



# Central Plains Dressage Society Newsletter JANUARY-MARCH 2021

## *Fun Friendly Forward*

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You might have noticed (or not) that the Newsletter has been on vacation for several months. Starting with this issue, it will be published on a quarterly basis. The timely, important, or last minute information can be found on our webpage or our FaceBook page. Also, be sure you are on Annie Houchin's email list. She sends out information and news almost every week. The newsletter has a lag time and information can be outdated by the time it is published. Modern technology is so much more efficient!

We plan to include "member interest" articles and are actively soliciting them at this time for the next issue. Send pictures of your new horse, suggestions of new products, book reviews, your latest accomplishments, etc. All will be considered and used. If you're planning a clinic, send in the information. If you rode in a clinic, send in an article. If you jumped up a level this year, how did it go? PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE send in contributions!

Since show season is approaching, this issue has a lot of information about CPDS schooling and recognized shows. There are also clinics planned at Valley View in February.

Any suggestions?

*Lee Ann Alf*

Editor



### Links and Contacts

**Central Plains Dressage Society Web Page**

<https://www.centralplainsdressage.org/>

**CPDS Face Book Page**

<https://www.facebook.com/Centralplainsdressage>

**Show Information and Entries**

<https://www.horseshowconsulting.com/>

**Valley View Equestrian Center (clinics)**

<http://hesseldressage.com/>

**For Email CPDS News Blasts-Annie Houchin**

(jahouch@yahoo.com)

**For Newsletter Contributions-Lee Ann Alf**

(leeannalf@gmail.com)

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### USEF/USDF Recognized Shows (CPDS)

February 27-28 - Donna Richardson "S"

March 27-28 - Thomas Poulin "S"

### Clinics (CPDS)

March 29 - Thomas Poulin "S"

### West Area Schooling Show (CPDS)

(at Valley View unless noted)

January 23 - Janelle Williams

February 20 - Lurena Bell

March 13 - Robin Hessel

### Working Equitation Schooling Shows (CPDS)

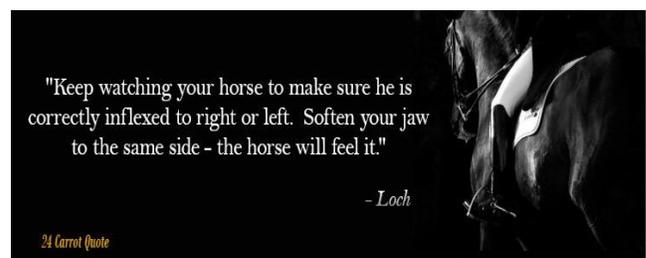
(at Valley View)

January 24 - Janelle Williams

February 21 - Tamera Mayo

March 14 - Robin Hessel

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24 Carrot Quote

## SHOW SEASON IS ALMOST HERE!!!!

CPDS invites you to join us for a great beginning to 2021!

### Upcoming Recognized Show Opportunities



Feb 27/28

Valley View Equestrian Center  
Donna Richardson "S"



March 27/28

Valley View Equestrian Center  
Thomas Poulin "S"



April 24/25

Valley View Equestrian Center  
Charlotte Trentleman "S"

### Upcoming Schooling Show Opportunities



January 23

Valley View Equestrian Center  
Janelle Williams



February 20

Valley View Equestrian Center  
Lurena Bell



March 13

Valley View Equestrian Center  
Robin Hessel

## Get ready, get set, let's show!

Dressage shows are a great place to show, every type of horse and rider is welcome.

Step 1: Prepare your horse. You need to find a dressage instructor. Someone who works well with you and your horse in lessons on a regular basis. Education is the number one most important part of Dressage. Find where you can make progress then stick with it the best you can. Work with your instructor to determine which test to challenge and when you will be ready.

Step 2: Education. Pay attention to not only practicing but volunteering at shows, reading, watching videos and auditing clinics. Volunteering will bring you along quickly in learning how the shows run and what to expect. It is easy, fun and deeply appreciated by the volunteer run club putting on the show. Dressage shows always need helpers. It is the best way to start.

