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**THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:**

**Merry Christmas and Happy  
 Holidays!**

## Harnessing the Power of Postbiotics for Equine Health

By The VHN Writing Team

As our understanding of equine nutrition evolves, a term gaining prominence in the world of horse care is “postbiotics.” While probiotics and prebiotics have long been recognized for their benefits in promoting digestive health, postbiotics represent the next frontier in optimizing the well-being of our equine companions. We humans are no strangers to prebiotics and probiotics, even for our other animals, like our dogs and cats. So what exactly are “Postbiotics” and how can they help our horses?

### What are Postbiotics?

Postbiotics refer to the metabolic byproducts produced by probiotics during the fermentation of prebiotics. In simpler terms, when beneficial bacteria (probiotics) consume indigestible fibers (prebiotics), they generate compounds known as postbiotics. These compounds include organic acids, enzymes, peptides, and other bioactive substances.

### The Role of Postbiotics in Equine Health:

1. **Gut Health:** The equine digestive system is highly sensitive, and disruptions can lead to a range of issues, including colic and laminitis. Postbiotics play a crucial role in maintaining a balanced gut microbiome by promoting the growth of beneficial bacteria. This, in turn, supports efficient digestion and nutrient absorption.

2. **Immune System Support:** A healthy gut is closely linked to a robust immune system. The bioactive compounds produced by postbiotics have been shown to modulate immune responses, enhancing the horse’s ability to fend off infections and diseases. This is particularly important for horses subjected to the stressors of training, competition, or travel.

3. **Anti-Inflammatory Properties:** Postbiotics exhibit anti-inflammatory effects, helping to mitigate inflammation in the gut and other tissues. This is especially valuable for horses with conditions such as colitis or inflammatory bowel disease.

By reducing inflammation, postbiotics contribute to overall comfort and well-being.

4. **Nutrient Utilization:** Optimal digestion is key to effective nutrient utilization. Postbiotics support the breakdown of complex feed components, releasing essential nutrients that contribute to the horse’s overall health, energy levels, and performance.

### Sources of Postbiotics for Horses:

1. **Fermented Feed Supplements:** Including fermented feed supplements in a horse’s diet is a practical way to introduce postbiotics. Fermented feeds are rich in the byproducts of microbial activity, providing a natural source of these beneficial compounds.

2. **Probiotic Supplements:** Probiotic supplements, containing live beneficial bacteria, can indirectly contribute to the production of postbiotics within the horse’s gut. When probiotics proliferate in the digestive tract, they produce a variety of bioactive substances as part of their metabolic processes.

3. **Fiber-Rich Diets:** Prebiotics, which serve as the fuel for probiotics, are found in fiber-rich foods. A diet abundant in forage and high-quality fiber provides the necessary substrate for the production of postbiotics.

As our understanding of equine nutrition advances, harnessing the power of postbiotics emerges as a promising strategy for promoting the health and performance of horses. By focusing on the holistic well-being of the digestive system, postbiotics contribute to a cascade of positive effects, from enhanced nutrient absorption to improved immune function. Horse owners and caretakers keen on optimizing their equine companion’s health should explore the incorporation of postbiotics into their feeding and management practices, ushering in a new era of digestive wellness for these majestic animals.



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## Celebrating Christmas with Your Equine Companion: Creative Ways to Include Your Horse

By The VHN Writing Team



The holiday season is a time for warmth, joy, and sharing special moments with loved ones—including our four-legged friends. If you're fortunate enough to have a horse as part of your family, there are creative and festive ways to include them in your Christmas celebrations.

1. **Deck the Stalls:** Transform your horse's living space into a festive haven by adorning their stall with Christmas decorations. Hang colorful stockings filled with horse-friendly treats, tie ribbons to their stall bars, and consider adding a wreath to evoke the holiday spirit. Be careful for those horses that tend to chew on things. Place and fasten your decorations where your horse cannot reach, or use decorations that they cannot destroy.

2. **Festive Equine Attire:** Dressing up your horse in holiday-themed attire can add a touch of cheer to your Christmas festivities. From Santa hats and jingle bell blankets to reindeer antlers, there are plenty of adorable options available to showcase your horse's holiday spirit. This is a great option if you have kids. It'll take a little patience, but with some treats and bribing you should be able to get a few nice holiday pictures together.

3. **Christmas Carriage Rides:** If you have access to a carriage or sleigh, consider taking your horse for a festive ride through the neighborhood. Adorn the carriage with twinkling lights, play holiday tunes, and enjoy a magical journey together.

4. **Equine Christmas Photoshoot:** Capture the holiday memories with a Christmas photoshoot featuring your horse. Set up a picturesque scene with Christmas decorations, even better if you have snow, and don't forget to dress both yourself and your horse in festive attire. These photos can become cherished memories and even holiday cards to share with friends and family.

5. **Horse-friendly Treats:** Treat your horse to some special holiday goodies. Carrots and apples can be transformed into festive shapes using cookie cutters, and horse-friendly peppermints or molasses cookies are excellent choices for Christmas treats. Ensure the treats are safe and suitable for equine consumption.

6. **Holiday Trail Ride:** If weather permits, embark on a holiday trail ride with your horse. Explore scenic trails adorned with winter landscapes, and perhaps bring along a thermos of hot cocoa to enjoy a cozy break in the midst of nature. You could also play some festive music as you enjoy your outing.

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7. **Equine Gift Exchange:** Extend the joy of gift-giving to your horse by wrapping up some new toys or grooming tools. Watching your horse eagerly “unwrap” their presents can be a delightful and heartwarming experience.

8. **Christmas Eve Stable Visit:** Spend quality time with your horse on Christmas Eve. Brush them, share quiet moments, and maybe even read them a Christmas story. This peaceful time together fosters a bond and allows you both to soak in the holiday ambiance. And if the weather is in your favor, there's nothing like a quiet, peaceful, Christmas Eve night.

9. **Holiday Parade:** If your horse is the kind to enjoy or at least tolerate being around other animals and a crowd, you just might find some joy in joining a holiday parade. You can bring smiles to onlookers as you festively ride or walk down a street, decked out in Christmas fun. Many cities have holiday parades around this time of year. Or, if you belong to a barn or a horse club, consider doing a parade all together as a way to bring joy to the neighborhood and your local community.

