



American Medical Equestrian Association
Safe Riders Foundation

American Medical Equestrian Association Safe Riders Foundation

Support for The Thinking Rider

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The criteria used to select a riding instructor by parents of children who ride, or by amateur riders may differ immensely. Parents tend to select a barn "where all the other kids go," perhaps due to recommendation of other parents, lack of knowledge of other facilities, or to make sure that their child has fun with their friends. Depending upon their reasons for riding, adults may look for a good relationship or "connection" with their instructor, a pleasurable, recreational experience and/or a results-driven riding outcome. None of these criteria for selection will ensure that the instructor is both competent and mindful of safety concerns. However, the qualities that make an instructor or program safe are not mutually exclusive from those that make it attractive and fun. At least three categories should be investigated when selecting a riding program: the facility (refer to Barn Safety Evaluation, page 4), the program, and the instructor. This article deals with issues related specifically to the instructor.

It is no longer as easy to evaluate an instructor as it once was. Gone are the days of retired cavalry personnel to whom riding instruction was a lifelong career, and who had

Selecting a Safe Riding Instructor

By Jan Dawson



learned to teach in a systematic fashion. Finding a competent, safe instructor requires some research. A customer must keep in mind that while a good instructor is usually a competent rider, the skills required to ride are completely different from the skills required to teach. By remembering *that one fact*, customers may avoid making a bad decision.

Therefore, the search for an instructor means looking for a person who trains riders, not

necessarily a person who trains horses. These two categories are frequently not the same. Certification may or may not be an indication of competence. Many experienced, competent instructors are not certified. Many certified instructors are not competent. A competent instructor should not only be able to answer the following list of questions but should answer them gladly and easily. He or she should also be happy to have a prospective customer

observe a few lessons. These questions may be asked during a first meeting or phone call. Be sure to schedule time to visit or speak with the instructor, rather than catching them on their way to a lesson and expecting them to drop everything to address your questions.

Questions for the Instructor:

1. "Do you use lesson plans which are adapted for each class or student?" Teaching is teaching, regardless of the subject matter or environment. Riding instruction is no different than classroom teaching, with the exception that when inexperienced people are mounted, an inefficient lesson can be unsafe or even dangerous.
2. "What is your experience and qualifications as a riding instructor?" The answer that you are looking for is NOT, "I've had horses all my life and I just love working with children." You want to hear about some formal training, or competition experience. Competition may not be the goal for everybody, but is the main way an instructor can get an independent opinion of his or her product. How do her students compare to the students of other instructors? There are many different forms

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SAFE RIDERS
FOUNDATION**

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MEDICAL EDITOR

Doris Bixby-Hammett, MD
CONSULTING EDITOR

Pat Hutson
Newsletter Design
pat_hutson@centurytel.net



MISSION STATEMENT

The American Medical Equestrian Association/Safe Riders Foundation is dedicated to the philosophy, principles and application of safety of people in equestrian activities. This purpose is achieved through education, research and resource.

- ▲ EDUCATION of health care professionals, organizational representatives and individuals, including an emphasis on public awareness;
- ▲ RESEARCH to better define injury patterns and risks, efficacy of safety measures and equipment, and assistance in equipment design;
- ▲ A RESOURCE of experience and expertise to be shared and utilized for the benefit of equestrian safety.

AMEA/SRF Vision

by Rusty Lowe, EMT-P, Executive Director, AMEA/SRF



"Watch out for the Sharks"

My 4-year-old son Russell and I were having a discussion the other day about going to the beach on vacation. He asked me what I would do if we were playing in the water and a shark attacked him. I replied that I would fight the shark to protect him. He became very upset and said, "Daddy, if the shark ate you I might not ever see you again!" I calmed him by saying that hopefully this would never happen. Nevertheless, this was a simple reminder that our actions do have a strong impact on others.

Recently, I responded (page 6) to Tricia Booker's editorial in the *Chronicle of the Horse* regarding the fatality of a young competitor at a Hunter/Jumper show. I expressed my desire for the new National Governing Body (NGB) to take safety issues more seriously than the current federation (USA Equestrian) does. As you can imagine, this was not a popular move, and some feathers were ruffled. My usual means of tackling problems is not to criticize and threaten, but to work together and assist with change. However, as I felt



strongly about this issue and was willing to "jump in the water with the sharks." Happily, change began to occur and will have a strong impact on the sport.

There is a movement within the existing federation to improve the medical response to serious accidents and fatalities, improve medical coverage and coordination at shows, and progress to improve rules requiring proper ASTM/SEI certified helmet usage, to name a few. I do not take full credit for these changes, although I am part of a team that has the best interests of equestrian sports in mind. Those who put their personal and financial interests before safety are becoming a smaller breed and less popular. Sometimes you can fight the "sharks" and win.

In addition, I have the personal commitment of David O'Connor, President Elect of the new NGB, to place safety at the forefront of the organization. Being a friend, I will take him at his word and look forward to an excellent working relationship between the Safety Committees of various disciplines, the AMEA/SRF, and others willing to work to make equestrian

sports safer. Teamwork will make a difference.

