

# THE SILVER FIDDLE GAZETTE

Volume 2, Issue 1

*For the Love of the Horse*

Winter 2008

**S**ilver Fiddle Ranch is a stress-free home for horses where they can socialize and move freely for mental and physical health. We offer the best in clinics and workshops for discriminating horse people who want to enjoy their horses while continuing to learn all about horsemanship and horse keeping. Our goal is to provide horses and their owners an environment where you both can grow and develop to your fullest potential both mentally and physically while having a safe and fun experience together.

## SILVER FIDDLE RANCH



*For the Love of the Horse*

**LOLA BLEVINS**

Owner

**209.296.6936**

[lola@silverfiddleranch.com](mailto:lola@silverfiddleranch.com)

[www.silverfiddleranch.com](http://www.silverfiddleranch.com)

24401 SHAKE RIDGE ROAD  
VOLCANO, CA 95689

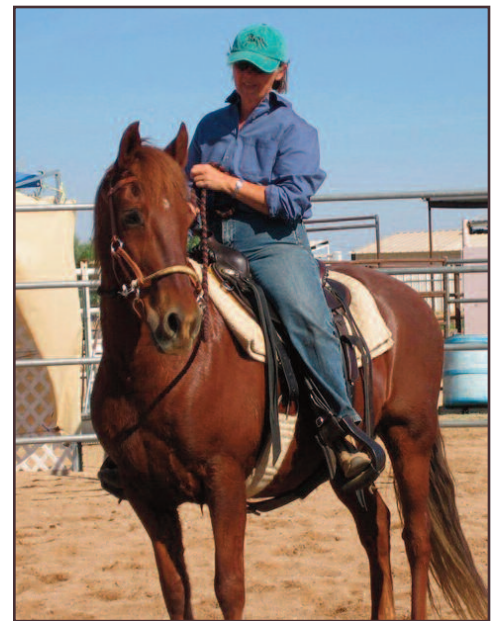
## THE JOURNEY CONTINUES...

**T**his past summer I've accumulated a number of mantras that I use to remind myself of how I want to feel when I'm working with my horses. These mantras are phrases that I often think on and that I believe have meaning both to me and my horses. A few of these you've probably heard before—maybe not—but anyway, here are a few that I ponder often:

- *Working in balance*
- *Directing a thought*
- *Trusting in patience*
- *Riding through softness*

Thinking about Briosa brings to mind the mantra "*working in balance.*" Briosa is happily moving freely on the trails now. For those of you who read my Spring/Summer 2007 *Gazette*, after riding with Harry Whitney in March, Briosa and I spent time with Ross and Michèle, and then Shea, in late spring. As summer came along, I took her to ride with Peggy Cummings. Briosa was a real trooper. Never worried, she was curious and showing me her willingness to want to work together. Peggy, as usual, was fantastic! Her coaching on body posture and balancing under saddle for both horse and rider is unsurpassed. A review for me was much needed and it set me off on a more balanced seat for my summer riding. When riding with Peggy, I discovered how important it is to be truly balanced for your horse to find his potential, and for you to stay safe when riding the trails. When I put myself off balance, like on my tailbone (one exercise Peggy had us do to discover the effects of good and poor balance), Briosa told me I was off balance by becoming off balance herself. This of course put me more off balance. She clearly mirrored my riding skills revealing how much I could improve to help the both of us. This reflective mantra on working in balance kept me thinking on this throughout the summer for all of my horses and client's horses.

Milagra (Briosa's mom) and I have had some revealing handling and riding experiences this summer, much in regard to "*directing her thoughts.*" Milagra is the kind of horse who absolutely and obviously tells you how she feels about the world. I've had her since she was a yearling, so we know each other well (she's ten this year). Sometimes she comes off as a real grouch which has in the past bothered me greatly! Placing a saddle pad on her back, she often would pin her ears and crinkle her nose in disgust. She's certainly telling me—no words needed—about how she feels with what I am going to do. For those who question, much body work and checks for soreness had revealed nothing wrong physically. We were dealing with a mental block or a patterned behavior where she was just not feeling good about things. It took me awhile to "get it" though. I'd so often think, "what a spoiled brat!" and then get angry and react to her frustration. Not a very productive way to handle the situation, for sure. After thinking hard on where her thought might be that is causing her such concern, I just keep in mind that she doesn't really need to



**Sancho and me learning patience.**

*continued on back page*

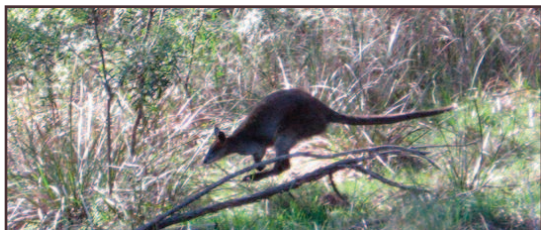
# WHAT'S NEW

## A Visit Down Under

In October, my husband Mike and I visited Ross and Michèle in Garfield, Australia. This is a little rural area outside of Melbourne in the beautiful state of Victoria. We had a grand time touring the area, delighting in watching the wild kangaroos and wallabies, the numerous and colorful parrots and flocks of cockatiels (both white and black!) who were cleaning up horse paddocks (not unlike our wild turkeys) and hiking the bush.