10. **Volunteer for a live Nativity Scene:** If you'd like to volunteer for another public festive function, consider being a part of a nativity scene with your equine. You could be a part of a wonderful holiday tradition that many people can enjoy. Many churches put together nativity scenes as well as holiday plays that sometimes need live animals for the performance.

11. **Make Santa come to life:** If your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, or even your friends or neighbor kids still believe in and enjoy Santa, you could potentially make Santa come to life with the help of your equine. If he doesn't mind you dressing up as Mr. Claus and carrying a small bag of toys or being decorated, you could become a wonderful memory for your kids and others during this time of year.

However you decide to include your equines in this festive season, you can be sure that it will be something special to remember for years to come. Every time you include them, you include one more important piece of your family in the holiday magic and could start new traditions for generations to come.



## • Happy Trails Monthly Recipe •

Created by Chef Sharon Hauht

### “Shrimp and Grits”

**Total Time: 45 min    Servings: 4 servings**

#### Ingredients:

3/4 cup grits  
 1/4 teaspoon salt  
 6 ounces Cheddar cheese, grated  
 3 tablespoons butter  
 4 tablespoons butter  
 3/4 cup chopped onion  
 1/2 cup chopped green bell pepper  
 2 garlic cloves, minced  
 1 cup diced ripe tomatoes with a little of their juice  
 (chopped canned tomatoes are preferable to less-than-perfect fresh tomatoes)  
 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme  
 1 tablespoon flour  
 1 pound medium to large raw shrimp, shelled (reserve shells for stock)  
 1/2 to 1 cup shrimp stock (see note)  
 1 tablespoon tomato paste  
 1/3 cup heavy cream  
 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce  
 2 dashes Tabasco  
 Salt to taste  
 2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

#### Directions:

For the grits, bring 3 1/2 cups water to a boil and stir in the grits. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook for 15 to 20 minutes, until the grits are tender and the liquid has been absorbed.

Remove from heat, add the salt, cheese and butter and stir until melted. Keep warm.

For the shrimp, melt the butter in a large skillet over medium heat and sauté the onion, pepper and garlic until softened, about 3 minutes.

Add the tomatoes and juice and thyme; bring to a simmer. Cook for 2 or 3 minutes. Sprinkle with flour and stir well.

Add the shrimp and stir constantly until they begin to turn pink, about 2 minutes. Add 1/2 cup stock and cook for 2 to 3 minutes more. Add the tomato paste and stir until blended. Add the cream, Worcestershire and Tabasco and more stock if needed to make a spoonable sauce that generously coats the shrimp.

Heat thoroughly, being careful not to let it come to a boil. Taste for salt.

Place a portion of grits in the center of each plate and spoon shrimp over or around it.

Sprinkle with parsley.

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## About Happy Trails Kitchen



Sharon Hauht is the owner of Happy Trails Kitchen that specializes in baking and artfully decorated custom celebration cakes, cupcakes, cookies and sugar art for your special occasion. Sharon is an award winning cake decorator who has more than 40 years experience. Sharon competed with her team, Gouly Goblins, on Season 10 of Food Network’s Halloween Wars and was featured on the Road to Halloween Wars, which aired on September 13, 2020.

Happy Trails Kitchen (HTK) is registered by the Southern Nevada Health District (SNHD) as a cottage food operation, which means HTK’s food labels have been approved by SNHD, applicable recipes have been lab-tested for shelf stability (pH and water activity), and Sharon Hauht has been approved to bake and decorate cakes out of her home. She can print edible images (logos and Photographs) on your confections. She has her food handler’s card for food safety.

You can see pictures of some of her recent projects on her website: [www.happytrailskitchen.com](http://www.happytrailskitchen.com). You can contact Sharon through her website or by emailing her at [happytrailskitchen@gmail.com](mailto:happytrailskitchen@gmail.com) or call (702) 277-8000. HTK is also on Facebook and Instagram under HappyTrailsKitchen.



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## Nurturing Equine Wellness: Gradual Transition to a Forage-Only Diet

By The VHN Writing Team



The transition to a forage-only diet marks a pivotal moment in equine care, as it aligns with the natural dietary patterns of horses, promoting digestive health, and overall well-being.

To embark on this journey successfully, horse owners must approach the process with patience, knowledge, and a keen understanding of their equine companions. Here we will explore the best practices for transitioning horses to a forage-only diet, emphasizing the significance of a gradual adjustment period, close monitoring, and a commitment to nutritional balance.

The first thing that owners must understand about a transition is that it must be done so once you are sure that your horse would benefit from such a change and is healthy enough to do so. The second thing to remember is that it is a very gradual process and may take some fine tuning, perhaps with the help of a vet to monitor your horse's progress.

### The Significance of Forage-Only Diets:

1. **Aligning with Nature:** Horses are natural grazers with digestive systems designed for continuous forage consumption. A forage-only diet mimics their natural behavior, fostering optimal gastrointestinal function and minimizing the risk of digestive issues such as colic and ulcers.

2. **Dental Health:** Beyond meeting their nutritional needs, forage promotes essential dental health. The fibrous texture of hay and pasture stimulates natural chewing behaviors, helping maintain proper tooth structure and preventing dental problems that can arise with diets lacking in roughage.

### Crafting a Gradual Transition Plan:

1. **Initial Diet Assessment:** Before initiating the transition, conduct a thorough assessment of the horse's current diet. This includes evaluating the type and quantity of concentrates, grains, and supplements they are currently receiving. Understanding their baseline nutrition allows for a more tailored and effective transition plan.

2. **Incremental Reduction of Concentrates:** Start the transition by gradually reducing the amount of concentrates in the horse's diet. This reduction should occur over a span of several weeks, allowing the digestive system to adapt to the upcoming changes. Replace the calories from concentrates with additional forage to maintain energy levels.

3. **Introduce High-Quality Forage:** The introduction of high-quality forage is a critical phase of the transition. Begin with small amounts and gradually increase the proportion of hay and pasture in their diet. This step ensures that the horse's digestive system adjusts to the new fiber sources while minimizing the risk of digestive upset.