On another note, there are many exciting opportunities being made available to the AMEA/SRF. Potential corporate sponsorships, grants and memberships are increasing our possibilities to continue our research and prevention activities along with allowing our budget for assisting injured equestrians to grow. (More details to come, as they are available.) There are so many people to thank for their efforts to assist the AMEA/SRF. Although the list is too long to credit them personally, we extend thanks to each of them for being a part of our team.

Finally, our actions do have a strong impact on others. When we leave our loved ones to participate in an activity such as riding, we owe them the satisfaction of knowing that we are going to be as safe as possible. Please use common sense, proper safety protection, and take heed of past experiences when you ride. Set a good example for your peers and help them be safe.

Consider your actions and the potential impact on others. Even though you are literally not going to fight a shark, you don't want to disappoint anyone by not being seen again. Not bad advice, Russell. Thanks, buddy.

THANK YOU
for editorial assistance

Dr. Josie Trott, UVM
Post Doctoral Researcher

A Note From the President

Welcome to the AMEA/SRF Summer Newsletter.

First, as the new President of AMEA/SRF, I would like to thank Janet Friesen, MD, for all of her hard work as the President of the AMEA. Janet did an excellent job in keeping the AMEA on track. Earlier this year the Board of Directors of AMEA/SRF asked me to become your President, an honor I accepted. As with every new president, there will be a learning curve. With the assistance of the Board and our Executive Director, we all can help AMEA/SRF to continue to grow and educate the equestrian community regarding safety of the complete equestrian sport.

As for a little background

on myself: I was born, raised and educated in Boston, MA. I am a graduate of the U of Mass with additional degrees from the U of Miami and the U of Kentucky. I have been active in the equine industry all my life. I started my equine industry career as a Vet Tech at many of the racetracks on the east coast. I have continued in the industry as a Vet Supply salesperson, and was recruited into the Equine Insurance industry in 1983.

Since then, I have developed many Equine Insurance Programs throughout the years. I have written and spoken at many Equine Programs on safety and have an approved Equine Safety Continuing Education course for the In-

urance Industry. I am proud to hold my TD card for Dressage and Eventing on a regional base. I have officiated at the Atlanta Olympics and every major 3-Day event in the USA (Rolex, Fair Hill, and Fox Hall) as a FEI assistant steward. I am now serving on the USPC Safety Committee and the development committee of the Central Kentucky Riding for the Handicapped. Both of my daughters ride. Megan is a Young Rider and is in College at the U of Louisville. Katie is active in 4-H and will be going into the ninth grade at her school.

As we go forward, the AMEA/SRF vision will be one that will promote a positive im-



age for safety for horse and rider. We will work with all the resources available to us and educate the equine community on how safety should be a daily part of their equine life. Please feel free to contact me personally. I look forward in developing the AMEA/SRF with the help of each of you.

Kind regards,

Joe Carr

*President, American Medical Equestrian Association/Safe Riders Foundation
equinect@hotmail.com*

Selecting a Safe Riding Instructor *continued from page 1*

and levels of competition. You are looking for examples of experience that will have taught the instructor analytical skills that apply to riding, and later, to teaching. Many skilled instructors have taught under the supervision of someone else, and if the instructor has some form of certification, ask what that particular certification program involved. An instructor that has continued to pursue additional training and education will most likely possess discipline in his or her teaching. The education may be vocational, a formal internship with teaching responsibilities, or completion of some type of program (e.g. Pony Club "HA" or "A" rating). You are looking for training that fo-

cuses on safety and requires discipline, because to teach riding well, it requires organization and discipline.

3. If the instructor is certified, "what was the focus of your certification program, and what did you learn that you will teach me/my child?" This will also tell you if any of the training is still there. The answer should be in terms of using and teaching understandable skills. It should not be in terms of descriptions of riding, or in how the horse moves. The goal at this level is to learn to ride the horse with a soft, balanced seat as quickly as possible, lessening the time the rider is at risk due to his lack of balance and skill.

4. "What is your proce-

dure for teaching someone to ride?" Listen carefully to the answer. It should contain easily understood instructions, rather than descriptions of what riding "feels" or "looks" like, or what a rider should be able to do at the end. Be wary of answers that are discussions about "riding and its principles" rather than how this person plans to teach specific skills to another person in order for that person to be in balance with, and safely in control of, an animal 7 to 10 times larger than him or herself.

