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THOUGHT OF THE MONTH:

Happy Valentine's Day!

The Appearance of White Hair Spots

By The VHN Writing Team



Our equines can be full of all kinds of mysteries, from behavior to biology. Most of the time these unique processes only add to their charm, while others can leave us scratching our heads and simply asking, “But, why?”

One oddity of our equines’ biology is the appearance of random white spots in their coats. These spots aren’t due to getting older or a natural overall color shift because of breed and genetics.

These spots tend to pop up after an injury, on any color horse as well. If your horse suffered from a scrape or a cut, chances are the hair that grows back could turn white. It might be only a few single hairs, or it might be a complete splotch of white that grows back in. Other times still, the hair might grow back in the same color as the rest of your horse.

So, what gives?

In your horse’s skin exists cells that produce pigment. This pigment is responsible for your horse’s coat color. They are called production cells and unfortunately, they are quite easy to damage.

You might be prepared for a nice, hairless scar to appear after a wound heals or for the hair to return as normal. But you’ll be a bit miffed when a bright, prominent splash of white crops up instead, and the reason is due to these very same production cells being damaged to the point of no return. When the hair grows back in without these cells, there is no pigment to color the hair so it remains white.

What’s extra tricky about these cells and how easy they can be to damage is that it doesn’t always take broken skin to cause the loss of pigment.

Your horse can have white splotches appear due to a fall that doesn’t cause a laceration. The impact and bruising can be enough to kill the cell’s melanin production. This also goes for ill-fitting tack. Riders may notice that white spots pop up right where a saddle rests or rubs on their horse’s back. This can be a sign that you need a different saddle.

Freeze brands are also a good example of this pigment loss as the brand typically stands out white against a horse’s color.

Another much larger example of this effect is in horses that express specific genes that cause them to shift from one color to white. The Lipizzaner or Lipizzan breed of horse is famous for this very feature. When born, the foals are typically black or bay in color. Over the course of their younger years, they gradually turn white because their cells stop making the melanin for their coats. When they reach between 6 and 10 years of age, they will have become the dazzling white Lipizzan color they are so famous for.

As for what you can do to prevent white spots, there’s not much to be done. It’s impossible to prevent every injury but providing adequate healing techniques can be beneficial. If you need to hide a white spot, say for a competition, temporary coloring can be applied. It’s best to check on the rules and regulations in this instance.



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*See you next time! - **Codi Kern***

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Planning for the Future – Could Your Horse Outlive You?

By The VHN Writing Team



Death is a natural part of life. It is just like the saying, “Nothing is certain but death and taxes.” A depressing sentiment, but otherwise very true. And maybe even more unfortunate is that death doesn’t just affect those that are dying. It also affects those that still remain.

While none of us likes to, we have to inevitably think about what happens after we pass, particularly when we are animal owners. We are everything to our animals. They love us, depend on us, and need us in just about every way. Without us, their care is no longer a guarantee.

Though it is a sad topic, what exactly do animal owners do when their horse could outlive them?

You may have seen stories of animals that were left after their owners passed away. A large species of parrot that outlived their only bonded owner. A small dog breed that lived an extra long life just beyond their childless owners life span.

Perhaps the death was sudden and unexpected, or perhaps no plans were put in place in case of the outcome because it wasn’t considered or was too painful to consider.

Either way, the animals that were left ended up being passed down to family or were alone completely with no directions for care. It’s a horrible concept to stomach.

But it’s an important one.

Horses live on average 25-30 years. This isn’t as much of a concern if you are a healthy person with every reason to believe that you have that much time and more before your life ends.

But maybe, you ended up getting your horse late in life. And there’s absolutely nothing wrong with that. Being older doesn’t mean you shouldn’t have horses, and it doesn’t mean you should get rid of them either. It simply means that you have the job of planning for your horse’s life after you are no longer here. A heartbreaking but very real possibility.

And maybe you aren’t older, but you have a life shortening disease or an occupation that is dangerous. Your life could tragically end without any warning. This too is a scenario where having everything worked out in advance would be a benefit to both you and to your precious animals.

If you have not thought about this possibility, then now is the time, no matter your circumstances.

The first thing you should do is speak with a reputable attorney about your options. There are many legal specifications and processes to consider, and your wishes need to be filed in specific ways so that they remain legal and in tact after your passing.

You’ll need to consider the writing in your will, if you will have any kind of trust, and all of the possibilities that could happen. It will be a hard process, but an attorney will know just how to explain things and know all of the loose ends that you need to think about.