Step 3: Take clinics. It is especially important to have help in learning dressage for your horse and yourself. It is a long process and fun when shared with others. When you are ready, add some clinics to make sure you and your horse can handle new environments and get good feedback from outside clinicians.

Step 4: Schooling shows. These vary from small to large. The larger ones are usually strict about following most of the same rules as the recognized shows. Choose your first one where your coach or an experienced friend can go with you and help you have a good day. Each schooling show will give you feedback on the scoresheet on how to improve for the next time you challenge the test. Schooling shows are exactly that. They are opportunities for you to school (improve) yourself and your horse.

Step 5: Memberships. Verify what memberships are required for you and your horse at the schooling show level. Work with your instructor to formulate goals for the year. Perhaps even qualifying for a championship if it is offered at the end of the year. CPDS offers fun Championships for both Schooling show level and Recognized Shows. Plan your calendar that you will have plenty opportunities to develop sufficient confidence at the level you expect to compete in by year end, especially if you are planning on a year-end championship show.

Step 6: Once the schooling shows are proving that you are confident and have success in your test then you may consider the Recognized shows. These are shows that are "recognized" by USDF and USEF, two more organizations you and your horse will need to join. These organizations provide larger competition following many more rules and a variety of competition and award programs. That is material for another article. For now, I hope you will take the time and consider your dressage education. From

practice and lessons to clinics and shows it is a fun way to enjoy your horse with like minded people who love their horses too. Let Central Plains Dressage Club be part of your journey! Its fun, friendly and always moving forward!



A NEW YEAR.....

A NEW LOOK.....

CPDS WEBSITE 2021



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DRESSAGE IN THE CENTRAL PLAINS OF OKLAHOMA

[Join Now](#)

#### Quick Links

[January 23 Schooling Show - Valley View](#)  
Janelle Williams

[February 20 Schooling Show - Valley View](#)  
Lurena Bell

[February 27/28 USEF/USDF - Valley View](#)  
Donna Richardson "S"

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

JOIN THE FUN





## Donna Richardson

Donna Richardson began in dressage after a successful career as a hunter jumper. She has proven herself a stellar athlete, named to the United States Equestrian Team in both 1999 and 2002 with her horse Jazzman. In 1999 she and Jazzman won team gold medals, and sixth individually at the Pan Am Games in Winnipeg, Canada. She is currently a USEF S judge, has lectured at the CDS Symposium and has written articles for Dressage Today and USDF Connection.

Following is an article by Donna....

### Donna Richardson Explains How to Handle The Dressage Test Gone Awry

Donna Richardson remembers the moment when one glaringly obvious pony kick saved her Grand Prix test. The San Diego based trainer was competing at the 1999 Pan American Games on her Dutch Warmblood, Jazzman. Under the relentless summer heat the horse began to fade, and Richardson knew she needed to do something as he lost momentum during what was arguably the most crucial test of their lives.

"He was tired, and it was a very hot and humid day. I could see him start to falter in the pirouette and if you lose the canter then you get a four. And I really, really wanted to get a good score so that I could go on and ride the freestyle - by then we had already secured the gold medal for the team so it was pretty much just going for individual placing at that point. I realized that my horse needed more gas so I gave him a little squeeze and that didn't do anything, so I took my legs off and give him a big old cowboy kick! He even grunted. But that was enough to get him to pick his legs up for two more strides to get out of the pirouette - that's all I asked."

Richardson's score hinged on one split second decision. Luckily, the gamble paid off and that cowboy kick helped secure the score she needed. By daring to risk one "unharmonious" moment the remainder of her test was salvaged. Not surprisingly, Richardson who has experience as both an international competitor and a "S" judge, believes a major correction or aid made mid-test is well worth it, so long as it's appropriate.

