

National Day of the American Cowboy !

I must mention a bit about the reputation of me and my kinsmen, the American Cowboy, as for 29 years in the UK, I have endured the disrespect shown toward the name "Cowboy". Therefore, the following is a bit of information to try and correct that image and a site address where readers can go for much more information. The following Fort Worth Stockyards site provides a good slide show and much more information : <http://www.fortworthstockyards.org/ & AMERICANCOWBOY.COM/COWBOYDAY ..>

This year the National Day of the American Cowboy was recognized on Saturday the 28th of July, 2012. The day is the 9th in the series and 8th National officially recognized date in USA (and of course Texas). This date is set aside to "Honor" the cowboy way by celebrating the National Day of the American Cowboy! As I hail from Ft. Worth, Texas, here is a tid bit on Fort Worth history. The Ft. Worth Stockyards saw more than 4 million head of cattle trailed through between 1866 and 1890. Currently and for benefit of tourism, the city provides a twice daily herding of 50+ Texas Long Horn Cattle down main street in mornings and back in the afternoons. The "National Day" festivities include seven rodeos and riding events featuring top amateurs and professionals. You can also partake in fun contests for watermelon eating and seed-spitting, best moustache, most worn-out boots, and buckaroo coloring. When you get hungry, check out the Love Shack restaurant, known for its juicy burgers & hotdogs. Kids love taking period photos at The Jersey Lily Old Time Photo Parlor.

Equine facility designs: Whilst I am standing on my soap box today would like to comment on a few things. I often see and try to politely as possibly comment on how stables and trailers are built so much differently than in the Southern USA (esp. Texas) and how they are too often built in a fashion that is not friendly or helpful to horses. I recently ran into an extreme example of the stable construction problem, within an otherwise well designed Farm based equine facility. In this particular facility there were stables, although not too confining in size, were built without sufficient windows in order to (1) provide needed ventilation and (2) to avoid the natural problems horses face regarding claustrophobia. Their lack of binocular vision and the limiting of their peripheral vision by being in stables, generates the very stressful claustrophobic reactions. It is not an overly expensive job to provide sufficient windows cut into at least two or three side and in the rear. This easily prevents the "cave style" situation which is "hard wired" into all equine minds over many millions of years and wont be changed in our lifetimes. These windows can be easily provided, even if they need to be small enough not to allow horses to injure one another (i.e. 4" high by 12" to 18" wide). I observed, at many of the livery farms I visit to deal with problem horses, I have seen horses enduring higher than normal summertime heat as well as claustrophobia and lack of sufficient ventilation (even hot air is better than none at all). I have seen them standing in their stables without these

August 2012 Essex Rider Magazine
National Day of the American Cowboy & Equine facility design problems

basic needs and as a result, of course, they were exhibiting extreme discomfort and acting in very agitated, potentially dangerous and poor habit forming manners. To me, this is cruel treatment and most folks should realize how detrimental it is keeping a horse inside what was effectively a sauna, even if they do not (or cannot) recognize the claustrophobic and breathing / ventilation problems generated in their facilities.

Staying with the subjects of windows and claustrophobia (for this issue), I often come across and solves many trailer and box loading issues/problems that were, in large part, caused by the following construction problems. In many cases, the two most common construction problems are lack of "sufficient" and/or "properly located" windows. Other causes are ramps in cases they are not necessary. I have recommended adding more windows and / or changing the locations of improperly located windows. Location is important in order that horses can not only "see out of them" but as well so that they can "see" things pass by out of sight more normally. Many trailers have badly located windows which leaves the horse in a situation where they see something coming from the front quarter only to then see it suddenly "disappear" from view and them must worry about whether the "thing" is behind them afterward. I have recommended these sort of changes and corrections be made to many trailers and the result is "always" positive. Back home in Texas I very seldom ran across any trailer loading problems, as our trailers are generally very open design (as can be seen on links in my site) and not built as "caves" are so many I have seen in the UK and Europe. Also our trailers do not use ramps to load as horses are just fine climbing up. Of course horse boxes are too high and ramps are then needed. I spend a great deal of time convincing horses the empty space under ramps is not dangerous to them. I have also found it best not to tie horses in transit (when possible) as they need to be able to balance and if they actually fall they need to be able to move their head & neck weight in order to get up. A tied rope can keep them from being able to maneuver their head and neck using the counter weight as normal. Most often we travel this way with all horses especially race horses who are less well trained and more hyper / **claustrophobic**.

A closing note regarding bits: Chrome bits have nickel in the metal mix, which generates electrolysis when the horses teeth touch it, much as tin foil generates electrolysis when we humans touch it with our teeth. Many people have accidentally done this in their lives and know how bad that feels. Therefore, please consider your horses point of view and comfort when buying / using bits. Good materials are sweet iron, copper or brass (even plastic now that happy-mouth and other manufactures use plastic that no longer splinters as it did in the past). Chrome or stainless steel for other sections of the bit, that doesn't touch the teeth, does not cause such problems and still gives the look humans want.

***Ya'll ride safely and Aware.** Lewis aka Blackie Blackburn,*
www.blackburnnaturalhorsetraining.com, blackieb@btconnect.com,
01799-543711, 0771-8317654