



SERA Newsletter

June - 2011

On the Trail

February and in the 60's and 70's!! Who would have imagined? It's been really nice to be back on a horse. We, like most of you, have had some pretty foul weather so this is a welcome relief. Now we are waiting for blackberry winter to hit. Until then we will enjoy!

The first thing I want to say about SERA is a BIG thank you to Tamra Schoech. Tamra has put her heart and soul into this organization for many years. She has been on the board and in various offices for as long as I can remember and has been the best voice of SERA that we could have had. I hope the rest of us can step up and represent SERA half as well at ride meetings. So Tamra, I hope you know how much we have all appreciated you!!

Your board has been busy trying to get some things accomplished that will help you and the organization. We have recruited Eric Rueter to take over the SERA website and get it up and current. He has already been at work so check out the progress at SERAonline.org. Nina Barnett is taking on the task of keeping up with points and awards, and Terry Price is reviving the newsletter, and is putting on a benefit ride for SERA, called the Witchdance Revival. Check it out on the website! We have voted to purchase a video projector and screen to be used at rides for ride meetings and for any time someone is giving a presentation. Joe Schoech has agreed to take care of the purchase and the equipment. And last but not least, Laurie Underwood is working on securing a location for the annual meeting in Jan.

The ride season is well underway with five SERA rides already completed. Gator Run, Piney Pig, Pow Wow, Far Out Forest, and Blazing Saddles are now in the books. And we are looking forward to FITS, Spring Fling, and Red Barn in March. Come out and support the rides and have a blast while you are there! See you on the trail.

Ike

Southeast Endurance Riders Association, Inc.

Members' Meeting Minutes

Athens, GA

January 23, 2011

The meeting was called to order by President, Tamra Schoech, at 9:05 a.m.

Tamra gave a short tribute to members recently lost: Tommy Crain, Deb Devita and Roger Barrett.

Treasurer's Report

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Alison Bailey presented the Treasurer's report. Our ending 2010 bank balance was \$9,223.79. This number does not include costs of the 2010 year end meeting and awards actually incurred in 2011. SERA received donations of \$1,000 to the Trails Fund from Trails For The Future and of \$1,000 from the Broxton Bridge ride. The December 31, 2010 balance sheet is attached to these minutes. A motion was made, seconded and unanimously passed to accept the 2010 financial report presented by Alison.

Old Business

- The SERA web page. Our website remains down. Truman Prevatt said he has researched this issue. We need someone to take over maintenance of the site. Ike Nelson and Alison Bailey both have folks to talk to about this. Truman Prevatt offered to take over the maintenance if we could purchase the software. Terry Price recollected that Steffanie Waddington had volunteered to handle maintenance at the last meeting if we could get the site up and running again.

Truman Prevatt suggested that we solicit proposals from the members and others. Cheryl Newman stated that she might be able to help, but wanted to review the site and software; if it is CSS based, she feels comfortable handling it. Truman will send Cheryl the site passwords so she can review and give us a proposal.

