



Quicksilver Quips

October 2012

October President's Message

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Hello folks.... One more club ride/pot luck/meeting is being planned for Saturday, October 13th. We looked at several potential places to meet, but it seems that Calero is the best in that area, with some shade, picnic tables, decent trails and water for the horses, so CALERO it is. I hope you can join us.

What we did last time seemed to work well, so meet there as early as you want, and plan to be back at the trailers by 12:30 for lunch and a short meeting. Bring a friend and introduce them to the club! If anyone is interested in doing another mini-endurance clinic, let me know. I still have some good materials left over from the last one.

Food:

Last time we had an over abundance of desserts, so let's see if we can solve that issue in a simple way:

- Last name from A to M please bring some kind of main dish-ey meaty thing.

- Last name from N to Z bring a salad or dessert.

I am out of club-owned plates, cups, and napkins, so bring your own, as well as something to drink.

Elections/BOD nominations:

It's time to nominate people for the next Board of Directors. This is your club and you get out of it what you put in.... please consider running or nominating someone (after they agree, of course!). Nominations will be taken according to the current bylaws, which state:

"No person may be a candidate in a club election who has not been nominated. Nominations for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Board Members will be accepted from the floor at the October general meeting. Nominations may be made by any member in attendance provided that the person so nominated does not decline when his (or hers - my addition) name is proposed, and provided further, that of the proposed candidate is not in attendance at this meeting, his (or her - my addition) proposer shall present to the secretary a written statement from the proposed candidate signifying his (or her - my addition) willingness to be a candidate. A candidate for an office who is not elected is automatically nominated for a position on the Board of Directors unless said candidate declines to run."

If you want to nominate someone who you know will NOT attend the ride/pot luck/meeting on the 13th, please get it in writing (an email from them accepting the nomination will also work) and present it to the club secretary (Peggy Davidson) or one of the BOD members if she is not in attendance. If we have more than one

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President.....Elisabet Hiatt
Vice President...Lori Oleson
Secretary.....Peggy Davidson
Treasurer.....Trilby Peterson

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Cathy Kauer
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Newsletter Editor

Barbara McCrary
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nomination per office, we will have elections at the December meeting. If only one person is nominated per office and they accept the nomination, there will be no need for elections. Don't know how to say this nicely, folks, but if you don't get involved, then don't complain either. We would all much rather have you involved!

And finally.... Christmas party!

Trilby reserved the Almaden Community Center for FRIDAY December 14th for our Christmas party. We heard many of you saying that it would be much easier to attend if you didn't have to get up early the next day, so hopefully having it on a Friday will help. Volunteers to help decorate, set up and clean up are needed. Please get in touch with Trilby if you'd like to help. We also need a Santa if we decide to do the White elephant gift exchange (which is always loads of fun). Someone please grow a beard! Put this event on your calendar now!

Cheers,
Elisabet

The Buck Doesn't Stop Here

By Julie Suhr, AERC Membership Committee

Your AERC membership buck does not stop with record keeping and year-end awards. Those of you who feel there is no value in a membership because you only ride a few rides a year and will never be in the standings or eligible for an award and won't ever get to a Convention, need to consider the AERC's other responsibilities.

I would like to cite two examples that your dues make possible:

1. Trail preservation. Michael Campbell, AERC chair of The Trails and Land Management Committee, which supports the maintenance and development of trails all across our country give this report of the committee's activities.

a. Trailmaster classes (1-5 each year) which teach AERC members and land managers how to build and maintain trails that will stand up to the pounding of hundreds of hooves per day. In 2012, AERC split the cost of the class (usually about \$6,000) with the Texas Endurance Riders Association. We hope to have three classes next year.

b. Trails Grants are made to applicants with a strong plan--usually to build or add to a trailhead, i.e. water, parking, etc.

c. Attendance at meetings of national importance such as the American Horse Council and Southeastern Equestrian Trails Conference.

d. Membership in organizations that support trails and equestrian activities such as American Horse Council, Back Country Horsemen of America and Equestrian Land Conservation Resource.

2. AERC funded research on the heart of the endurance horse. The objective of this study was to determine if endurance horse performance is related to heart size or function, as determined by echocardiography.

In spending your AERC dues on these two projects, the AERC is living up to its mission statement which includes the preservation of trails and the welfare of the horse.

Hall of Fame Horse Award

My wonderful Buddy horse won the Quicksilver Horse Hall of Fame award last year. That automatically made me the chairman of the Horse Hall of Fame Committee for 2012. The plaque has space for 12 horses and Buddy was the 12th, so I get to keep the plaque. Yay, Buddy!

When I look at the names on it I am very proud. They run the gamut from a three-time World Champion to horses (oh, and one mule) that never won a ride, but distinguished themselves in other respects.....by being a best friend or by contributing to the happiness or well being of their human partner.

Now it is time to make the selection for 2012. I would like a committee of three which means I need two people to volunteer to join me on the committee. If no one does by Thursday, October 11th, I will make some phone calls and ask a couple of members.

