
TRAILS 'N TAILS

ATLANTIC CANADA TRAIL RIDING ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 241

WWW.AC-TRA.CA / FACEBOOK

JAN/FEB/MARCH 2012

Hi Everyone,

It's funny, I have all these thoughts of what to write for the front page of the newsletter and when I finally get around to writing, I can't remember a thing! I'm going to have to start jotting down the thoughts when they hit and then piece them together....I'm getting old!! Hmmmm speaking of getting old....rumour has it that Gwenn has bought the "old lady" rain bonnets to wear for her morning walks so she won't ruin her hair for work! The roving reporter must get a picture of this!

Is everybody enjoying our lovely maritime winter? Plus 12 one day and then minus 12 with a wind chill the next! The critters don't know whether to hibernate, shed their coats or just do both. Some of our ACTRA members are enjoying the sunshine and warmth of Florida. I heard from Betty and she is enjoying putting some miles on one of Bob's new horses and doing a bit of competing with him. Eric is perfecting his golf game! Hmmmm maybe Bob and them could host an ACTRA ride in Florida? Sylvia and Martin enjoyed a visit to New Zealand to visit their son Murray (who is working there as a vet) for Christmas. I do believe it is summertime there now. Looking forward to seeing the pictures and hearing the stories from Betty and Sylvia this summer around the campfires.

We had a good turnout for the Year-end Meeting and lots of ideas on how to boost our membership. Our silent auction with our auctioneer, Elwood Munroe, brought in \$349 for the club. Thanks to everyone for donating and buying the many items! Please note that some of the positions now have new Directors. The list of the 2012 BOD is on the back of this page. Also this is a reminder that if you haven't already paid your 2012 membership it is now due. Make it easier on the poor ride manager of the first ride and pay now!

I would like to say thank you to all the Ride Managers out there that take on the task of hosting a ride. A lot of hard work and very little rewards! We the riders appreciate all the hard work that goes into hosting a ride and though we may not say it at the time, but THANK YOU!!! I have listed a few rides under the ride schedule and more details to follow on each of them. Rumour has it that there will be a 50 mile ride in the Rawdon, NS area this summer.....fingers crossed!!! Also there was mumbling of the McDonald Run being back to back 30 mile CTR's.....fingers crossed on this one also!!!

The newsletter has a winter theme to it this time around. I keep finding articles that I hope you find interesting and thank you to those that send me articles to put in. The next issue will have lots of information on conditioning, saddle fitting, conformation, etc. I've also picked some photo's that I've taken to stick into the "dead" spaces that need to be filled up. If you have a pic of yourself and your mount and would like it to find its way into the newsletter, send it along to me!! I always take my camera to the rides, but usually forget to take the pictures! So help me out!

Well I will wrap it up here as I have to go out and top up the critters water and hay for the night. I tried to let Izzy go without a blanket this year, he told me he can't do it by losing weight! So he will be a pampered boy! Now Nova on the other hand.....hasn't lost a pound....gotta love the Morgan!!

Have a great winter, do some riding and make your plans for the summer!

Bev, Izzy, Nova and Dunn.....oh ya, can't forget Furnace the cat!

ACTRA 2012 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chairperson

Kaaren LeBert
591 Route 605
Temperance Vale, NB
E6G 2C7
(506)575-0190

Vice Chairperson

Sherri Brooks
209 Church Street
Sackville, NB
E4L 1K5
(506)536-2262

Secretary

Donna Lee Cole
485 Dickie Mountain Road
Bloomfield, Kings Co., NB
E5N 2W7
(506)832-7960

Treasurer

Gwenn Dexter
RR # 5
Canning, NS
B0P 1H0
(902)582-3463

Rules

Susan Hovey

Sanctioning

Donna Munn
249 Menzies Road
Midland, NB
E5T 2N2
(506)839-2810

Statistician

Jennifer McDonald
2020 Rte 705
McDonalds Pt, Wickham, NB
E5T 4A1
(506)485-5659

Public Relations

Afiena Kamminga
37 Stephens Drive
Sackville, NB
E4L 1J5
(506)536-3617

Newsletter

Bev Elliott
931 Newtonville Rd
RR # 1 Wolfville, NS
B4N 2R1
(902)542-9586
rcmp@wolfville.ca