The sad part is we only had about 11 days to visit, but our gracious hosts helped us enjoy every minute we were there. While there I had time to enjoy watching and questioning Ross as he was working some horses for clients. Another day Michèle was giving a lesson to a young girl on her new pony and at the end of the lesson, they took their first ride outside of the arena. What a happy smile that little girl displayed to all! And her pony seemed pretty pleased about it as well!

Another full day was spent trimming feet—so I was of course, in my happiest moment! The wet ground (they were coming out of their winter down under) and lush pastures sure messed up those horses' feet. This was a vivid demonstration to me of



A 'roo leaps through the brush down under.

how feet can deteriorate and go bad with *too* much wet green grass! hadn't spent time helping Ross and Michèle out with their daily duties. The Australian tools for mucking the pasture took some time to get used to—a scoop and hoe!

## High Country Trails!

I finally made it up to the high country this past summer riding trails around Blue Lake with Lin and Sue Hokana—Fiddletown neighbors and good riding friends—along with, of course, my wonderful mare Milagra. We totally enjoyed our High Sierra experience together and I realized what a fantastic, level-headed, go-getter horse I have as a partner. More of this in 2008 with horse camping to boot!

## Barefoot Trims

*Hoof trimming added to my program:* It's been about three years since I seriously decided to learn more about my horse's feet and how to care for them to keep them healthy and sound. This summer I decided to make the commitment to formalize my training and to offer bare foot trimming to my clients. In September, I attended a week-long workshop with the American Association of Natural Hoof Care Practitioners (AANHCP) in Warrenton, Missouri. Jaime Jackson and a crew of hoof care, vet, and behavioral experts, and just plain knowledgeable people, filled the week with tons of information to help answer questions and encourage me in my hoof care business.

I continue to consult with Roger Budden who comes out monthly to help answer questions and keep me current on new happenings in the hoof care world. I'm also keeping up with Pete Ramey's work. Pete put out a 16-hour hoof care video this past summer packed full of the most recent knowledge and some very practical information on trimming for soundness and health (the video is available at [www.hoofrehab.com/underthehorse.htm](http://www.hoofrehab.com/underthehorse.htm)).



Gracie gets her feet trimmed.

I serve El Dorado, Calaveras and Amador counties. My trims include teaching you the barefoot model, how environment and nutrition affects soundness, and overall health for your horse. I will teach you how to maintain your horse's feet between trims to ensure a sound and happily moving horse. Prices are \$45 per trim. Call for price outside Amador County.

## Lessons and Training Programs

I've been helping a number of people and horses with basic horsemanship lessons and with help on training issues for their horses. What I find so often is that people are looking for ways to understand what their horse is feeling about the whole human-horse connection. Once we can get some of this communication going, what a difference it makes with riding and handling and just being happy together.

Lessons and training are available at Silver Fiddle Ranch or at your place. I will travel to El Dorado and Calaveras Counties and cover all of Amador County. My focus is on teaching you and your horse to be a functioning team. I can help you with horses who have problems trusting people or horses who are pushy and haven't been taught their boundaries around people. Lessons and/or training are \$50 an hour. Call for price outside Amador County.

## Our Facility

Horses can be stalled over-night for lessons, training and clinics.

### SERVICES AND CHARGES FOR OVERNIGHT STABLING:

- \$30 per night
- High quality grass hay for breakfast and dinner
- Daily stall and paddock cleaning
- Clean water
- Plain salt mineral blocks in all paddocks and pastures

### FACILITIES:

- 12 x 12 covered pipe stalls
- 12 x 16 in barn stall
- Three 12 X 50 paddocks for two horses per paddock
- Groomed mountain trails and logging roads on and off the property
- Groomed, all weather footing arena (120 X 60) and round pen (50 ft)
- Tying and wash area
- Shaded picnic areas

# NATURAL HORSE KEEPING: AN EQUINE LIFESTYLE



Those of you who know me know my commitment and passion about understanding the “whole horse.” So, I’m planning a series of essays on embracing a natural equine lifestyle. I’ll publish this in future *Gazette* issues as well as on my web site [www.silverfiddleranch.com](http://www.silverfiddleranch.com). In this essay, I will set the stage on how and why I got involved and what it means to me and my horses.

