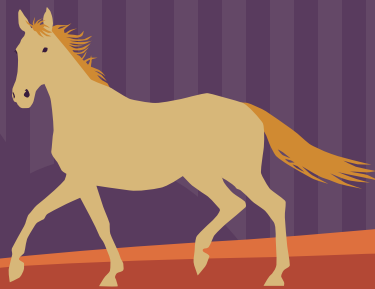


STABLE CONNECTIONS

ZINE

FALL 2026



CONTRIBUTORS



SHAMROCK GREGORY grew up in Marin County and has been madly in love with and riding horses for as long as she can remember. Currently, her clients compete in everything from barrels to cowboy dressage to trail trials. Her focus when teaching always comes back to good horsemanship. Her goal as a trainer is to develop happy, healthy, safe, willing and soft horses and to help people develop consistency, patience and a strong understanding of horses and horsemanship skills.
shamrockgregory@yahoo.com



JACLYN PEPPER-MILLARD is an FEI-level rider, CDI Grand Prix competitor, and trainer based in Santa Rosa, CA. She began her riding career at the age of three, successfully competing in hunters and jumpers before discovering her passion for dressage. Jaclyn is known for developing horses through the levels. Her training approach is especially supportive of adult amateurs, focusing on clear communication, confidence building, and creating a structured yet approachable path for progress.
jaclynpepperdressage.com



CAREY SWEET With nearly three decades writing about food, culinary travel, restaurants and the chefs that make them happen, Sweet contributes to numerous publications, including the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Press Democrat*, *Houston Chronicle*, *USA Today*, *Alaska Airlines* magazine and *Sonoma Magazine*, among many others. When not eating, interviewing, traveling or chained to a computer writing, she shares her home, a farm in Sonoma, with a menagerie of horses, goats, dogs, chickens, cats and various visiting wildlife. All her pets are beloved rescues.



ABBY HANC is a myofascial release body worker for horses and humans, functional movement coach, and lifelong horsewoman based in Sonoma County, California. She works in myofascial release, somatic movement, and biomechanics – with horses and the riders who love them. Her work is rooted in the belief that riding challenges are rarely just about riding. When something isn't working in the saddle, I look at the whole picture – the body, the mind, the history, and the horse. That's usually where the path forward begins. You can learn more at abbyhanc.com



MAX WOOLF is the owner of Woolf Automotive Detailing, serving Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties. Through his wife, Mirja, and their involvement in the local equestrian community Max began applying his background in professional detailing to horse trailers. What started as another area of his business quickly became a passion for helping owners protect their trailers while creating cleaner, healthier spaces for the horses traveling inside them. His work is rooted in protecting the investment, maintaining the equipment, and caring for the horse.
woolfautomotivedetailing.com



SHONNA BERK (CREATOR) started working with a few different trainers and multiple local tack shops to find a way in the horse world. In 2019, she started West Coast PEMF Team where she offers Pulsed Electro-Magnetic Field sessions to horses, small animals, and people while still feeling a pull to create something more. Stable Connections the Podcast was born in 2022, which has now blossomed into not only a podcast, but a Business Finder, Calendar of Events, and now a Zine! A true entrepreneur at heart, Shonna is consistently thinking up new ideas and is eager to create a vibrant equestrian community in the North Bay.



KARI ONTKO (DESIGNER AND ILLUSTRATOR) has been drawing for as long as she can remember—making her path into art and design a natural one. After graduating from design school, she founded Ontko Design. Her work spans a wide range of projects, from cookbooks and photo art direction to branding and logo design. Today, Kari brings together her passion for art and her love of horses in a wonderful line of paper goods—etsy.com/shop/OntkoDesign. She lives in Sonoma with Roger and their rescue Schnauzer mix, Ryder. When she's not in the studio, you'll likely find her at the barn riding her horse, Rudy.

IF YOU WOULD
LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE
TO THE ZINE,
contact us at:
StableConnections.sb@gmail.com

ON THE FRONT + BACK COVER
HELLO FALL illustration by
Kari Ontko, Ontko Design



FOLLOW @StableConnections

2026 © Stable Connections. All rights reserved.
StableConnections-ThePodcast.com

STABLE CONNECTIONS

ZINE

FALL 2026



6 The Little Blue Dot

BY SHAMROCK GREGORY



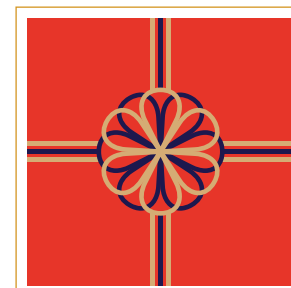
12 Ali Pearson

ARTIST



14 More Than a Championship

BY JACLYN PEPPER-MILLARD



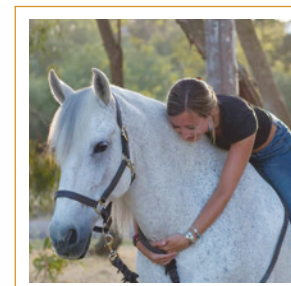
16 Gift Guide

FOR EVERYONE ON YOUR LIST



18 Sunrise Horse Rescue

BY CAREY SWEET



20 Born Intersex The Story of Stella

BY ABBY HANC

24 The Missing Piece of Horse Trailer Maintenance

BY MAX WOOLF

28 Pony Time

30 Upcoming Events

31 Ask Scout

ADVICE STRAIGHT FROM
THE HORSE'S MOUTH



Cowboy Dean Spinelli working on the hills outside of Petaluma, California
BY JAK WONDERLY JakWonderly.com

THE LITTLE BLUE DOT

ON HORSES, LEADERSHIP, AND NURTURING A BARN COMMUNITY



BY SHAMROCK GREGORY

For my 18th birthday, my mom gifted me an astrological chart reading. This was in the 1990s, and there is only one part of that reading that I remember because it stuck out so vividly to my young self, causing alarm. While looking at my chart the astrologer said something along the lines of, "Oh wow. Yes. Ok, you will be responsible for large groups of people. They are following your lead." I remember thinking, Oh no. Wait. Why?!

Surely there was someone more qualified. Where exactly was I supposed to be leading these people? Did this mean I would have to speak in public? Extra yikes.

It's funny now because just one year later, I became the Advisor to the Novato Junior Horsemen. Suddenly I was speaking to large groups of people and thinking wait, is this what the chart meant? This is ok, I can do it.

Since then, different versions of that responsibility have continued to evolve throughout my life. Each experience seemed to prepare me for the next, as life so often does. And horses have been at the center of nearly all of it. Horses desire leadership. They need calm confidence and consistency. I believe their influence had a lot to do with teaching me how to lead long before I realized that was what I was learning.