### Monitoring and Adjustment:

1. **Body Condition and Weight:** Regularly monitor the horse's body condition and weight throughout the transition. Adjust the forage-to-concentrate ratio based on their body condition, ensuring they maintain a healthy weight. It's essential to strike a balance that supports the horse's energy requirements without causing weight loss or gain.

2. **Behavior and Digestive Health:** Close observation of the horse's behavior and digestive health is paramount.

Changes in appetite, signs of discomfort, or alterations in manure consistency may indicate the need for adjustments in the transition plan. Immediate attention to these signs helps prevent the development of complications.

### Ensuring Nutritional Balance:

1. **Balanced Nutrient Intake:** A forage-only diet should provide a balanced intake of essential nutrients, including protein, vitamins, and minerals. If there are concerns about nutritional gaps, consult with a veterinarian or equine nutritionist to develop a supplement plan tailored to the specific needs of the horse.

2. **Water Availability:** Adequate water intake is crucial during the transition. Horses must have continuous access to clean, fresh water to support digestion and prevent dehydration. Proper hydration is essential for maintaining overall health and aiding in the breakdown of fibrous materials.

### Addressing Potential Challenges:

1. **Adapting to Changes in Activity Levels:** As the diet evolves, consider potential changes in the horse's activity levels. Adjust energy intake accordingly to support their work or exercise routine. Balancing nutritional needs with energy demands is key to ensuring the horse's vitality and performance.

2. **Consulting Professionals:** Seek guidance from equine health professionals, including veterinarians and nutritionists, throughout the transition process. Their expertise can provide valuable insights, ensuring a smooth and successful shift to a forage-only diet.

Transitioning horses to a forage-only diet is an art that requires a delicate blend of science and compassion. By embracing a gradual approach, closely monitoring the horse's response, and ensuring nutritional balance, horse owners can embark on this journey with confidence.

This intentional transition not only respects the natural inclinations of these majestic animals but also lays the foundation for improved digestive health, dental well-being, and overall longevity. In nurturing equine wellness through thoughtful dietary choices, we affirm our commitment to the health and happiness of our beloved equine companions.

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## Making Merry, The Role of Equines in Christmas History

By The VHN Writing Team



As the winter winds whisper through snow-laden landscapes and festive lights twinkle in the night, the holiday season comes alive with traditions that transcend time. Amidst the carols, the warmth of hearths, and the joy of giving, equines—horses, donkeys, and mini's too—have etched themselves into the rich tapestry of Christmas history. These graceful companions bring a unique charm to the season, weaving stories of humility, magic, and enduring partnership.

### The Humble Donkey in the Nativity:

At the heart of Christmas lies the timeless story of the Nativity, where the humble donkey plays a pivotal role in transporting Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. This enduring image of the donkey bearing the weight of a pregnant Mary is symbolic of humility and sacrifice.

In countless Nativity scenes around the world, the gentle donkey stands by the Holy Family, a silent witness to the miracle of Christ's birth. The quality of steadfastness is symbolic of a donkey today, much because of this story.

Beyond its symbolic significance, the donkey adds a touch of realism to the narrative. These steadfast creatures, known for their hard work and endurance, evoke a sense of the everyday world in the extraordinary setting of the Nativity. The inclusion of the donkey in Christmas displays serves as a reminder that the magic of the season is found not only in grand gestures but in the quiet, unassuming moments that shape our lives.

### St. Nicholas and His Christmas Steed:

In European traditions, particularly in Germany and the Netherlands, St. Nicholas, the precursor to Santa Claus, is often accompanied by a mythical Christmas steed. This magical horse, sometimes depicted as white, accompanies St. Nicholas on his gift-giving rounds on the night of December 5th. The tradition persists in modern celebrations, with parades featuring St. Nicholas riding on horseback, surrounded by the enchanting presence of his equine companion.

The Christmas steed symbolizes not only the magic of the season but also the timeless partnership between humans and horses. It echoes ancient folklore where horses were revered as mystical beings, bridging the gap between the mundane and the supernatural. In these celebrations, the horse becomes a symbol of generosity and joy, embodying the spirit of giving that defines the Christmas season.

### Reindeer and the Magic of Sleigh Rides:

In the snowy landscapes of the North, another creature takes center stage—the reindeer. Popularized by Clement Clarke Moore's poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (commonly known as "The Night Before Christmas"), Santa's sleigh is famously pulled by a team of eight reindeer. This whimsical image of reindeer in flight, guided by the red-nosed Rudolph, has become an iconic symbol of Christmas magic.

The concept of Santa's reindeer draws on ancient folklore and indigenous traditions, where reindeer were revered as sacred animals. It was the horse that first led to St. Nicholas actually riding something or having his sleigh of toys pulled by animals, instead of him walking on his own to deliver toys. In modern times, the image of reindeer pulling Santa's sleigh has been immortalized in literature, film, and festive decorations.

This fantastical portrayal adds an element of wonder to Christmas, capturing the imaginations of both children and adults alike as the reindeer embark on their important flight with Santa. And while reindeer are now the concrete animal in Santa's sleigh images, many people and many places still show horses as the ones pulling Santa's sleigh on the ground.

### Equines in Christmas Parades:

From small towns to bustling cities, Christmas parades are a cherished tradition, and equines often play a central role. Clydesdales with adorned harnesses pull ornate carriages, their hooves echoing through the streets. Riders in festive attire guide horses bedecked in wreaths, ribbons, and jingling bells. And jingle bells first became tradition alongside horses and their sleighs, as we hear in the famous Christmas song, "Jingle bells, Jingle bells, Jingle all the way. Oh, what fun it is to ride on a one horse open sleigh."

These parades evoke a sense of timeless elegance, reminiscent of a bygone era when horse-drawn carriages were a common sight during the holiday season. The presence of horses in Christmas parades adds a touch of regality and grace to the festivities. Whether draped in traditional holiday colors or adorned with twinkling lights, the equines become living ornaments, enchanting onlookers with their beauty and poise. The connection between humans and horses in these parades reflects a mutual joy in celebrating the spirit of the season.