In the meantime, please think of which horse you would like to be honored this year. Send your nomination to 100 Marinera Road, Scotts Valley, CA 95066 or marinera@aol.com.

Thank you for your cooperation. Julie Suhr

Full Circle for No Repeat

Final Installation of Becky Hart and Pete's Quest for the 2012 World Championship Endurance Race

by Judith Ogus

Sheikh Mohammed of the United Arab Emirates is the owner of the Darly Stud. He has bred many Arabian horses for the track and is himself an avid endurance rider. His foundation stallion Wiking was one of the two most famous sires in the history of Arabian racing, the other being Sambor. By the end of 2004, Wiking's progeny had earned \$8 million dollars, the largest amount ever won by any sire's get. During the period from 1984 to 1999, 636 horses won stakes races in the United States. Over fifty-seven percent of those horses were sired by either Wiking or Sambor. The other forty-two plus percent of the winners were sired by 38 different stallions.

Several years ago, the Sheikh decided to unload some of his excess horses and had a dispersal sale of six of them here in California. No Repeat (Pete), sired by Wiking and out of the mare Just One Time, was one of those six. A friend of ours, Darran Ross, went to that sale and was advised by the trainer to buy Pete. "He's the sleeper of the bunch," he said. "They think he bowed a tendon a while back, but I don't see any sign of it." Darran bought him, had his tendons ultra-sounded and both front legs were perfectly clean. After riding Pete a couple of times, Darran realized that Pete was not for her. Rather than continuing to pay for his board and training, she offered him to Becky if she was willing to go pick him up. The three of us drove down to the cowboy trainer's ranch in Fresno to see him. He was tied to a hitch rail, a lean Arabian in the midst of bulky quarter horses. Something startled the horses and the fear traveled down the line, each horse pulling back in fright till it got to Pete, who just stood there as if to say "what's the problem?" - a very good sign with an Arabian. Next, one of the cowboys rode Pete in the round pen while we all watched. He walked in both directions, then loped, asking Pete to put his head down, which he did. "Can we see him trot? I asked "We cowboys don't like to trot" was the response. "Well, we endurance riders spend a lot of time trotting . . ." So he trotted. Then we could see why the cowboy didn't want to trot. Pete had tremendous elevation and float in his trot - hard to sit for a cowboy who is used to the smooth western jog or lope. Pete seemed responsive and sensible and was a beautiful mover. "I'll take him," Becky said, and so began their journey to the international stage.

Pete's transition from being a flat track horse to an endurance horse began immediately. Race horses are taught to lean into the bit and go. Endurance riders hope that their horses will respond to light pressure on the bit, along with seat and leg aids to slow down or whoa. Becky sent Pete to Mark Schuerman in Auburn. He is a fabulous dressage and endurance trainer who is particularly talented with Arabians. For those of you not familiar with the breed, they tend to be hot, sensitive horses who are full of "Go." After two months at Mark's, Pete began his careful progression of conditioning for endurance rides. First a multi-day ride (50 miles per day for four consecutive days) where he would learn that he must eat and drink at the vet checks or go hungry. Then he moved on to 75 and 100 mile distances in one day. The four years of training included at least three to four 10-20 mile conditioning rides—trotting and cantering—per week, alternating with 5-10 miles of walking rides, all the time monitoring his heart rate at different speeds and over different terrain. Of course this went along with regular horse care that includes annual dental work, shots and worming, new shoes every six weeks, a balanced diet for the equine athlete of feed and supplements. During the 2011-2012 seasons, Becky had to carefully orchestrate Pete's conditioning and competition schedule both for the selection process and to peak him for the trials and World Championship (WC), to make sure that she did not over-stress his muscles, tendons or bones.

As I wrote in previous articles, by June of 2012, Becky and Pete had succeeded at three consecutive prestigious rides, including the "race off" in Texas, where all the fastest endurance horses in the country were pitted against each



Becky Hart and Pete

Becky and Pete (Continued on page 4)

Becky and Pete (Continued from page 3)

other as part of the selection process for the WC. Becky and Pete were finally chosen as members of the squad of six and we left for England in mid-August. Three horses shipped from the west coast and four from the east coast, one of whom was the seventh alternate horse in case any of the six had a problem and could not start. The east coast horses flew directly from New York to London. The west coast horses endured a six hour trailer ride to Los Angeles, a long flight to Luxembourg, then an eight hour trailer ride to the Shadwell Stud in the small village of Diss, England, northeast of London. Sheikh Hamdan from the United Arab Emirates owns the stable and was kind enough to allow the Uruguayan and American teams house their horses there. He provided large grassy paddocks so the horses could graze freely during the day, 16 x 16 foot box stalls for the nights, and a Eurosizer - which is a walker that allows the horses to move freely instead of being tethered to a line.

