

NFF STABLES

Horse Owner's News

MARCH



News around the Barn

Welcome: Welcome to Meg Roesser and her horse Schatzie! Meg has been riding with NFF since she was a little girl, but after college she and Schatzie moved to North Carolina. She recently got a new job here in Maryland, so she's back! Welcome home, Meg and Schatzie!

Farewell: February was a month to say good-bye - some we knew about and others took us by surprise, but we'll miss you all! We knew Meredith and Wishes were only here a short while since Meredith recently bought a house in Virginia. We also knew Maverick and the Nesbitts were looking to move Maverick closer to home. We were surprised to say good-bye to Debra and Craig and Baxter and Beaker, but wish them well.

So Long, but Not Farewell: We also said good-bye to two horses, but not their owners! Shawn has retired Sooner and decided to move him. But we'll still have Shawn around, because we still have his other horse, Denver! Harmony also made the tough decision to move Lewie to her house - her other horse Rebel is there. Though we won't have her teaching here on Saturdays, she'll still be around - after all, she's our resident NFF dentist (see the next page for a dental reminder!).

Dreams Really Do Come True!

Last week, Sandy took this picture after a wicked storm blew through the area...how cool is it that the "end" of the rainbow begins right at the "hole" in the indoor arena?

We've all felt a little like Dorothy in the land of Oz these past several weeks. We're all so used to the convenience of the indoor arena, and it's been very weird not having something you're so used to. But after weeks of waiting, we finally got the official word yesterday - we are getting a BRAND NEW INDOOR ARENA!

So as much as we loved the convenience of our indoor, let's remember all the things we didn't like about the indoor arena...the windows banging when it was windy, the leaky sprinkler system, the front door that had to stay permanently open and the side door that had to stay permanently shut, the big dip on the long side...should I keep going?!

Now, it's not going to be as easy as clicking our heels three times and having a new indoor arena appear. The estimate we've been given is six months... but you know what, that puts us right at the end of the summer (and last summer we only used the indoor arena to ride under the sprinklers for camp!).

We have another week until it stays lighter at night, and I think we'll be in for more and more nicer, warmer days as Spring gets closer. I think it's been good for all of the horses to have a little time off, but now they can get back to work (and you, too!).

I don't know how to thank all of you for your patience and kindness during this rough period. There really is no place like home, and NFF has become a home to all of us! And with our new indoor arena, our home is going to be better than ever!

It's Dental Time!

Most of us have fond memories of losing a baby tooth, putting it under the pillow at night, and waking up the next morning to find the tooth replaced with a coin—courtesy, of course, of the “tooth fairy.” Your horse also sheds baby teeth—beginning at about the age of 2 1/2 years. Unlike yours, his permanent teeth continue to erupt throughout much of his life, until no more “reserve crown” exists.

The horse is a grazing animal by nature, and his teeth are designed to select and chew grasses—often coarser stuff than that found in lush pastures. The process of mastication (grinding) wears away the tooth enamel, and as a result, the horse evolved with self-replenishing dental work. Domestication disrupted Nature's balance, and most modern horses consume a diet that consists of large amounts of concentrates (grain) and hay, with limited opportunities to graze. Chewing hay and grain is less natural for the horse than chewing grass. It limits the movement of the lower jaw, and the process of chewing grain also requires a more up-and-down jaw action than that of chewing forage. A common result is the development of sharp enamel edges, most often along the inside edges of the lower teeth and along the outside edges of the upper teeth.

Okay, so your horse's teeth weren't designed to chew hay and grain. He's not likely to be mountain lion bait these days, and he doesn't need a dazzling smile to win ribbons. So why worry about dental care?

Because if you don't, you might find yourself with one or more health or performance problems on your hands. On the health side, malnutrition, weight loss, chronic colic, cheek and tongue ulceration, glossitis (an inflamed, swollen tongue), periodontal disease, choke, and even an inability to eat—all can result from insufficient dental care. On the performance side, dental discomfort can manifest itself as head-tossing, head-shyness, resistance to being bridled, evasion of rein contact, lugging on one or both reins, overflexing (going “behind the bit”), a head-up/hollow-backed way of going, and even rearing or going over backward in extreme cases. Not surprisingly, tooth and mouth pain also can cause irritable behavior.

Eating difficulties also are telltale signs of teeth or mouth problems—spilling grain while chewing, dunking hay or feed in the water bucket, holding the head to one side while eating, bolting grain, or dropping partially chewed balls of food. Excess salivation, foul breath, and facial swelling can also indicate discomfort or infection.

From birth to at five years of age, some horses might need twice-yearly dental exams; young performance horses might need more frequent check-ups. After age five, a horse with a normal mouth and in light work probably will do fine with one floating a year; performance horses or those with problem mouths might need a biannual schedule. Your equine dentist can recommend a schedule that's right for your horse.

So don't forget - per your board agreement your horse needs to have his teeth examined by either an equine dentist or a vet at least once a year. You can use the vet, or a dentist - and of course, we're lucky that we have Harmony on hand to be our barn dentist (but other dentists come here as well!). Spring is a great time to get it done, so check and see when your horse is due and make a plan!

Calendar

We don't have much on our books for March, but we do have our first Show Team show coming up at Loch Moy on March 26. You all own your own horse...you should show your horse! Joining our show team is easy - you only have to show three times throughout the year. Being a member of show team gives you discounts on shipping and coaching. If you'd like more information, please talk to Jen!

We had to reschedule our Essential Oils clinic from President's Day to the following Sunday due to snow. Thank you to all who attended - it was really interesting! I have some handouts from the clinic if you'd like to read them.

We always do our barn Easter Egg Hunt the Saturday before Easter, but we're going to be at our first Show Team show that day. I'm tentatively thinking about Friday, March 25 - spring break for MCPS, and many of you have off work since it's Good Friday. I'll do some thinking about this.

We'll be scheduling Spring Vaccinations and Coggins for mid-April. Most all of your Coggins expire at the end of April.

And cross your fingers for us - we're hoping to host the last two Interschool shows of the season here in April (which means the weather better cooperate!). April 17 and April 24 are both show days.