5. "What is your goal for your students?" This is where you as the customer must make a choice, as different instructors will have different goals. Some instructors will

have show ring expectations that may or may not carry with them valid, general riding skills outside the show ring. Some instructors will train a horse for the customer and teach the customer to compete on this horse. This is not, in my opinion, a particularly good way to begin, because it is not necessarily a reliable or the safest way to gain solid riding skills. In some cases, it may be questionable on safety grounds. Some instructors will state that their goal is to teach their students the basics of safe horsemanship including balanced seat riding; after which they can choose their discipline and choose to compete or not. These students

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CASE STUDY

Putting Educational Materials to the Test with a Barn Safety Evaluation

Introduction

The "Self-Guided Horse Facility Analysis" educational handbook was used to examine a local barn in order to test the level of validity, applicability and usefulness of the publication. The purpose was to identify likely areas that present safety hazards, specific to this particular barn; and to identify changes that could be made relatively easily to minimize the safety risks that are inherent in any horse-related activities. The handbook emphasizes that even if changes could not be made to make a facility safer, it is always possible to develop an appropriate protocol to prevent clients from being exposed to that particular risk. The reading and walk-through required time, thought, and planning but the effort was well worth the identification of and the reduction in potential accident risk. After conducting a barn

Josephine Trott, Ph.D.



walkthrough with the Self-Guided Horse Facility Analysis handbook in hand, I am confident that this tool can assist with identification of hazards and the development of preventative protocols in most barn situations.

Methods

An old barn that is currently being used as a boarding, breeding and riding lesson facility was chosen for the study. This barn was originally a cowshed for a dairy farm,

and was converted into the current horse facility over a decade ago. The self-guided horse facility handbook was read thoroughly, and the barn analysis checklist/questionnaire was answered during a walk-through.

Results and Discussion

Dr. Betsy Greene and Jan Dawson developed the "Self-Guided Horse Facility Analysis" handbook in collaboration with the Vermont Department of Agriculture and the Vermont

Horse Council, to assist owners and managers of horse barns to examine their facility for potential safety hazards. Prevention of accidents is the best way to ensure the safety of owners and users of horse facilities, and to prevent a lawsuit based on faulty action or judgment of those responsible for the facility. The handbook guides the user through all aspects of the establishment to facilitate identification of areas that are potentially hazardous and could leave the owner and/or manager legally liable in the event of an accident. Unfortunately, it is often cost prohibitive to make all the changes necessary to make a facility hazard-free, particularly old facilities that were not designed properly in the first place. However, improvements can always be made that do not necessarily cost a lot of money,

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Selecting a Safe Riding Instructor *continued from page 3*

will generally learn to ride competently. Other instructors will state their goal by saying, "I want to allow the student to reach whatever goal he or she wants to reach with horses." Be wary, as this kind of instructor may have no systematic program for teaching riding.

7. **"Who is your instructor or coach?"** If the instructor has stopped learning, she/he will lose her/his edge and may become careless. Instructors that consistently hone their own skills will be better teachers, because they will be

at the top of their game. In addition, all instructors should observe and study other, more advanced instructors. This does not necessarily mean an instructor of more advanced students, but rather, an instructor with better teaching technique.

8. **"Do you wear an ASTM/SEI helmet when you ride?"**

You want to know if the instructor will be a role model for your child.

If the answers to the first eight questions are satisfactory, make an appointment to

observe the instructor teaching in a similar situation in which you or your child expect to participate. By following these simple guidelines to selecting an instructor, you can ensure that you or your child will be receiving safe, competent instruction, thereby enhancing the pleasure of learning to ride. The next column will arm the parent or rider with questions and explanations to help determine if the instructor is prepared, skilled and organized when s/he is in the arena with students on horses.

Jan Dawson is an attorney and President of the American Association for Horsemanship Safety Inc. She is the author of *Teaching Safe Horsemanship*, and through AAHS, has conducted many clinics teaching safe riding by the *Secure Seat*sm method. Jan and her husband Dr. Bob Dawson (a law professor at the University of Texas) are long time friends of the AMEA/SRF and are responsible for maintaining our website and providing valuable support. For more information about AAHS, go to www.ameaonline.org and click on "links."

Putting Educational Materials to the Test with a Barn Safety Evaluation

time or labor.

Not all sections of the handbook were relevant to this particular facility. Of the sections that were, several areas were identified that could be easily addressed in order to minimize the risks associated with horse activities on this property. Several of the issues identified during the walk-through are listed by the following categories 1. Changeable (Limited Investment), 2. Facility Changes (Significant Investment), and 3. Behavioral Changes.

Changeable (Limited Investment)

- Storing machinery well away from all horse activities
- Not using farm machinery and tools during riding times
- Posting a sign to prohibit riding in the barn
- Initiating regular testing of fire extinguishers
- Latching the bottom of the sliding stall doors when a horse is in the stall
- Posting "No Smoking" signs
- Fitting protective covers on all outlets and switches
- Placing heavy-duty wire cages over unprotected light bulbs
- Providing tools for manure removal in wash stall
- Posting stable rules
- Writing a procedure manual for the daily barn activities
- Posting a protocol for horse handling and stall cleaning
- Posting guidelines for entrance of horses and/or people to indoor arena
- Posting directions to the facility by the phone

Facility Changes (Significant Investment)