By the time we arrived, Pete and the other two west coast horses, Kutt and Marvel, were settled happily in one of the large paddocks which had been divided into three sections with temporary electric fencing. Becky's first question for the Chef d'Equipe (Team Captain) was about the grass. Was he sure that the grass would not be too rich for a horse coming from the dry summer pastures of California? Becky's enquiry was based on the fact that a horse not used to green grass that has a lot of sugar and/or protein can "tie-up." This is a colloquial term for muscle cramping. It is particularly tricky if the horse has had some time off, is allowed to eat the grass, and exercises soon after. The tying up syndrome is also known as "Monday morning disease," referring to farm horses who pull plows all week, are fed grain and rested over the weekend, then go back to work on Monday morning only to suffer from immobilizing muscle cramps. More technical terms for "tying up" are Azoturia Equine Sickness or Equine Exertional Rhabdomyolysis. The Chef reassured Becky that the grass in these pastures was mowed frequently and would not cause a problem for the horses. We felt good about letting Pete have lots of free time to graze alongside the other horses.

The humans also had lovely places to stay in the small villages in and around Diss. Some of the riders and crew were housed in bed and breakfast inns, others in self-sufficient cottages. All were within 20 minutes of the stable and each other. We shared some wonderful group dinners at local pubs, enjoying such British delights as fish and chips, meat pies, and curries, thanks to the strong East Indian influence on the UK cuisine. The team members were relaxed and mutually supportive. During the day, while Becky rode Pete, I went shopping for last minute necessities or investigated the crewing points. My assignment was to be part of the road crew who would meet the riders at several designated spots along the trail. At these points we could offer the horses and riders water and cool the horses as well as possible by pouring water on them as they went charging by. So I had to have a crash course (so to speak) in driving on the right side of the car and the left side of the narrow and winding country roads.

We had arrived two weeks before the day of the race, hoping to give the horses time to rest after their journey and to acclimate to the new environment. Our stable was actually right along the trail, so the riders and horses could experience some of it when they went out on their warm up rides. Sheikh Hamdan's facility included a beautiful castle whose renovation was stalled because of disagreements with the British historical society, a picturesque lake surrounded by willows and rolling green lawns. Everywhere you looked there were pheasants. The Sheikh bred and released them to provide plenty of game. It was a beautiful but oddly contrived hunter's paradise. Swans and ducks paddled peacefully around the lake. There were so many pheasants you could just about jump out of your car and grab one. Opposite ends of the lake provided locations for the first two crewing points. Its perimeter was part of the trail.

For the first two days, Becky rode Pete at the walk or put him on the walker. On the third day she added some trotting, then turned him out in his pasture. When I went to get him for his evening stabling, he seemed to have trouble turning toward me and walking out. I feared the worst - a tie up - and called Becky over. Ever the optimist, she said, "Just make him walk out," which he did. The next day the team vet took blood from all the horses to see if their hydration levels were normalizing after their respective flights. The enzyme levels in Pete's blood revealed that he had indeed tied up. We wracked our brains for a possible cause. We had been so careful with his feed, had administered a muscle relaxant for the trip, had brought him in to work slowly. We finally decided it must have been the grass, and after talking to a local resident, this seemed to be the most probable cause. England had experience more than normal rainfall all summer. The grass was mowed frequently. The older grass had more seed and the new grass more sugar - enough to cause a California horse used to dry hay to tie up. The East coast horses were used to summer grass. The other two West Coast horses had spent the summer in Colorado on green grass. Pete was the only one coming from a dry pasture.

Becky refused to be deterred by this setback. In the past we had had horses come out of tie-ups in just a couple of days. We proceeded to treat Pete with every available therapy. We had an excellent support staff - an equine chiropractor, an equine masseuse, two different kinds of therapeutic lasers, and a vibrating pad that the horses could stand on. To this day I am not sure how this helps relieve pain, but every afternoon you could find a bunch of riders and crew standing, sitting on this pad with beers in hand and raving about its palliative effects.

We worked on Pete from morning till night. He got walked or ridden slowly twice a day and seemed to be fine to us by the Thursday before the race on Saturday, August 25th. The Chef d'Equipe and Team Veterinarian met with each rider on Thursday afternoon to tell them what speed they were to ride, hoping to win the U.S. a team medal. Becky came out of the meeting with her assignment and we all felt excited about the coming race. On Friday morning - horses were

Becky and Pete (Continued on page 5)

Becky and Pete (Continued from page 4)

brought out from their stalls and again trotted out in front of the team vet. On previous days they were trotted out both cold out of their stalls and after their warm up rides. After Friday's trot outs, the riders had one last meeting with the chef and vet. I was mixing up Pete's electrolytes when Becky emerged from her meeting. "I'm not riding," she announced. We were dumbfounded. Neither the vet nor the Chef had given any indication that Pete was still exhibiting any problems. It seemed like four years of dedicated hard work were all for naught. What can you do in a situation like that but process your disappointment and move on? Becky graciously congratulated our alternate rider, Meg Sleeper, for her opportunity, wished her the best, and offered her services and those of Becky's crew to the rest of the team.

At the pre-ride vet check, all the entered horses must trot out for a staff of internationally-rated veterinarians, and all the riders must weigh in to be sure that they meet the minimum weight requirement of 165 lbs. Unfortunately the USA lost another horse at this check-in. A mare who had trotted out sound at our stable was lame after the brief trailer ride over to the ride venue. This meant that we would only start five horses instead of six, four on the team and one individual, Meg. The team members have to ride with a group strategy in mind; the individual can usually ride as she pleases.