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Some things to consider are:

1. When you are gone, who will inherit your animals? A spouse, adult child, sibling, friend?
2. The person that you pick to inherit your animals, are they knowledgeable and financially able to care for them?
3. If you don’t have anyone specific to leave your animal to, what kind of beneficiary will you have look after them until they find a new home? A rescue?
4. How much money will you need to leave to compensate for their care, either with a spouse, adult child, etc., or a legal beneficiary providing some form of care until adoption?
5. What happens to your animals if you are simply incapacitated or deathly sick? If you have no spouse or legal partner, will your animals go to your children, siblings, relatives?
6. How far down the line do you want the decisions laid out?
7. Will all of your animals go to the same person? Will they go to different people with different knowledge?
8. If your chosen familial beneficiary should pass, do you need to specify your animal’s care beyond that point?
9. How many of your possible beneficiaries would be comfortable inheriting animals and agreeing to your terms?
10. When your animal does pass, what do you wish to happen with their remains?

If the legal processes are not done right, you could have problems, like probate or familial disagreements that could put your wishes in jeopardy after your passing. That’s why thinking about these possibilities now, while you are sound of mind and have the time to think about it is better than waiting.

The absolute worst thing you can do is leave your animals care up to chance, but often times it’s not a fair process and could be what you would have never wished for your pet.

Horses can be even trickier than other pets when it comes to these preparations as they take a lot more money, space, and care than other species. If you are the only “horsey” person in your family, this could be the very first problem you encounter.

If you don’t have any family to leave them to, there are much fewer places for your horse’s care than there would be for say a dog or cat. Specialty animals, like horses, will need a lot more thought and planning to make sure they end up in a situation that’s right for them.

Yes, it’s true, this process might not even end up happening as your horse could pass before you. But if there is even a small chance that your horse could live longer than you, do some research and get in touch with an attorney sooner rather than later. After all, none of us truly knows how long we have, and that fact is true for every person, horse owners included.

• **Happy Trails Monthly Recipe** •

Created by Chef Sharon Hauht

“ Honey Balsamic Chicken ”

Prep Time: 10 min Cook Time: 10 min Servings: 2

Ingredients:

2 boneless skinless chicken breast halves (5 ounces each)

1/2 teaspoon garlic salt

1/8 teaspoon coarsely ground pepper

2 teaspoons canola oil

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

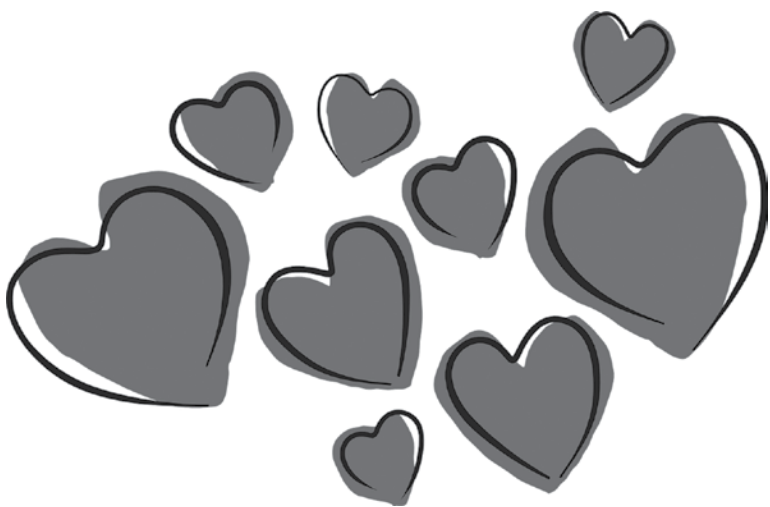
1 tablespoon honey

1/2 teaspoon dried basil

Directions:

1. Sprinkle chicken with garlic salt and pepper. In a large skillet over medium heat, cook chicken in oil for 4-7 minutes on each side or until juices run clear. Remove and keep warm.

2. Add the vinegar, honey and basil to the pan; cook and stir for 1 minute. Return chicken to the pan; heat through, turning to coat with glaze. Yield: 2 servings.



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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. You can contact Sharon through her website or by emailing her at happytrailskitchen@gmail.com or call (702) 277-8000. HTK is also on Facebook and Instagram under HappyTrailsKitchen.



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The Right Way to Fall Off a Horse

By The VHN Writing Team

Many of us horse owners will spend the majority of our riding time trying not to fall off of our horses. I mean, that's kind of the point, isn't it?