Director At Large

Evan LeBert
591 Route 605
Temperance Vale, NB
E6G 2C7
(506)575-0190
evan_lebert@hotmail.com

Kaaren – virgmagic@hotmail.com
Sherri – brooks11@nbnet.nb.ca
Donna Lee – jdc@nb.sympatico.ca
Susan – sears@nb.aibn.com
Gwenn – gwenn.dexter@hotmail.com
Donna – dmunnn@nbnet.nb.ca
Jennifer – jennmcdonald@xplornet.ca
Afiena – hklarsen@nbnet.nb.ca

ATLANTIC CANADA TRAIL RIDING ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME: _____ :

ADDRESS: _____ :

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____ :

JUNIOR OR OTHER RIDERS IN THE FAMILY

NAME: _____ BIRTHDATE: _____ :

NAME: _____ BIRTHDATE: _____ :

I WISH TO REGISTER THE FOLLOWING MOUNT WITH ACTRA (LIFETIME MOUNT REGISTRATION FEE \$25)

REG NAME: _____ BARN NAME: _____ :

BREED _____ AGE: _____ MARE GELDING STALLION (PLEASE CIRCLE)

BREED REGISTRY INFORMATION: _____ :

MEMBERSHIP DUES: INDIVIDUAL \$17.50 - FAMILY \$22.50 - MOUNT REGISTRATION \$25.00

PLEASE SEND MEMBERSHIP FORM OR FACSIMILE TO: GWENN DEXTER, RR #5 CANNING, NS, B0P 1H0

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN RECEIVING ACTRA LITERATURE? YES NO (PLEASE CIRCLE)

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP DUES : _____ @\$17.50 OR _____ @\$22.50 OR/AND _____ @\$25.00

TOTAL FEES SUBMITTED = _____

ACTRA

2011 Ride Results

Gwenn's Miles To Go IDR

Conditioning:

- 1st JDA Azrael The Canadian – Deanna Johnston
- 2nd MDA High Five – Bev Elliott
- 3rd Hoofprint – Irmgard Lipp
- 4th Sir Ruby – Pat Ritcey

Trail Horse:

- 1st JDA Azrael The Canadian
- 2nd Sir Ruby
- 3rd MDA High Five

.....

Amigo's CTR

Conditioning:

- 1st Ballahamish Glen – Jim Burns
- 2nd Guysborough Grey – Jean Bridges
- 3rd Windlord – Troy Beazley
- 4th Rewbay – Peggy Cosman
- 5th Aazzaan – Bev Elliott
- 6th Elastic – April Haliburton

Trail Horse:

- 1st Windlord – Troy Beazley
- 2nd Doc Holiday – Pearl Skjonsberg
- 3rd Guysborough Grey – Jean Bridges

.....

Amigo's JP

Horsemanship:

- 1st Guysborough Grey – Jean Bridges
- 2nd Prairie Zacintosh – Sherri Brooks
- 3rd Sheitana – Debbie Daley
- 4th Windlord – Tammy Beazley
- 5th Jazlra Shadow – Susan Hovey
- 6th Luna – Jacolyn George

Trail Horse:

- 1st Doc Holiday
- 2nd Shetana
- 3rd Silver Mist
- 4th Maggie
- 5th Tom
- 6th Magnifyque
- 6th Windlord

.....

Camp Cheputneticook CTR

Conditioning:

- 1st Elastic – April Haliburton
- 2nd Jalna Saffire – Jean Bridges
- 3rd Guysborough Grey – Ann Bridges
- 4th Royal – Bob Curran
- 5th Ballahamish Glen – Jim Burns
- 6th Jazlra Shadow – Susan Hovey

Trail Horse:

- 1st Royal
- 2nd Guysborough Grey
- 3rd Deuces Wild – Sylvia Gillies

Camp Cheputneticook IDR

Conditioning:

- 1st MDA Billy Four – Donna Munn
- 2nd Delmar – Priscilla Scott
- 3rd Sir Rocco's Indian Thunder – Karen Jonah Brown
- 4th Emily Sutherland
- 5th Tara Pathfinder – Maureen Johnson

Trail Horse:

- 1st Delmar
- 2nd MDA Billy Four
- 3rd Tara Pathfinder

Camp Cheputneticook JP

Horsemanship:

- 1st Jalna Saffire – Ann Bridges
- 2nd Jazlra Shadow – Susan Hovey
- 3rd MDA Billy Four – Donna Munn
- 4th Deuces Wild – Sylvia Gillies
- 5th Tara Pathfinder – Maureen Johnson
- 6th Dream Caleter – Emily Sutherland

Trail Horse:

- 1st Deuces Wild
- 2nd Jazlra Shadow
- 3rd Jalna Saffire
- 4th MDA Billy Four
- 5th Dream Caleter
- 6th Tara Pathfinder

.....