On the day of the race, all the horses start at the Euston Park Endurance venue. They charge forth under a broad banner across a wide field that tapers down to a dirt road studded with the local flint rock. The horses immediately spread out according to fitness, training and ride strategy - something that varies widely from team to team. After each loop, the horses return to the venue. First they cross the in timer, where their arrival time is recorded. They have a limited time in which their pulses must recover to 64 beats per minute. Then they go through the gauntlet of crewing - a flurry of activity that involves removing the saddle and dousing the horse repeatedly with ice water to cool down its body and lower its pulse. The faster a horse meets criterion, the faster they complete their rest period and the faster they can get back on the trail to continue the race. Once they recover, they are led to a vet who stands at the head of one of several trotting lanes. The vet examines the horse's metabolics, then asks for the horse to be trotted to the end of the lane and back to verify its soundness. At this point the vet either passes the horse and it can continue, or asks for two other vets to confer if there is something questionable about the horse and they vote on whether or not to allow the horse to continue. Sometimes a vet will request that the horse re-present before it leaves the vet check. At two of the five vet checks, there were mandatory re-checks after the rest period. Unfortunately, one of our team horses who passed the check when he first arrived, was pulled at the re-check. That left us three team members and Meg, our individual, who was riding faster than the team.

I drove one of six crew cars from crew point to crew point out on the trail. As road crew, the job is to spread a team of folks out along the crewing area - about 1/8 mile long, each of us holding up large bottles of water that the riders grab as they go cantering by. They take a sip and dump the rest on their horses. We also have buckets or other wide mouth containers of water that we dump on the horses, trying our best to cool them down. Once in a while a rider will slow down his/her mount so the horse can drink, but mostly they go flying by and it is a wild and crazy few seconds of crewing.

Becky stayed in the vet check area to help with Jeremy Reynolds' horse Kutt, who was overly excited that day and was having trouble recovering. There were sporadic showers all day long interspersed with periods of sunshine and moderate temperatures. Meg Sleeper, who had replaced Becky, came in 11th and was the first American to finish. Jeremy and Valerie Kanavy finished soon after. By the afternoon, a thunderstorm and cloudburst forced the Organizing Committee to call the race. Our last rider, Heather Reynolds on Marvel was close to the finish when the ride was called and rode in to complete all 100 miles. Only three members of a team have to finish to be eligible for a medal. But alas our times were not good enough. The American team placed fourth. Sheikh Mohammed of the United Arab Emirates won the individual gold medal, as did his team. The Spanish won the silver team medal and Oman won the bronze. The first ten horses to complete compete for the coveted Best Condition Award (BC) - which is given to the horse who the veterinarians deem the most fit at the end of the race. So we were just out of the running for the medals and the BC judging. A Spanish horse, who looked as fresh as he had before the race, won BC.

Becky is one of the most focused individuals I know. Her goal was not only to get Pete to the WC, but also to sell him, hopefully for a handsome sum. Though she did not get to ride, she did sell Pete. This was not an easy decision to make. The grief of losing a dear equine friend was coupled with the sense of accomplishment of bringing him to this point and eligibility for sale. Thanks to his stellar record at the North American Championship and the trial in Texas, Sheikh Mohammed's trainer, Juma, came to look at Pete the day after the race. "Really nice muscling," he said. He watched Pete trot out perfectly sound and asked Becky a few questions about his personality and shoeing and the deal was made. So No Repeat, son of Wiking, contrary to his moniker ended up back in Sheikh Mohammed's stable.

Now we are home. We have already picked up two horses for Becky to try out. Both are also from the track. Becky will test them out to see which has the most potential. My horse, whose grand sire is the other famous sire, Sambor, is just beginning her career, but I am not sure that I have the courage or chutzpah to take the risks that Becky does or that I could part with this lovely mare. When I went to stroke Pete a final time, I burst into tears. The grief of losing his companionship was suddenly overwhelming. I went up to the pasture to visit Heather and Jeremy's horses, Marvel and Kutt, who had also sold. Marvel tolerated my hugs and tears. Kutt came over hoping for a treat and edged Marvel out of the way, as is the wont of a more dominant personality. Seeing that I had nothing to offer, he turned away. But Marvel

Becky and Pete (Continued on page 6)

Becky and Pete (Continued from page 5)

came back. He put his head on my shoulder. It seemed like a consoling gesture and I suddenly had a revelation that the sold horses, even Pete, would be fine. Their needs are relatively simple. If they have food, water and a pasture in which they can move around, they can be content. They don't whine and complain the way we do. They adjust. We project so much of our own sentiment on these animals, it is hard to separate our inclination to anthropomorphize from the objective reality of their "horseness." A professional horse person's motto is, "Never get attached to a horse." Many years ago, I did sell a mare that I had had for eight years. To this day am plagued by the sound of her desperate whinnying as she was driven away. Horses do have attachments, but it is hard to say whether their attachments are to place, to herd, to a specific equine companion or to the humans who ask so much of them. They certainly seem able to readjust to new surroundings and to form new bonds very quickly. Horses who have never met before can go on a short trailer ride together and be bonded once you reach your destination. This may be an evolutionary trait - a characteristic of herd animals that insures protection in numbers from predators. The willingness of horses to pull carts, plow fields, ride into battle, or carry a rider for 100 miles may also be an aspect of their herd mentality, the imperative to submit to the most dominant member of the herd who is sometimes a human.