In the symphony of Christmas traditions, equines stand as graceful companions, embodying the magic, humility, and joy that define the holiday season. From the humble donkey in the Nativity to the mythical Christmas steed and the enchanting reindeer guiding Santa's sleigh, these creatures bring a unique charm to Christmas history. As we gather around the festive table and exchange gifts, let us not forget the silent but powerful presence of these equine companions, whose enduring partnership with humanity continues to add a touch of magic to the most wonderful time of the year.



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# A Harmonious Connection: How Music Enhances the Bond Between Horses and Riders

By The VHN Writing Team



Music possesses a unique ability to evoke emotions, uplift spirits, and create a harmonious atmosphere. This captivating power extends beyond human experiences; it resonates with horses and their riders alike. In the equestrian world, incorporating music into training sessions, competitions, or leisurely rides can have profound effects on both equines and their human partners. This article explores the ways in which music contributes to the well-being, performance, and the overall connection between horses and riders.

## Establishing Calm and Focus

**Stress Reduction:** Horses are sensitive animals, and their environment significantly influences their demeanor. Playing calming music in the barn or during grooming sessions can help reduce stress and anxiety in horses. Soft melodies have the power to create a serene ambiance, making horses feel more at ease in their surroundings. This can also be useful during vet appointments, thunderstorms, and other uncomfortable situations for our equines.

**Enhanced Focus:** Music with a steady rhythm can aid in enhancing a horse's focus during training sessions. The rhythmic beats provide a consistent backdrop, helping horses maintain a steady pace and encouraging riders to synchronize their movements. This synchronization fosters a sense of unity between horse and rider, establishing a foundation for effective communication. And depending on the chosen music, it can help to teach riders about keeping a well-timed pace for competitions.

## Tempo and Cadence in Training

**Matching Rhythms:** Incorporating music with a suitable tempo during riding or groundwork exercises can influence the cadence of a horse's movements. The rhythmic patterns of the music can guide riders in maintaining consistent gaits, promoting balance, and improving overall coordination between horse and rider. It can be hard, especially for young or new riders, to understand maintaining a specific tempo in their horse's steps. Finding music that matches the desired tempo can help to create an example for riders to follow.

**Encouraging Relaxation:** Slow, calming music can encourage horses to relax and lower their heart rates. This is particularly beneficial during warm-up or cool-down sessions, as the soothing sounds contribute to a more tranquil and enjoyable experience for both horse and rider. It can also calm nervous riders that are just starting out or perhaps have had an injury or fall while riding and need to get their confidence back.

## Elevating Performance in Competition:

**Musical Freestyles:** In equestrian disciplines like dressage, musical freestyles allow riders to choreograph routines set to music of their choice. This creative expression not only showcases the horse's skills but also adds an artistic dimension to the performance. The carefully selected music complements the horse's movements, enhancing the overall visual and emotional impact.


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**Motivation and Energy:** Upbeat and energetic music can serve as a motivational tool during training and competitions. The rhythm and tempo of lively tunes can inject enthusiasm into the riding experience, encouraging both horse and rider to perform at their best.

For kids that are students and do their lessons after school or during off times, music can help to either relax them or it can also help to make the lesson more fun and less stressful. Children may develop boredom with their riding lessons or need something to encourage them past obstacles. Music can be a positive gateway for this.

## Strengthening the Bond

**Shared Experience:** The act of choosing, playing, and enjoying music together creates a shared experience between horse and rider. This shared sensory engagement deepens the bond and understanding between the two, fostering a sense of companionship and trust. It can also help to desensitize horses for competitions or loud events, where music is usually played.

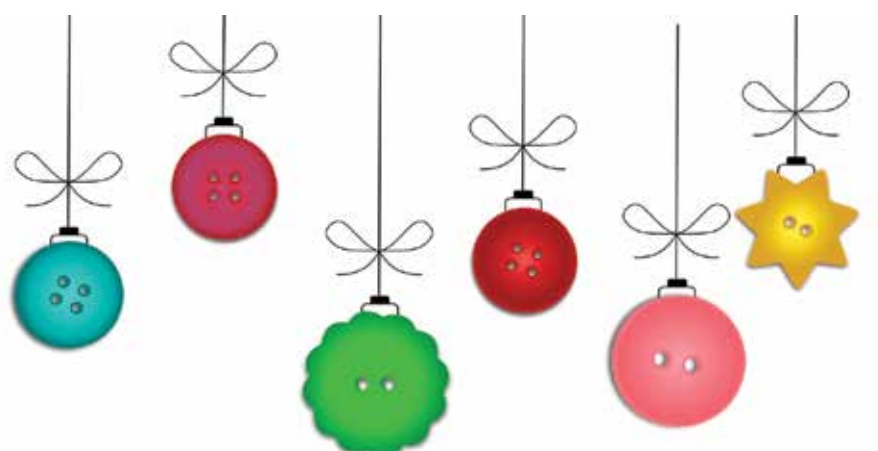
**Positive Associations:** Associating music with positive experiences can have lasting effects on a horse's behavior. Playing soothing music during grooming, feeding, or relaxation periods creates positive associations, making horses more receptive and cooperative during various activities.

## Practical Considerations

**Volume and Genre:** While music can be beneficial, it's essential to consider the volume and genre. Loud or sudden sounds may startle horses, so choosing music with a moderate volume and calming melodies is advisable. Experimenting with different genres can help identify what resonates best with each individual horse. And by making changes to the music in increments, you can help your animal get used to these changes and be more pliable with new situations.

**Safety First:** In all instances, safety must remain a priority. Ensure that music choices and the act of playing music do not distract the rider or compromise the horse's attention and responsiveness. Additionally, be mindful of the volume to prevent startling or overwhelming the horse.

The integration of music into the world of horses and riders is a testament to the universal language that transcends species. From fostering relaxation and focus to elevating performance and strengthening the bond, music plays a multifaceted role in enhancing the equestrian experience. Whether in the quiet moments of grooming, the rhythmic flow of training, or the electrifying energy of a competition, the harmonious connection between horses and riders finds its symphony in the language of music.