MapleRidge LD

Order of Finish:

- 1st Kindred Spirit – Lynn Beazley
 - 2nd Hurricane – Melissa Plarode
 - 3rd Windlord – Troy Beazley
 - 4th Ace – Margaret Shand
 - 5th Ballahamish Glen – Pat Rideout
 - 6th Woody – Jim Burns
 - 7th JDA Azrael The Canadian – Deanna Johnson
 - 8th Hoofprint – Irmgard Lipp
 - 9th Rewbay – Peggy Cosman
 - 10th MDA Billy Four – Donna Munn
 - 11th Deuces Wild – Sylvia Gillies
 - 12th MDA Japros Sultan – Gwenn Dexter
 - 13th Elastic – April Haliburton
 - 14th Solara – Donna Lee Cole
 - 15th Sam – Marcia Miller
-

MapleRidge JP

Horsemanship:

- 1st JDA Azrael The Canadian – Deanna Johnson
- 2nd Precisement – Bev Elliott
- 3rd Ace – Margaret Shand
- 4th Ice Capades RF – Russlyn Patriquin Dyke
- 5th MDA Billy Four – Donna Munn
- 6th Deuces Wild – Sylvia Gillies
- Windlord – Tammy Beazley

Trail Horse:

- 1st MDA Billy Four – Donna Munn
 - JDA Azrael The Canadian – Deanna Johnston
 - Call Me Lauren – David Dyke
 - 2nd Dawn - ?
 - 3rd Ice Capades RF
 - 4th Sam ?
 - Precisement – Bev Elliott
 - Windlord – Tammy Beazley
 - 5th Sunni With A Chance - ?
 - Evol – Colleen Hopkins
 - 6th Dueces Wild – Sylvia Gillies
-

2012 ACTRA RIDE SCHEDULE

*More details to follow

May 19th – Mud Run LD – 25 Miles – Lucy Rudge

June 16/17th – Parrsboro JP's – Bertha Harrison

July ? – Endurance Ride

Aug 4/5th – McDonald's Run – Jennifer McDonald

Sept 1/2nd – Amigo's – Donna Munn/Sylvia Gillies

Sept 22/23rd – Camp Cheptincook – Susan Hovey

2011 Fall BOD meeting

Nov 19th, Sackville NB

Deanna Johnston, Donna Lee Cole, Irmgard Lipp, Gwen Dexter, Bev Elliott, Pat Rideout, Jennifer McDonald, Lynn Beezley

Meeting called to order at 10:03 by Irmgard

- Spring 2011 minutes read by Irmgard, accepted as presented

Old Business:

- 1) Mount Registration- Continues to be a work in progress
 - a. Bev will attempt to have a certificate by Jan/12
- 2) Distance NB: Sylvia Gillies has stepped down as President. Jennifer and Jean Bridges will continue the position so that Distance Riding in NB will be able to qualify for NBEA funding as have a voice on Sport Council

Reports:

- Treasurer Report offered by Pat. Balance \$5762
- Rules Report offered by Gwen
- Secretary Report offered by Donna Lee
 - o ACTRA cards to be purchased from Staples for ~\$60
- Sanctioning Report offered by Donna
 - o Rides were down in number this season
 - o General Discussion re filling out of Horsemanship itemized score sections "Is this necessary"
 - *Decision that score sheet will be revised and that only rider/mount names and final scores and placings will be necessary*
 - This will make it much less time consuming for rife management and statistician
- CaLDRA report offered by Donna
 - o CaLDRA returned \$60 to the club this year
 - o CaLDRA has not yet been dissolved
- Endurance Canada Report offered by Donna
 - o There has been much discussion Re: AERC and End Can sponsoring of rides
 - o In order to sanction a End Can ride in NB members would need to have a Bronze Sport License as well as be members of EC, as well as the Ride would require a certified Stewart
- Statisticians Report offered by Jennifer
 - o Paperwork is being returned to her incomplete and/or illegible