Since I’ve had horses, they have lived in a herd—although in a much smaller physical space before moving to Silver Fiddle Ranch. I’ve been pursuing what is often called “Natural Horsemanship” for many years. Three years ago, I became interested in the natural hoof care movement primarily because my barefoot horses were not doing as well as they had been before moving here. Their training was progressing as I was gaining more and better ideas on how I could help them in their learning. But their hoof health and their body conditions were not right, and I didn’t quite know if it was something about my horses or what I was doing. Finding a solution to what I was seeing was a necessity before embarking on serious training and trail riding—two aspects of having horses that I want to continue to enjoy. A horse who is moving improperly—or who hurts—is not a happy horse and is a horse who will break down before reaching any level of potential.

The most observable problem about my horses’ overall health was with their hoof health. Abscesses, under run heels, long toes, stumbling, moving in a way that was just “off” but with no clear picture of where that “offness” was coming from. Feedback from people I trust pointed to problems in their feet. This led me to learn about the natural barefoot movement and find resources that might lead me to a solution to their soundness issues. Along with many useful web sites for learning about barefoot hoof care, I found the American Association of Natural Hoof Care Practitioners (AANHCP) and The American Hoof Association (AHA), which are organizations for learning both the theoretical and practical aspects of natural hoof care.

Through bringing my horses feet back to soundness with the help of two natural hoof care practitioners, I learned some important lessons about barefoot trimming: that not all trimming methods are the same, and that the trim alone does not ensure a sound and healthy horse. I had not realized that soundness and health was a “Whole Horse” endeavor. Not just the feet, but diet, physical, emotional and spiritual health, along with creating and maintaining an environment where my horses can live for optimal overall health. Horse keeping and training for health is a complete equine lifestyle that includes natural barefoot trimming, natural horse keeping, feeding horses as naturally as possible, and handling and training them in a stress-free manner. This has turned into a huge endeavor but one which anyone who cares for horses can achieve.

The components of creating a natural lifestyle for your horse include balancing the care of their physical, emotional and mental needs along with their spiritual needs. These are areas that I will cover in detail in future essays and for now, suffice it to say there are any number of ways to go about it. I’ve found some ways that have worked for me to achieve some balance for my horses and these are what I will be looking forward to sharing. The following are some of the topics for future essays.

**Horse Keeping:** Our horses’ physical, mental and emotional needs are taken care of 24/7 by keeping our horses in a “paddock paradise.” Jaime Jackson, founder of the AANHCP, has studied the wild horse for decades. He is well regarded as an expert in the field of the wild horse foot. His book *Paddock Paradise* discusses the wild horse model and explains how you can go about recreating a territory for your horses to live in that will simulate the rich environment found in the wild. In future essays, I will go into the detail of how my paddock paradise is organized and how the planning and laying it out with the features described in Jaime’s book have resulted in positive changes in all of my horses’ feet and their overall health.

**Natural Hoof Care:** Natural hoof care is a hot topic these days. There are as many ways of trimming a horse’s foot as there are people doing the work—some real good, others very damaging. My horses have had both with some nasty results for their overall health but then finally positive results with a way that has honored my individual horse’s natural feet. Finding the right way—the way that accounts for the horse’s natural way of being—is the important fact for horse owners to understand. Doing no harm to the horse, not using invasive or shaping techniques to force the foot into a standard frame, and finding someone who can help you with regular trims or learning yourself how to trim your horses are areas that I will discuss in a future essay.

**Handling and Training:** For horses to be mentally and emotionally healthy, they need stimulation and socialization with both other horses (as in a paddock paradise) and with people. When horses are with people, they need to be handled in a way that honors their needs and acknowledges their intelligence. This means a training method that engages their mind in ways where learning is a pleasure, is non-forced, non-invasive and non-threatening. We want our horses’ lifestyle in training to be as stress-free as it is in their natural living environment. We do not want our training method to break our horses’ spirits. We want them to be with us, to be able to make decisions about what we are asking, and to know when those decisions work for the both of us. The people who are my teachers—Harry Whitney, Shea Stewart, Ross Jacobs, and Peggy Cummings—acknowledge the horse’s mind and spirit. No tricks, no gizmos and gadgets—just good clear communication and understanding that complements a natural equine lifestyle.

In my future essays I will enjoy helping you learn more about your horse and finding that balance between their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs and how this can take you to a new and better understanding of both yourself and your horse.