# Understanding and Addressing the Crooked Lope in Horses

By The VHN Writing Team



The lope is a signature gait of horses, characterized by a smooth and rhythmic canter. However, in some instances, horses may exhibit a crooked or uneven lope, where their movement appears unbalanced or asymmetrical. This phenomenon can stem from various factors, ranging from physical issues to training inconsistencies. In this article, we delve into the complexities of the crooked lope in horses, exploring its potential causes and offering insights into how to address and improve this irregularity.

## Causes of a Crooked Lope:

**Muscle Imbalances:** One common cause of a crooked lope is muscle imbalances. If a horse develops uneven strength or flexibility in their hindquarters or shoulders, it can lead to an asymmetrical movement at the lope. This can be a result of uneven training or rider influence. It could also be due to favoring an old injury or stiffness that resulted in an uneven recovery, like an orthopedic issue.

**Orthopedic Issues:** Underlying orthopedic issues, such as joint stiffness, arthritis, or limb asymmetry, can impact a horse's ability to move symmetrically. Pain or discomfort in a specific limb may cause the horse to compensate, resulting in a crooked or irregular lope.

**Poor Saddle Fit:** Ill-fitting saddles can contribute to gait irregularities. Discomfort caused by pressure points or an imbalanced saddle can influence a horse's movement and potentially lead to a crooked lope.

Typically a crooked lope will be a reaction to pain in some way, as we can see from above. It can be from something simple or something more hidden that your horse can't quite tell you about. Which means, it's time for some investigating.

Perhaps the first place to start would be having someone watch you while riding to see where the pain may be stemming from in the first place. It might be an easy fix, like a different saddle fit, or even a sudden shoe issue. Or it could be more complex.

## Diagnosing the Issue:

**Veterinary Examination:** If a horse consistently exhibits a crooked lope, regardless of simple changes made to fix the problem, it is crucial to involve a veterinarian. A thorough examination, including a lameness evaluation and musculoskeletal assessment, can help identify any physical issues contributing to the irregular gait. The problem could be something that is outside your ability to fix without medical intervention.

**Professional Riding Assessment:** Consulting with a skilled equine professional, such as a trainer or riding instructor, can provide valuable insights into potential training-related causes. Observing the horse's movement under an experienced rider can help pinpoint areas that may need improvement. While you can check to first signs alone or with a friend, having a skilled instructor check later on can help to pinpoint something in your horse's movement pattern, and his riding habits that may need to be tweaked.

An advertisement for 'THE LEATHER SHOP' by Pro Champion Horse Gear. The ad features a central text box with contact information: 702-469-9693 and contact@prochampionhorsegear.com. The shop is located in Overton, NV. Services listed include Tack/Saddle Repair &amp; Cleaning, Custom Tack, Rope Bags, Awards, Rope Cans, Bridles, and Pick Up/Drop off available in Las Vegas. The website www.prochampionhorsegear.com is also provided. The ad is decorated with images of horse gear, including saddles, bridles, and rope bags, and includes logos for 'Lyndee', 'Cecile Jo', and 'Tupac'.

## Addressing and Improving the Crooked Lope:

**Corrective Exercises:** Once the root cause of the crooked lope is identified, implementing targeted exercises can help address muscle imbalances and improve overall symmetry. These exercises may include lateral work, pole exercises, and transitions to encourage balanced muscle development.

**Chiropractic Care:** Chiropractic adjustments can be beneficial in addressing musculoskeletal issues contributing to a crooked lope. A qualified equine chiropractor can assess and correct spinal misalignments, promoting better overall balance and flexibility.

**Proper Training Techniques:** Consistent and correct training plays a pivotal role in improving a horse's gait. Employing techniques that promote engagement of the hindquarters, proper collection, and straightness can contribute to a more balanced and even lope.

**Regular Saddle Fittings:** Ensuring a well-fitted saddle is essential. Regular checks by a qualified saddle fitter can help identify and address any issues related to saddle fit, preventing discomfort and asymmetrical movement.

## Patience and Consistency:

**Gradual Progression:** It's important to approach the improvement of a crooked lope with patience and a recognition of the time it may take to see results. Gradual progression in training and rehabilitation efforts is key to avoiding stress on the horse's body.

**Consistent Monitoring:** Regularly monitor the horse's progress and adjust training strategies as needed. Consistency in addressing the issue, whether through exercises, chiropractic care, or other interventions, is vital for long-term improvement.

A crooked lope in horses can be a multifaceted issue with roots in musculoskeletal imbalances, orthopedic problems, or training inconsistencies. Identifying the specific cause through veterinary examinations and professional assessments is crucial for implementing targeted and effective solutions.

With a combination of corrective exercises, chiropractic care, proper training techniques, and attention to saddle fit, horse owners and trainers can work towards improving the horse's overall symmetry and promoting a smoother and more balanced lope. Remembering the importance of patience and consistent monitoring will contribute to the horse's well-being and long-term soundness.



## Unveiling Equestrian Wonders: A Visit to Natural History Museums

By The VHN Writing Team



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Natural History Museums, repositories of Earth's magnificent and diverse life forms, is not limited to the creatures that roam the wild. While they are most renowned for dinosaur skeletons and extensive mineral collections, they are also home to an impressive array of horse specimens, celebrating the unique role of these majestic animals in our shared history.

How is the long history of the horse and its counterparts represented at Natural History Museums? Read on to find out.

### The Horse's Historical Connection

Horses have been our companions for centuries, serving in various capacities from transportation and agriculture to sports and leisure. Their deep-rooted connection with human civilization makes them an integral part of the museum's biological and cultural exhibits.

So many locations across the world have a rich history with horses that stood alongside humans as empires conquered each other and people populated unknown areas for the first time. They were used for war, farming, transportation, social and financial status, and the building of whole civilizations. Because they have been so integral to our existence, you will find horses throughout the many centuries of human experience.

### Fossils and Evolution

One of the most captivating sections of Natural History Museums is the horse fossil collection. It presents a fascinating story of horse evolution, taking visitors through millions of years of transformation. Fossils and replicas, meticulously preserved, demonstrate the evolutionary journey from small, multi-toed ancestors to the contemporary single-toed horse.

Visitors can marvel at specimens like Hyracotherium (Pictured above at the London Natural History Museum), a small, forest-dwelling creature that roamed the Earth over 50 million years ago. It's a powerful reminder of the remarkable evolutionary journey that led to the horses we know today. Being able to see these replicas in person is what makes the trip to these museums worth it. We're able to see firsthand just how these creatures appeared long before they ever came into contact with humans.