- o She will return paperwork to RM's if this occurs and riders will not get their mileage for the ride

New Business:

- Continuing financial support for RM's holding a combined CTR/IDR or ER/LD on the same day was discussed
 - o It was decided that ACTRA will continue the \$200/ride incentive and **review the financial feasibility on an annual basis**
- Membership cards
 - o ACTRA will invest in purchasing some membership cards

BOD members whose term is completed

- Pat Rideout (will not restand)
- Lynn Beazley (will not restand)
- Deanna Johnston (will not restand)
- Irmgard Lipp is resigning her position as President

Meeting adjourned at 11:30



ACTRA 2011 Fall AGM

Sackville, NB

Alwood Munroe, Lucy Rudge, Karen Murray, Alfeena Kaminga, Kaaren Lebert, Pam Thorton, Nicole Anderson, Tammy Beezley, Troy Beezley, Lynn Beezley, Pam Rustige, Bev Elliott, Jennifer McDonald, Gwenn Dexter, Evan Lebert, Sherry Brooks, Jean Bridges, Bertha Harrison, Donna Munn, Deanna Johnston, Pat Rideout, Jim Burns, Irmgard Lipp, Donna Lee Cole, Susan Hovey

Meeting called to order at 13:15 by Irmgard

- 2011 Spring meeting minutes read by Irmgard, accepted as presented by Gwenn, seconded by Jean,

Reports:

- Treasurer Report offered by Pat
 - o Current balance is \$5262 (including year end allowance)
- CaLDRA, Endurance Canada, Sanctioning Reports offered by Donna
 - o There were 300 available ACTRA miles in 2011
- Public Relations Report offered by Lynn
 - o Members encouraged to continue promoting ACTRA to general public, Pony Club, 4-H etc
 - o There is hoped to be a clinic in March this year in NS possibly at Lynns
 - o Donna Lee will contact Hampton Pony Club to offer an educational session
- Newsletter Report offered by Bev
 - o Mail out fees are significantly reduced with the email version of the newsletter
- Statistician Report offered by Jennifer
 - o Score sheets will be returned to RM if incomplete
 - o Riders **strongly** encouraged to add their rider and mount registration number, as well as PSO member #'s to their ride entry forms

Old Business:

- Jennifer sent Bob Gielen his WEG cooler. Bob returned a Thank You card to ACTRA

New Business:

- Hoof Boots Rule
 - o Kaaren made a motion *""ACTRA accept all types of sole protection in all sanctioned divisions. Attachment strap, keeper or gaiter may not extend above the pastern. The judges may request to observe*

the covered area at any time. Devices which serve as leg protection are not permitted" Seconded by Donna, none opposed, motion passed.

- Horsemanship Master Score Sheets will be revised so that the rides individual score compartments section will no longer need to be recorded, just the finishing totals.
- Jean Bridges requested that ACTRA continue to provide a booth at January Thaw, which she will continue to organize. Membership agreed
- ACTRA will continue to offer a financial incentive, again for the 2012 competition season, to Ride Managers who offer a CTR/IDR and ER/LD on the same day. The incentive is \$200. Susan Hovey was the only RM to receive the financial incentive this season. Congratulations Susan!
 - o The BOD will review the financial incentive requests on an annual basis for each upcoming competition season
- Equine Review
 - o Members felt that it was of little benefit to have an ACTRA booth at Equine Review this year
- Trail Courtesy
 - o Members are reminded that new comers to our sport often do not understand the rules and conditioning processes
 - Reminders to be polite and patient
 - Ride Managers should take new comers to the side for a short discussion after the Ride Briefing
 - Suggestion of a green ribbon for new riders to alert other riders that the rider or horse is new to our sport
- Breed Awards
 - o Discussion of which types of rides will be acceptable for calculating the year end breed awards
 - It is suggested that we revert to our previous system of calculating points based on CTR/IDR conditioning scores
 - Motion made by Bev *"Breed Award points are to be tabulated on CTR conditioning scores only"* seconded by Deanna. None opposed, carried.
- Motion made by Kaaren *"To increase the speed of IRD's to 6mph and with no holds"* No seconder, motion dismissed
- Lucy Ridge and Lynn Beezley are planning a 50 mile ER for the 2012 season. Dates, place to be announced