New Business

- ❑ An SERA benefit ride for 2011 called the Witch Dance Revival is being hosted by Terry Price. The trails are the old Witch Dance trails, but the trailhead is in a new location. Cash and prize donations are appreciated.
- ❑ Rides: The Leatherwood ride will be held on August 13, 2011; Skymont will be a 2-day ride; Angie McGhee will not hold the Longstreet ride this year.
- ❑ Eric Rueter advised the members that the Knoxville Arabian Horse Club is selling glo sticks for \$.30 each. If a ride manager does not use all of the glo sticks they ordered, Eric will take them back and issue a refund.
- ❑ Tamra Schoech made a motion that SERA give each AERC SE Director \$500.00 to help them defray the costs of attending the AERC Convention. Laurie Underwood seconded the motion, and the members approved it unanimously.
- ❑ Joe Schoech
 - Thanked all of the members for making the 2010 National Championship ride a success
 - SERA membership numbers are down and the decline is consistent with national numbers which are down 7-9%. This decline has occurred despite an increase in rider starts. Joe encouraged all SERA members to recruit new members to our organization.
 - Encouraged all members to work on trails. Truman Prevatt stated that with current economic conditions, state trails are going to take a hit. It is time to talk to land managers and take over trails maintenance.
 - Suggested that SERA form a ride managers' committee with a chair appointed by the President and regularly scheduled meetings to discuss issues with individual riders, payments, rides and to help new ride managers. Dinah suggested SERA consider setting up a Yahoo group for ride managers.
 - Suggested SERA might want to consider the purchase of a video display to be used as an advertising and educational tool at rides. The live leaderboard at the National Championship ride and the video display by Moments to Memories at Skymont demonstrated the value of this equipment, and Joe is willing to transport it to rides and put together the slide shows. He estimates the cost of the projector at \$700 to \$1,000.
 - Pointed out that SERA is a unique organization in the sport of endurance. Our members and the SE region make us unique, as well two rules which AERC does not have: (1) the 8-year-old rule, and (2) the requirement that two vets work every SERA sanctioned ride. Joe suggested that SERA consider instituting a helmet rule. AERC requires helmets for juniors but not for adults. Angie McGhee stated that she is not in favor of any further additions to AERC's rules – ride managers currently have the latitude to require helmets and she is in favor of leaving it at that.
 - Helen Koehler announced that the 2011 SETEC will be held in Auburn, Alabama in July. SETEC is the only trails program which receives direct trails enhancement funds from the U.S. Highways Department. This program enables endurance rides to be held on public lands.

- Ike Nelson stated that the NATRAC Convention was being held in Nashville, Tennessee at the Embassy Suites on the same weekend as the Camp Osborn Boy Scout Powwow Ride.

Elections

The directors and officer results are as follows:

- ❑ Georgia Director – Angie McGhee
- ❑ South Carolina Director – Vance Stine
- ❑ North Carolina Director - Cheryl Newman
- ❑ Florida Director – Helen Koehler
- ❑ Mississippi Director – Terry Price
- ❑ Alabama Director – Ike Nelson
- ❑ Tennessee Director – Nelia Rueter
- ❑ Kentucky Director – Amy Whelan
- ❑ Virginia Director – Barb Horstmeier
- ❑ President – Ike Nelson
- ❑ Vice President – Terry Price
- ❑ Secretary -- Laurie Underwood
- ❑ Treasurer – Alison Bailey

Statistician—Nina Barnett

Web Master—Eric Rueter

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Submitted by Laurie Underwood, Secretary

Submission to Thoroughbred Times

March 2008

Kenneth L. Marcella DVM

Chattahoochee Equine

5060 Sugar Pike Rd.

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Canton, Georgia 30115

Personality and Performance: Calming the nervous horse

It is not enough to be simply athletic and conditioning can only take you so far. At the elite levels of sports, nearly all competitors are superb athletes and the training and conditioning they receive does not differ that much. We have all seen great, muscular, wonderfully moving, athletic horses that did not manage to fulfill their potential. What then makes one athlete succeed and one falter? Often it is the mental aspect of sport and the successful competitor is the one who handles pressure better, who reacts optimally despite distractions and delivers a performance that positively reflects the months of training and preparation. Horses that are nervous, excitable, hormonal or otherwise unfocused cannot compete at their best and their performance reflects these personality or behavioral problems. These horses do not “have their heads in the game”, to borrow a phrase from human sports psychologists, and they have lost before they begin.

