

Improving the Well-Being of Horses and Riders

Dear USHJA Members, As a member of the USHJA Horse and Rider Advocates Committee, I'm proud to give back to the sport, because its mission resonates with my heart. I'm grateful for everything horses have given me throughout my life.

They taught me discipline, speed, strength and balance. They helped me become an athlete. They continue to hone my intuitive skills and keep me connected with the earth (in more ways than one). They provide fun, challenge, exhilaration and adrenaline rushes. They allow me a way to make a living doing something that I love.



Sue Lyman

I've been fortunate to have some great horses to work with in my small and humble business. Two that I should mention are Rox Dene, one of the greatest show hunters in the sport's history, and Simbalu, a talented Thoroughbred Regular Working Hunter champion who was featured in Rodney Jenkins' video "Selecting Hunters and Jumpers," which is still

used today to educate judges.

Ted Andrews, author of "Animal Speak," wrote that no animal has contributed more to civilization than the horse, which has enabled us to travel faster, explore new communities, carry our supplies, plow our fields and serve in battle.

They continue to help us in the modern world in diverse ways. Horses are used in hippotherapy to help physically and mentally challenged people. They aid in the rehabilitation of prisoners so they can re-enter society, and horses help at-risk youth gain confidence. They're used in programs to teach CEOs team-building and how to communicate more effectively in business negotiations. To the Native Americans, they symbolize freedom, mutual respect, spirit and a way to travel to other realms. Clearly, the horse has the ability to help us find a better side to ourselves, if only we listen.

We've chosen the horse to be our partners in sport, and for many people, this relationship creates even stronger bonds. Attaining our goals

with our horses is a remarkable achievement. Yes, winning is fun; it boosts our confidence and keeps us striving for more. But unbalanced competition is destructive. Winning for the sake of winning is an empty accomplishment that dampens the spirit and is often harmful to other people and the animals we claim to love. It's easy to get caught up in that competitive energy, and sometimes our personal agendas lead us astray.

Through our Healthy Balance series of articles, we hope that our fellow USHJA members will take time to examine how our committee is approaching our goals and what's in the best interest of our horses and ourselves.

After listening to our members' concerns at the 2016 USHJA Annual Meeting, our committee produced a longeing video in both English and Spanish. We've compiled a list of high-quality retirement facilities for horses. In 2017, we produced articles on health and wellness best practices that can be found on the USHJA website (www.ushja.org) under "Education and Resources." This year, we helped to create the four-part Healthy Balance series of articles that concludes on p. 30.

Our committee is currently sponsoring rule-change proposals for requiring stall cards, prohibiting the pulling of shoes for under-saddle classes and inhumanely fitting curb chains. We're also compiling a list of evacuation facilities in the case of natural disasters.

Our mission is to provide educational resources for horsemen and to be a forum for feedback concerning the well-being of our horses and riders. Through future articles and videos, we hope to encourage our members to consider the horse's point of view and to improve the path on which horses are healthy, willing partners on our journey.

Sue Lyman

*Horse and Rider Advocates Committee Member
USHJA Certified Trainer
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“Winning for the sake of winning is an empty accomplishment.”

TERESA RAMSAY