### Varieties and Breeds

The museum's collections extend to showcasing the remarkable diversity within the equine world. It's not just about the wild horses and their evolutionary ancestors; it's about the countless breeds and domesticated horses that have been shaped by human selection. And so many cultures of people have helped to create these different breeds over the centuries.

Visitors can explore life-sized horse models representing various breeds from around the world. From the sleek Arabian to the powerful Clydesdale, these displays highlight the adaptability of the horse and its ability to serve a wide range of human needs.

And by showcasing where these breeds originated from, we can see how the breeds we know today were formed in the first place.

### Paleontology and History

Natural history museums not only focus on the biology of horses but also delves into the historical aspects. Visitors are treated to glimpses of the archaeological and paleontological discoveries related to early horse-human interactions. How did we first come into contact with horses? When did we started riding them? When did we begin to utilize them as a daily part of our lives? What did they eat, how did they travel, what was their life span, and more can be discovered.

Artifacts such as ancient horse tack, chariot remnants, and sculptures provide insight into the crucial role of horses in transport and warfare throughout history. The stories of conquering armies and empires can be traced through their cavalry units, all of which were powered by horses.

### Equine Art

Horses have been celebrated in art for centuries, and Natural History Museums recognize this fact by showcasing a remarkable collection of equine art. Visitors can witness intricate paintings, sculptures, and drawings that capture the beauty and grace of these creatures, art that is hundreds of years old.

One of the standout exhibits you can find at the largest Natural History Museums is a collection of paintings depicting famous horses and equestrian scenes throughout history. From Napoleon's charger Marengo to the famous racehorse Secretariat, these works of art encapsulate the deep emotional and historical connection between humans and horses. And seeing the timeline of history in which these horses existed and how they played such a crucial part in its formation is truly eye opening.

### A Glimpse of Modern Horses

Natural History Museums also bring the story of horses into the present with sections on contemporary horse breeds and their uses. Visitors can learn about the various sports and competitions where horses continue to excel, from show jumping and dressage to rodeo events.

Additionally, museums explore the critical role horses play in therapy and rehabilitation. They showcase the emotional bond between horses and individuals with special needs, demonstrating how these animals can bring comfort and healing.

### Preservation and Conservation

The museum's commitment to the preservation of horse specimens extends to its conservation efforts. Visitors can learn about the challenges that horses face in the modern world, including issues related to habitat loss, overbreeding, and neglect.

Educational exhibits provide insights into conservation initiatives aimed at protecting wild horse populations and preserving rare and endangered breeds.

### A Visit to Remember

A visit to a Natural History Museum is not only a journey through time but also an exploration of our unique relationship with horses. The horse specimens at these museums pay homage to the enduring bond between humans and these remarkable animals.

As you wander through the halls of a Natural History Museum, you'll be reminded of the horse's evolution, the variety of breeds, their role in history, and their significance in art and culture. It's a testament to the enduring fascination and admiration we hold for these magnificent creatures. So, the next time you feel an itch to learn more about our equine friends, locate your closest Natural History Museum.

You can even travel to the most famous ones, like those located in L.A., New York, Washington D.C., and abroad like in London. Take a moment to appreciate the remarkable horse specimens and the stories they tell each time you take a stroll through the museums hallways, where history waits to be remembered.



# Coffin Bone Fractures in Horses - Causes and Prevention

By The VHN Writing Team



Horses are magnificent creatures known for their strength, agility, and speed. However, like any other living being, they are susceptible to injuries, and one such injury that can have serious consequences is a fractured coffin bone. The coffin bone, also known as the third phalanx or distal phalanx, is a crucial structure within a horse's hoof. Understanding how these fractures can occur is essential for horse owners and caretakers to ensure the well-being of their equine companions.

## Causes of Coffin Bone Fractures:

**Trauma:** One of the primary causes of coffin bone fractures in horses is trauma. Traumatic incidents such as a heavy impact or severe twisting can lead to fractures. This can happen during activities like jumping, racing, or even a simple misstep. Uneven terrain and improper footing may also contribute to trauma-induced fractures.

**Concussion and Overloading:** Prolonged or excessive concussive forces on the hooves can lead to stress fractures in the coffin bone. Horses engaged in high-intensity activities without proper conditioning may experience overloading of the hoof, increasing the risk of fractures.

**Poor Hoof Conformation:** Horses with poor hoof conformation, including imbalances or abnormalities, are more susceptible to developing coffin bone fractures. Issues such as long toe, low heel, or underdeveloped frog can disrupt the natural distribution of weight and cause uneven pressure on the coffin bone.

An issue with your horse's coffin bone can be difficult to treat and difficult to pinpoint in the first place without a range of tests. A fractured coffin bone is typically diagnosed through a combination of clinical signs, imaging studies, and sometimes advanced diagnostic procedures. Here are some common methods used to diagnose a fractured coffin bone in horses:

### 1. Clinical Examination:

- **Lameness Evaluation:** Lameness is a common sign of a fractured coffin bone. A veterinarian will observe the horse's gait and evaluate the degree of lameness.
- **Hoof Sensitivity:** Horses with a fractured coffin bone may exhibit sensitivity in the affected hoof. Pain can often be localized by applying pressure to different areas of the hoof.

### 2. Imaging Studies:

- **Radiographs (X-rays):** X-rays are a crucial tool for diagnosing fractures in the coffin bone. Multiple views are usually taken to get a comprehensive look at the bone structure. Fractures, displacement, or abnormalities in the coffin bone can be identified through X-ray images.
- **CT Scan or MRI:** In some cases, particularly if X-rays are inconclusive, a veterinarian may recommend more advanced imaging techniques like computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) for a detailed assessment of soft tissues and bone structures.

### 3. Nuclear Scintigraphy (Bone Scan):

- This diagnostic technique involves injecting a radioactive substance into the bloodstream, which is absorbed by bone tissue. Areas of increased uptake can indicate inflammation or fractures. While it provides a broader view of the entire skeletal system, it may not be as specific as other imaging methods for pinpointing a coffin bone fracture.