BOD nominations for 3 year term:

Susan Hovey nominated by Deanna, seconded by Donna Lee

Sherry Brooks nominated by Gwen, seconded by Bev

Afina Kaminga nominated by Irmgard, seconded by Donna

Evan Lebert nominated by Donna Lee, seconded by Kaaren

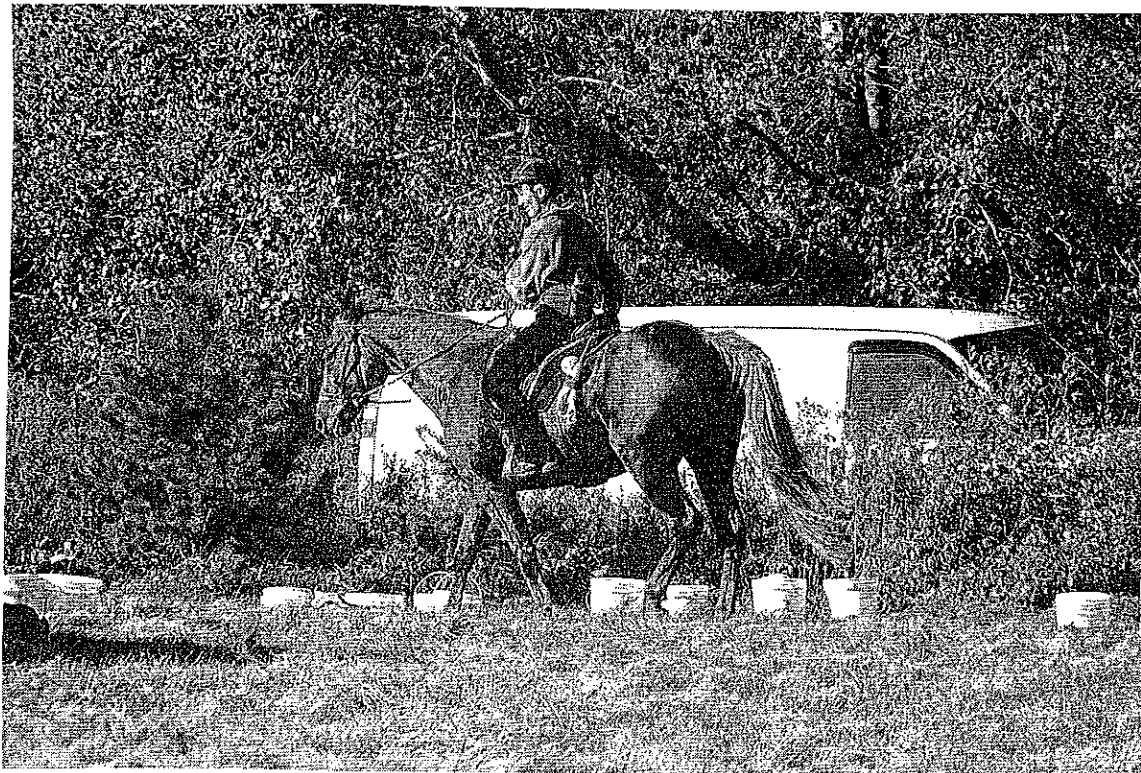
Meeting adjourned at 14:30
Minutes submitted by DL Cole Nov 20/11

Outside notes:

Silent auction raised \$349

Short new BOD meeting followed Awards Presentations

- New BOD positions
 - o President Kaaren Lebert (to fill in Irmgard's remaining one year term)
 - o Gwen Dexter – Treasurer
 - o Rules – Susan Hovey
 - o Public Relations – Afina Kiminga
 - o Director at Large – Evan Lebert
 - o VP – Sherry Brooks



2011 Year End Award Results

CTR – Conditioning

Champion – Elastic / April Haliburton

Reserve – Ballahamish Glen – Jim Burns

3rd – Caruso / Lucy Rudge

Aazzaan / Bev Elliott

4th – Guysborough Grey / Jean & Ann Bridges

5th – JDA Azrael The Canadian / Deanna Johnston

6th – Solara / Donna Lee Cole

Jazlra Shadow / Susan Hovey

Jalna Saffire / Jean Bridges

CTR – Trail Horse

Champion – JDA Azrael The Canadian
/ Deanna Johnston

Reserve – Guysborough Grey
/ Jean & Ann Bridges

3rd – Prairie Shadowfax / Chester Gillan
Ballahamish Glen / Pat Rideout
Royal / Bob Curran