DIFFERENT ROADS LEAD PEOPLE TO HORSES

Mine is the path of those whose love of horses is embedded so deeply in their soul that, if asked where it originated, they wouldn't be able to pinpoint the source. It isn't a love that arrived. It was a deep knowing, a yearning that was already there. Seeking expression. There is a quote: "I wasn't born in a barn, but I got there as fast as I could." That was definitely my story.

I'm not sure who I would be without horses. They have shaped me, molded me like clay through their lessons, and given me a beautiful life filled with people I love. My most devastating heartbreaks and grandest achievements have been gifted to me by horses. They have humbled me when I needed it and helped me find courage when I needed it.

Growing up in the suburbs of Novato, to find horses, meant I first had to find a boarding stable. I started at age 6 at a beautiful hunter-jumper barn, home to multiple trainers and regular schooling shows. When I was 9, my trainer moved away and my parents relocated me to a less formal but much bigger western barn,

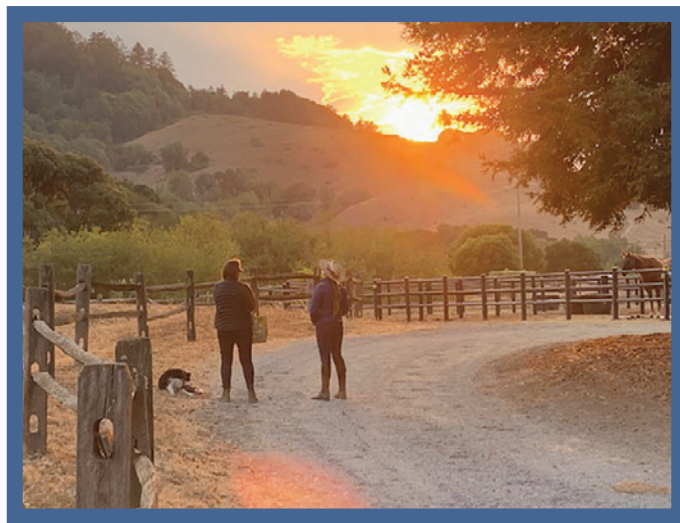
where my exposure to horses and people increased tenfold. As kids, we had freedom there. We were allowed to have adventures, make mistakes, and then clean up our messes. Over the years, as my involvement with horses became increasingly professional, I've experienced many different barns, both here and on the East Coast. Some had a manager. Some had one trainer or multiple trainers. Others had no real guidance beyond the owner. Some operated as co-ops. There were places with good horse sense and other places with almost none.

A few changed ownership while I was there, and I watched them evolve—or devolve—right before my eyes. Yet one thing was true of every single one:

EVERY BARN IS ITS OWN LITTLE ECOSYSTEM

It is made up of the people—their personalities, values, relationships, and the systems they follow. It is made up of the horses—how happy, healthy, relaxed, and cared for they are. And it is made up of the land everyone is sharing. Every barn has a culture too, whether the owner, manager, and trainers intentionally create one or not. And whoever is at the top has an enormous responsibility for that culture—for how the barn feels to the people and animals who spend their days there.





BLUE DOT

When I was asked to write about my position as barn manager at Blue Dot and how I foster community, I kept ending up with what were essentially pages of gratitude journaling. I know that what we have here is rare. So I'll try to explain how we got here.

It starts with Liebe Patterson, who bought the property, previously known as Meadowbrook, in 2015 and named it Blue Dot. The name was inspired by Carl Sagan's reflections on the famous first photograph of Earth taken from space: our planet, a fragile pale blue dot in the vastness of space. The realization of both our shared insignificance and our profound interconnect- edness. That idea feels particularly appropriate here. I had been a trainer at Meadowbrook, along with Teresa Korol and Rachel Burke, since 2006. We are all still here together now, twenty years later.

When Liebe bought the property, she asked me to be the manager. Since she had already been a client of mine for 11 years, I knew the kind of person she was and the answer was an easy 'yes'. She also asked all of us to make lists of repairs/improvements, then the lists were compiled and a 5-year-plan was drafted and work began immediately. Literally a dream come true! There is always tremendous uncertainty when a barn you are a part of goes on the market. You never really know which way things are going to go. So being able to stay and rebuild was mind blowing.

Teresa, Rachel and myself were trainers at Meadowbrook because we loved what the property offered. But during the last few years under the previous ownership, the property had fallen behind in maintenance. It seemed it was being held together by the sheer determination of the trainers and boarders— also some bailing twine and duct tape! The silver lining was that this experience had already created a culture of support that still persists today.

With Liebe, the whole property improved. Morale was boosted as everyone actively participated in the improvements and then benefited from the results. For me, there was another important piece. As manager, I wanted to make sure that Liebe could continue to come to the barn and enjoy her horses, friends, and community just as she had before. I made sure she was never bombarded with trivialities. I trust her vision for the property, and I go to her for the bigger decisions. Within that framework, my job is to care for the day-to-day ecosystem and the people and horses within it.

All of our clients are also in a program with one of our three trainers. When something comes up, clients can first go to their trainer and then come to me as manager if needed. The trainers and staff communicate as necessary to navigate the inevitable comings and goings of barn life.

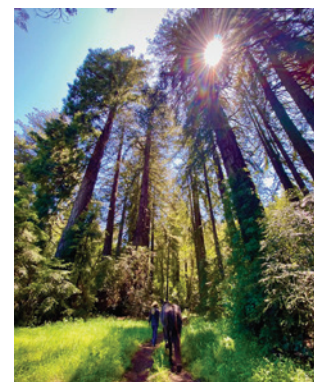
When a space becomes available, the trainers take turns bringing in a client they believe will be a good fit—not only for their own program, but for the community as a whole. I know we are in an extremely blessed

position to be able to operate this way. We have a long waiting list to draw from, and as trainers, our schedules are full. That makes choosing people based on community fit possible. And that matters.

THE PEOPLE

I have admired Teresa and Rachel since I met them each twenty years ago. They are both incredibly talented horsewomen, riders, and teachers, and I am elevated by their influence. Our programs are different, with eventing, dressage and western, and I believe that makes the barn stronger as a whole. Clients are free to switch trainers. We have collaborated on challenging horses. We've helped with each other's horses and clients when someone is sick or traveling.

Teresa is steady and kind and has a great sense of humor. She is also, by far, the toughest woman I've ever met. Along with her assistant, Amelia, their clients and horses are successful and happy. Rachel is magic—the kindest, purest soul—and horses and riders glow under her gentle guidance. I am grateful for every day I get to share this place with them.





For the purposes of this article, I'm going to skip the details of how we try to keep our horses healthy and content, how we schedule, our evacuation plans and emergency preparedness, the quality of staff training, and facility maintenance. Just know that those things are also my focus every day.

But fostering community is a different kind of work and I think there are three things that have mattered most:

1. WHO WE INVITE IN

There is an old idea that if givers are surrounded by givers, everyone's cup gets filled. That is essentially what I look for.

