



High Desert Horsemen  
 P.O. Box 2263  
 Dayton, NV 89403  
[www.hdhorsemen.org](http://www.hdhorsemen.org)

# HD Hoofprints

Volume 2 Issue 9  
 September 2006

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## Upcoming Events

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**Sep 23**—2nd Annual Autumn Horse Show, 11225 Silver Lane, Hamilton's Arena, Stagecoach. 9:00 a.m. Linda Mulkey 629-0817. Entry forms are on the website: [www.hdhorsemen.org](http://www.hdhorsemen.org)

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**Oct 7**—Washoe Lake State Park Ride. 10:00 a.m. Contact Bonnie Replogle at 882-6604 or Sheila Aerick at 246-0781.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Nov 4**—Pancake Breakfast and Ride/Drive. Breakfast 8:30—11:00 a.m. Ride/Drive begins at 11:30 a.m. 11080 Silver Lane. Contact Mandy Brinnand at 629-9696.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Nov 9**—General Membership and Board Meeting. 6:30 p.m. at the Pizza Factory in Silver Springs. Contact Margy Hamilton at 629-0807.

\*\*\*\*\*

**Nov 18**—De-Spooking 102. Conducted by Vince Pirozzi. 11225 Silver Lane, Hamilton's Arena. 9:00 a.m. \$10 members/ \$25 non-members. Contact Margy Hamilton at 629-0807.

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PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE REGULARLY FOR TIME AND DATE CHANGES. SOMETIMES THINGS CHANGE AND WE HAVE TO RESCHEDULE OR CANCEL.

[www.hdhorsemen.org](http://www.hdhorsemen.org)

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***We are taking nominations for Officers and Board members for 2007. If you would like to serve as an officer or board member, please contact Margy Hamilton at 629-0807.***

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## Classifieds

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MYLER BIT  
Harold Roy Miller

I am a cowboy poet and western songwriter.  
My sweet wife Diana is a reluctant reciter.  
I can usually coax her to get up on stage  
but it always costs me some kind of wage.

An inexpensive gift is the agreed-upon norm  
and then she'll cowgirl up and perform.  
She tends to pick some kind of bling  
like a western vest or a turquoise ring.

We had an engagement at the Gilded Spur  
and I wrote a brand new poem for her.  
I told her she needed some practice time  
to capture the poem's meter and rhyme.

I asked her what token gift she required  
or was there something special she desired.  
She stated "For this poem, I want a Myler bit  
or else I won't recite a word of it."

I was taken aback by this request  
and I said, "What? Honey, surely you jest!  
I know perfectly well it goes against your grain  
to use any implement that may cause pain."

I protested, "This could make a horse's mouth sore,  
so how about a sidepull or a soft hackamore?"  
But she stood firm and was totally undaunted.  
A Myler snaffle bit was what she wanted.

She explained. "The Myler comfort bit is made  
with a sweet iron mouthpiece that is copper inlaid.  
And this D-ring I want has independent side action,"  
she stated, with obvious horse knowledge satisfaction.

When she smiled at me with that Cheshire grin,  
I knew I was the one that would have to give in.  
My course of action became perfectly clear.  
If I was to further my poetry writing career.

So I went to the computer and got on line  
searching for a bit for this stubborn gal of mine.  
When she gets her mind set, I know she will not quit  
until she possesses that Myler snaffle bit.

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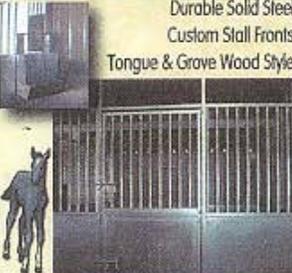
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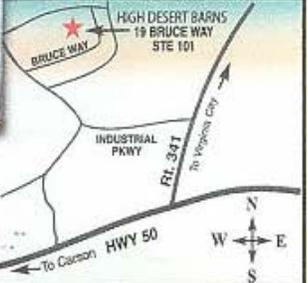


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## Why People Start Horses Too Young, Too Hard