IDR – Conditioning

Champion

Gryphon / Wendy Vissers

JDA Azrael The Canadian / Deanna Johnston

MDA Billy Four / Donna Munn

Reserve

Amiri Tai / Deanna Johnston

MDA High Five / Bev Elliott

CF Dancer / Priscilla Scott

3rd – Hoofprint / Irmgard Lipp
Sirroco's Indian Thunder
/ Karen Jonah Brown

4th – Sir Ruby / Pat Ritcey

5th – PD Cat A Hoolah / Betty Dwyer
Tara Pathfinder / Maureen Johnson

6th – Poplar Ridge Baily / Vernon Leighton

IDR – Trail Horse

Champion

Ronya – Irmgard Lipp

JDA Azrael The Canadian – Deanna Johnston

CF Dancer – Priscilla Scott

Reserve

Poplar Ridge Baily – Vernon Leighton

MDA Billy Four – Donna Munn

Sir Ruby – Pat Ritcey

3rd – Gryphon / Wendy Vissers

MDA High Five / Bev Elliott

Tara Pathfinder / Maureen Johnson

Judged Pleasure – Horsemanship

Champion – Deanna Johnston

Reserve – Donna Munn

3rd – Jean Bridges

4th – Tammy Beazley

5th – Susan Hovey

6th – Maureen Johnson

Judged Pleasure – Trail Horse

Champion – Jalna Saffire / Jean Bridges

Reserve – Jalna Jestacat / Leslie Wade

3rd – Jazlra Shadow / Susan Hovey

4th – MDA Billy Four / Donna Munn

JDA Azrael The Canadian / Deanna Johnston

5th – Dueces Wild / Sylvia Gillies

6th – Prairie ZacIntosh / Sherry Brooks
Doc Holliday / Pearl Schjoberg

Breed Awards

Purebred Arabian

Champion

JDA Azrael The Canadian

Reserve

Elastic

Partbred Arabian

Champion

Jazira Shadow

Reserve

MDA Billy Four

Purebred Morgan

Champion

Jalna Saffire

Reserve

Jalna Jestacat

Partbred Morgan

Champion

Deuces Wild