You don't want to fall off and hit that hard ground, and by riding correctly, you either won't fall off or greatly diminish the chances. It was engrained into our horse riding brains when we first learned how. With the proper seat and leg actions and with the proper coordination and horse sense, we could prevent ourselves from falling off. So now, it's simply a part of riding, or a habit if you will.

But for all of the preparation we had in making sure we don't fall off of our horses, it's still important to learn a few things for coming out of the saddle.

Specifically, the right way to fall off of a horse.

And yes, you read that correctly, there is in fact a right way to fall off.

By the right way, we mean falling off in such a way that you improve your chances of not being injured and improve your chances of getting back to your horse.

The first part of falling off the right way is picking the best combination of factors to not fall off in the first place. Obviously, you need to be schooled in riding but it can be even more than that. You should try to do these things:

Ride on your level of horse, ride in a safe area matched to your experience, anticipate your horse's reactions, be an active rider with awareness, have properly fitted tack and properly fitting riding gear, double check that your tack and your clothes are in working order with no faults, and always check your girth or cinch. By keeping these things in place and making them a habit in your day to day riding, you will reduce the chance of falling off your horse by a huge margin and prevent injuries.

Now, there will always be a chance of falling off, even if you somehow strapped and taped yourself to your horse, it will happen.

To prepare, follow these tips:

Always wear a proper riding helmet that is the correct fit and position, wear the correct riding clothes and if you'd like you can wear a crash vest, wear boots with a heel or invest in some form of safety stirrup, and know how to do an emergency dismount should you be put in the situation.

When you actually do fall off, there are some things you can do to fall in the best way possible. The first thing you might question is whether or not you should completely let go of the reins when you fall. This can be tricky, especially in the split second that you're falling and you have little to no time to think about things. If you are in an area that's enclosed, like an arena, letting go of the reins would be okay, as your horse will not be able to bolt and get lost.

If you are not in an enclosed area, like out for a trail ride, you can try to hold onto the reins as you go down to keep your horse from running off and leaving you stranded. The difficult part of this decision is that by keeping ahold of the reins, you could get entangled and dragged or cause your horse to get caught up. If your horse is bucking and bolting during your fall, you should let go of the reins completely no matter your riding area. This way, you know you won't get dragged which is the best outcome.

Secondly, if you feel yourself coming off your horse and you know you won't be able to right yourself, try to kick your feet from your stirrups. If your horse should get spooked and take off after your fall, a stuck boot means you'll be dragged and potentially kicked or hit something as you go. By shaking your stirrups free, you won't get stuck with no way to get loose.

Ideally, after letting the reins go and getting your boots free, you would fall to the ground and land on your butt. Resist the urge to try and break your fall with your arms. Sticking your arms out at any angle can easily lead to a broken arm, wrist or hand. You could even injure both arms at the same time, increasing your number of problems. Your horse might stop in surprise and just look at you, unsure of what he's supposed to do. That is the best scenario for what he will do. You'll feel a little bruised and embarrassed but getting back up and slowly reaching for your horse should be doable.

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You might be in the position that you fall at a different angle. You might fall forward, towards your face, backwards towards your back, or to the side. In any scenario, falling off can lead to you landing on your back, your face, your neck, or any combination of positions. When you feel like you're not going to fall onto your butt, the best position you can get into is to tuck into yourself, like a loose ball shape. Pull your arms in and your legs up a little bit at the knees, and when you land on the ground, you'll increase the likelihood of rolling onto the ground with your momentum. If you can get yourself to roll a little bit upon impact, it lessens the force on just one part of your body.

By tucking, you also help to eliminate the chance of your horse bolting and running over your arms or legs. After you've hit the ground and stopped, try not to immediately move. It's best to give yourself a few seconds to catch up and feel if anything hurts or even feels numb. If you've managed to land without any big injuries, you've succeeded. You can slowly collect your horse and get back on.

If you are injured, however minorly, try not to move much or too quickly and call for help. Keeping a phone on you if you are alone is important in case of this situation. When you are out riding by yourself with no one else around, you should always have a means of communication on your person. Do not leave your phone on your horse, as if you get separated, your only means of communication will be gone.

All of these tips may seem obvious or seem like a lot to remember in the moment. It's not exactly easy to practice these maneuvers to make them habit either. But the next time you're in the saddle, think about this information and try to commit these things to memory. Move around in the saddle and go through different scenarios in your mind while you're up there. It can help to imagine the possibilities and what you might do when you're actually on your horse.