By: Laura Phelps-Bell

I've been a professional trainer/instructor in the horse industry in many different disciplines, including competitive dressage to the upper levels, hunter/jumpers, western pleasure and western riding, trail trials and trail/pleasure riding, for over 30 years. Following are a few of my own opinions regarding starting horses too young, too hard and the negative repercussions that these horses can possibly suffer at a young age, or when they are in their teens: In my opinion, many people that are involved with horses, and this goes for hobbyists as well as professionals in the industry, are in it for themselves, not for the love, or the consideration, of the horses. When deciding when to start a young horse in mounted training, people need to be brutally honest with themselves and examine and determine what their motivation for starting a two or three-year-old horse in heavy under-saddle, mounted training is.

For some owners, the motivation is to be competitive in the reining, cutting, western pleasure or pre-green hunter futurities. Maybe it's because they want to send their 3 year old Warmblood stallion prospect to the 100 Day Testing and the horse must be able to free jump, jump under saddle, perform a dressage test and gallop a distance in a certain amount of time. And then of course, there is horse racing where the horses are racing heavily as two and three-year-olds. More and more, the big money futurities for performance horses are for three-year-olds, so in order to be competitive, these horses MUST be started as two-year-olds, and sometimes even when they are long-yearlings (18-24 months old). Because of this, many of these horses end up with bowed tendons, Navicular Syndrome, bone spavins, bone chips, stifle injuries, blown-out hocks, hairline fractures, arthritis, severe back problems, sprained necks and a myriad of other problems and conditions associated with stress and strain to young, developing bodies. Many horses will end up with debilitating problems at only four or five-years-old and already are receiving anti-inflammatory medications and/or painkillers on a daily basis in their feed, or in the form of injections. Some older horses, in their teens, will develop problems that can be traced directly back to being started too young and too hard. It will take 10 or so years for the stresses they experienced when younger to appear as problematic (this I learned from Dr. Robert Miller who was my vet in So. CA beginning in the mid-'70's).

Another motivation is the false assumption that if you don't "get to" these horses when they are very young, they will become difficult to start under saddle because they are getting bigger and stronger and also developing more "attitude" psychologically. Many people refer

to how difficult horses seem to be as four-year-olds, but I haven't experienced this at all in the hundreds of horses that I've started. This might sometimes be true if the horse has NOT BEEN HANDLED AT ALL, or had barely any handling to speak of, from the time of birth until under saddle training begins and had been pretty much left alone in a pasture. If the horse is brought in from pasture at four or five and someone tries to get them started immediately under saddle, with no ground-level training in place and no trust or understanding between horse and human in place, the horse will be understandably confused, scared and lacking trust and may "act-out", creating the illusion of being difficult because they were started late. In most of these cases, this is not the problem at all. The problem is in not receiving any, or hardly any, early ground-level training and developing mutually respectful and trusting relationships with humans from a young age. It's a fact that the younger the horse is, the easier they are to manipulate and intimidate from a psychological standpoint and also being not yet fully developed physically, they can also be "pushed-around" a little easier. However, an educated horseman does not train from a position of intimidation or strength; they instead train from a position of establishing a bond of mutual respect, trust and understanding with whatever horse they are interacting with. A wise horseman knows what each and every horse "needs" and applies the appropriate training for that individual horse. Once the correct foundation has been laid, you can start a horse at eight, ten or over 12 years old and still be completely successful with mounted training. A "true" horseman also develops a spiritual relationship with their horse and really knows and cares about how they are feeling.

