

Blankets, feed points of contention

WHILE I DON'T have a bog spavin horse, I do regret not being able to attend the Spooky Clinic thrown at **Becky Siebel's** Spirit Horse Ranch on Oct. 22.

The clinic was about teaching horses not to be scared by various objects, and I heard folks had a hoot of a good time

Instead, my Shetland pony, Snowball Express, and I went to support a good cause by providing rides to small greenhorns during the Sequim Safeway employees' third annual Peninsula Breast Cancer Walk.

I wanted to be there in support of my good friend, cancer survivor and Safeway employee **Cyndi Sanders**, who also had the privilege of cutting the ribbon to signal the race's start.

For many of those young whippersnappers, it was their very first pony ride, so it was fun to see them react.

Most were surprised how quickly Snow's four legs moved underneath them.

He loved all the attention and was the perfect pony the entire time.

Snug as a bug

Is it just me, or are our fall nights already colder than a Popsicle?

It's the beginning of November, and I'm already contemplating whether or not to blanket my four horses.

I just read an article in a horse magazine that stated my horse will feel chilly if I do.

Truly, if that were the case, my horses would want to be wearing several layers of wool, topped by a down parka, almost every night of the year on the North Olympic Peninsula.

Trust me, they would be hot and uncomfortable if currently wearing a blanket all night, or would

PENINSULA HORSEPLAY

Karen Griffiths



they?
When cold, a horse will often trot around the pasture to keep warm.

So far I haven't seen my horses frolicking more than usual.

Given that food is the primary way horses keep warm, my horses are all fed well.

Their source of energy — it's the reason it's so important to feed a good-quality hay.

Consider this: If you only paid a few dollars a bale for hay, chances are it has more weeds than grass or alfalfa.

Poor-quality hay equates to a poor or weak energy source; it does not provide the nutrients needed during our damp weather to provide for your horse's nutritional needs.

Actually, I am constantly surprised to hear from folks who don't realize grass is dormant this time of year, so it doesn't provide nutrients for your horse to be healthy.

Supplemental feed

If in doubt, provide a supplement.

In fact, all horses could benefit from a little supplemental feed to their hay.

Local feed stores carry a variety of pellet feeds for all ages and lifestyles.

Personally, I try not to blanket my horses too early in the season because I want each to grow a thick undercoat and long outercoat to keep them warm during the winter.

On a healthy horse, the short, thick hair fluffs up to create an air pocket of warm air close to the skin;



CYNDI SANDERS

Bailey Wessel of Sequim takes her turn astride Snowball Express at the pony ride during the Sequim Safeway employees' Peninsula Breast Cancer Walk. More than 50 walkers participated, raising \$1,200. With Bailey is "Peninsula Horseplay" columnist Karen Griffiths.

the longer hairs tend to protect the shorter, warm hairs when it rains or snows.

If your horse is healthy, has shelter (which could just be evergreen trees) and has access to move around, he might not need a blanket at all.

However, since each one of my horses is an individual, I look at each one's needs separately.

Most young, healthy horses do not require a blanket in winter; aged horses do.

Yet there are always exceptions.

Since we do live in a damp, wet region, please look to your own animal for answers.

Remember, too, when blanketing a horse that you must take extra care to see what's going on under-

neath that blanket.

Feel if he's hot, cold or sweaty.

Know that a wet blanket can be worse than no blanket at all and might cause a horse to freeze to death.

It can also be a breeding ground for rain rot.

When the sun is shining, take that blanket off and let the horse roll to scratch his back and, perhaps, even feel those warm rays.

Upcoming events

■ 10 a.m. Sunday — Mini-Beats Game Day at Freedom Farms, 493 Spring Farm Road in Agnew. Open to all riders under 100 pounds who want to play games and ride over obstacles on the farm's own schooling

horses. Donations go to Peninsula Friends of Animals.

■ 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 9 — Native Horsemanship board meeting at Fortune Star Chinese Restaurant, 145 E. Washington St. in Sequim.

For questions, email **Sharon Hogue** at jazzibub@hotmail.com.

■ 10 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 12, and Thursday, Dec. 1 — Freedom Farm Schooling Shows, 493 Spring Road in Agnew. Phone **Mary Gallagher** at 360-457-4897.

For class details, visit www.freedomfarms.net.

■ Friday, Nov. 11, through Saturday, Nov. 12 — Equine dental clinic by **Dr. Richard Vetter** of Performance Equine Dentistry at the Jefferson County Fairgrounds.

Is your horse, pony, donkey or mini dropping grain, losing weight or quidding (balls of feed that pack in the mouth and then drop out)? It could be a dental problem.

To schedule an appointment, phone **Betty Mysak** at 360-379-6931. Observers are welcome.

For more information, visit Vetter's website at www.perfequinedentistry.com.

■ Noon to 3 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 27 — Cow working at Freedom Farms.

Karen Griffiths' column, Peninsula Horseplay, appears every other Wednesday.

If you have a horse event, clinic or seminar you would like listed, please email Griffiths at kgb@olympus.net at least two weeks in advance. You can also write Griffiths at PDN, P.O. Box 1330, Port Angeles, WA 98362.