What does it mean to be a giver? Someone who considers other people's needs first. Someone who understands that they are sharing a space rather than simply occupying one. This sounds simple, but in a barn, it matters enormously. Sharing an indoor arena with multiple lessons happening simultaneously on a rainy winter day can be surprisingly easy when everyone is considerate and accommodating.

- They help each other.
- They put things back.
- They look out for one another's horses, dogs and tack.
- They celebrate each other's accomplishments.
- They understand that their own experience of the barn is affected by everyone else's experience of the barn.
- That is community.

2. ADDRESSING PROBLEMS

The second piece is finding solutions as soon as possible. I am naturally a peacekeeper and handling conflict takes an extreme amount of energy from me. But I am protective of others, and over the years I've learned to channel that protectiveness, have the hard conversations and set clear boundaries.

I am also curious about people in general—what makes us the way we are, why we behave the way we do, and what might be happening beneath the surface. I will work with people when they show me they are trying. I have also learned some difficult lessons about discernment and about being too patient. That, too, is part of maturing.

Good community does not mean that everyone always agrees or that nothing ever goes wrong. It means that when something does go wrong, there is a willingness to address it, repair it when possible, and protect the health of the whole. Like a herd.

3. CELEBRATE LIFE

And then there is my favorite part: I have joked that my backup career would be a party planner. It brings me an enormous amount of joy to bring people together—especially if there is a good theme! Over the years, Blue Dot has had some pretty delightful celebrations.

Our inaugural party included a catered dinner, a dance floor in the indoor arena, and a live band with a square-dance caller (who knew square dancing could be so fun!) We've had summer bluegrass picnics and annual holiday wreath-making.

During COVID, when we couldn't gather together, we hired a photographer to take portraits and gave prizes for the most festive, most creative, and other categories. We shared the photographs in our newsletter, *Connecting the Dots*.

Our holiday parties have included customized barn bingo, customized songs, a "Ghosts of Christmas Past" history of the property and its previous owners, and dog races in the arena (with the dogs wearing mini Santa's hats of course) among other things

But celebrating isn't only about parties. There are trees planted around the property for beloved horses we've lost. There are hand-painted stones and flowers in memory of dear friends. We have celebrated birthdays, new babies, marriages, divorces, accomplishments, new horses, old horses, moving away, moving back and the seasons... And we have grieved together. Some years it has seemed we had too much practice. It's about being there for one another through all of it.

OUR LITTLE DOT

Being responsible for these 75 acres, the wildlife, the horses, the cats, the dogs and the people who share this place is an honor—one I don't take lightly. Every day, I strive to be worthy of the responsibility. Sometimes I think back to that 18-year-old girl sitting in an astrology reading, trying to imagine why she would be responsible to lead. I understand it differently now.

Leadership, at least the kind I have learned from horses, isn't about standing in front of everyone and telling them where to go. It is about paying attention. It is about knowing when to step forward and when to step back. It is about creating enough safety that other people can become more fully themselves. It is about protecting what matters. It is about making decisions

when decisions need to be made, having difficult conversations when they are necessary, and knowing that you don't have to do any of it alone.

Mostly, it is about stewardship. In a world that seems to be in ever increasing danger from a seemingly endless list of overwhelming threats, I come back to this: I have this little dot on this corner of the Earth to care for and do my best to protect and nurture.

I can try to make it a place where horses are happy, where people feel safe, where friendships grow, where grief is held, where accomplishments are celebrated, and where everyone understands that they are part of something larger than themselves. And maybe that will radiate out into the world.

For what it's worth, it is what I do best.



Ali Pearson

A Bay Area artist and horse person who grew up riding in the East Bay, Briones Park and Orinda back roads. She has been painting for over 40 years, working as a muralist for natural history museums and visitors' centers. Her work is based in a deep love of nature and a lifetime of observing the natural world. She lives in Sebastopol with four horses and three goats and creates paintings in her Petaluma studio. alumniexhibits.com

CLYDE AND SYLVIA ▼

I painted this painting from a photo I took when the kids in a summer program at my farm were getting ready to do a "farm play". What really struck me about this image was how it expressed the feeling of the magic of reaching across the species barrier, or divide, between us as human beings and horses as horse beings. It's something I've always been interested in, trying to see other animals for who they are, and it's amazing to see them seeing us with the same intent. Horses are super good at that kind of seeing. Animals offer a kind of companionship that is different than what is offered in exchanges with people. We are ultimately a very lonely species on the planet, getting lonelier every day. In this painting I'm trying to express a little hope by celebrating a moment of being in that bigger context of part of the larger animal kingdom, a human but with porous perimeters. (Oil on canvas 36" X 48")



◀ CLYDE'S HEAD

My guess is all of us here have had a special animal that really saw us. Clyde is one of those for me. I made this painting from a photo I took of him because it shows that willingness horses have to cross the threshold into our human world- literally stick their heads in the window to check us out. They don't just meet us half way, they make a pretty big effort to see us and understand us. Clyde is a mustang, and when I think about how mustangs in particular, born in the wild, completely immersed from birth in a natural horse world, can make the leap into our human world and still be emotionally and physically functional, well, it amazes me. I painted this as a tribute to the generosity of spirit and incredible resiliency of mind that mustangs have. (Oil on canvas 48" X 36")

PETIE IN SPACE ▶

Petie was a really special guy that I adopted from a rescue. He was a retired thoroughbred eventing horse. He had a huge amount of confidence in himself and an expansive mind. I only got to share a few years with him but he taught me a lot. I painted him to make him look so much larger than life, in front of the horse head nebula, because he would have liked that. (Oil on canvas 40" X 40")



A rider in formal dressage attire, including a helmet and tailcoat, is shown on a dark bay horse. The horse is in a collected movement, possibly a piaffe or passage, with its front legs lifted. The background features a white fence with a logo, a building, and spectators.

[illegible]

If someone had told me a few years ago that my mare Ellie (Limited Edition) and I would be riding down centerline at the 2026 USEF Grand Prix National Championships in Ocala, Florida, I probably would have laughed—and then gotten right back to work.

Walking into the arena at the USEF Grand Prix National Championships, especially during a World Championship year, was one of those surreal moments where everything slows down for just a second. I found myself thinking less about where we were and more about everything it had taken to get there. Every early morning, every setback, every tiny victory that no one else ever saw suddenly felt worth it.

The people around me believed in this dream as much as I did. Friends, clients, fellow riders, family, and supporters rallied around us in a way I'll never forget.

That's why organizations like Southern California Equestrian Sports (SCES) are so important. SCES is a nonprofit dedicated to helping equestrian athletes pursue opportunities like these through financial support while also creating tax-deductible giving opportunities for donors who want to invest in the future of our sport. I experienced firsthand how life-changing community support can be, and I hope more riders are able to benefit from programs like these.