- Protecting electrical wiring from horses (particularly wiring to electric fences)
- Installing smoke alarms
- Providing a non-skid rubber mat in the wash stall
- Hanging and routing a hose to feed from overhead in the wash stall
- Make separate rodent/bird/cat proof hay storage area (away from barn)
- Lessen the horse accessibility of the daily/weekly hay storage area

Behavioral Changes

- Providing adequate storage for tack and ensure it is returned to its proper location
- Cleaning and checking the school horse tack after each use
- Keeping records of tack and horse use
- Enforcing the rule that clutter is not left in the wash stall
- Enforcing proper storage of manure removal tools

The barn was converted from a cow barn, hence many of the eaves and beams are not 10-12' high. Surprisingly the horses have adapted to this, and do not often hit their heads, and it certainly makes them think twice before they throw their head up in the wash stall. However, it is a less than ideal situation, particularly with respect to potential cranial trauma that can adversely affect the athletic ability of a horse. Unfortunately, this issue could not be addressed without rebuilding the barn. The windows in

some of the stalls are glass, but are recessed and protected by bars. Nevertheless, ideally the glass should be replaced with plexiglass. This would not be cheap, and given that the windows are protected by bars, it probably need not be as high a priority as some other more easily addressed points that were mentioned previously. Finally, another problem that arises in winter is the inability to remove snow completely from the dirt/gravel parking area. Horses never have access to this area, so this presents a people safety issue only. Paving the parking area would be the only solution to prevent the parking area from becoming icy each winter, and this solution would be rather cost prohibitive.

Conclusions

Overall, given the less than ideal structure of the facility (which was predetermined by its original use), a good effort has been made to reduce the hazards in the barn. The manager does not accept children for lessons or to work in the barn, which significantly reduces potential hazards. However, a number of areas were identified that could be addressed with little monetary input and would significantly reduce the hazards associated with horse-related activities in this facility. Addressing these points would also significantly reduce the liability of the owner and manager in the event of an accident occurring in their barn.



Dr. Trott received a degree in Agricultural Science from University of Sydney (1995) and her PhD (1999) in Zoology and Molecular Biology from University of Melbourne. Following a postdoctoral position at the National Cancer Institute (1999-2001), she is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Vermont Dept. of Animal Science, researching basic lactation biology and breast cancer. Josie has been riding for 16 years, and worked on an Arabian Stud Farm/Riding School during her youth (age 13-22). Finally, she spent three months working as a groom for Manolo Mendez, in Australia, in 1999.

For more information on the "Self-Guided Horse Facility Analysis" handbook, contact Dr. Betsy Greene at Betsy.Greene@uvm.edu or 200A Terrill Hall, 570 Main Street, Burlington, VT 05405-0148.

Safety Should Become Second Nature

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When I went to compete in the Hunter Classic Spectacular in Wellington, Fla., I really didn't think about my own safety. Even though I hadn't regularly ridden or jumped due to the harsh winter weather in Virginia this season, I was most worried about missing a distance — not about falling or suffering an injury. My showing was indeed successful, but things could have turned out differently in the blink of an eye, as I was reminded on Saturday.

As I sat in the stands watching the junior hunter classes, two falls occurred almost simultaneously in two different rings, one at the Stadium Jumping facility and one at the adjacent Littlewood Farm. Sadly, Meggan Morency, who fell at Littlewood, died of her injuries. Callie Leone, who fell off in the International Arena field where I was watching, suffered a broken femur. I later found out that just 90 minutes earlier another junior rider had fallen and suffered severe head injuries, reportedly because her helmet fell off before she hit the ground. So in about a two-hour period, two helicopters and multiple ambulances were called to the two horse shows. *The Palm Beach Post* further explored Saturday's injuries in a Feb. 17 article and reported that five accidents requiring medical personnel occurred that day at those two shows.

We all know that riding horses is dangerous and that accidents will happen. But sometimes we become too complacent. As I stood at the ingate waiting to go in the ring on Friday, I watched a groom take off a horse's polo wraps. She crouched underneath the horse and even crawled under his belly to get to the wraps on the off side.

While she may have trusted that her horse wouldn't step on

her, I was standing right beside her on a 4-year-old. I hate to think about what could have happened to her if my young horse had spooked.

On Tuesday I hacked out two horses around the show grounds with Julie Coles, a fellow amateur competitor and horse show mother. As we walked, we chatted about showing, safety issues and children. While we strolled around, we began watching riders in the schooling rings and those preparing horses for the warm-up classes. It was amazing. Not only did we see adults without helmets, schooling on the flat and over fences, but we also saw juniors riding and jumping with harness straps unfastened. And in our informal poll, we figured fewer than half of the juniors we saw wore their harnesses tight

enough. Most hung down several inches, showing ample daylight. In a fall, an improperly fastened harness or an improperly fitted helmet can shift or completely fall off, causing severe head or facial injuries.

We adults need to set proper examples for our children through our own actions, and we need to educate them.