Reserve

Guysborough Grey

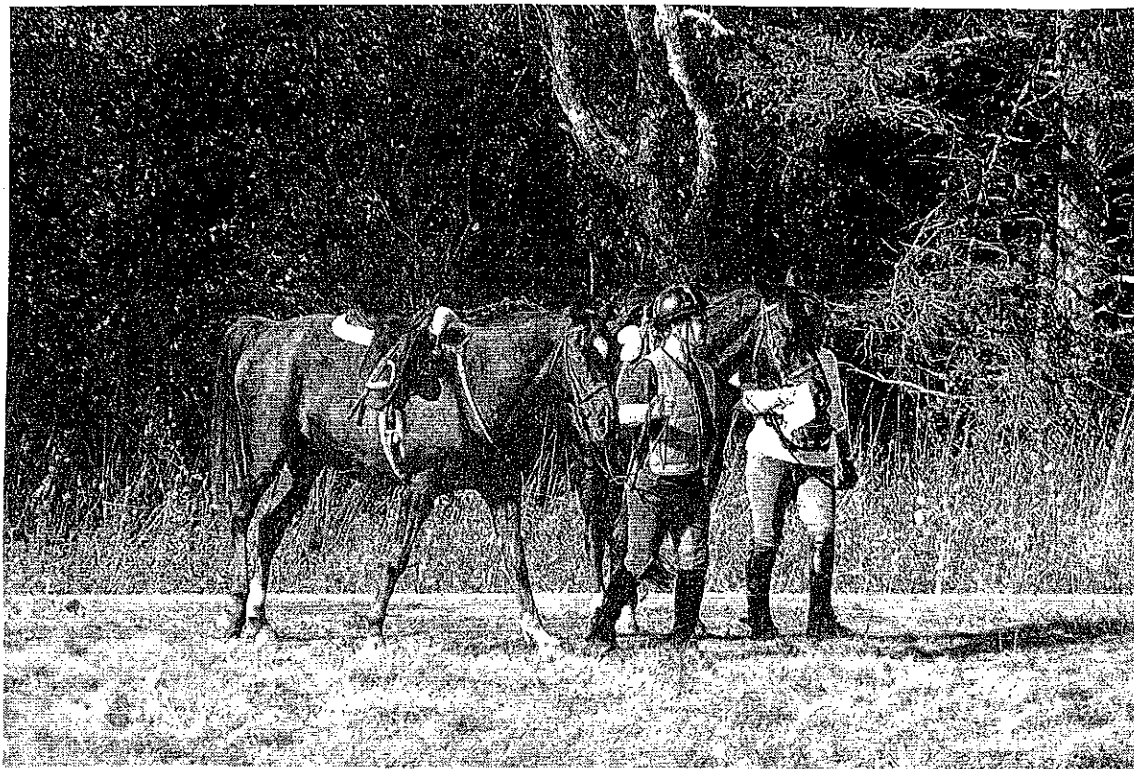
Grade

Champion

Ballahamish Glen

Reserve

Prairie ZacIntosh



2011 Mount Mileage Accumulations

Mount Name	ACTRA #	Miles
Poplar Ridge Baily	227	2,399
Pitshko	231	1,632
Some Nice Tracey	233	1,480
Virginian Magic	243	3,068
Sirrocco's Indian Thunder	257	1,015
Guysborough Grey	259	2,447
Ronya	267	1,421
Tequilla	273	327
MDA Billy Four	275	2,274
Call Me Lauren	276	2,026
PD Cat-A-Hoolah	278	1,301
Royal	279	824
CR Dorra Nedjyn	280	462
Doc Holiday	298	349
Thunder	301	508
Docs Magnolia Steel	316	72
Sir Ruby	318	263
Hoofprint	320	546
Rewbay	323	797
Arabian Styles	327	449
Whispering Willow	332	75
Summer Breeze	333	500
Jalna JestaCat	336	271
Jalna Saffire	338	1,390
MDA Japros Sultan	340	483
Morgan	343	241
Elastic	349	344
Aazzaan	350	827
JDA Azrael The Canadian	357	909
Caruso	363	663
Precisement	364	18
Prarie ZacIntosh	365	189
CF Dancer	366	347
Prairie Shadowfax	372	72
S'hakhe Rattle 'n Run	374	154
Kindred Spirit	376	677
Magnifyque	380	276
Washademoak Sunset	381	175
Deuces Wild	382	399
Amliri Tal	383	46
Solara	385	270
Tara Pathfinder	388	75
Buddy	392	101
Jazlra Shadow	393	303
BallaHamish Glen	394	288
Gryphon	395	98
Kizzy's Magic Dream	397	46
Mister Pete	398	46
Poets Starlight Melody	401	16
Ice Capades RF	402	18

2011 Rider Mileage Accumulations

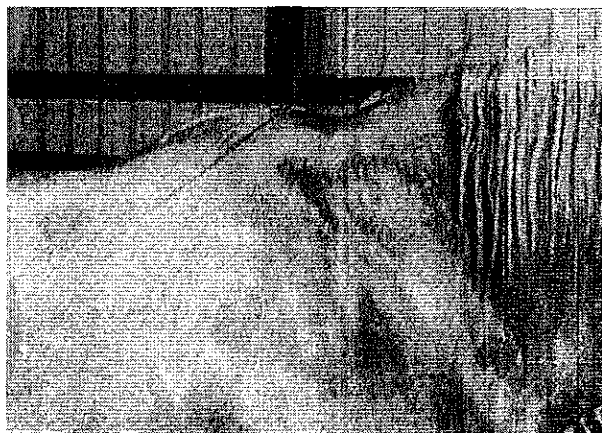
Rider Name	Miles
Anderson, Nicole	16
Beazley, Lynn	615
Beazley, Tammy	106
Beazley, Troy	261
Bridges, Ann	1,341
Bridges, Jean	8,225
Brooks, Sherry	214