### 4. Ultrasound:

- Ultrasound can be used to assess soft tissues and detect inflammation or abnormalities around the coffin bone. While it may not directly visualize the bone itself, it can provide valuable information about surrounding structures.

### 5. Physical Examination of Hoof Structures:

- A veterinarian may also physically examine the hoof, looking for signs of swelling, heat, or other abnormalities. They may use hoof testers to identify specific areas of tenderness.

If a veterinarian suspects a fractured coffin bone, they will typically use a combination of these diagnostic methods to confirm the diagnosis and determine the severity of the injury. Once diagnosed, the veterinarian will develop a treatment plan, which may include rest, medication for pain and inflammation, and in some cases, corrective shoeing or surgical intervention.

Most of the time, a coffin bone injury is found more prevalently in racing horses or those that are exposed to high impact sports of uneven or hard ground. Younger horses whose bones are still developing and hardening can also fall prey to this injury. Even horses that end up kicking a very hard object just right or run over a hard spot, such as a giant hidden rock or piece of something.

Any horse can suffer from this injury though. And the most common symptoms of a coffin bone fracture are:

- Progressive lameness
- Heat in the hoof
- Swelling in the coronary band
- A digital pulse
- Focal or diffused sensitivity to hoof testers

Depending on where the fracture occurs in the coffin bone, the pain can present a bit different, such as lameness appearing as more of a heel issue instead. Below you can see an image of a coffin bone placed along a horse-shoe, right where it would be positioned in a live horse. Anywhere along this bone can suffer a crack from stress.

### Prevention Strategies:

- 1. Regular Veterinary Check-ups:** Regular veterinary check-ups are crucial for monitoring the overall health and conformation of a horse's hooves. Detecting and addressing any potential issues early can prevent the development of conditions that may lead to coffin bone fractures.
- 2. Proper Hoof Care:** Maintaining proper hoof care is essential in preventing fractures. Regular trimming and balancing of the hooves, along with appropriate shoeing, can help distribute weight evenly and reduce the risk of imbalances that may contribute to fractures.
- 3. Gradual Conditioning:** Gradual conditioning and training are essential for preparing horses for intense activities. Sudden increases in workload can put excessive stress on the hooves, making them more vulnerable to fractures. A well-planned conditioning program allows the hooves to adapt gradually to increased demands.

Coffin bone fractures in horses can have serious consequences, affecting the animal's overall soundness and performance. By understanding the potential causes and implementing preventive measures, horse owners and caretakers can significantly reduce the risk of these fractures. Regular veterinary care, proper hoof maintenance, and thoughtful training practices are key components in safeguarding the health and well-being of our equine companions.



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**Does Exercising on an Empty Stomach Cause Ulcers?**

By The VHN Writing Team

Our horses' bodies go through a very specific chain of events each and every day like clockwork, and those events are the body's way of staying regulated. Their digestive systems are perhaps the most complex of the process, and this process should be considered as he goes about his activities.

Now, when we were kids, we were regularly told to wait to swim or do any big activities after eating, otherwise you'd get a stomachache or cramps. This same thinking seems to have made its way into the logic of horse exercising as well.

A common question from horse owners is whether or not a horse should be fed before exercising.

Experts advise that it is a good idea to feed your horse, at least a small meal before exercising, if they haven't eaten in a few hours.

When horses are in the wild, they will constantly find sources of forage to consume, which means they will have food in their gut at all times. Stomach acid is secreted round the clock in our horse's lower glandular portion. This stomach acid will typically have a buffer layer on top in the form of a "fibrous mat" which is from the forage that they eat.

By having this floating on the top of the stomach acid, the likelihood of acid splashing up and damaging the tissue or causing ulcers is reduced. The non-glandular part of the stomach does not produce a protective mucus to prevent this splashing of stomach acid from doing damage.

When we exercise our horse hours after their last meal, their bodies are breaking down the very last of their hay or other feed, leaving their stomach vulnerable to the attack of the stomach acid and the potential for an ulcer to develop.

There are a few things owners can do to keep this from happening.

You can make sure to feed your horse a small bit of hay or a pound of pellets before exercising. This can be done while your grooming him up or getting other things ready.

You can exercise after a main meal so that you can be sure he has enough food in his stomach.

You can also give buffering or coating supplements available to help your horse with creating a barrier against the acid or by reducing the acidity of the stomach acid to begin with. The supplements are very short term, so it won't disrupt any important processes, but it could be enough if your horse has a predisposition for ulcers or you don't have a whole lot of time to let him eat before exercising.

This is also a good time to consider providing a longer lasting forage opportunity for your horse. Slow feeders are a great way to accomplish this and they can be stocked with forage that doesn't have a huge calorie impact as well. So, if your horse is trying to lose weight or you don't want to grow a chunky monkey, you can still provide a barrier for your horse's digestion without giving him more than he needs.





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Underneath the twinkling lights so bright,  
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# DECEMBER 2023 CALENDER OF EVENTS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>VALLEY HORSE NEWS DEADLINE</b> <b>15th of EVERY MONTH</b> <b>valleyhorsenews@gmail.com</b>					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	<b>11</b> <b>APACHE LAND APPALOOSA CLUB</b> Meeting 7:00pm, Horse-shoe Restaurant, Benson AZ; Contact Fred @ 520-384-5332	<b>12</b> <b>POSS GENERAL MEETING</b> 7pm @ SHOWPOSS.VPWEB.COM for time and place Pahrump 775-727-9576	<b>13</b> <b>HCON MONTHLY MEETING</b> 7pm Doc's Saddlery 6185 Elkhorn RD LV, NV 702-361-5456  <b>BCH of UTAH WASATCH FRONT CHAPTER</b> 7:00pm American Legion 345 Depot st Clearfield, UT Info. 801-773-9419	14	15	16
17	18	<b>19</b> <b>SSPHC MONTHLY MEETING</b> 7pm IHop Cheyenne & Rainbow 702-373-2673 paintmee@aol.com	20	<b>21</b> <b>BCH BRISTLECONE CHAPTER</b> Meeting @ 6:00 pm Third Thursday of Every Month BCHNVB.com for details	22	23
24	<b>25</b> <b>S. NV REGIONAL TRAILS</b> 4701 N Torrey Pines Dr., LV Contact Ed @ 702-645-1791 editoredd@juno.com	26	27	28	29	30
31						