The California Mission Ride

By Barbara McCrary

Gwyneth Horder-Payton is a Santa Cruz resident who is a film director working in Burbank. She is doing a documentary on the California Missions for educational purposes, while riding from mission to mission. She contacted us last August to see if we could help her find a way from the Santa Clara and San Jose missions to the one in Santa Cruz. Obviously, she and her party would have to trailer their horses in places where multi-lane freeways have prevented safe riding. We told her that if they would meet us at Waterman Gap, the junction of Highways 9 and 236 (Big Basin Way), I would lead them to Swanton to the site of the Swanton vet check, where they could camp overnight.

Lud trailed me and our granddaughter, Katie Webb, and our horses—Spirit, my Morgan mare, and Jess, our Arab gelding that Katie is riding endurance—to the appointed rendezvous. Soon the party arrived there also: Gwyneth, her 16-year-old daughter—riding in a walking cast to protect a broken foot, Rod Rondeaux, a Crow/Cheyenne Indian who is an actor, stunt man, and horse trainer, another man (whose name I have forgotten)—the second horse wrangler—and Katie and I made up the party of six. We were to ride—basically—the first 22 miles of Swanton Pacific in reverse, plus about 3 more miles to the site of the Swanton vet check.

We started at 10:00 and arrived at camp at 6:00. We walked the whole way, following my requirements as their leader. Realistically, I wasn't ready to trot much, as I haven't been keeping up my endurance riding condition. I also felt it was easier to keep control of the entire party at a walk, should there be any misbehavior. And one mount, a Haflinger cross pony, did misbehave on occasions, once leaping upward and forward, unsettling to his rider.

Lud had driven up Last Chance Road some distance, at a time he hoped he would connect with us, and offered water to the horses. He was happy to see that we were still safe and sound.

After our arrival in Swanton, Katie and I rode up the hill another mile to our house—the horses as fresh as if they hadn't been anywhere at all—unsaddled, groomed, and fed them, and returned to camp where we were given dinner. We sat around a campfire and visited, learning more about these folks who had taken part in such an interesting journey—from one California mission to another. It's unfortunate that the development and population of California in this area is so prohibitive to riding it in its entirety. Imagine riding all the way, seeing an undeveloped and wild California as it must have been in the 1700s.

The party went to Pacific Elementary School in Davenport the next day to tell of their goal: Start at the northernmost mission, Sonoma, and ride to San Miguel Mission this summer, from San Miguel to San Diego next summer. The next day, they rode from Swanton to Davenport, using back roads. From Davenport, they rode to Santa Cruz on the disused railroad that used to serve the now-closed cement plant in Davenport.

I have no idea when—or how—they will publicize their documentary, but I do know that Katie and I had a great day leading the group on the trail we know so well.

I found my new Morgan mare to be a superb trail horse—safe, surefooted, unflappable, comfortable, a strong hill climber and a fast walker. I had come so close to turning her down when we drove to Tucson, AZ to look at her last January. She is an alpha mare, very dominant, and believes it's her God-given right to lead the herd. For this reason, her former owner had put her up for sale. He belongs to a riding club whose adventures take them to interesting places like Monument Valley to ride in a large group. He said to me, upon my question, "What's the worst thing you can say about this mare?" that she "hated being behind a slow Quarter Horse butt." She would fuss and jig, and I had felt she was wrong for me. But upon returning home, she wouldn't stay out of my mind—she kept haunting me—and after two months, I called back to find out if she was still there. She was, and I bought her. With time and repetition, she has learned to relax and walk on a loose rein. She still doesn't have the patience to allow me to open gates from her back, ride through, and close them again, but we're working on that. She simply translates my leaning over to open the gate as a sign to move on. With time, I think she'll understand what it is I am trying to accomplish.

Pigeon Fever in Horses Is Spreading

Endemic to California and Texas, pigeon fever has been spreading north and east the past few years, with recent outbreaks in Oregon, Washington and Colorado, and reported cases as far east as Kentucky and Florida. Pigeon fever, while not necessarily life-threatening, is highly contagious. Once introduced into the environment, the hardy bacterium that causes it is difficult to eliminate, resulting in unpredictable future outbreaks.

Also referred to as dryland distemper or Colorado strangles, pigeon fever earned its name from the characteristic swelling of a horse's chest from abscesses in the pectoral muscles. Swellings can also occur along a horse's ventral midline (belly) area and in the groin region, affecting sheaths and udders. The initial clinical signs can be vague, sometimes showing only as lameness or a reluctance of the horse to move.