Burns, Jim	439
Carter, Lauren	32
Cole, Donna Lee	1,410
Cosman, Peggy	121
Curran, Bob	1,966
Dexter, Gwenn	4,002
Dillon, Maureen	18
Dwyer, Betty	1,204
Elliott, Bev	4,591
Fournier, Stephane	226
Gillan, Chester	2,224
Gillies, Sylvia	4,089
Haliburton, April	3,204
Hopkins, Colleen	83
Hovey, Susan	1,124
Jonah-Brown, Karen	297
Johnson, Maureen	212
Johnston, Deanna	1,130
Kamminga, Afiena	585
LeBert, Evan	251
LeBert, Kaaren	3,177
Leighton, Vernon	274
Lemay, Denise	156
Lipp, Irmgard	1,724
Loughnan, Stephen	71
McConaghy, Gail	433
McDonald, Jennifer	1,008
Miller, Marcia	112
Munn, Donna	4,582
Munroe, Elwood	700
Patriquin-Dyke, Russlyn	2,525
Peverils, Elizabeth (Biddy)	91
Rideout, Pat	3,425
Ritcey, Pat	503
Robbins, Shannon	235
Rudge, Lucy	4,455
Rustige, Pam	500
Scott, Priscilla	1,035
Sharpe, Bernice	72
Singer, Lori	101
Skjonsberg, Pearl	327
Stewart, Gail	345
Thornton, Pam	4,584
Vissers, Wendy	221
Wade, Leslie	447
Wheeler, Mark	131

Horse Winter Blankets: How much damage can they do?

February 28, 2010

When **blanketing our horses** during cold winter months, we have the best intention of keeping him warm and protected from the elements. But the design and fit of **many blankets can potentially harm your horse** and – in extreme cases – cause major structural problems. A first sign that the edge of your blanket is cutting into the crest and the nuchal ligament of the horse, is the so called ‘blanket-dip’, an indentation right in front of the withers.



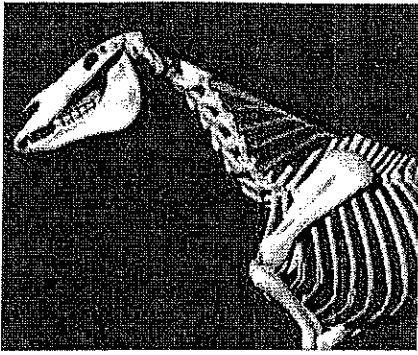
Horse's crest indented by ill fitting winter blanket

A first sign that something is not quite right, is usually a **slight indentation right in front of the withers**, often coupled with hairloss, coldness to touch (lack of circulation) and possibly stiffness and soreness in the horse. It's hard to put two and two together. We blanket our horse to keep him warm and protected from the elements and often don't think that *such a relatively light piece of equipment such as a blanket can do damage to our horse*.

But indeed, most blankets – even though available in many different sizes – are still not customized enough to fit every horse. The blanket pulls down on the front edge and causes the so called ‘blanket-dip’.

What this means to the horse's anatomy:

The blanket edge presses on the fatty tissue of the crest and the underlying nuchal ligament. The nuchal ligament starts at the poll and attaches at the withers, making it an elementary component of equine biomechanics. This ligament – together with the supraspinous ligament – serves as the ‘string’ in the ‘suspension bridge’ of the horse's back.



nuchal ligament, image borrowed from <http://www.scienceofmotion.com/documents/home.html>

Dr. Gerd Heuschmann: “When the horse stretches his neck forward, the nuchal ligament is put in traction, pulling on the withers’ spinous processes, causing them to rise. This effect extends all along the horse’s back – the traction is transmitted to the tendon-like supraspinous ligament, which, as a direct continuation of the nuchal ligament, connects all of the back’s spinous processes.” And: “..it’s mainly the nuchal ligament that helps the horse lift his back by stretching it forward.”

Impeding or even damaging this important ligament can lead to anything from minor discomfort and restriction to major loss of soundness, requiring lengthy rehabilitation. Stiffness, choppy strides, disjointed movement can be first pointers that something is causing damage or restriction to this ligament.

If you are blanketing your horse, investigate carefully whether the blanket is restricting the nuchal ligament. If you find a dip, coldness to touch or loss of hair, you will want to make changes. Having a knowledgeable tailor make custom changes to your blanket or buying a blanket that has a different design, such as the “Rambo Wug” or “Rhino Wug” by Horseware Ireland may be a good idea, if your horse cannot go without blanket.