# JANUARY 2024 CALENDER OF EVENTS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	<b>8</b> <b>APACHE LAND APPALOOSA CLUB</b> Meeting 7:00pm, Horse-shoe Restaurant, Benson AZ; Contact Fred @ 520-384-5332	<b>9</b> <b>POSS GENERAL MEETING</b> 7pm @ SHOWPOSS.VPWEB.COM for time and place Pahrump 775-727-9576	<b>10</b> <b>HCON MONTHLY MEETING</b> 7pm Doc's Saddlery 6185 Elkhorn RD LV, NV 702-361-5456  <b>BCH of UTAH WASATCH FRONT CHAPTER</b> 7:00pm American Legion 345 Depot st Clearfield, UT Info. 801-773-9419	11	12	<b>13</b> <b>SNGA</b> Horsemen's Park <a href="http://www.snga.biz">http://www.snga.biz</a>
14	15	<b>16</b> <b>SSPHC MONTHLY MEETING</b> 7pm IHop Cheyenne & Rainbow 702-373-2673 paintmee@aol.com	17	<b>18</b> <b>BCH BRISTLECONE CHAPTER</b> Meeting @ 6:00 pm Third Thursday of Every Month BCHNVB.com for details	19	<b>20</b> <b>LVGA</b> Henderson Saddle Association <a href="http://www.lasvegasmkhanaassociation.com">www.lasvegasmkhanaassociation.com</a>
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	<b>29</b> <b>S. NV REGIONAL TRAILS</b> 4701 N Torrey Pines Dr., LV Contact Ed @ 702-645-1791 editoredd@juno.com	30	31			



## Press Release: Brawley Cowgirl, Cailee Roper, Crowned Miss Rodeo California



San Luis Obispo, California; November 4, 2023 – Cailee Roper, 23, of Brawley, California was crowned Miss Rodeo California 2024 after a two-day pageant in San Luis Obispo, California.

The competition included the following categories: Horsemanship, Speech, Personal & Horsemanship Interviews, Test, Raffle Ticket Sales, Photogenic, Personality & Appearance. Along with the title of Miss Rodeo California 2024, Cailee was the winner of the written test, personality, appearance and horsemanship categories that count for points as well as congeniality and speech categories that do not count toward points.

As the newly crowned state rodeo queen Roper received a \$6,750 educational scholarship, buckle, saddle, perpetual chaps, perpetual crown, and other various awards provided by our generous sponsors from the western industry. This year's pageant awarded \$8,250 in educational scholarships.

Roper is no stranger to state titles as she held the title of Miss California High School Rodeo as well. Starting January 1st she will have the prestigious opportunity to represent California traveling the state and nation representing rodeo and the western industry.

She will also end her rein while competing in the Miss Rodeo America 2025 Pageant. The Miss Rodeo America Pageant is held in December each year in conjunction with the National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, Nevada.

“This year we were blessed to have three talented contestants compete for the title of Miss Rodeo California 2024. Each young lady brought their A-game, skills, and kind hearts to SLO to give it their all. The Miss Rodeo California, Inc. board and I couldn't be prouder of each one of them. As the pageant director and sponsorship coordinator, I look forward to working with Miss Cailee Roper as she takes the reins as Miss Rodeo California 2024 on January 1, 2024.” Jessica Schmidt, MRC Pageant Director.

“It was an honor to attend the Miss Rodeo California pageant in a new role, having been a contestant, title holder and committee member in the past. The caliber of contestants made me so excited of the future of our program and the western industry. Crowning Cailee Roper MRC 2024 is a proud moment, she will represent our state with grace and I am thrilled to watch as she continues to touch the lives of everyone she meets,” Brittany [Slaton] Walker, former Miss Rodeo California and judge at this year's pageant, said.

“It's hard to put into words the way it feels to accomplish this lifelong goal of mine, but more than anything I am overwhelmed with gratitude and excitement. It is an incredible honor to bring the Miss Rodeo California crown back to Brawley for the first time since 1997! This was no easy task, and was only made possible by the incredible support of my friends, family, coaches, and community. I am so appreciative of each and every person who rallied around me to help me represent my absolute best self in San Luis Obispo. I cannot wait for the year ahead! California, let's ride!” Cailee Roper, Miss Rodeo California 2024

### Cailee Roper's Biography:

Nestled in the southeast corner of California's desert is the agricultural community of Brawley, where Cailee Roper and her family proudly call home. Growing up, Cailee was an avid dancer and a cheerleader, but her greatest enjoyment was time spent with horses. Her riding career began at 7 years old in the show arena, she then made the switch to rodeo while she was in middle school. Cailee has a heart for agriculture education; she serves her community as a 4-H leader and is an active member of the Imperial Valley Chapter of California Women for Agriculture. A 23-year-old recent graduate of Montana State University, Cailee has just begun her professional career in Marketing Research. She is excited to utilize her education to further promote the rodeo industry across California and the United States. As the second oldest of Charles and Kari Roper's 5 children, Cailee has always aspired to be a positive role model for those around her. She is honored to have the opportunity to inspire the future generation of rodeo queens as Miss Rodeo California 2024.

### About Miss Rodeo California

Miss Rodeo California is a young lady who strives to promote the State of California and the sport of professional rodeo. In doing so she also endeavors to promote the great western way of life with its strong morals and values. Miss Rodeo California will be a talented, personable horse-woman with a vast knowledge of the sport of rodeo, the equine industry, and the State of California. She is a young lady who enjoys travel and has a sincere interest in garnering educational experiences that will assist in laying a solid foundation for her future. As an ambassador to the sport, Miss Rodeo California promotes the western way of life and professional rodeo. She is well versed on the sport of rodeo, horsemanship skills, has a wonderful personality and is an excellent speaker.

### For more information, press only:

Markie Battaglia  
760-390-4131  
Markiemarie88@gmail.com

### For more information on the pageant or organization: [www.missrodeocalifornia.com](http://www.missrodeocalifornia.com)

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