And it would be great if trainers took the initiative by not allowing their students on

their horses without properly fitted helmets and harnesses. ASTM/SEI-approved helmets are the safest available, but they're only effective if they're properly adjusted.

Since severe injuries in a short time period could happen any time and stress the medical resources available, it's time for show managers and USA Equestrian leaders to reconsider their medical response policy to be prepared for multiple traumatic accidents. Statistically speaking, there are more people than ever competing at horse shows, so more accidents are likely to happen.

Simply put, safety on and around horses needs to become second nature for everyone, not something we wish we'd remembered when it's too late.

Tricia Booker

RESPONSE

February 28, 2003

I would like to respond to Tricia Booker's editorial of February 28, 2003 and commend her for bringing to light the still ever present lack of safety at USA Equestrian recognized shows. How long do we still have to hear of tragic situations before everyone will listen to the simple message of safety? We have come a long way with regards to protective equipment, rules and medical care required at shows. But, we still have a long way to go and improve with the growth of the sport.

The safety committees of various organizations have for years have been warning the rule makers of the potential for disaster with research and recommendations of rules and precautions. Many of these recommendations have been ignored, shunned or ridiculed. Also, many show managers actively fight new legislation. Recently, a USA Equestrian Executive Committee member was overheard on an internet broadcast (<http://www.equestrian.org/media/webcasts/webcast-ec-1-30-2003.asp>) comparing equestrian sports to hockey and its lack of EMTs and ambulances standing by at their matches. She went on to say that a comment made by a member of the Safety Committee about equestrian shows being behind other sports with regards to medical care available was unnecessary and the recommendations were

Attitudes toward Equestrian Safety among North Carolinians

Results of the North Carolina Horse Council Rider 2001 Safety Survey

Linda Mansmann, R.N., Meredith Walker, MS,
Doris Bixby Hammett, M.D., Robert Mowery, Ph.D.

“overkill.” Need we even reasonably compare the two sports? Or, should we think about the poor choice of words and what happened two weeks later in Florida?

Until the Executive Committee, Board and Counsel of USA Equestrian listen to the informed, researched and well thought out recommendations of safety committees and concerns of competitors; we will still hear of tragic stories, critical debilitating injuries and loss of life. It is understood that not all accidents and deaths can be prevented. However, by allowing the investigation and research of these accidents and heeding the advice of dedicated committee members, officials and competitors, I believe we will see a change for the better.

I can only hope that the new National Governing Body will place a greater priority on safety within equestrian sports. Requiring properly fitted ASTM/SEI helmets with the harness secured for all competitors, reviewing the minimum requirements for EMS staff at recognized shows (with intense coordination at larger shows) and the initiation of a rapid response from the organization to fatalities, critical incidents and other mishaps would be a good start.

*Rusty Lowe, EMT-P
Equestrian Safety Consultant
Executive Director
American Medical
Equestrian Association/
Safe Riders Foundation
Birmingham, Alabama*

Introduction

A rider safety survey was developed to determine the attitudes of persons with horse related interests in North Carolina toward safety, and to serve as a needs assessment to guide the direction of the newly developed Riders Safety Program. Six hundred and twenty surveys were mailed to members of the North Carolina Horse Council along with the quarterly newsletter. The response rate was 35% with 218 surveys returned. This report will summarize and interpret the results.

Demographics

The respondents represented the three major geographic regions of North Carolina with the majority being from the Piedmont area (Table 1). In 1996, The North Carolina Equine Inventory reported 42% of the horse population was located in the Piedmont region¹. This area represents the larger cities, medical centers and universities in the state. There was good representation from a variety of breed organizations and riding disciplines (Table 2). Over half of the respondents indicated that they owned at least 3 horses, and approximately 80% had been involved with horses for longer than 10 years. Over 80% of the respondents spent from 2-10 hours per week with horses, indicating that they were primarily amateurs in their horse activity.

Table 1

NC Region Represented	#	%
Eastern	48	22.5%
Piedmont	135	63.4%
Western	30	14.1%

Table 2

Riding Discipline	#	%
Trail	143	65.6%
Pleasure	119	54.6%
Hunter Jumper	52	23.9%
Dressage	44	20.2%
Driving	24	11%
Combined Training	24	11%
Fox Hunting	14	6.4%
Polo	2	0.9%

Injury

Respondents were asked to report injuries in the past year. This data was recorded based on the diagnosis given by the respondent (Table 3). It is possible that the category head injury and “lost unconsciousness” were actually from the same incident. We have no data to suggest that head injury was neurological versus contusion or abrasion of the head. The study does suggest a lower incidence of head injury than found in NEISS data². Mounted and unmounted injuries (Table 4) correlate with NC NEISS data³. Surgery was required in 8.3% of reported cases, and stitches in 2.9%.