Consequently attempts to calm nervous horses and to sharpen focus and concentration in equine athletes have become as much a part of preparing for events as any other aspect of training. A “skittish” or nervous horse trains poorly and may learn or progress slowly. Such horses may shy away from competition and fail to reach potential. Hyper-excitabile horses may have tremendous energy but can have trouble utilizing that energy for performance and may “wash out” or use up that drive before they can direct it toward useful work. Aggressive horses likewise waste energy and can be distractions to barn and show situations. Moody mares or mares with excessive heat or estrus behavior can also disrupt a training environment and work and perform inconsistently. Veterinarians are routinely consulted as to various drugs and medications that may be used to calm nervous horses or to focus other excitable horses on the task at hand. There are literally hundreds of products available through tack stores or vet supply catalogues and their various names seem to promise it all- Calm n Cool, Chill, Mare Magic, Relax-x, B-Calm. Trainers and owners may have a difficult task sorting through all of these options and it may be advisable to take a look at the science behind these “calming” products and behind exactly what may be making horses nervous, excitable and unfocused.

There are two main factors that determine equine behavior- genetics and management. These are the “nature” and “nurture” components that have been debated in psychological circles for centuries. Is a horse a product of its genes- essentially predetermined to be aggressive or calm based on genetic aspects of the sire and dam? Many horse owners and breeders agree with this view citing known bloodlines that tend to produce intensely competitive, or aggressive, or calm horses from generation to generation. Or is the horse a product of how it is raised, handled and trained? A good number of horsemen and trainers agree with this view as well and the truth is likely a mixture of the two. Some horses have personalities that are not suited to the rigorous demands of a show or competition athlete. The genetics in these individuals are susceptible to gastrointestinal irritation due to stress and ulcers, colic and poor digestion can be commonly seen. Other horses thrive under the same conditions as their genetics are better suited to such stresses and, as with some humans in certain professions, they may not even perceive any stress at all. These horses will tolerate trailering, will continue to eat well and stay energized at shows and will perform to their abilities. Identifying individuals that do well in competition situations and breeding to utilize those genetic benefits is a useful strategy for improving equine athletic performance.

Management is the other main factor influencing equine behavior and this can include all aspects of the horse’s environment such as nutrition, turnout, exercise, rest, socialization and sleep. Poor management practice in any of these areas can predispose a horse to excitable, nervous or unfocused behavior. Nutrition is often blamed for the nervous horse and it is an incorrect assumption that sweet feed, molasses, corn or protein actually make horses “hotter” or more excitable. Excess protein can cause an increase in

blood nitrogen levels which in theory can alter certain metabolic hormones and thyroid hormone levels and possibly effect excitability but, according to statistics published in American Horse Rider magazine, protein would have to be fed in upwards of 150 % of the horse's requirements in order to have any effect on behavior and attitude. What generally makes a horse hyperactive is not any of the particular feeds associated with detrimental behavior but the fact that the owner/trainer simply feeds far too much of these feeds. Overfeeding corn, protein or even oats can lead to abnormal behavior and a good balanced ration is the best management for all horses.

Reduced turn out is an unfortunate fact of life for most competition horses. Either their inherent value and the risk of injury or the demands of travel and competition serve to drastically reduce or altogether eliminate the time spent free at pasture for most elite equine athletes. Dr. Joyce Harmon of the Harmony Equine Clinic in Flint Hills, Virginia and one of the leading holistic practitioners in this country feels that lack of turn out is a significant factor in the behavior of nervous horses. "The horse evolved as a free ranging animal with a need for social interaction, continual grazing and an ability to "burn off" excess energy with bouts of running and pasture play", explains Dr. Harmon. She goes on to point out that modern management practices have greatly reduced this free time and show horses have even less of it with often little more than training sessions and small paddock turn out. "Some people", says Dr. Harmon, "consider a 20 to 30 minute ride to be work and a half hour session once a day is simply not enough for a horse from a mental or physical standpoint". If horses are given more exercise then it must be variable types of exercise that does not continually stress one area of the horse's body. Combining dressage work with jumping or trail riding with flat speed work allows the horse more exercise time reduces excess energy and helps the equine athlete focus because it does not become stale or bored with routine exercise.

