

December 2005 Newsletter

Amazing – one more Christmas is upon us and with it another wet, cold winter. Horse Council staff would like to take the time to wish everyone a safe and happy Christmas season filled with great rides and close friends. And just a reminder – while your horse may be snuggled down in a warm stall at night, many of the other barn inhabitants may not be so lucky. Cats, dogs and even the little birds who co-exist with our horses need water that does not freeze, as well as a shelter and beds for those who keep the barn free of mice and rats. So take the time to make your barn a great home for all.

One other issue that plagues us each year is the number of people who blanket their horses with blankets that are not totally waterproof and leave the horses standing outside day after day in that very same wet blanket. The staff receives calls daily from people who witness this abuse and request our help in dealing with the problem. There is very little we can do about this concern other than to remind everyone of their responsibility. It is better to not blanket at all than to leave a wet blanket on your horse. Waterproofing spray can be purchased at almost any store carrying camping supplies for about \$15.00.

Good news from Sport BC

Horse Council BC is one of 60 sport organizations within the BC sport program. It is a challenge for staff and our board to work within the perimeters of general sport concepts to ensure that we fit a recognized sport model. It is often said at the national level that equestrian sport is like fitting a square peg into a round hole – we just cannot fit a conventional sport model. But HCBC is not an organization that believes in the status quo and in saying that, we found numerous opportunities to meld our existing programs and initiatives into the Sport BC vision. What is the benefit you may well ask? To begin with increased recognition of our organization at various governmental levels, this in turn increases our profile for additional funding. Funding that we apply to our coaching program, funding for our athletes, financial support for clubs,

community participation in equestrian activities and almost everything we do. Financial benefits are not the only rewards but respect from other sport groups and additional lobbying power are very tangible benefits as well. With the upcoming winter Olympics, it is very important for those sports that fall under “summer” do not get lost in the process. Horse Council has committed to ensuring a growth of 20% participation in our sport by 2010 while expanding our reach to non-horse owning participants and grassroots development. This has been well received and applauded at the provincial level in BC and we are striving to bring our sport to the same status rank as hockey, soccer, alpine skiing and tennis – no mean feat but totally achievable. It will take every one of our members to become committed to this growth to make this a reality.

Some of the initiatives we hope to achieve with the additional funding we receive from Sport BC – more educational opportunities for all areas of the province, additional grant money available for clubs, enhanced coaching program to provide mentoring, the BC Trek program, a 2007 Equestrian Games for juniors and adult amateurs, better support of our competitions and inclusion into the high schools as a sport credit.

The US – Canada Border

It has once again come to our attention that horse people are trying to bring horses, tack and miscellaneous equipment in and out of Canada without declaring the true value. It cannot be stressed enough how detrimental this is to our industry as a whole as it not only creates tension for those honest people crossing the border but shows a clear lack of respect for the border personal. In just one week in November, three separate individuals tried to bring horses in from the US at the Osoyoos border crossing under false values – all three were caught and fined. One person could not afford the fine and left all the horses with the authorities. This is a very high price to pay for being dishonest. So please – no matter how tempting do not try to “sneak” that expensive horse past the authorities.

Competitive riders, drivers & vaulters – Rule Changes

Many of the sport disciplines are looking at rule changes for the next release of the Equine Canada rulebooks in 2007. You may not be aware of significant changes until it is too late to provide input so now is the time to get involved. Each discipline sets its own rules and combined effort sets the rules for the General Regulations section. If you are not aware of who to contact or what changes are in the air – please contact Kelly at the HCBC office at competition@hcbc.ca for more information.

Helmets for Juniors – A must now in BC competitions

At the recent Board of Directors meeting a motion was passed that all HCBC events and sanctioned competitions will require that Juniors (under 18 years of age) wear ASTM/SEI approved helmets. This rule supersedes all discipline rules with the exception of vaulting. All ten provinces discussed this issue and all agreed that for safety of our youth this must be instituted into each province.

Adults will be encouraged to set a good example by wearing helmets as well. Judges will not penalize riders or drivers for wearing helmets. Other sports have moved to this requirement over the years – for example hockey, cycling, alpine skiing and snowboarding all require helmets.

Hopefully over the years good horsemanship will far outweigh the need to “look good” in the show ring. This will then become the norm for riding every day. A head injury is not something to be scoffed at and the care required by family members for someone who has a traumatic head injury is huge and totally preventable.