Table 3

Type of Injuries	#	%
Muscle sprain/strain	16	45.7%
Broken bones	7	20.5%
Head injury	5	14.3%
*Unconscious	4	11.4%
Stitches	1	2.9%

*Unconsciousness may be caused by head injury

Table 4

Mounted vs Unmounted Injuries		
Mounted	26	74.35%
Unmounted	9	25.7%

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Attitudes toward Equestrian Safety among North Carolinians *continued from page 7*



Phone with emergency contacts at University of Vermont stable.

—PHOTO BY DR. BETSY GREENE

Attitudes toward Safety

The survey indicated strong support of alcohol free trails (88.4%), wearing proper equipment such as shoes/boots and ASTM/SEI helmets with correctly fastened chin strap (78% and 71% respectively), and lessons from a certified riding instructor (62.4%). Respondents indicated that they had already taken measures to promote safety (or help to lessen the consequences of an accident) (Table 5), by having a phone accessible, a first aid kit, an emergency evacuation plan, and CPR certification (see table 5). Respondents (82%) also indicated that helmets were instrumental in preventing head injury, and 50.7% supported a helmet law.

Table 5

Safety Measures	#	%
Phone available on facility or mobile	204	94.9%
First aid kit	185	85. %
Emergency evacuation plan	105	52.2%
Helmets	160	82.5%
CPR certified	110	51.6%

Conclusion

The respondents reflect an experienced group of amateur “horse people” with conscientious attitudes toward safety. The majority of the group spends only 2-10 hours per week around horses, and this time could be spent either riding or taking care of horses. This number suggests that this group is not highly representative of individuals involved in high levels of equestrian competition. The study indicates that future programs should focus on areas such as barn safety, safety helmet promotional programs, CPR training and rider instructor certification to improve the already positive trend toward safe horsemanship in North Carolina.

Special thanks to Glenn T. Petty and Cindy Wadford and the members of the North Carolina Horse Council for their support and participation of this study. With thanks to Maureane Hoffman, MD, for her ideas about this survey and devotion to safe horsemanship.

¹ North Carolina Agricultural Statistics, 1996 North Carolina Equine Survey, Raleigh, North Carolina.

² Hammett, Doris Bixby, MD, Horse Related Deaths in North Carolina 1978-1999.

³ Hammett, Doris Bixby, MD, National Electronic Injury Surveillance System Consumer Product Safety Commission, North Carolina Horse Related Injuries 1980-2000.



Fire extinguishers at University of Vermont stable.

—PHOTO BY DR. BETSY GREENE



Elegant and Useful: A Side Saddle Primer

By Robin Brueckmann

Eileen F. had sustained a brain injury during a riding accident that left her affected by right-side hemiplegia. She enjoyed riding sidesaddle and went on to compete in open shows and competitions for riders with disabilities. Annie R. was affected with rheumatoid arthritis in both hips and wrists. She tried a side saddle because it gave her more support and she didn't have to spread her legs so far. Margie P. was 52 years old, and had been riding astride with a side walker and leader for several years. Childhood polio had left her trunk and extremities extremely weak. She was able to ride independently at the walk, but had to hold on to an arch in the front of her saddle at the trot, which meant that she was unable to steer the horse on her own. When she tried a sidesaddle, Margie liked the support that the saddle offered, but she was still unable to ride independently, as her right leg kept sliding off the front of the flap of the saddle. An adapted hook was devised for the saddle that allowed her to ride independently at the trot for the very first time. She became a Champion at the Rider with Disabilities events of the prestigious Devon Horse Show and a successful competitor in open side saddle shows. While riding in her side saddle, her disability became

invisible. These riders discovered a historical riding method that served their unique riding needs today. So, what exactly is side saddle?

In General:

The sidesaddle can be an elegant and useful addition to a therapeutic riding center. It was designed to provide great stability and security for ladies, when women were considered far weaker than men. It has two curving horns that support each thigh in a different way, giving great security to the rider. This security does not require strength from the rider, making it appropriate to use for riders who need such support. Safety is a primary concern when selecting and using a side saddle. Never entrust the safety of a rider to a saddle of uncertain integrity! Most sidesaddles are very old and must be evaluated by a knowledgeable saddle maker prior to use.

Fit for the Horse:

It is important that the saddle is comfortable to the horse. Horses with prominent withers can carry a sidesaddle far more easily than horses with flat withers. There is an extra girth, the balance girth, which goes from the back of the right side of the saddle to

the front of the left side of the saddle. This girth, set quite snug, keeps the saddle from listing to the left in use. It is necessary to accustom a horse to this unfamiliar feeling by turning him in small circles to the right and left.

Fit for the Rider:

Side saddles should have a pancake-flat seat. The upper horn curves; this curve should match the shape and length of the rider's right thigh. If it is set too far to the left, a common scenario, a towel can be wrapped around it to change the fit to the rider. This gives better support to the thigh. The lower horn, or leaping head, supports the left leg, and the stirrup is adjusted so that there is about a hand's width of space between the left thigh and the leaping head. This allows the rider some freedom of movement, but in the case of loss of balance, the rider can raise his or her left heel. This is the emergency grip, and it is precisely that which gives the security of the side saddle.