To everyone who has been part of this story—whether you've coached us, cheered us on, donated, or simply believed in us—thank you. Every ride down centerline carries a little piece of each of you with it and we hope to continue to make you proud.





HANDCRAFTED LEATHER GOODS

Born & raised in Sonoma County, Sarah Pradels is the owner and maker behind Pradels Ranch & Leather, where she handcrafts leather handbags, wallets, and accessories meant for everyday life. Each handbag style is named after Sonoma County towns as a tribute to her home. Thoughtful, timeless, and built to be used and loved for years, her pieces make truly special holiday gifts. Explore the collection at pradelsranch.com



A TREAT FOR YOU!

Handmade sugar cookies (for humans!) from Perfect Pony Patisserie are baked in Sebastopol with love and crafted into edible works of art with delicious royal icing. Available in boxes of six or a dozen —a perfect gift for all your barn friends! Available in assorted horse markings, or each cookie can be crafted to look like your horse(s). Your horse has plenty of treats – it's time to treat yourself! Connect through firolisa@aol.com or text **707-332-6684**



A TREAT FOR YOUR HORSE!

Caballo Cookies is a handcrafted horse-treat business founded by high school equestrian and teen entrepreneur Mia Gonzales. Inspired by her passion for horses, Mia has created delicious, crumble-resistant, preservative-free treats made with simple, carefully selected ingredients. They're perfect for training rewards, equine stretches, or just giving your horse a special treat. Shop online at CaballoCookies.Etsy.com



ONE-OF-A-KIND CERAMICS

Artisan ceramics handmade with love in Sonoma County. Discover one-of-a-kind pieces in our collections of mugs, platters, planters, and more that will add joy and beauty to your everyday life. jgclay.com



Gifts for Everyone on Your List

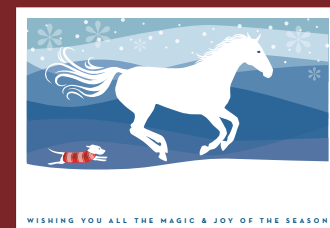
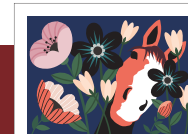


A GIFT OF ARTWORK

Our horses hold such a special place in our heart. Give the horse lover in your life the opportunity to preserve that connection through beautiful, timeless artwork they can see and enjoy every day. Can be used toward horse-and-rider portraits or classic black background photography sessions, creating artwork designed to live on the walls of their home for years to come. hannahbeebephotography.com

WHERE COOL DOGS SHOP

Dogville is a pet boutique in San Anselmo, California, specializing in quality accessories and supplies for your dog or cat. They carry a large selection of designer collars and leashes, beds, grooming products, high-quality food and treats, toys, and more. dogvillesananselmo.com



INSPIRED BY HORSES

Artist and avid equestrian Kari Ontko from Ontko Design combines her love of horses and dogs in a collection of holiday cards (available in boxes or single cards), birthday cards, thank you cards, notepads and calendars. Each illustration is drawn from her imagination and brought to life in bold colors. Shop on Etsy.com/shop/OntkoDesign

Sunrise Horse Rescue

BY CAREY SWEET



When Daddy found himself in need of a new home, his future looked bleak. In his 30s, the gelding was in immediate need of relocation, due to a family's property dispute over his pasture land. He also came with a friend: his bonded, longtime friend, an elderly mare named Chili.

The handsome boy's bay coat was scattered in old-man white, but he was relatively healthy, while Chili was a bit wobbly. Sunrise Horse Rescue immediately stepped up to the plate and took them both in.

"When horses are relocated, their nervous systems require a significant adjustment to the new environment," said Lisa Cannon, executive director of the Calistoga non-profit. "This is true for all horses, but for an aged horse, the challenge to their nervous system is exponential. We knew it was imperative that the extremely bonded Daddy and Chili move together to Sunrise, and that their transport was handled with the utmost care."

After landing at the sanctuary, they received vet exams, it was determined that Chili had significant neurological challenges. Staff and volunteers constantly monitored them, showering them in love, comfort and medical care. Slowly but surely, the horses adjusted.

It was a familiar experience for the team at Sunrise, founded in 2007 to rescue abused and neglected horses in Napa and surrounding counties, educate the public about issues affecting horse welfare, and provide community members the unique benefit of equine assisted learning and therapy.

Today, there are 20 horses at the ranch on Tubbs Lane, five horses at a satellite pasture just down the road that is generously loaned by the Sharpsteen family, and 17 horses living the good life with foster families.

And the Sunrise team knows firsthand how unsettling upheaval can be. They have had to move lock, stock and barrel several times from different locations, including being evacuated during the Valley Fire of 2015, then moving again after its temporary land in St. Helena was sold. Now, it has secured a 50-year lease for a four-acre property on Tubbs Lane in Calistoga.

"We rely on our dedicated volunteers and staff to help prepare new spaces, and a move of this size takes a tremendous amount of planning and preparation," Cannon said. "There is also a lot of horse hauling involved. Once the horses arrive, they need time and attention to adjust to their new surroundings, so giving them the time they need to acclimate is incredibly important. We are hopeful that Tubbs Lane will be our last stop."

With about four dozen volunteers, Sunrise still welcomes greater community participation.

"We love our volunteers, and can always use more help in certain areas," Cannon said. "Many of our opportunities do not require prior horse experience, while others do require specific skills or physical ability. Support needs currently available are listed on our website, and we are always especially in need of people who can help with heavy lifting and larger construction projects."

Donations are warmly welcomed, too, as the 501(c)(3) relies entirely on fundraising and tax-deductible financial generosity.

"It costs between \$6,000 and \$10,000 a year to support each of our horses," Cannon explained. "We provide food, veterinary care, shelter, training, and lots of love."

Fosters and donated pasture and shelter space are much appreciated, as well.

"We continue to receive calls about horses in desperate need of help," Cannon said. "So far this year, we have responded to 96 calls, with another 20 horses currently on our waiting list for assistance."

The work is often challenging, she admitted.

"We supported Chili through many months of constant loving care, but she ultimately was not able to pull through and passed. Yet Daddy remains with us as a beloved and cherished member of the Sunrise family. He graces our herd with his gentle and wise nature and is loved instantly by all who meet him. We think he's about 34 now, and he always has a great attitude no matter what.

"In fact, we have a couple of very special horses who are nearly 35 years old. They are wonderful examples of the long, happy lives horses can have when they are given the care, safety, and love they deserve."

And whenever things seem overwhelming, the team need only stop, take a deep breath, and give Daddy a caress on his velvety nose.