You can also practice falling off of a fake horse set up with a saddle. You can have the set up at the same height as your horse and you can practice falling off to the side and getting into the balled position. It might seem scary or even silly to practice and prepare for falling off of your horse. But chances are, the day you fall off is the day you end up least expecting it.

Flipping a Coin on Grass Sweetness

By The VHN Writing Team



You're stuck with a question that should have a pretty simple answer, right? It's either this or that, heads or tails. If you don't know the answer, you might decide to google it, ask a professional, or maybe a friend.

Then it turns out that some say the answer is heads, while others say it's tails. Go figure.

This endlessness of answers can be prevalent in the horse community. Whether this is founded from opinions more than facts is for anyone to say. One question that always seems to have a flip of a coin answer is when grass is considered the sweetest for pasture.

You want to turn your horse out to graze, but you're not sure when the best time of day that is, as you've heard that depending on the time of day and the season, grass will be more sugary than other times. And you'd prefer that your horse not pig out on a big field of sugar.

Alright, what's the deal with the mystery?

Well it is true that the time of day can have a big impact on just how much sugar fresh grass contains. One person will say that the morning is the best time of day, while others will assure you that it is in fact afternoon.

Logically, grass is a living thing, a plant that grows and matures, much like others. It requires NSC or non-structural carbohydrates to grow and thrive. NSC is a mixture of starch, sugar, and fructans that accumulate through the process of photosynthesis. Hello freshman biology class. As we may, or may not, remember, photosynthesis is the process in which plants utilize sunlight, as well as water and carbon monoxide to create oxygen and energy from sugar. So, sunlight is important.

As the day progresses and grass basks in sunlight, sugar will continue to be produced and it will accumulate. Once that all important sunlight is gone for the day, plants will take those NSC's and metabolize them for energy. After this process, NSC's will be the lowest come the early morning hours, after the longest span of time without sunlight. Makes sense, right?

But here's where it can get tricky. During the cold, plants, or specifically grass, will hold on to those NSC's so that come morning, the levels will be much higher than if the nighttime had been more temperate. There are other things that can cause grass to withhold NSC's as well, such as cutting too short, over grazing, too much or too little water, fertilization causing new growth, and more.

Makes things a little clearer on why your stinking house plants seem content to wither and die under the most prudent care.

To really know for sure what your grass will do in cold or warm weather, research the type and what it handles best. Some grasses, like timothy and orchard, are considered cool-season grasses, while grass like Bermuda, are warm-season.

Depending on type, different weather and times of day will make NSC's fluctuate. And don't rely on simple logic, always do your research. You'll have to become a grass whisperer and endow yourself with knowledge on your specific type of grass and the weather coinciding with it to determine what time of day and what weather leads to higher sugar content. This can be especially important for horses that are sugar sensitive, like those that are Insulin Resistant.

In a way, it makes sense why we hear both heads and tails for this question, because in all honesty, the answer is this: it depends. *face palm*

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When a Horse Won't Use Their Paddock

By The VHN Writing Team



Our horses can be very habitual creatures and rely on a certain daily routine. It can be all the more difficult when our horses develop a bad habit or behavior that we don't understand and don't know how to fix it as a result.

For instance, some horses are housed in an indoor stall with an adjacent run or paddock attached. This set up has multiple benefits for our equines, including providing a permanent space of shelter and safety for your horse and allowing them adequate space to roam outside with fresh air and plenty to look at.

Part of the draw of this divided space is that your horse will use the inside area for eating and maybe drinking and the outside area is where they will do their business. Inside, most stalls will have no bedding, only rubber mats for ease of cleaning and sanitation. Outside in the paddock there will be dirt, sand, or other material to soak up urine and hold stool. Your horse can sleep either inside or outside depending on their preference for standing or laying down.

One of the tricky things about having this setup for your horse is the potential for going potty inside where there is nothing on the ground, particularly for peeing. Most horses will get the hang of the difference, as it will feel more natural for them to go outside.

But there can be times where you horse refuses to poop and pee outside where he should, leaving you with a very smelly and hard to clean mess. And it's not as if a horse only pees and poops once in a while. A horse that goes potty inside every time can nearly ruin their indoor stall, with or without mats. The odor from ammonia in your horse's pee can be overwhelming, leading to bacteria buildup and an increase in flies.

Many owners with this issue will utilize wood chips or shavings inside to soak up the mess, but it still creates a lot of work and doesn't fix the main issue.

Why won't your horse just go outside?

There can be a handful of reasons why your horse doesn't feel like doing his business in his paddock. And the best way to find out what's wrong is to do some observing.