"It depends on whether the correction is a fair correction or whether it's abuse. If the horse takes off because he's spooking at something and the rider sits down and uses her core and get the horse to stop and then goes on, then of course as a judge you are going to take points off for the movement but you probably won't take it off in the rider score. However, if that same rider gets run away with, sticks her hands in the air, leans back, and sticks her feet out in front of her while sawing the heck out of the horse's mouth then, yes, you're going to lose points on the movement as well as the rider score! It's about appropriate correction."

Knowing when to make a correction though, and then having the guts to do it under the scrutiny of a judge can be easier said than done. Richardson says the tendency to freeze up is not at all uncommon in the dressage ring.

"It happens a lot when riders go off course. They get this deer in the headlights look instead of regrouping and just going over to the judge and asking where they should restart, and then going on as if that little mistake hadn't happened. A lot of people when they go off course get really freaked out and start to rush. Then one mistake gets compounded. People make a mistake and they let that ruin the rest of the test. In dressage you have to be totally in the moment. What's happening is happening and you're paying attention to it. It really makes you Zen."

Unfortunately, "Zen" isn't something you can just slip into like a pair of yoga pants. According to Richardson the gift of "being in the moment" is one that is honed over time.

"Everybody can get better at it. The more times you go down the centerline and the more focused you are in the moment I think the more that you can make quick corrections."



However, Richardson is a firm believer that to improve one's showing ability, not all practice needs to be done in the saddle.

"I think mental preparation is exceedingly important. Before I ride a test I think I've probably ridden that test 20 or 30 times in my mind that day. There's a couple of ways to do it. One is that you can just visualize the perfect ride, which is probably the most positive way to do it. If you think your horse might spook at the judge's box, stop, rewind to the halt - see your horse coming confidently through the corner, not being shy. The other way to do it is to go, 'Ok, maybe he's going to spook - what am I going to do?' Practice bending him away, maybe turning a little bit early, having a lot of inside leg and a nice long outside rein and run through scenario in your mind. You can run through the good ones - which I prefer to do - but if you're pretty sure a horse might have an issue then just run through what might happen and how you're going to handle it.

Your brain is powerful and your mind doesn't always know the difference. You can practice a lot more in your head than you can on a horse because the horse wears out, but your brain doesn't wear out that fast.

Richardson's other great secret is to school the tough stuff at home and not push her horse's training at shows. Between dodging other horses in the warmup and finding one's place of Zen, the competition environment is a challenge in itself.

"You should be riding a test that the horse thinks is easy. If you're schooling second level at home and he's really struggling still with the haunches in and the shoulder in then you shouldn't really be showing that. The horse should really go to a show and think 'oh this is so easy, I really like showing because I don't have to work as hard as I do at home!'. So the first thing is to make the horse really, really comfortable with the movements. This goes for the rider too. And if you ride the horse a little bit differently at the show that's not unexpected. Maybe at home you're a little bit braver and ask for a bit more in your lengthenings, but if you feel him coming out of the corner and he's a little tight in the back and you know if you push as hard as you push at home then he might get irregular or break into the canter then of course you play it safe and save the seven or eight for another day. So there is such a thing as test riding. It's not completely the same as you ride at home. It should always be easy for the horse - until you get to Grand Prix and then there's no more easy!"

When "easy" goes awry though Richardson says "the secret is not to lose your composure".

"Regroup as quickly as you can. If it involves coming back to the walk, regrouping and taking an error, that's better than forging on with the horse inverted and not paying attention to you. Get your horse back with you, that's the most important thing. If you're riding confidently and the horse trips and he does as well as he can then great, and if someone else scores better I think, 'well more power to them'. You still achieved your goal by being correct and kind to your horse, and he will reward you next time you go out. The score in my opinion is never as important as the good riding."



# Tom Poulin

## — Pioneer in American Dressage

By Doris Degner-Foster



Tom discussing a point during a mounted session.

**T**he elegance of dressage, especially at the higher levels, is often called equine ballet.

Not surprisingly, the art of ballet actually played a pivotal role in the development of dressage in America.