"The horses keep us going," Cannons said. "Every second chance, every small victory, and every horse who finally feels safe reminds us why we do this. There are hard days, but knowing there are more horses waiting for us makes giving up impossible."

sunrisehorserescue.org



Born Intersex *The Story of Stella*



BY ABBY HANC

There are moments in life that divide time into before and after. For me, one of those moments happened on an early autumn afternoon in western Rhode Island, when I turned down a long wooded drive and pulled up alongside an old stone wall and a stunning grey horse walked over and looked at me.

Her mane fell like a waterfall of silver against her soft grey coat that swirled with darker dapples. She stretched her thick curved neck over the wall and looked at me with a curiosity that was completely calm and certain of itself. I had never felt so simultaneously drawn to and unworthy of anything in my life and my first reaction was to leave.

But I didn't, and everything that came after this encounter – my work, my path, the books I write now, can be traced back to the exchange over that stone wall 14 years ago.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BORN INTERSEX

Intersex in horses refers to a condition where the chromosomal, gonadal, or anatomical characteristics don't fall neatly into either typical male or female categories. In Stella's case this was male pseudohermaphroditism which is where a horse has the external appearance of a female but carries internal testicular tissue rather than ovaries. Many cases go undetected for years, only discovered during incidental veterinary exams or in some cases prolonged elevation in testosterone encourages deeper veterinary exploration.

Stella was born in California in 2004. At birth she appeared to be a mare- her external anatomy was entirely female. It wasn't until she was older that veterinarians discovered she had internal testicular tissue rather than ovaries or a uterus and that she had been born intersex.

While we don't hear about Intersex all that much- variations in genitals is actually the same 'rarity' as having red hair or green eyes. It's a spectrum of differences that can occur that don't fit into clear boxes or definitions of "normal". I mean what is normal, anyway? Both, and More

What struck me most about Stella, outside of everything magical that she encompassed, was her wholeness.

She moved between mare energy and stallion energy with an effortlessness I have never seen in any other horse. Her boundaries were impeccable- clear and fair and she was a leader in every herd she was part of. The other horses trusted her completely because her confidence matched her leadership. She had the mindfulness and emotional intelligence of a lead mare and the steady protective presence of a stallion, and she wore both without conflict or confusion.

She was brave. She was funny. She was opinionated about peppermints and kind of hated hugs. She did not particularly enjoy being brushed anywhere except her mane and tail, which was thick and straight and gorgeous. On the nights when I was too tired for anything else I would go out to the barn with a hairbrush and just tell her about my day. She had the most incredible grounding energy and being around her was the best therapy I have ever found.

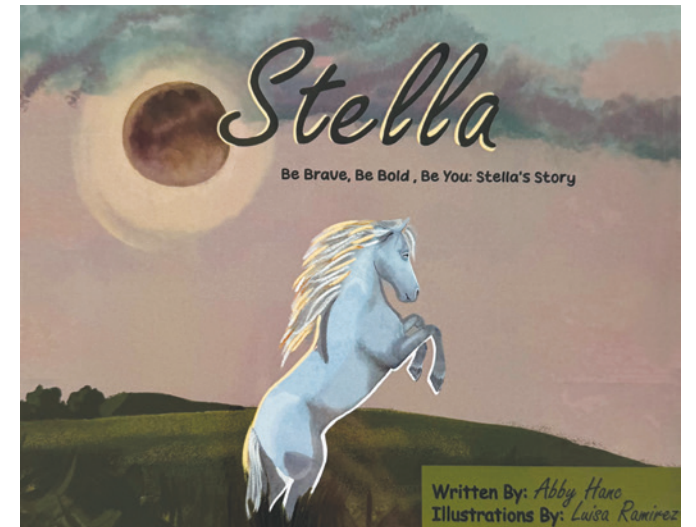
Having Stella as a partner and a teacher was beyond rewarding and also incredibly challenging- and probably even more challenging for her. Her confidence far exceeded my own and being around such a spiritually balanced horse really forced me to "do my work". But in doing that she also became the inspiration and foundation to my life's work.

Stella passed away unexpectedly in May of 2020 a week before her sixteenth birthday. It remains the greatest heartbreak of my life and there is still a grief in me around her that I don't expect will ever fully close.

I had always wanted to write her story. I had imagined taking her to schools, letting children meet her, watching their faces as they encountered this extraordinary being who defied living in the boxes that society loves to give us and she did so with such graceful ease. It took me a few years... grief does that. But eventually I found my way back to writing because the world needed to know about Stella, and because I believe, deeply, that her story belongs to more people than just me.

BE BRAVE, BE BOLD, BE YOU

Stella is a beautifully illustrated children's book based on her true story. It is a book about being born different and about the particular kind of magic that lives in a being who doesn't fit neatly into any category the world has prepared for them. It is for children who feel out of place, who are too much of one thing or not enough of another, who are still learning that what makes them different is also what makes them extraordinary. It is for anyone who has ever loved a horse who changed them.



Stella is available on Amazon for Kindle and on Stella's website - stellasbooks.com



Intersex Awareness Day is observed every year on October 26th- a day to recognize and honor the reality that bodies and identities exist in more variety than our categories account for. Stella lived that truth every single day of her life. She never questioned it, never struggled with it, never asked the world to make room for her. She simply was what she was- wholly, brilliantly, and without an apology.

(CHECK OUT) THE NORTH BAY BUSINESS FINDER

@ StableConnectionsThePodcast.com



HORSE HORSE HORSE

A LARGE SOLID-HOOFED HERBIVOROUS
MAMMAL WITH AN UNCANNY ABILITY TO FILL
A HEART WITH PASSION, DRIVE AND LOVE

The Missing Piece of Horse Trailer Maintenance

BY MAX WOOLF

Y our horse is already on a care schedule – shoeing, vaccines, bodywork and exercise. Your trailer should be on one, too. Brakes. Bearings. Tires. Floors. Cleaning. Protection. They belong on the same maintenance calendar.

When we think about horse trailer maintenance, most of us think about the obvious things: brakes, bearings, tires, floors and lights. These are the things we're taught to pay attention to because they help keep a trailer – and the horses inside it – safe on the road. But after spending more and more time working on horse trailers throughout Marin, Sonoma and Napa counties, I began to see that one critical piece was often missing: thorough cleaning. Not because every trailer needs to look perfect, but because a clean trailer is easier to inspect, easier to maintain, and ultimately a better environment for the horses we ask to step inside.

MY JOURNEY INTO TRAILER DETAILING

I came into the horse world a little differently than most people reading this probably did. I originally specialized in automotive detailing; my wife, Mirja, is the horse person in our family. Through her, I started spending more time around barns, horses, trainers, haulers and trailers. Eventually, I began detailing trailers for people in our local horse community, and something struck me almost immediately: these trailers work incredibly hard. No matter the size, year, make or model, a horse trailer represents a significant investment in both equipment and your horses. And the environment inside one is demanding. Horses do everything they would do in a stall or paddock – they sweat, eat, drink and, inevitably, produce waste and other organic matter. Dirt, moisture, feed, mold and mildew find their way into corners, crevices and seams. Mats trap debris underneath them. Outside, trailers spend their lives exposed to sun, rain, dust, bugs and road grime. Then, after all of that, we put our horses back inside and head down the road again.