Through the use of a systematic approach, technique and establishing mutual respect and trust and also establishing your "position" with the horse in your "herd-of-two", all things are possible. The age is not the huge factor in under saddle training, the previous history of training/handling, or not, and the type of relationships that the horse has had with humans previously are the critical factors to consider. Because of my systematic approach to training, I'm always puzzled why some people seem to be impressed by these "trainer challenges" where some trainers take a so-called unhandled 2 or 3 year old horse and have them saddled and ridden in 2 or 3 hours. What does that prove as I sure do know many non-professional and professional trainers (myself included) that could get a youngster saddled and ridden with minimal hassle in a few hours but where's the foundation for the training structure? There is no foundation by taking this route, so most everything unravels in a hurry without a foundation in training. To me, it's just

## Judged Obstacle Ride— September 2, 2006



Sheila Aerick, Diana Goodrick, Nancy Cuccato, Sandy



Bonnie Replogle, Tony Sumner, Kelli Lyon

The obstacle course was a great challenge to the participants. Champion Trail Horse Award went to Tony Sumner and Reserve Champion Award went to Aimee Sumner—talk about keeping it in the family! After the obstacle course, we all had lunch and went for a fun relaxing ride.



Aimee & Tony Sumner—Winners!

## Why People Start Horses Too Young, Too Hard (Continued)

showing off at the expense of the horses physical and mental well-being.

One other VERY BIG motivation for starting horses very young under saddle is the human's impatience and haste in wanting to "just get on and ride". As a species, humans do tend to be impatient and some people do want everything to happen NOW. Is this fair to the horse that is started in heavy, "serious" training at two-three years old? Absolutely not! Most parents of four or five-year-old children would not have their children participating at that young age in full-contact tackle football, or intensive gymnastic training.

There would be major concern that their child could perhaps be irreparably damaged physically (and mentally) from the stresses and rigors of these activities on young bodies and minds. The problem here is that human children "look" like children, whereas many young horses "look" mature on the outside, but in reality, they still only mature structurally at the same rate as a less mature looking horse for the most part. Appearances can be very deceiving in the case of horses!

I feel the same way about horses as I would about putting a human child through rigorous activities because I truly love them (even the ones who try to act unlovable) and horses sense when a human really cares about them and will respond to that caring and love. A horse that is devoted to their human will try-their-heart-out to accomplish that which they are asked to do. It's for this reason that humans must never forget the huge honor that is given to them by a horse that loves them. I don't ever want to be the cause of a horse being rendered with physical and/or psychological problems when they are young, or when they get into their teens, because I started them too hard, too young. I always ask myself "what would I do if this horse were my human child?" By asking this question, I always get the best answer; go slow, be patient and wait until the horse is developed adequately both mentally and physically for that which I will be asking them to do. My advice for people who are contemplating buying a young horse, but they are also

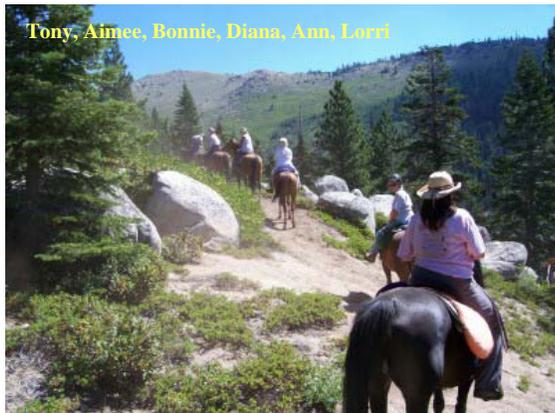
wanting to do "serious" riding sooner-rather-than-later, is to buy a horse that's a little older (and hopefully not started too young themselves) and spare a young horse the possible physical and mental negativity of being ridden too hard, too young.

In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with starting a horse lightly under saddle at two-three-years-old if they appear to be well-developed (even though NO horse develops completely skeletally until they are at least 4, with some horses vertebra not completing development until they are 8 years old!). However, when I say "start under saddle" at that age even with good muscular development in place, what I mean is to already have the leading, tying and basic handling aspects in place and then accustom them to the tack and equipment, moving with the equipment in place during leading, light lunging (no galloping in a circle!), and perhaps ponying and ground driving if you're so inclined when they are a mid-long two-year-old. Very light exercise, that's all. At three, get a rider up (someone lighter) and do a little light walking and maybe a few steps of trotting/jogging here-and-there, but no cantering/loping and absolutely no riding that will stress their joints such as jumping, rolling a horse back over their hocks, galloping relentlessly around in the round pen, etc. If a person can force themselves to wait, then I prefer to not start a horse in mounted under-saddle training until four. Horses should not be in "serious" training in my opinion until at least four at the earliest, if not five or six-years-old depending on their physical and mental development. By "serious", I mean the horse is beginning to be trained for their "career" in life, such as dressage, jumping, reining, cutting, endurance riding, pleasure trail riding, etc. Of course, all of the above are just my opinions for what they're worth!