In the early 1960s, Tom Poulin, a pioneer in developing modern dressage and a founding member of the U.S. Dressage Federation, invited ballet master Robert Thibodeau to his Hillside Farms riding academy in his home state of Maine. "I asked Robert to come and watch my horses and he said, 'Your horses look great but you look terrible. You have to

come to the studio and start working,'" Tom smiled as he remembered. "So I worked there six years in the studio, never doing [real] ballet but doing the exercises to make myself more aware of my body alignment and control so that I'd become a more elegant and effective rider."

An FEI rider and trainer, Tom is an "S" rated judge and an "L" program instructor. His experience teaching and judging dressage over four decades, around the world at all levels and on all types of horses, is evident in his approach to training and teaching today; Tom can quickly assess both horse and rider to

pinpoint problems that keep them from reaching their full potential. He has said, "If you understand how your body works and learn how to move like a dancer, you will go with the motion. You will no longer be a porcelain figure sitting stiffly upright. You will become alive and allow your horse to move instead of impeding him."

### They Began by Switching Places

While Tom came from the barn to the studio, the reverse happened with



**Tom working with Cathy on a piaffe.**

Robert. The ballet master ventured out to Tom's farm to take riding lessons so that he'd know firsthand just what muscles were needed for the different dressage movements. He and Tom discovered common ground in their respective areas of expertise, and that learning about the muscular control and body alignment of the dancer helped riders become more responsive and in better control. "Someone who appreciates ballet will immediately recognize the beauty of dressage," Tom said, citing as example an early chairman of the America Dressage Institute, Lincoln Kirstein, who was also

director of the New York City Ballet. Lincoln brought George Balanchine to America and together they founded the New York City Ballet.

Tom was vice president and director of instruction of an earlier organization founded in the 1960s called the American Dressage Institute. Original members of the ADI included such notable individuals as Major General Jonathan Burton, Eventing Chef D' Equipe Jack LeGoff, Dr. Max Gahwyler and Margarita (Miggie) Serrell.

Tom's brother Michael Poulin and visiting instructors from the American

Dressage Institute trained some of the institute's horses at the Poulin family's Hillside Farm using these new techniques of body control and balance. Michael was initially hesitant to adopt the methods. "Of course there would be resistance. Who would go to a [dance] studio to learn to ride? That's kind of crazy, right?" Tom admitted. "My logical answer was, 'If you can't control your body, how are you going to control a 1,200 or 1,400-pound horse?' If you don't have body alignment, control, and know where your body is and give coordinated aids, how are you going to be able to control this beautiful animal that is



**Tom is happy to be riding again.**  
*Photo courtesy of Tom Poulin*

under you?"

"It wasn't easy to get Michael involved, but once he did he became very good," Tom said of his brother. Michael trained and rode two horses in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, winning team bronze with his longtime student Carol Lavell. His students have competed successfully in the Pan Am Games and Olympics. He's now on the board of the USDF and travels as a coach and FEI "I" judge. Michael's two daughters, Gwen and Katherine, have both competed at Grand Prix. Katherine was on the gold medal winning team at the Pan American Games in Rio de Janeiro in 2007. "Michael and his family are a complement to the Poulin family," Tom said.

### **Organizing the Concepts of the Program**

Tom's students soon benefitted from the new program. "We'd have them work in the studio under Robert's tutelage and then we'd put them on the lunge and use similar language. We wouldn't say 'sit up straight,' we'd just say 'lift' and they knew exactly how to lift [their upper body] because we had accomplished these

exercises in the studio," Tom explained. "Then they'd have a riding lesson at the American Dressage Institute." The intense work was practiced daily and lasted at least eight hours.

"It's a logical order to learn how to control your body in the studio without the horse, how to move and align your body and feel the differences in your weight distribution: the elevation of your upper chest, the lifting, without tension," Tom explained. "Then you can transport that to the next session, which would be on the lunge line. You can use exactly the same terms. On the horse it could be a little bit different but it all worked out to produce an elegant and effective rider."