Submission from Backcountry Horsemen

The North West Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen of B.C. is the northernmost chapter of this riding club in the province. In fact, we are one of only two chapters north of Salmon Arm! A quick look

at the map of B.C. only lets us imagine just how much back country riding there is in the upper 2/3 of the province. The North West Chapter has members living from Houston all the way to New Aiyansh in the Nass Valley. (Get that map out and have a look!) We have a diverse group of more than 70 members ranging from 10 years old right up to folks in their 70's. We work in the business, education, forestry, health, government, ranch and railroad sectors. Some of us are retirees who just won't slow down! Our four legged members are just as diverse as the people, ranging from great big mountain horses to the shaggy little donkey who accompanies us on many rides ~ much to the excitement of some of those great big mountain horses! Some of our members also ride rodeo, gymkhana, dressage, drill team and ranch work, but we all come together to share our passion for trail riding. We hold a number of larger group rides during the riding season, which in this area means April through October. We encourage our more experienced members to mentor our newcomers, introducing them to trails and offering tips and insights into the sport of riding trails. Our members are out throughout the year in small groups exploring and experiencing the fabulous riding we have here. Now, we don't just hibernate during the winter months. We get together for family sleigh rides and attend meetings where we learn skills and plan for the next season. Many of our hardier members ride right through the winter season, padding through snowy fields and forests under crisp blue northern skies. We hold regular monthly meetings, which include an educational topic as well as a chance to catch up with good friends over a cup of coffee once the business is done. Our meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month at the Smithers Secondary School from Fall until Spring and then are often held in conjunction with a group ride and potluck supper during the summer months.

We also take pride in community service with some recent examples being: hosting a Make A Wish Charity ride, raising money at Aldermere Days for a local seniors' housing project, cleaning up the Chapman Lake and Morin Lake forestry recreation sites, raising money for the Tsunami Relief and

continuing our maintenance of the Lyon Creek trail in the Babine Mountains. If Back Country trail riding appeals to you, have a look at our provincial website at www.bchorsemen.org . Call the chapter contact near you, or, if you are interested in starting a new chapter, contact our provincial president, Gord MacKenzie at 250 679-3999.

Equine Canada www.equinecanada.ca

We would like to bring your attention to a couple of items upcoming within the scope of Equine Canada:

1. Director At Large – every adult member of HCBC is entitled to vote for the EC Director at Large. To do this you must register by January 19th, 2006. Registration forms and further information can be found on the EC website

2. The EC Annual Convention and AGM will be held in Saint John, New Brunswick this year beginning on February 6th to the 12th. Horse Council will be sending a number of representatives to the convention, so if you have any concerns or issues you feel are significant enough to bring forward please contact the HCBC office.

Environmental Farm Plans

No time to attend a free workshop? The planners will now come straight to your farm without the need to attend a workshop. This will save you both time & money. All information provided to the EFP planner is held in strictest confidence and this program is open to all bona fide farmers. Contact Jennifer at HCBC for more information.

Christmas Marketplace

Our annual marketplace craft fair was a great success this year, due in part to the vision and help we received from Betty Parlee, the great weather and volunteers from the community. The traditional fair was expanded to include pony rides as a fundraiser for two local pony clubs, the local fire department's truck on display, live

nativity scene, Santa Claus who had over 100 children visit him and a herding duck demonstration coupled with over 60 vendors and educational sessions. Thanks to all of you who attended and made this day a success – See you next year !!

And last but not least – The HCBC website

Many of you have no doubt visited our new website. It is still very much under construction and will be for some time as this is a very timely and labour intensive task. Every HCBC staff member now realizes why webmaster and designers charge so much for the big websites. We ask that you bear with us through this transition period and helpful advice is always appreciated. The new forums will be much more professional and will have far greater capabilities than the old forums. An online directory for industry related websites will be completed in the new year as we are waiting on that component to be built by the website hosting company. The events calendar is also under development by Sportweb and they assure us that it will be available within the next couple of months. The on-line distance courses have created a number of challenges due to the fact that they will be password sensitive, require exam question feedback and participant tracking. The website host did not realize the full extent of what our courses entailed so we are working with 5 separate technology companies to bring these courses to your computer. Rest assured they are worth the wait.

For the competition organizers – your prize list can now be linked to the website as well as email contact information. For further info on this, contact Kelly at the HCBC office.

This is the last complimentary PPHJ you will receive as part of your HCBC membership. We encourage everyone to sign up for the same complimentary magazine for the low cost of just the postage. We will continue to provide our newsletter each month in the PPHJ as well as on our website. We would like to thank Kathy and her staff at Pacific and Prairie Horse for the support over the past years and look forward to our continuing relationship.

