often carry us into and out of fields of battle.

Listen to stories of that once-in-a-lifetime horse; of journeys made and challenges met. The best of horses rise to the challenges we set before them, asking little in return.

Those who know them understand how fully a horse can hold a human heart. Together, we share the pain of sudden loss and the lingering taste of long-term illness. We shoulder the burden of deciding when or whether to end the life of a true companion.

In the end, we're not certain if God entrusts us to our horses--or our horses to us. Does it matter? We're grateful God loaned us the horse in the first place.

Author Unknown



Well that's it for another edition of the Poop Scoop. If you have any news for future editions, please feel free to send them to me at ghollander@markelcorp.com If you would like to write an article for the Poop Scoop, we are always looking for contributors.

Our next regular meeting is on February 17th at the Markel Plaza Building at 4600 Cox Rd. in Innsbrook. We hope to see you there.

The End