After seven years of perfecting their technique of adapting the muscular control and body alignment exercises of a dancer to the dressage rider, Tom and Robert formalized their method into a six-week course. It was taught during summer 1973 as part of a series of seminars sponsored by the American Dressage Institute at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. ADI founder and President Margarita (Miggie) Serrell helped organize the course and later referred back to Tom and Robert's method

in her book on dressage fundamentals, *"Free, Forward and Straight,"* which was published in 1991.

### **Influencing Other Riders and Instructors**

Recently, Tom spoke with excitement about a long day of judging FEI competition at the Wellington Classic Dressage, the kickoff show for 2015. "This is the best collection of horses I've ever judged in Wellington," he said. "You name the names, they were here! Some were my teachers and they're still riding and doing it the right way."

In addition to his busy schedule judging and conducting clinics throughout the U.S., Tom is resident trainer at the Pine Knoll Center for Integrated Horsemanship in Lexington, Kentucky, where he's introducing his earlier concepts to aspiring riders. The Center's holistic approach to educational programs that are designed to optimize the well-being and performance of both horse and rider is an ideal fit for Tom's philosophies. He's scheduled to teach several unmounted Body Awareness seminars and riding clinics at the center this spring.

The body awareness seminars take place in a dance studio atmosphere with mirrors to aid students in their balance, posture and alignment. These sessions are followed by lunge line and riding lessons in the dressage ring where riders can apply the lessons learned in the studio.

Tom points out the importance of the system of proper body alignment and control so that the horse, now working in partnership with the rider, can move freely and perform with happiness in his work. "Dressage is the most difficult sport in the world," Tom said, "To bring two animals together — one supposedly rational, the other a huge, wonderful gift from nature, from God — and we take his gaits and we augment them into something that's brilliant. You can't have brilliance without the augmentation of these gaits and you can't have brilliance through roughness; it must come from a partner that's coordinated and willing to work with this wonderful animal that God has given us."

Fostering clear communication between horse and rider is a passion of Tom's. "Many horses have lost their brilliance because we've killed the spirit in the horse. We've made them a robot; they move shoulder in, they do half pass, but they can't be brilliant when you subdue

the brilliance," Tom warns. "That means you subdue the spirit of the horse so the brilliance is slowly pushed down. A good trainer, a sensitive trainer, can bring that back out in a horse, but brilliance should never be lost in dressage or it's not dressage."

Preparing the horse to succeed by nurturing his spirit through clear communication and orderly steps in training, and preparing the rider with the knowledge of body mechanics and balance, sets both up for success. "How do you add brilliance?" Tom asked. "Working together! Dancing together! That's the concept."

For more information, visit [www.pineknollfarm.com](http://www.pineknollfarm.com) and [www.equestrianlifestylesolutions.com](http://www.equestrianlifestylesolutions.com) 

*Photos courtesy of Pine Knoll Farm, unless noted otherwise*

*About the writer: Doris Degner-Foster rides with Harvard Fox Hounds when she isn't interviewing interesting individuals in the horse sport. She also writes fiction and is working on a middle-grade mystery series and a mainstream murder mystery where a horse strangely appears in different people's lives to help them through a crisis. Look for her blog:*



**Top: Tom training in Germany during the 1960s**

**Bottom: Tom Poulin**



## Charlotte Trentelman, “S”



Charlotte Trentelman is a USEF “S” Dressage judge who has competed through Grand Prix in Dressage and the Advanced Level of Combined Driving with multiple breeds. She served as USDF Region 3’s Director for two terms and currently chairs USDF’s Historical Committee. She is also a “R” Western Dressage Judge. She was one of the original show managers on the Florida Circuit and served as a local organizer for the USDF National Symposium in Orlando, Florida.

A believer in being well-rounded, she has also been a breeder, instructor, and Technical Delegate. She has organized L Programs and USEF Judging programs. Charlotte and her husband, Chris, own Rebel Ridge Farm, a teaching and training facility which has hosted many local, national, and international clinicians, near Ocala, Florida.