After reading what I have to say on the subject of starting young horses under saddle from a trainer's perspective, I would hope that it will cause people to think long and hard before doing things that are not appropriate for the horses level of physical and/or mental development. After all, if we don't protect our horses, who will?

**Tahoe Ride  
August 5, 2006**

What a beautiful ride!



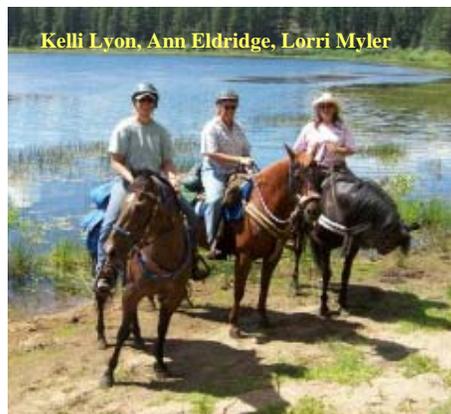
Tony, Aimee, Bonnie, Diana, Ann, Lorri



Marlette Lake



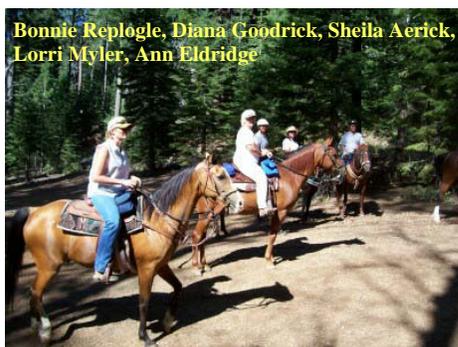
Sheila Aerick, Kelli Lyon



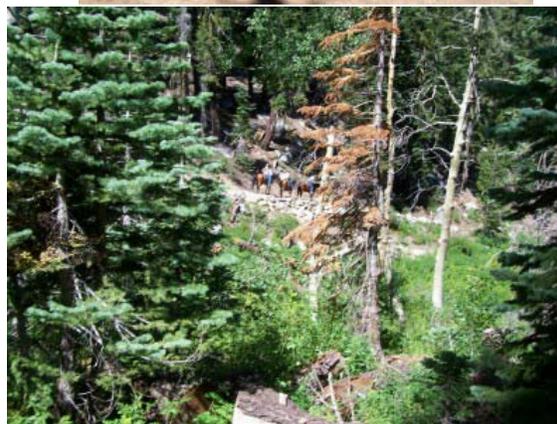
Kelli Lyon, Ann Eldridge, Lorri Myler



Aimee Sumner, Ann Eldridge, Tony Sumner



Bonnie Replögle, Diana Goodrick, Sheila Aerick,  
Lorri Myler, Ann Eldridge



**Ft Churchill Ride—August 26, 2006**



Vince Pirozzi, Linda Tarulli



Tony Sumner, Bonnie Replogle, Diana Goodrick, Vince Pirozzi, Linda Tarulli



Debbie Young, Vince Pirozzi, Linda Tarulli, Margy Hamilton



Bonnie Replogle, Diana Goodrick



Tony Sumner, Diana Goodrick, Debbie Young, Linda Tarulli, Vince Pirozzi, Aimee Sumner, Margy Hamilton

**Soda Lake Ride September 16, 2006**



Kelli Lyon, Theresa Panziera



Diane Goodrick, Bonnie Replogle, Tony & Aimee Sumner



Sheila Aerick, Margy Hamilton



Aimee & Tony Sumner, Bonnie Replogle, Diana Goodrick, Kelli Lyon, Theresa Panziera, Sheila Aerick, Margy Hamilton

