

Horse News and Views



◆ Spring is herd health time, when owners and veterinarians are getting horses ready for the busy show and racing seasons. We are already receiving inquiries regarding the need for vaccination for Eastern Encephalitis (EEE) and Western Encephalitis (WEE), better known as "sleeping sickness" and West Nile Virus (WNV). Sleeping sickness occurs sporadically in Ontario horses. In the fall of 2001, two horses with clinical signs were confirmed as infected, one in the South Muskoka area and another that had been in competitions in the same area (Dr. Tom Wilson, Canadian Food Inspection Agency). These diseases are transmitted to horses and humans by mosquitoes that have fed on diseased birds. They cause swelling of the brain, resulting in staggering, convulsions, and fever. For further information on these diseases and their prevention, refer to the information sheets, *Equine Viral Encephalitis and West Nile Virus Threat to Ontario Horses* at <http://www.gov.on.ca/omafra/english/livestock>

◆ In areas where equine encephalitis (WEE/EEE) viruses are a risk, adult horses should be initially vaccinated with two doses of vaccine four weeks apart. Pregnant mares should be vaccinated four to six weeks before foaling to enhance colostral immunoglobulin transfer to the foal. Foals should be vaccinated starting at four months of age. An initial series of three doses, four to six weeks apart, is recommended by the American Association of Equine Practitioners. (AAEP Guidelines for Vaccination of Horses, January 2001).

For further information contact Dr. Bob Wright (519) 846-3412 or visit our website: <http://www.gov.on.ca/omafra/english/livestock>

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CLIPPITY CLIPS

Keep it safe on the trails

by Stacey Massey

The days are getting longer, the temperatures are rising, and the ground is drying up.

For all those horse enthusiasts it can only mean one thing - it's trail riding season!

There's nothing better than sitting on the back of your trusty steed as you meander through the countryside, admiring the natural beauty as flowers blossom, grass greens and birds chirp.

Not only is it enjoyable for the rider, horses also enjoy the change of scenery and smells, and will likely welcome the chance to escape from their usual environment for an hour or so.

Carlisle's Largo Stables instructor Achsa Lansellotti says, "It's really nice for them (the horse) after a big workout - it's refreshing."

The change in human attitude as the warm weather approaches is noticeable. However, many people forget that animals can get excited too.

Jane Casselman, owner of Touch 'N Go Farms in Campbellville says, "In the spring horses are often 'high', so make sure that they are quietened down before heading out on a trail. Lunging, or turn out would probably help."

Before tacking up and hitting the trails, keep in mind, trail riding is very different riding than riding in an arena or sand ring. There's a lot to take into consideration in



order to have fun and prevent yourself and your mount from harm.

Cathy Cleverley of Old Orchard Farm in Campbellville says "If you or your horse are new to hacking, start small. Walk up and down the driveway, or on paths around the farm until you are both comfortable before venturing further afield."

To thoroughly enjoy both the scenery and horseback riding, it is essential horse and rider are comfortable.

Horses were not bred to fight. If they become scared it is a natural tendency for them to flee, so be prepared. If a horse does spook, don't panic.

"Always stay calm and talk to him," Ms. Lansellotti says. "Circle where you can and try to get him back listening to you. The main thing is to just keep talking to him."

Ms. Lansellotti says one of the

most important things to remember when going out for a trail ride is communication.

"You should carry a cell phone, or some sort of communication, such as a whistle. You need something you can communicate with."

Riders should also be aware not to venture out alone - always have at least one buddy.

If you're lucky enough to have a group of people take into account the abilities of every horse and rider.

"When in a group, the pace is dictated by the slowest person in the group. Understand the expectations of your hacking partner or group before you head out," says Ms. Cleverley. "You may be looking forward to a long canter out in the fields but someone in the group is only up for a slow walk around the fields."

"Everyone's enjoyment is ensured if all are under the same assumptions about the agenda."

The Halton area is full of rideable trails and fields, just make sure you have permission before trekking through a neighbouring farm.

For information on rider friendly Conservation trails call Conservation Halton at 905-336-1158 ext. 239.

For those not lucky enough to own their own horse - don't worry. There are many local trail riding ranches in the area that can provide a safe, fun adventure. Happy trails!



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