A Leg Up:

To mount, the rider is first assisted to an astride position. This gives the correct alignment to the seat bones and pelvis, which should remain square to the front. The rider then puts



Far left, and above: Adel Dukes, riding Grayson, at the National Horse Show, Wellington, Fla, Nov. 2002.

— PHOTOS BY VIRGINIA CAMARATTA

his or her right leg over the neck of the horse, around the upper horn, and places the left foot in the stirrup. The weight should be distributed more toward the right thigh to compensate for the asymmetrical leg position. The rider needs to keep the right shoulder back, to help maintain the square position to the front. The reins are held in a normal way, with each hand to one side of the right knee. The horse should be led to the right first, as that direction makes it easier for the rider to remember to stay square and balanced. The rider could also be instructed to hold the balance strap with the right hand to help with this position.

Benefits at a Glance:

The side saddle helps with elongation of the right side of the rider's trunk, and increases trunk stability and strength with continued practice. There are right-handed side saddles, although these are rare, which then encourage elongation of the left side of the trunk.

Side saddles can be adapted to the particular needs of individual riders. I have added a third support to the front of the flap of the saddle, to make it

Continued on page 10

accessible to riders who cannot keep the knees bent on their own. It's also possible to put a handhold on the right flap of the saddle, again to give more security to riders who have low tone in the trunk.

The feeling of elegance that comes from riding in the "saddle of Queens" gives riders a greater sense of self-esteem as they assume the role that seems to go with riding side-saddle.

For more information about sidesaddles and sidesaddle riding, contact the International Side Saddle Organization, 90 Cumberland Avenue, Estelle Manor NJ 08319, www.sidesaddle.com, or email at aside1@aol.com.

Robin Brueckmann has been an International Side Saddle Organization Judge/Instructor since 1978 and has competed in a side saddle through Second Level, becoming National Side Saddle Champion in 1987. Robin has been disabled with complications from reflex sympathetic dystrophy since 1994. She currently competes in USA Equestrian open dressage shows, and has represented the United States at the World Dressage Championships in Denmark and the Paralympics Games in Sydney. She and her horse Richmond hope to compete at the 2004 Paralympics in Athens. Robin is a USA Equestrian "S" dressage and "R" combined training judge and a technical delegate. She is the author of DRESSAGE IN A SIDE SADDLE and WHEN TWO ARE ONE. Contact Robin at Chiri302@aol.com

Getting Back into the "Side" Saddle: Therapeutic Riding

Marilyn Lanza, DNSc, ARNP, CS, FAAN

I had a very serious stroke at 52 years of age, and I was left with right-sided paralysis of my arm and leg. I was devastated, to put it mildly. After a lengthy time in a rehabilitation hospital, I came home. I still wanted to ride. I had ridden all my life, and I was determined to ride again.

Soon after my return home, I tried riding a quiet horse. I had to be lifted on and off, but I was able to walk by using just my left hand, "neck reining" in some circles. The trouble was with my right leg. It was extremely weak and the muscles contracted. In addition, my right buttock was much more sensitive than the left so I had to be careful of becoming too saddle sore. When riding "astride," my right leg contracted, often in about ten minutes, and it was hard to keep the right stirrup on my foot.

The suggestion was made for me to try side saddle, so I met with a side saddle instructor and I tried it on a large, gentle hunter. It felt strange but rather good. I did not have any knowledge or experience in side saddle riding. However, I felt considerably better at that time riding sidesaddle than riding astride. We found a used side saddle and had the manufacturer fit it to my horse.

The benefits of hippotherapy in a side saddle were both physical and emotional. My seat improved in the side saddle, mainly because my right leg was steadier from being placed around the horn. The emotional benefits from riding side saddle were as good, if not better than the physical benefits. I developed motivation, even though my improvement seemed very slow to me. However, two years after the stroke, my right leg has improved remarkably, and I can walk fairly normally (even without a brace or cane). The doctor initially told me this was impossible, but obviously, he was not familiar with the potentials of "hippotherapy." I am now riding astride much more comfortably at the walk and trot, and I am beginning to canter.

I would highly recommend the use of a side saddle for its therapeutic benefits. I am convinced that both new and experienced riders could benefit from riding side saddle to enhance their comfort, confidence and physical abilities. Especially during a time of medical crisis or while dealing with a disability, I believe that the physical and emotional benefits of riding "aside" can offer tremendous assistance and provide a positive outlook for any rider.

At this time, the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) does not have guidelines or standards that are specific to riding side saddle. Applicable NARHA core Program Standards would address the basic issues. For instance, as in any other piece of equipment, Mandatory Standard P14 would require that the tack be "safe, clean, and in good repair."

Stirrup requirements are addressed in Mandatory Standard P13. It is also essential that the instructor be familiar with the requirements of the equipment to ensure safety of the rider and comfort for the horse. The instructor will also need to have experience in the specialty if the fundamentals of the skill are being taught.