From Dressage Today....

Nothing can replace solid basics when you want to achieve high scores and place well in your classes. However, judges do become frustrated when they see riders who lose points on small things. A lot of points are lost because the riders don’t understand bending and straightness. Here’s an example: A rider (in any level) comes smoothly down the centerline, makes a quiet straight halt, but does not make a straight transition out of the halt. She will probably lose a point from whatever the judge has been considering. Many times this happens because the rider is preparing to turn the horse at C but forgets to support or frame the horse with the outside rein and leg. This causes the horse to bulge and drift to the outside.

When riders don’t support their mounts on the outside aids upon making circles, turning corners and performing lateral movements, balance becomes an issue. The comments (which usually don’t make over a 6, if that) are usually, “Neck over-positioned,” “falls to inside shoulder,” “haunches fall” or in shoulder- in “too much neck bend.” In fact, overbending, which usually is shown through the neck, stops the horse from sending energy from the hindquarters (the engine) over the topline and into connection. To show a better bend from a 10-meter half circle to another on the centerline, you need to have a brief moment of straightness on the centerline. If you don’t have that, your figures will not be correct half circles.

The leg yielding sequence in the new First Level, Test 3, appears to be difficult for riders (This sequence involves a leg yield from K to X, followed by a 10-meter circle left, a 10-meter circle right and a leg yield from X to H. A total of three scores are given). Riders often do not reach X and support their horses on the outside aids as they start the first circle of the figure eight. This makes the circle lose roundness. Both circles will then not be equal size. It is very important to reach X and be straight before starting the first circle, the second circle and the final leg yield (especially the final leg yield). By keeping the neck straighter in the leg yield and not allowing the horse to over-bend away from the direction you are moving, you’ll have a better chance of making the centerline just before X.

In addition to performing movements with better balance, I can also think of three instances when riders routinely lose a good score:

1. If your horse picks up the wrong lead, fix it as soon as possible by going back to the gait from which you made the transition. Taking more time may bring you into the geography of the next movement and you'll get two bad scores, rather than one. Asking for a flying change at this point rarely works well.

2. Teach your horse to accept your leg and leg aids at the walk. At the lower levels I see horses successfully teaching their riders to take their leg off in the walk by jiggling. When this happens, keep your leg on while you bring the horse back to the walk. Then continue to apply aids for a marching, reaching walk (by giving light and quick leg aids rather than tight and restricting ones). The seat should not be overused. When you make your transition back to a medium walk, you lose points if your horse stiffens to the connection. Again, he must accept the leg aid to keep the rhythm smooth and forward. In your schooling, don't be afraid that the horse will make a mistake. Use the opportunity to teach that the leg doesn't always mean an upward transition from the walk. Don't forget to ride with accuracy from letter to letter.

3. It's better to make pirouettes or half turns a little larger and keep the rhythm of the gait than to try to make them too small and get stuck. A smarter rider thinks forward, even in the pirouettes.

It really depends on your riding experience as to whether or not any of these points are an easy adjustment. In my opinion, your hours of practice, training and riding education will make most tasks easier.

Charlotte Trentelman is a U.S. Equestrian Federation (USEF) "S" dressage judge who has competed through Grand Prix. A breeder of Holsteiners, she currently organizes a U.S. Dressage Federation (USDF) "L" Education Program for her local club. She and her husband, Chris, run Rebel Ridge Farm in Anthony, Florida ([rebelridge.net](http://rebelridge.net)).



## SCHOOLING SHOW DRESSAGE JUDGE BIOS



Janelle Williams – January 23

Janelle has started many horses from ground up and has trained three horses to the FEI level in dressage earning the USDF bronze and silver medals and is currently seeking the final score for her gold medal. Janelle has won multiple USDF yearend awards. She loves working with young horses.