There are many products used to calm nervous horses that have a nutritional basis. These products generally contain high levels of B-vitamins, magnesium, chromium, calcium and certain amino acids such as thiamine and tryptophan. There is some research evidence for the calming effects of all of these substances but the actual degree of calming and the exact mode of action for many is just not known. Magnesium Oxide is often given orally and Magnesium sulfate is sometimes combined with thiamine and it is injected intravenously. Magnesium helps modulate or control the electrical potential across cell membranes and can therefore reduce excitability or nervousness. Thiamine is important in the utilization of fats, carbohydrates, and proteins and the production of cellular energy. High grain diets have a higher thiamine requirement and deficiencies of this amino acid can result in hyper-irritability, weakness and in-coordination. B-vitamins also help with stabilization of cell membranes and with the production and utilization of certain neurotransmitters (the substances that transfer electrical impulses and information along nerves and between cells in the brain). Tryptophan is another amino acid that is involved with neurotransmitter function as well. A look at most of the calming agent

products for sale for use in horses will have some combination of these substances. Dr. Juan Gamboa, a horse show veterinarian based in Akin, South Carolina but who frequently follows the east coast show circuit, urges caution with the use of magnesium. "Some horses are more sensitive than others and some can have serious reactions", says Gamboa. He also adds that, other than magnesium in its various forms, "most show horses being treated for nervousness or lack of concentration are given some combination of calcium, thiamine, lactonase, thryptophan, methocarbamol (robaxin), ACTH gel, or herbal products". Gamboa is quick to add however that, despite all the available medication and products, most horse show veterinarians agree that training is crucial. "In my opinion," says Gamboa "good horsemanship is probably the most important".

Herbal remedies are another method of treating the nervous or excitable horse that have been becoming more accepted and more popular. Since there are many herbs available and since they tend to work synergistically or in harmony with each other, the exact herbs, amounts and combinations for a particular horse will still be a bit "hit or miss" initially and require, according to Dr. Harmon, "some fine tuning as you and your horse progress". Most herbal preparation will include valerian root, raspberry leaf, hops, chamomile, St John's wart, dandelion, golden rod, marigold, Chaste Tree berries and rosemary. Drs. Marty Smith and Rory Foster of Foster Smith Animal Hospital in Wisconsin feel that herbal remedies can have a significantly beneficial effect on some nervous horses. "We cannot emphasize strongly enough that calming herbs are in no way a substitute for correct diet and proper training", say Drs. Foster and Smith. "Calming aids do not replace good horsemanship", they add, "but can be a wonderful ally in many cases". Most herbal preparations contain at least one or more of the following- Chamomile, vervain, Valerian, Devils Claw, Passion Flower, Kava Kava and hops.

Owners and trainers must be cautious when using these products and are encouraged to visit the websites pertaining to their respective sports for up to date information on the legality of certain products. Many "natural" remedies and related calming products are prohibited by the United States Equestrian Federation (USEF) and racing requirements and restrictions are even more specific. The USEF Drugs and Medication Program can be contacted at 1-800-633-2472 .

Attention to management factors that do have a good basis in science may help owners , trainers and nervous or anxious horses. While there is no "quick fix" or magic product that can be easily given to quiet down excitable horses or to make an attentive and calm athlete, owners, trainers and veterinarians should be working toward more turnout, better and more consistent exercise, good diets low in carbohydrates and high in balanced protein and all other factors that, behaviorally, can keep a nervous or "flightly" horses calm.

FROM THE “EDITOR”

This is the first “novice” newsletter from this editor (I use that term loosely). That being said, I would like to invite the membership to encourage others to join our organization. The best way to increase membership is by being an example of what S.E.R.A. REPRESENTS.

There will be a section of the newsletter that Ken Marcella,d.v.m. and others THAT will present pertinent articles to the sport of Endurance riding. I would like to invite you to make suggestions of topics that would be of interest to you. E-mails can be sent to johnterryprice@yahoo.com.

SUMMER IS HEREAND CERTAINLY HOT AND HUMID IN THE SOUTHEAST.
RIDE WHEN YOU CAN, TAKE CARE OF YOUR HORSES AND SEE YOU IN THE
FALL.

SINCERELY,

TERRY PRICE