The equine version of the disease isn't caught from pigeons; instead, the transmission route is thought to be flies, especially cattle horn flies, carrying the bacteria *Corynebacterium pseudotuberculosis*. While rarely contagious to humans, we can easily transfer the infection from horse to horse via our hands or equipment that has touched a draining abscess. A similar strain of pigeon fever affects goats and sheep; cattle are susceptible to both versions. All it takes is a single bacterium entering a wound, abrasion, or break in the horse's skin or mucous membranes for the disease to take hold.

THREE FACES OF PIGEON FEVER

Inspiritus Equine, located in Napa, California, is in the hot zone when it comes to pigeon fever. Founder Joanna L. Robson, DVM, CVSMT, CVA, uses an integrated approach with her equine pigeon fever patients, providing treatment options to help eliminate the abscesses and shorten the duration of the disease.

"Pigeon fever is very contagious," says Robson. "Evidently it's found worldwide, but it's endemic to California because it's both dry and hot here, with lots of dust and flies."

Robson reports that pigeon fever takes three forms:

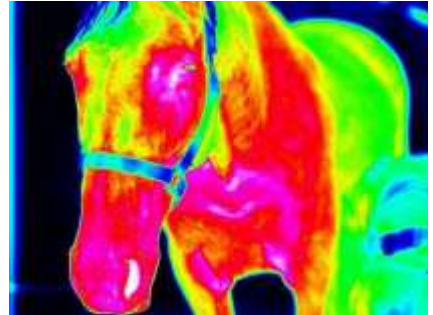
- * most common is a ventral midline and chest swelling with abscesses appearing externally

- * less common is swelling of the limbs, with cellulitis and edema, referred to as ulcerative lymphangitis

- * also less common but by far the most serious form settles into and affects internal organs such as the lungs, liver, spleen, and kidneys

Robson's findings are supported by research conducted by Sharon J. Spier, DVM, PhD, Dipl. ACVIM, at the University of California-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. One study found that ulcerative lymphangitis occurred in only 10% of cases, while internal abscesses occurred in 8% and external abscesses in 81% of cases studied. Spier's research also found that early diagnosis was key for successful outcomes.

Robson points out that a horse who is immunosuppressed or has a weak constitution is going to be most at risk. "In addition, horses living outside are typically the ones more prone to scrapes and cuts, and more prone to ventral midline dermatitis or 'fly strike,' which appear to be predisposing conditions for pigeon fever infection," she says.



EARLY TESTING AND DIAGNOSIS

Since early diagnosis is important, it's essential to remain watchful during the late summer and early fall months, when pigeon fever typically appears. "It's likely that flies introduce the bacteria during the hot summer months, then it sits in there and festers until it erupts into abscesses," says Robson.

Initial symptoms can be as subtle as a decreased appetite and lethargy, or can extend to indicators such as weight loss, abdominal pain, fever, or signs of respiratory disease. "Other things can mimic pigeon fever, such as strangles, or even the odd lumps and bumps that horses sometimes get," says Robson.

Different tests can be used for diagnosis, including ultrasound (for the internal form), blood titers, or a culture grown from an abscess swab. "Titers detect a level of antibodies, or immune system response, to a certain antigen. For pigeon fever, a serum synergistic

hemolysin inhibition (SIH) test is the titer test of choice," Robson says.

It's typically thought that horses with internal abscesses will have higher titers than those with external abscesses, according to Robson; however, culturing an abscess is still the definitive test. "Some horses without any active infection will still have positive titers, indicating possible exposure, and should be watched closely for any signs of illness," she says.

Getting a culture is essential to know what you're dealing with, according to Kay Aubrey-Chimene, RMT, co-owner and director of Grand Adventures Ranch (GAR) in Sonoita, Arizona. "The only way to truly diagnose pigeon fever is to

Pigeon Fever (Continued from page 7)

culture the material from the abscess,” she says.

In 2006, Aubrey-Chimene encountered a rash of pigeon fever-symptomatic horses who were having repeated abscess breakouts; they were brought to GAR, where she was conducting a study on the efficacy of intensive ozone treatment on pigeon fever horses. To help resolve the mystery of what was causing the ongoing problems, she sent abscess swab samples to several labs, including the University of Arizona.

“Despite the clinical signs of pigeon fever, some turned out to have *Corynebacterium kitcheri*, a related disease the University of Arizona lab insisted exists only in rats,” says Aubrey-Chimene. “We found literature showing *C. kitcheri* has happened in horses in England, and it’s far more serious than pigeon fever. For anyone who has a horse they suspect has pigeon fever, I hope they’ll spend the extra money and get the abscess cultured so they know how to treat it, and whether there are also any opportunistic infections present that might complicate treatment.”

TREATING PIGEON FEVER, INSIDE AND OUT

When diagnosed properly and early on, a number of holistic modalities and treatments with demonstrated success can be used for pigeon fever (see Holistic Treatment Options). However, an integrated Eastern-Western approach is considered necessary for horses with internal abscesses. “The internal abscesses can be very thick walled, reducing penetration of medicines, and they can affect many organs, so it’s important to support the patient with both traditional and alternative means,” says Robson.