Lurena Bell – February 20

Lurena has earned USDF Gold, Silver, and Bronze medals and won numerous Region 9 Championships ranging from training through Grand Prix. She has competed on a variety of breeds of horses. Lurena Bell has been short listed twice for the U.S.E.T. and long listed 5 times. She has competed at the North American Dressage Championships in Montreal and was part of the Gold & Bronze Medal Teams at U.S. Olympic Festivals.



Robin Hessel – March 13

Robin Hessel is a United States Dressage Federation (USDF) Bronze, Silver and Gold Medalist. She is a dressage trainer and instructor at Valley View Equestrian Center in Stillwater, OK where she works with all breeds of horses. She graduated with distinction from the USDF "L" Judging program. Robin has won multiple USDF yearend awards. Robin has a passion for teaching and developing rider and horse.



Having worked in the feed industry for nearly 10 years, and a bachelors degree in animal science I've had many questions asked of me about equine nutrition. But there is usually a common theme of questions this time of year. With spring in the air and things warming up, horses' hair is shedding, and we are on the verge of having those nice green pastures again (weather permitting). This time

of year brings people into our feed store (Cook Feed and Outdoor) in mass because they've decided to start riding their horse again after having the winter off. When they go out to ride, however, they realize that their horse has shed their winter coat and not quite as fat as he used to be, and as a matter of fact he's skinny and needs weight put on. This is such a common story at this time of year, maybe because with the wind chill temperatures in Oklahoma we are guilty of sprinting to the pasture throwing some hay and feed and running back inside and tend to not look at our horses very close. Or maybe it's because that thick winter coat starts to shed and we realize those rib bones weren't showing just a few months ago. Whatever the case, there are a few tricks to get that beloved horse of yours back on track in no time at all.

### **Should I feed more protein or fat?**

The "old school" way of thought for helping a horse gain weight is modify the feed you feed them from a 12% protein to a 14% and you should be good. The problem first and foremost with that, is forage should be 80% of the horses diet. Forage can be in two different forms- in the pasture grazing or fed through a source of hay. So, if forage is 80% of the diet it would be what you should check first BEFORE you switch feeds. There are multiple ways to test forage (most basic tests will show you protein, fat, fiber, and some vitamins) through universities like Oklahoma State, or some feed stores will send it off to be tested, but this is the best place to start your nutrition questions. Some people are blown away with the difference in nutrition from bale to bale, going from 8% protein in one bale to 12% in another, and when forage is 80% of your horses diet it is very important that you address this issue first.

If the analysis comes back and forage is not your problem, or you haven't switched up hay for some time, then perhaps improving feed will solve the issue. First of all, it's important to look WHERE your horse needs to gain weight. Along the top line (where the saddle sits), croup (buttocks region), and shoulders are all mostly made up of muscle and this would be improved with adding additional high-quality protein. Along the ribs, and overall size of the horse is improved with fat. Whichever case pertains to you, you'll have to dive into some feed tags.

### **Protein**

At the most basic level moving protein up 2%-4% above what you're currently feeding and waiting about 30 days should do the trick for some muscle improvement. Remember, you can over-do it on protein. If the horse doesn't need the protein when it's being digested it will be urinated out. Think of protein digestion like a sponge. If you fully saturate a sponge it will only hold so much water at one time, but slowly over time it will lose that water and you can soak it some more. Much like that is the digestion of protein, when the horse needs to repair muscle or use protein for functions of the body it will start to use some up slowly but the horse will not digest any additional protein that it doesn't need at the time. Don't use the attitude of "if some is good for my horse, then a lot is better". For a maintenance horse (if they have good quality forage) 12% should be more than enough, and for a performance horse 14% should be sufficient.

### **Fat**

If, as opposed to gaining muscle, your horse needs help covering some ribs you'll need to add more fat. Different from protein, fat CAN be stored by the horse if fed too much. Prepare yourself when going to the store to shop for more fat as it's usually what makes the cost of feed go up or down. It's hard to say what a horse needs when it comes to fat. Much like humans all horses have different activity levels and different metabolisms. So just know, if your horse needs more cover on their ribs, take the fat up 4% from what you're currently doing and see what happens after 30 days. Typically fat will help your horse "bloom" and not only gain weight but typically since fat sources are derived from products like soy beans, and rice bran it will help them dapple and have a shiny coat.