Understanding that impact changed the way I thought about detailing trailers. With cars and trucks, a big part of detailing is obviously appearance. We want the paint to shine and the interior to look beautiful. There's certainly something incredibly satisfying about doing that with a horse trailer, too. I love watching dull aluminum brighten up, seeing tired paint regain its gloss, getting years of grime out of corners and, in a way, rewinding years of use. One of my favorite reactions is watching an owner walk around a finished trailer and say, "I forgot it could look like this." But the most important win for me isn't simply making the trailer beautiful. It's getting it clean, well cared for and easier for its owner to inspect.

What condition is the floor actually in? What's been sitting underneath the mats? Are seams, fasteners or hardware beginning to show deterioration or corrosion? Is moisture collecting somewhere it shouldn't? Is there a damaged or sharp area that was difficult to see when everything was caked with dirt? Detailing obviously doesn't replace a proper mechanical or structural inspection, and cleaning a floor doesn't tell you everything about its structural condition. But dirt can hide a lot of important information about the condition of a trailer. Cleaning gives an owner a much better opportunity to look closely at the equipment they're trusting to

carry their horse. To me, that's preventive maintenance – not cosmetic maintenance.

Then there is the horse themselves. This is probably the part of trailer detailing I've become most passionate about. Think for a moment about what we're asking a horse to do when we load them. We're asking an animal to walk into a relatively small, enclosed space, stand there, trust us, and remain there while the entire thing starts moving down the road. There are sounds, vibrations, scents, turns, stops and unpredictable movement underneath their feet. We can't eliminate all of those stresses, but we can control the condition of the space we're asking them to enter. I don't think a horse cares whether the outside of its trailer has a mirror finish. But I do believe we're respecting our horses as partners, and caring for them as they deserve, when we remove manure, urine, old hay, dirt and accumulated grime and give them the cleanest, best-maintained environment we reasonably can.

Equestrians already understand this idea better than almost anyone. We clean a stall knowing perfectly well a horse is going to dirty it again. We fill and scrub water buckets that will need to be done again tomorrow. We groom a horse that may immediately walk outside and roll – and, if we're lucky, shake even half of it off. We clean tack. We check legs. We walk fence lines and check latches. So much of caring for horses involves doing things over and over again, not because they're ever permanently "finished," but because that's what devoted stewardship looks like. I think trailers deserve to be viewed through the same lens. A trailer doesn't have to remain spotless. It simply needs someone paying attention to it consistently and with an eye for what matters.

A SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT

Your trailer is also a substantial investment, and regular cleaning and protection can help care for the surfaces and materials you've invested so much in. That doesn't mean hiring a professional every time your horse steps into the trailer. Some of the most useful maintenance is simple: promptly remove manure and wet bedding after hauling, sweep regularly, keep cobwebs under control, don't allow wet organic material to sit against surfaces for long periods, periodically clean beneath and around mats where appropriate, and wash the



BEFORE



AFTER

exterior. If your trailer is going to sit for an extended period, consider where you park it — trees, shade and moisture can contribute to significant moss and algae buildup, particularly on the roof. Most importantly, take a few extra minutes while cleaning to really look at your trailer. Professional detailing can handle the deeper cleaning, restoration and protection, but the goal should be maintenance in between — not waiting until years of buildup have to be rescued.

The unexpected part for me is that horse trailers have become some of my favorite things to work on. Yes, the before-and-after transformations can be pretty incredible. But what I really enjoy is meeting the people and horses connected to them. I've worked on trailers belonging to owners, trainers, large and small barns and professional haulers, and every trailer has a purpose beyond simply being another vehicle. It might carry someone's once-in-a-lifetime horse. It might carry a child's first pony. It might be headed to a horse show next weekend or simply down the road for a trail ride.

When someone hands me their trailer, they're trusting me with a piece of equipment they depend on to carry their friends and partners safely and comfortably. I take that trust seriously. I approach every trailer as if it were my own equipment, with my family's horses and best friends taking that next trip. It matters deeply and personally to me that the work is done right.

So the next time you're thinking about trailer maintenance, check the brakes. Check the bearings. Look at the tires. Inspect the floors. Test the lights. And then open the doors, pull things out, look underneath and give the trailer itself the same attention. You may not find anything concerning — and that's a good outcome. What you will have is a cleaner, better-cared-for investment and a space you can feel proud to ask your horse to step into.

Because brakes, bearings, tires and floors help protect your horse on the road. Cleaning and protection help care for the space they're traveling in. They belong on the same maintenance calendar.

WOOLF

AUTOMOTIVE DETAILING

YOUR TRAILER WORKS HARD.

IT SHOULD LOOK THE PART.

Professional horse trailer detailing for owners who care about presentation, protection, and longevity.



EXTERIOR WASH & DECONTAMINATION



OXIDATION REMOVAL & POLISH



CERAMIC PROTECTION



INTERIOR TACK & LIVING QUARTER REFRESHES



MOBILE SERVICE AT YOUR BARN OR PROPERTY

Because your trailer is more than transportation — it's part of your program.

BOOK YOUR SUMMER TRAILER RESET

LIMITED SPOTS • RESERVE YOURS TODAY

707-939-5451

WOOLF.AUTOMOTIVEDetailing.COM

@WOOLFDETAILING



SCAN TO BOOK NOW

SONOMA & MARIN COUNTIES

FULLY INSURED

5-STAR SERVICE ★★★★★



(SPOTLIGHT ON PODCAST 44)

FAVORITE MUSIC FOR PLAYLIST?

Johnny Cash, native flute, Van Morrison, Neil Young

FAVORITE FOOD TO EAT AT HOME?

A just picked salad from the garden, mango, and 100% grass fed meat

WHAT ELSE MIGHT YOU HAVE BEEN?

A veterinarian

FAVORITE GETAWAY ESCAPE?

The rustic cottage at the beach, off season

FAVORITE WAY TO GET PAST FEAR?

Acknowledge that you are afraid, Notice you are afraid, center, breath and stay grounded and calm. Stay connected to the horse.

FAVORITE EQUESTRIAN BRAND? Ariat

(ARIANA MAZZUCCHI)

A multi-generational horsewoman, zoologist and land steward extraordinaire. A deep connection with animals and nature has spanned her entire life and is easily seen in all that she touches.

FAVORITE TRAINING MOMENT?

That is a long story! But the gist is I broke out of an old myth of horse training where your horse has to do what you say when you ask it and do it now.

FAVORITE WAY TO RELAX?