Treatment of sick horses also involves careful environmental management to mitigate long-term contamination of the location, plus minimize chances of spreading the illness to other horses. Keeping the sick horse isolated is important, as is putting all contaminated manure, bedding, and cleaning supplies into plastic bags and into the trash.

“After each treatment session, we sanitize the area and the equipment,” says Aubrey-Chimene. “We spray the horse, the handler, the shoes, the hands; anything that might carry infection.” For horses and humans, GAR’s spray solution is 30 drops of grapefruit seed extract in a 32-ounce spray bottle of water.

For the surroundings, “We use one cup bleach to a gallon of water, and use a garden sprayer, like one you’d use for pesticides, except this one is used only for this purpose,” Aubrey-Chimene explains. “Bleach is cheaper for spraying our dirt stall floors, and we also spray the stall walls, hay feeders, and feed and water buckets.” When using bleach on any items the horse will eat from, be sure to give it a thorough rinse. Wear latex gloves when handling or treating sick horses, and wash your hands well to avoid carrying germs to other horses.

SHOO, FLIES

Both Robson and Aubrey-Chimene agree that fly prevention and a clean environment are instrumental in minimizing your risks when it comes to pigeon fever. But since flies don’t pay attention to land boundaries, it’s important to get your neighbors involved in the efforts, too. “If a farm down the road gets it, and a fly comes over to your farm and bites your horses, next thing you know you have it on your farm. Barns have to work together as a community, especially if someone in the area had it as an issue in the past,” says Robson.

To minimize an area’s fly density, Robson recommends using fly predators, tiny gnat-sized parasitic wasps that deposit their eggs inside fly pupae, consuming the developing fly and preventing it from hatching as an adult. Fly sheets and masks are a good idea, and Robson cautions horse owners not to forget fly spray.

“There are definitely some good holistic sprays, using ingredients like citronella, marigold, and peppermint,” she says. “A lot depends on the types of flies and the horses involved; sometimes it’s just trial and error to find what works for you.” Other fly control methods include feed-through garlic or apple cider vinegar, or using products such as apple cider vinegar-based fly spray, or even Avon’s Skin So Soft as an external fly repellent.

Fly management also involves your environment including removing manure and bedding, trash, and anything else that would be attractive to flies. Aubrey-Chimene uses zeolite, an odor absorbing pellet frequently used in commercially available urine minimizers. It’s available either in small quantities or by the pallet or truckload for larger barns. Zeolite is placed on top of dirt or packed clay stall floors as a urine and ammonia absorber, with clean bedding placed on top.

And last but not least, Aubrey-Chimene points out that the best fly control is to detox your horses. “Flies have a job to do; they carry away junk. The more junk your horse is sweating, peeing, or pooping out, the more flies will be attracted to him,” she points out, adding that a horse that’s been cleared of toxins will also have a cleaner liver and a stronger immune system to help him combat any bacteria he encounters.

As for preventive treatments, a daily once-over to locate any new wounds or abrasions is ideal, combined with dressing and covering wounds to prevent fly contamination.

THE BOTTOM LINE ON PIGEON FEVER

While primarily confined to California in the past, pigeon fever is advancing quickly on the rest of the country. Your best defense is a good offense: through preparation and proactive measures, with an emphasis on boosting each horse’s immunity, controlling fly populations and their access points, and managing the environment, you’ll have done your best to fortify your horse’s resistance to pigeon fever.

Pigeon Fever Primer

PREVENTION

* Fly management is your #1 prevention strategy. Use fly masks and sheets, fly spray on everything from horses to stall walls to trailers, feed-through options, and fly predators. Organize your community so everyone's working to minimize flies.

- * Detox your horse to help with both fly prevention and immune support.
- * Compost or dispose of manure properly, and keep your property tidy and trash-free.
- * Immune support and stress reduction options are important to help fight off any bacteria.
- * Dress and cover any wounds immediately to prevent infection.

DIAGNOSIS

* Early diagnosis is ideal for the best results. During the summer and fall, be especially vigilant to any symptoms, swellings, or behavior changes; call your veterinarian if you suspect pigeon fever.

* Since pigeon fever can mimic several other diseases, run a culture from an abscess swabbing for a definitive diagnosis.

TREATMENT

* Immediately isolate sick horses and any equipment used for them.

* Holistic approaches help resolve the external abscess and ulcerative lymphangitis types of pigeon fever; an integrated approach is needed for the more serious internal abscess type of the disease. Antibiotics are contraindicated for an external abscess, since they prevent it from coming to a head and draining properly; they are, however, considered necessary for complete resolution of internal abscesses.

* Use disease containment precautions such as wearing latex gloves, disposing of all infected or contaminated waste, and disinfecting surfaces appropriately.

* Bag and dispose of contaminated bedding properly; putting it on the manure pile will contaminate your environment via bacteria, since it's been shown to survive for up to two months on hay and bedding, and more than eight months in the soil.

* Use supportive methods to keep your horse comfortable and ease his suffering during recovery.