***Kitty Stalsburg
(NARHA Master Instructor and Immediate Past President)***

For more information, contact:

***Michael E. Kaufmann
Director of Education and Communication
North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA)
1-800-369-7433***

***MISSION STATEMENT:
"NARHA is a membership organization that fosters safe, professional, ethical and therapeutic equine activities through education, communication, standards and research for people with and without disabilities."***

S I D E L I N E S

BEWARE

Recently, we were made aware of Internet versions of first aid and CPR courses that allow you to purchase training and certification on line. The AMEA/SRF does not recommend training in first aid and CPR (or any medical training) that does not involve actual hands on instruction and practice with a certified, experienced instructor(s). In addition, the AMEA/SRF does not recommend that any equestrian organization requiring first aid/CPR training for instructor candidates, certification levels or any reason accept training from these sources. Please contact the American Red Cross, American Heart Association, or your local EMS for hands-on training.

E-MAIL ADDRESS CHANGE

Please note that due to the high volume of spam, the AMEA/SRF has had to change our e-mail address to ameasrf@equestriansafety.com. We apologize for the inconvenience, but this should allow us to better serve the equestrian community.

HELMETS

The AMEA/SRF strongly recommends that you wear a properly fitted ASTM/SEI certified helmet with the harness secured when mounted on a horse.

THANKS

Safe Rider's Foundation wishes to thank Rebecca Broussard for the donation of the full-page advertisement in the programs at "The Event at Rebecca Farms" and "Chronicle of the Horse Western Adult Team Championships at Rebecca Farms." We appreciate the support!

THANKS

AMEA/SRF will consider appropriate articles and photos for inclusion in the newsletter. Note: Articles are subject to editing for length and/or content. Photographs must be at least 3½" wide at a minimum of 200 dpi (in jpeg, tif, or eps format), and must include caption and photo credit.

Please submit material to:
Dr. Doris Bixby-Hammett
103 Surrey Road
Waynesville, NC 28786
dbhammett@charter.net

LATE NEWS

On July 7-8, 2003 in Lexington, Kentucky, the new national governing body (NGB) of equestrian sports will be formed as the United States Equestrian Foundation under the direction of President David O'Connor. During these initial meetings, the former United States Equestrian Team and USA Equestrian will finalize plans for their merger and adopt formal guidelines and rules. After these meetings it is expected for the new NGB to begin functioning in December 2003. The search for an Executive Director who will oversee day-to-day operations continues.

As mentioned previously, we are hopeful of a new NGB with a stronger emphasis on safety, empowering the safety committee to be a more vital part of the organization. The proposed new guidelines for the United States Equestrian Foundation state:

Section 22. Safety Committee. There shall be appointed by the President a Safety Committee composed of eleven (11) or more Senior Active Members. The President shall appoint a Chairman. This Committee shall hold at least two meetings annually and shall be responsible for regularly assessing the safety equipment used at competitions or that is commercially available as well as safety procedures applicable to U.S. Equestrian recognized competi-

tions. It shall also be the responsibility of this Committee to review the circumstances of injuries that occur at competitions to determine if steps can be taken in the future to eliminate or mitigate such injuries. The Committee shall make recommendations for rule changes to maintain and improve the safety of human and equine competitors at U.S. Equestrian recognized competitions and events. The greater of three or one-third of the members of the Safety Committee shall constitute a quorum.

Source: USA Equestrian Regulation Department

As you can see, this clearly states that the Safety Committee will have a vital responsibility to the organization with specific duties. Many members of the AMEA/SRF are active in current Safety Committees within their respective organizations and have dutifully served to work for the betterment of equestrian sports. We thank them for their efforts and look forward to their continued service.

The AMEA/SRF, as always, stands ready to assist the USEF in all of their efforts to improve safety within equestrian sports.

Rusty

Selecting a Safe Riding Instructor
AMEA/SRF Vision
President's Message
Barn Safety Evaluation:
Putting Educational
Materials to the Test
Safety Should Become
Second Nature
Attitudes Toward Equestrian Safety
Among North Carolinians
Elegant and Useful:
A Side Saddle Primer
Getting Back into the "Side" Saddle

INSIDE

Rusty Lowe, Executive Director
P.O. Box 130848
Birmingham, AL 35213-0848

**American Medical Equestrian Association
Safe Riders Foundation**



MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION



**American Medical
Equestrian Association
Safe Riders Foundation**

Rusty Lowe, Executive Director
P.O. Box 130848
Birmingham, AL 35213-0848
1-866-441-AMEA (2632)
ameasrf@equestriansafety.com
www.ameaonline.org

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NEW

RENEWAL

Enclosed:

Application for: Active Membership (Physicians) (\$100) _____
Associate Membership (Non-Physician) (\$ 50) _____
Junior Members (Students, Youth) (\$ 35) _____

Send Application and dues to:
**American Medical Equestrian Association
Safe Riders Foundation**
Rusty Lowe, Executive Director
P.O. Box 130848
Birmingham, AL 35213-0848