Hanging by the horse field with a glass of wine or go out for lunch

DOG OR CAT LOVER?

I like both. I love dogs – Rat Terriers, Pitbulls and a new favorite, Rhodesian Ridgebacks. But now I have 2 kitties I adore too.

BEST BARN HACK?

Bailing twine is a good emergency hack to fix fencing when a cowgirl is by herself. Always have a pair of heavy duty wire cutters handy, actually all sizes are good.

BOOKS ON YOUR BEDSIDE TABLE?

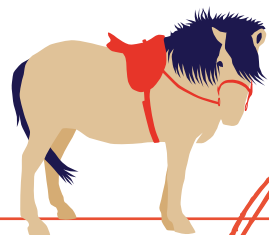
Shortest History of Economics and Of Time and Turtles

GREATEST EXTRAVAGANCE?

My custom made cutting saddle

26 THE ZINE | FALL 2026

CHECK OUT ALL THE PODCASTS AT StableConnectionsThePodcast.com



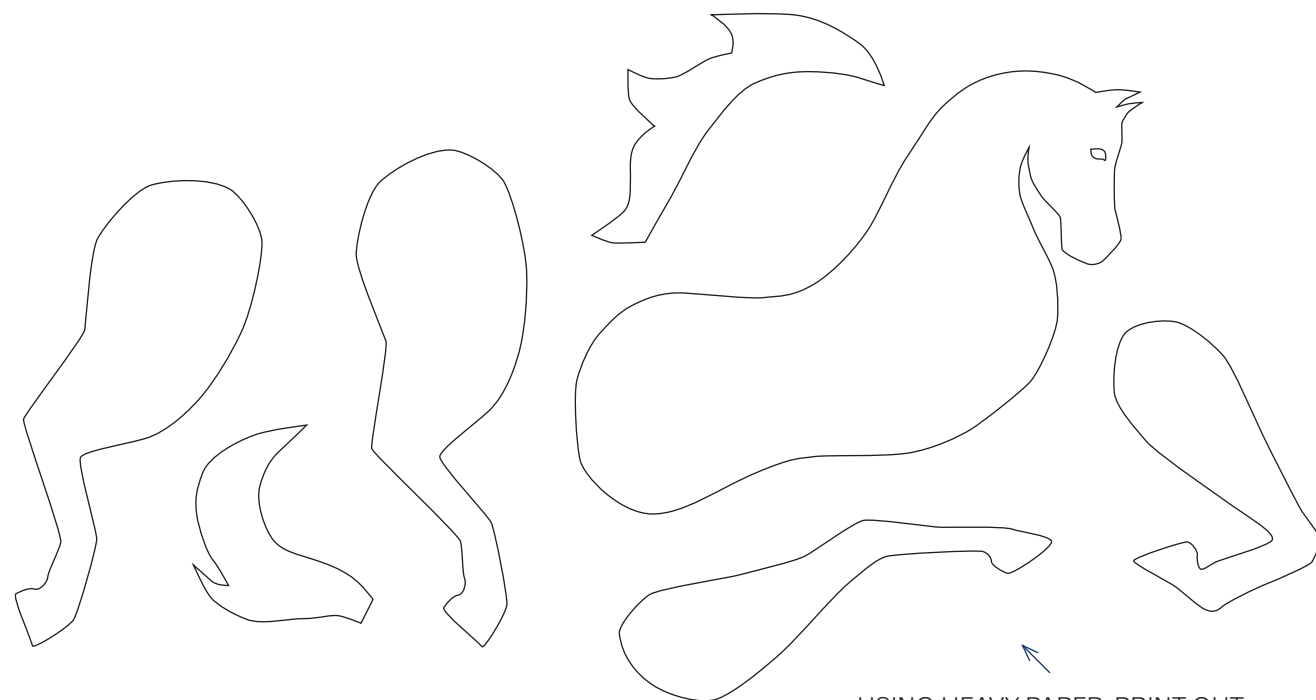
pony time



DIY HOLIDAY HORSE

Easy to make holiday horse for gift tag, ornament, or a present!

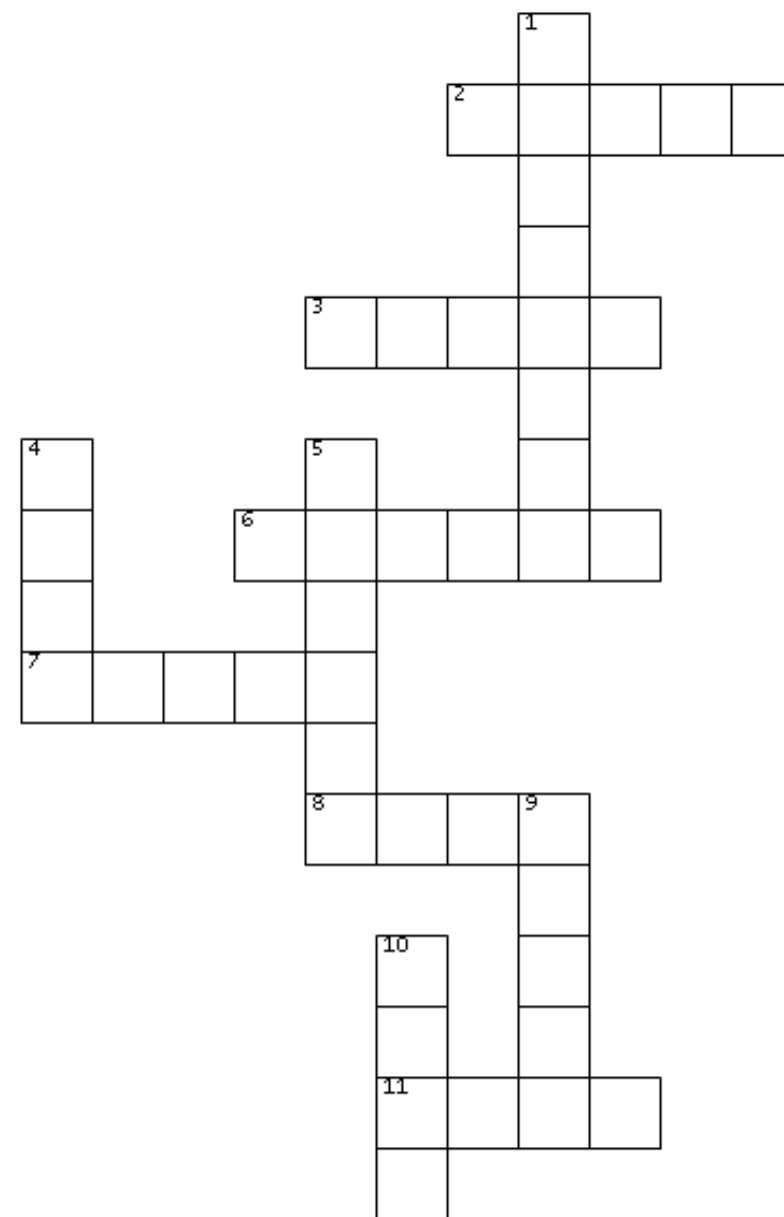
1. Using heavy paper, print out the black and white pieces at the bottom of this page.
2. Use markers, crayons or paint to color in the pieces or you can use gift wrap or decorative papers.
3. Cut out each piece.
4. Glue on mane and tail on the back of the horse body.
5. Attach legs with a brad through the body – one leg in front and one leg behind.