HOLISTIC TREATMENT OPTIONS

* Acupuncture: Points to relieve heat and boost the immune system might be helpful, but there's some concern about needing a pigeon fever patient because of the possible dissemination of bacteria and spread of the disease.

* Chinese Herbal Medicine: The TCM diagnosis for pigeon fever is 'external pathogen – heat toxin' and patients typically have a red tongue and a fast or wiry pulse. Using Wei Qi Booster can increase the immune system's response and the body's immune Qi. Also, the topical medicine Golden Yellow Powder, when mixed with vinegar to make a paste, can be used to treat abscesses topically.

* Dynamite Miracle Clay: A food-grade bentonite clay, it can be mixed into a 'runny paint' consistency and applied topically to help draw out abscesses.

* EqStim Immunostimulant: An injectable product that boosts the equine immune system, it's been used successfully to decrease the severity and duration of the disease. The active ingredient in EqStim is inactivated Propionibacterium acnes, a naturally occurring bacterium recognized as a safe but potent stimulator of cell-mediated immunity; a number of research and field studies have been conducted and published, showing no toxicity or adverse side effects.

* Homeopathic: Remedies include high potency Silicea and Arsenica Album, both at a 200C potency, for cleansing the blood and lymphatic systems and helping the body purge abscess material. Check out the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy (www.theavh.org) and the National Center for Homeopathy 703-548-7790.

* Homeopathic nosode (i.e., vaccine or immunization): Made by Hahnemann Laboratories and labeled Corynebacterium nosode, a nosode contains disease material during the preparation process, however, no disease material remains after the nosode is produced. Used annually at the beginning of the fly season, it works by energetically educating the body. Hahnemann does not sell to the general public; a veterinarian or certified homeopath can establish an account with Hahnemann and purchase the Corynebacterium nosode for you.

* Ozone: Treatments can be applied either rectally or directly into the abscess by a veterinarian. Since the *C. pseudotuberculosis* bacteria is anaerobic, introducing oxygen is detrimental to its survival. Another alternative is magnesium ozonate, a stabilized ozone that's put directly into the horse's food, or is mixed into water with a few drops of vinegar. It causes a chemical reaction, breaking off the nascent oxygen from the magnesium and releasing it into the digestive system, where it then enters the bloodstream.

* Wound care: A dressing made of five parts olive oil to one part tea tree oil can be sprayed directly on abscesses or wounds help them heal and to repel flies.

The author of this article, Lisa Kemp, is an award-winning writer and marketing consultant for the equine industry. Her definition of a good day is one filled with any combination of horse people, horse images, horse stories, and yes, actual horses. For additional information, visit www.KempEquine.com

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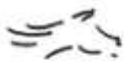
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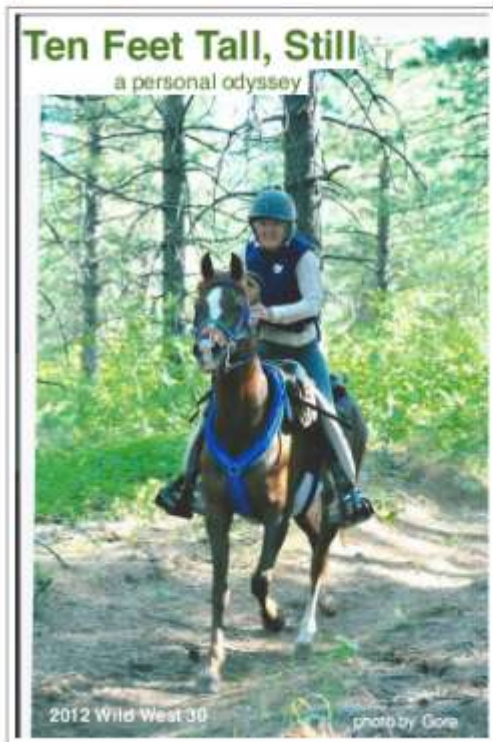


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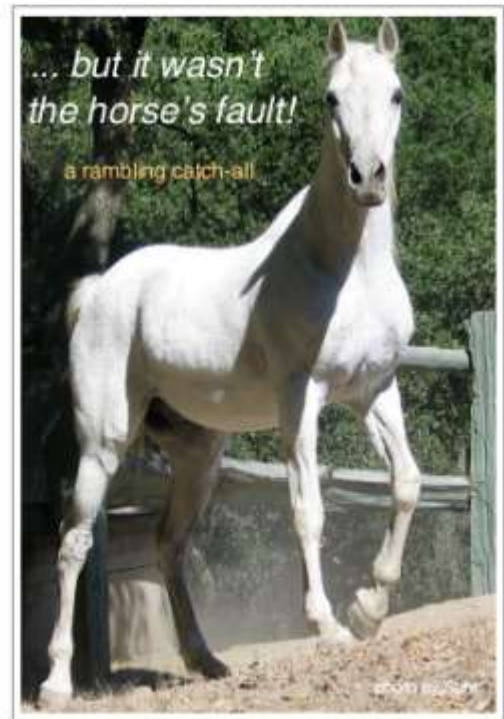
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Julie Suhr

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