## 2008 CLINICS

LOOK FOR THE FOLLOWING  
CLINICS & WORKSHOPS IN 2008:

### **Shea Stewart**

Horsemanship Clinics, Lessons and Workshops  
(MONTHLY OR AS ARRANGED)

### **Ross Jacobs and Michèle Jedlicka**

Good Horsemanship Clinic  
(SPRING)

### **David Genadek**

About the Horse Saddle Fitting Clinic  
(SUMMER)

### **Karly Delano, DVM**

Amador County Veterinarian Services  
(SPRING OR SUMMER)

### **Dental Clinic with Amador County Veterinarian Services**

(SPRING)

### **Other topics:**

Hoof care workshops; body work workshops; SFR  
training for attention and other topics workshops;  
(DATES TBD)

## **New Riding Trails for Silver Fiddle Ranch**

This summer we did tons of work on our property; opening up more wonderful trails and areas for riding, restoring our pond, and adding two new springs with water troughs for horses and riders to rest and drink. We will continue to open up trails this winter and by summer 2008, we expect to have an extensive trail system taking you to the upper levels of our property for rides through scenic vistas and meadows. So if you have only a short time to ride, you'll be able to experience excellent trail riding at Silver Fiddle Ranch. Come often to help your horse stay in condition by riding our beautiful trails!

## **Weekly Ride Days!**

Weekly trail rides are arranged that take you from Silver Fiddle Ranch to the south Fork of the Cosumnes River which runs down below our property. Ride length depends on time, weather, and who is riding. Our rides are on well-maintained logging roads that run through our property and the neighboring land. The ride includes hills, curves and straight road for training, conditioning and just plain fun! The highlight is to cool off in the river, for both horse and rider! Easy trailer access and parking for day rides.

☞ PLEASE CALL BEFORE COMING BY FOR TRAIL RIDES!

## **A HORSEWOMAN'S JOURNEY** *continued from front page*

feel this way (after Ross drilled this into my head: how a horse feels can often be very obvious—look for that feeling! Rejoice when it is obvious!). I decided to not react to her but instead respond to her negative feelings by redirecting her thought to a different place as I was working around saddling. (As Shea says so often, just redirect her thought and she will go there.) Milagra is so responsive anyway that I simply directed her mind to look away in the opposite direction from where she was thinking (about me with a very nasty expression). By flicking my fingers at her focused eye, I sent her eyes and thought away from me. When she focused away as I asked her to do, to my surprise and joy, the nasty expression went away! This was a powerful message—get the horse's mind going where you want to go, or where you want them to think, and things can really change for the better! The great thing about this kind of work is that the horse remembers, and pretty soon issues with tacking up—or whatever bothers them—just kinda go away (but always make sure there isn't something wrong physically first!)

Progress with my gelding Sancho also took some positive turns in large part because I've learned to "trust in patience." I had a friend (Teresa) over from Nevada who wanted to take a ride. Theresa's a good hand with a horse—very soft and forgiving, but certain and direct with what she asks. Sancho is a horse who gets very (very) worried and when he's worried, getting his thought can be a huge challenge. I had Teresa try him out. Teresa was so patient with him—keeping him moving but stopping and getting a step back as soon as he would show worry. Or, she would redirect him via what some people call a

half-halt, which to me is just moving his hind quarters over getting an inside bend to his neck to slow his tempo and get a change in his thought from that. I sure was pleased that Teresa was following through on things that I had been working on, and with her patience she sure accomplished a lot! I learned from Teresa about trusting in patience and trusting in what I'm doing as my horse really does want to do what I'm asking—even in his most worried state. And Sancho is a great teacher for this! I ride him now with my "trust in patience" mantra in mind, and he responds in kind. More on Sancho next issue as I'm determined—with patience—to help my friend Sancho out in his life.

"Riding through softness" has found a home in my daily thinking and has been my clear and ever-present mantra taken from all who I ride with and from messages transmitted by all of my horses as well. When I ride in softness, my horses in turn respond in softness. What a beautiful feedback loop that is! Softness with Sancho changes him from a prancing washing machine trot/pace (yeah, he's been likened to a washing machine in the past) to a soft, yielding smooth paso llano. Softness with Milagra gives me flying lead changes and a gait as smooth as glass. Softness with Briosa puts her in a state of true bliss and balance where her beautiful, animated gaits shine through. Applying all of my mantras to my wonderful mustangs, Gracie and Isabella—who are progressing well on their ground work—have ensured that they will continue their training from a point of view that considers their inherent willingness to partner with a human. You just can't have anything better than that!