

Challenging the Trainers

By Sharon Wells-Ackermans

What a wonderful article in the June issue by Barbra Ann King! And how right she is to point out the staggering numbers of unwanted, abandoned, neglected and untrained horses finding their way to auctions and rescues every day. Horses without training have very little future ahead of them.

They are sold cheaply at auction and when they unwittingly hurt someone, become a financial burden, or just a bother, they find themselves back on the auction block.

Backyard breeders are still producing foals every year, even though the market is poor and many of these horses grow up in pastures without being handled, much less cared for properly. Often these horses are purchased by inexperienced people because they are cute (and often cheap). With no knowledge of the training process these unfortunate people find themselves with more than they bargained for.

Legitimate horse rescue operations have to use most of their resources, both volunteer and financial, just to care for and feed these horses. There are few grants or supporting agencies willing to help financially; most rescues must spend time fundraising, with the facility owners, directors and volunteers subsidizing the balance of the costs.

It's time for those at the top of the horse industry to dig a little deeper, and the Trainers' Challenge would be the perfect venue! If the organizers are opposed to using rescued livestock for

the Challenge, how about assigning a rescue horse for each trainer to work with, in addition to their colts. What if each trainer was asked to spend time in the round pen assessing his rescue horse honestly, doing what he can with the youngster, and then allowing his name to be used to help find an adoptive home?

Maybe each trainer could feature these horses on his website; maybe he could talk about the problems faced by the multitude of unwanted horses out there right now, not to mention the challenges faced by organizations trying to support them. How about if each trainer in the Trainers' Challenge would challenge other trainers to take on one rescue colt per year in their own operations, to see them trained and adopted out. It would be wonderful if the Mane Event gave out a prize to the trainer who did the most for rescue horses each year!

It takes time and knowledge to properly assess a horse, decide what the horse would be best suited for, train it and place it in an appropriate home. Credible trainers, like those featured at the Mane Event, who share their knowledge and their endorsement with a rescue horse will increase its chances for the future.

Once valued, and even revered, today's horses are becoming the forgotten ones. It's not only high-end performance horses that deserve to be well cared for. They all deserve the best we can offer them, in gratitude for all they have done for us over



Daryl Gibb with rescued foal, Cindy Lou, at the Mane Event in Chilliwack 2010. Cindy Lou is still with us and doing well.



Training takes time, knowledge, patience and experience!

the centuries, and for what they still have to offer us now!

The Horse Protection Society of BC (HPS) is not a rescue operation; we are an advocacy group focusing on educating the public on horse issues. Our Horsemanship Program teaches people to understand and care for horses, as well as to ride safely. However, the horses used in our programs are ones that have been rescued or were in need of re-homing. Occasionally a foal comes our way in need and those foals stay with us until they are started under saddle. It's our philosophy that any horse that leaves us must leave with more value than they come to us with. Even though we do home visits and follow up checks, we realize that years down the road we will most likely lose touch with these horses. Knowing that, we want to do all we can to make sure that each horse has a lasting value that may one day serve to keep it in a good home. For more ideas on how to help horses visit our website: www.HorseProtectionSocietyofBC.com.

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