

Owner looking for help with ailing pony

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

When an animal refuses to eat or drink, there is something wrong.

For Alexandra Heilbron, it was colic in her 21-year-old pony, which was caused by bad teeth not enabling him to chew properly.

Heilbron was feeding second cut hay because it is softer, but it was still too hard for Cody to chew and he ended up swallowing some of it whole, she said.

Quite often the administration of mineral oil or another type of laxative can be used to help dislodge the impaction, but Cody's case was so severe he required surgery.

In late February, the pony was rushed to the veterinarian who discovered huge impactions of fecal matter in his small colon and enough undigested hay to fill half a large garbage pail in his large colon.

This also caused his organs to be displaced. His bladder was so cramped he could not hold water, which caused him to stop drinking, she said.

The 13.3 hand-high pony Heilbron bought 10 years ago weighs in around 800 to 850 pounds when healthy. Prior to surgery, he was about 750 pounds. Post-op, Cody dropped down to less than 700 pounds and right now, he is back up to 700 pounds.

"He's back to being his curious, mischievous, sweet self," according to Heilbron.

But now he lives at a new Whitchurch-Stouffville barn that can attend to his special needs, such as feeding Cody soaked concentrated feed four times a day.

He will likely never be able to eat hay again, only grass, which means

Cody will have to stay in a paddock alone, Heilbron said.

With Cody's health on the rebound, Heilbron's focus has shifted to paying for the surgery and much needed dental work that still must be completed.

The surgery itself cost \$10,000.

Despite the price tag, Heilbron, who is a senior editor at Tribute Entertainment Group, never contemplated putting Cody, who is only halfway through his life, down.

"He's my best friend. I'm not married, don't have kids, so he's everything to me," she said.

Insurance and some donations helped pay for a portion of the surgery. Heilbron even sold some of her riding equipment and clothes online to help cover the cost.

GOFUNDME.COM ACCOUNT

Heilbron is also looking for part-time weekend work.

Heilbron has also turned to GoFundMe.com to raise the \$7,000 needed to cover the rest of Cody's surgery and upcoming dental work.

Even before the online fundraiser was launched, equine lovers and friends were donating to Heilbron and offering up any kind of assistance they could.

"This is really, really sweet of people," she said.

So far, she has raised \$510.

As an extra incentive, various equine-related businesses have offered up items and services in return for donations.

For example, a \$10 donation will get you a button with Cody's photo on it; \$20 nets the donor a thank you card with a photo of Cody.

Other items include a personalized stall plate (\$35) and full horse imaging session (\$50), to name a few.

"When we have the ability to help others, we pay it back," she said.

Ever since Heilbron was a little girl, she wanted a horse. She never got one.

But she did take lessons.

In 2003, Heilbron moved to Mussleman's Lake near the former Wagon Wheel Ranch, where Cody was a trail pony for children.

Because of his high energy and tendency to spook and bolt, he wasn't safe enough to use for the public, so he just hung around in a paddock before Heilbron came along, she said.

"I trained him using gentle methods to listen to what I was asking him so he would be a safe horse to ride and with some give and take, we started to make a good team. When the ranch closed, that left a lot of horses without an owner, including Cody. I bought Cody because he was already bonded to me and I wanted to give him a good life with one owner," she said.

In 2008, the pair started competing in show jumping competitions.

"We only do schooling shows because they're not expensive, no pressure and just a lot of fun," she said.

His titles include: Blue Star: Year End Show Jumping Champion (2014); Blue Star: Year End Show Jumping Reserve Champion (2010 and 2012) and Pickering Horse Centre: Year End Show Jumping Champion (2008 and 2009).

Heilbron doesn't know if she will ever be able to ride or compete with Cody again and she's OK with that. She'll just walk beside him on the trails.

To make a donation go to www.gofundme.com/1s79ao



Alexandra Heilbron and her pony Cody in better times.

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'He's my best friend. I'm not married, don't have kids, so he's everything to me.'

Alexandra Heilbron
on her 21-year-old pony, Cody

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