Adding protein, and fat will both work if done correctly and no other issues exist. However, don't forget you can also just supply more feed as well. Most bags should have a feeding recommendation on the back by weight (actually weigh out the feed, don't say "this is a 3lb scoop" because it's probably not). So check the back of the bag and make sure you don't need to just feed a little more, or hay a little more! Don't forget, when you see something every day it is hard to notice changes like gradual weight gain. The most accurate way to track weight gain is by using a weight tape (a small measuring tape you wrap around the heart girth), or by taking pictures.

### **I gave more protein and fat, it didn't work. Now what?**

If you gave more protein or fat, if you tested your forage, if you started feeding more, and all those things aren't helping or your horse is just not eating it all now maybe other issues exist.

## **Check teeth**

Something that is certainly "out of sight out of mind" (unless you have an aggressive stud horse) is your horse's teeth. When a horse reaches 5 years of age they should begin to have annual teeth checks. All of the grinding horses do to their teeth can cause sharp points to some areas which need to be floated and made flat again. If you've never seen this done it can be quite intimidating, however, on a weekly show that I do for Facebook and Youtube I interviewed Dr Kin with Exclusively Equine and she showed me how she knows horses don't mind this procedure as they never shy away from the float, and they're typically sedated anyways. If you haven't had your horse's teeth checked in years this might be a place to start. If hay and feed is not being chewed up and grinded down then it will be dropped out of the mouth and not digested which could explain weight loss.

## **Check for Ulcers**

Another possible issue causing weight loss is ulcers. Studies have revealed that more than 90 percent of racehorses and 60 percent of sport and show horses develop gastric ulcers. Even 60 percent of foals have some degree of ulceration from birth to weaning. It is reported that half of the horses with ulcers show no clinical signs of the condition. However, many others do and it often negatively affects performance. (Andrews, 2003, McClue, et al., 2005 and Gordon et al., 2006.) There are tons of different causes of ulcers from hauling, showing, racing, and even something as simple as your neighbor got a new donkey and it's stressing out your horse. The cause might be unknown, and in many cases is irrelevant if your horse has ulcers, you need to get them resolved. The most accurate way to find out if they have ulcers is to get your horse scoped. Depending on your situation geographically or financially, this might not be feasible for you. Option two is to go ahead and treat your horse for ulcers. The only ingredient on the market that will help heal ulcers is omeprazole. You can give your horse some doses of this product, keep an eye on its behavior, and go from there. If it seems to help you might try to get your horse scoped and see how bad the ulcers are and get a plan with your vet from there.

In conclusion, sometimes it is much easier to try a few things out before you call in a vet, or become concerned that there are major issues. Never be afraid to ask for help with nutrition don't forget that most people you ask (feed store help, feed sales reps, crazy horse guy from facebook or youtube) no one is going to know your horse like you do. So do whatever seems right!



CENTRAL PLAINS  
DRESSAGE

## 2021 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

A REGION 9 GROUP MEMBER ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES DRESSAGE FEDERATION

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

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CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ USDF # \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

### MEMBERSHIP TYPE:

ADULT (\$50 Annually) AMATEUR \_\_\_\_\_ VINTAGE \_\_\_\_\_ OPEN \_\_\_\_\_

JUNIOR-UNDER 18 (\$35 Annually)

FAMILY-UP TO 2 MEMBERS (\$65 Annually)

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OPTIONAL DONATION TO CPDS \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED or \$ \_\_\_\_\_ PAYPAL PAYMENT

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**WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER? Yes\_\_ NO\_\_**

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I agree to allow photos taken at Central Plains Dressage events to be included on Central Plains Dressage websites or publications.