USING HEAVY PAPER, PRINT OUT THE PIECES OF THE HORSE

Horse Crossword Puzzle

BY OLIVIA & MELISSA KALEMBER



ACROSS

2. A designated space we ride in
3. Generic name for an equine
6. A three-beat gait
7. Horses use their nostrils to do this
8. Space between the ears
11. A type of jumping obstacle that uses two sets of rails

DOWN

1. A discipline that includes 20 meter circles
4. What horses listen with
5. A four-beat gait
9. An Activity where the horse is attached to the end of a line
10. A two-beat gait

KIDS

If you would like to contribute an article, drawing, poem, puzzle or recipe to be published in *Pony Time* contact us at: StableConnections.sb@gmail.com



EVENTS 2026

SEPTEMBER

September 2-6, 2026
Sonoma Horse Park Fall Classic I
 Petaluma, CA
 Lyn Nelson
lyn@sonomahorsepark.com

September 9-16, 2026
Advanced Equine Guided Education / Santa Rosa, CA
 Ariana Strozzi Mazzucchi
 707-338-9817

September 9-13, 2026
Sonoma Horse Park Fall Classic II
 Petaluma, CA
 Lyn Nelson
lyn@sonomahorsepark.com

September 26, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

September 27, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
 Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

OCTOBER

October 12-14, 2026
Conrad Schumacher Clinic at Kildarra Equestrian Center
 Santa Rosa, CA
 Jaki Hardy 707-536-5553

October 23-25, 2026
Freedom Cowgirl Retreat
 Santa Rosa, CA
 Ariana Strozzi Mazzucchi
 707-338-9817

October 25, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
 Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

October 28, 2026
Bit Clinic with Kim Gentry at Kildarra Equestrian Center
 Santa Rosa, CA
 Jaki Hardy 707-536-5553

October 31, 2026
Woodbridge Dressage Schooling Show / Petaluma, CA
woodbridge-farmdressage.com

NOVEMBER

November 7-8, 2026
Mike Osinski Clinic at Sanbar Dressage
 Petaluma, CA
sanbardressage.com

November 14-15, 2026
Jan Ebeling Clinic at Alko Equestrian Center
 Napa, CA
 Jane Ewer 707-249-0732

November 21-22, 2026
Chris Ellsworth Clinic
 All the King's Horses, Calistoga, CA
 Erin King 415-385-8354

November 22, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
 Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

DECEMBER

December 13, 2026
New Test Dressage Clinic at Kildarra Equestrian Center
 Santa Rosa, CA
 Marin Chapter CDS

December 13, 2026
Cavaletti Clinic at Woodbridge Farm / Petaluma, CA
 Erika Jansson 707-326-7612

SIGN UP NOW FOR THE 2027 BUSINESS FINDER

The only Equestrian Business Finder in the North Bay. Pricing increases every few months, so the sooner the better to sign up.
stableconnectionthepodcast.com/businessfinder

Ask Scout

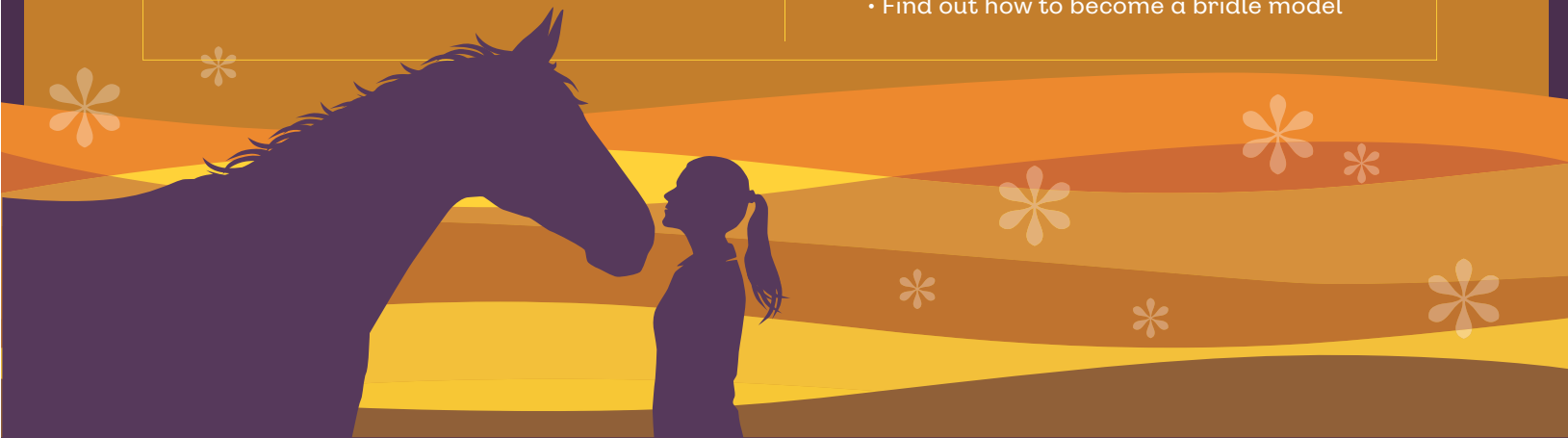
ADVICE STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSE'S MOUTH

YOUR NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

- Move up a level / jump higher
- Ride more to get fitter
- Try a new discipline
- Go to more shows and clinics
- Train with an Olympic Trainer for a month
- Enjoy the journey!

YOUR HORSE'S NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS

- Eat more grass!
- Act like a lunatic in the trailer so I don't have to go anywhere
- Hope for more "Let's just go for a trail ride" days
- Have Mom get another horse so I can work less (maybe even two more!)
- Find out how to become a bridle model



West Coast PEMF Team offers Pulsed ElectroMagnetic Fields (PEMF) to horses, humans, and small animals across Northern California

> INTRODUCING OUR TEAMMATE
KRISTEN BROWNING offering human and small animal sessions in Sonoma County

SHONNA BERK offers equine sessions in Sonoma, Marin & Napa Counties

RACHELE BERTOLI offers equine, human and small animal sessions in the East Bay

westcoastpemfteam.com 818-523-9710 (WE TRAVEL TO HORSE SHOWS UPON REQUEST)





HELLO FALL