Does your horse use his paddock at all? If he rarely goes outside or never does, it means there's something about his run that is making him uncomfortable. Watch your horse and ask yourself a few questions.

What's out there that could be causing your horse stress?

Are there horses next to him that he doesn't get along with? Does anything move in the wind or make noise that could startle your horse? Could he have had a bad experience and now won't venture outside? Is it painful for him to get out there?

Try haltering your horse and carefully leading him out into his paddock. Watch his behavior and note if he appears agitated or afraid. If he is giving off stress or doesn't want to follow your cues, there is something specific frightening him. You might be able to tell what it is based on what he's looking at or shying away from.

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If your horse seems uneasy but slowly comes outside with your encouragement, it could be a simple “fear of the unknown.”

Most horses prefer doing their business on softer ground where they have more space and typically move around. If your horse has just not gotten familiar with this paddock, you might be able to ease his anxiety by making the paddock a positive place for him. Grooming him in his paddock and giving him treats outside will help to positively reinforce the area.

If something specific is stressing your horse, you might have to get creative with how to fix it.

Some horses are stubborn and will take time to break the habit. With consistency and encouragement, your horse should see improvement fairly quickly.



He Loves Me, He Loves Me Not

By The VHN Writing Team



Declarations of love and devotion will be floating around as Valentine's Day approaches. It could be a couple married for forty years that decides to redo their wedding vows. Maybe a long time crush finally has the courage to ask for a date. Or perhaps your third grader has their first official boyfriend or girlfriend. It's hard to deny that love will be in the air during this holiday, and that's fine by you.

But with all of these grand gestures of love and commitment, it can make you wonder about the love and attention you receive from your animals.

Maybe you haven't really stopped to think about it before, but now that you're on the topic you have to truly wonder.

Does your horse love you? Does he even like you?

It's like high school puppy love all over again trying to riddle out the signs and clues from your silent equine buddy.

It might be strange to suddenly ponder the possibility that your horse may or *gasp* may not like you or even love you. After all, you're their caretaker. You provide every effort and comfort you possibly can. By golly, your horse better love you for all the love you give him.

But don't fret, you don't need to pick apart a daisy and rip off petals this Valentine's day, singing "He loves me, he loves me not." There are other ways to find out if your horse has true affection for you. And you will probably find that he does these things pretty often, you just never really noticed them before.

Your horse probably likes you if they seem at ease around you. If you're standing in their stall, grooming them, tacking them, or occupying their space in anyway and they appear relaxed, then they like you. A horse that isn't a fan of yours would be eagerly waiting for you to leave and make no attempts to hide his eagerness.



Your horse probably cares for you if he comes up to greet you when you arrive. If you walk up to your horse's stall or his pen, and he automatically walks up to see you and say hello, then he must like you and look forward to you coming. A horse that decides to approach you instead of staying aloof and away doing his own thing definitely wants to be around you and is happy to see you.

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Your horse probably appreciates you if he knickers or calls to you when you come to see him. This is especially true if no treats or food are involved. Instead of vocalizing for a potential goody, he's actually vocalizing his enthusiasm at your presence. He's saying he's happy to see you.

Your horse more than likely adores you if he nudges you, lays his head on you, or grooms you in return. A horse that shows any reciprocation of affection through touch definitely cares for you and views you as an important and beloved individual. He for sure adores you if he plays with you and shows how silly he can be with you as well.

Your horse more than likely respects and esteems you if he does as you ask and follows your lead. A horse that doesn't look up to you or view you as a person to work with will never do as you ask. But if your horse follows your commands and does so willingly or enthusiastically, he respects and appreciates you.

Your horse definitely loves you if he has comforted you during a difficult time. If your horse has shown the sense that he knows your unwell, either by seeing that you're sick or sad, and has made an effort to comfort you in some way, he most assuredly loves you.

Your horse also loves you if he has protected or looked after you. If your horse has shown his sense by keeping you safe, guarding you, or doing something because he felt he needed to do for your wellbeing, then he loves you with all of his heart.

So, he may never get you a lovey dovey card filled with romantic or heart felt words.

He probably won't gift you with a bouquet of pretty flowers or a heart shaped box of chocolates.

He won't be able to declare his feelings for you with eloquent words or grand human gestures.

But in his own horsey way, he will tell you just how much he loves you. And sometimes, those wordless actions and small, special moments, mean even more when it comes from an animal that cares for you just as much as you care for him.



A Horsey Valentine's Day

By The VHN Writing Team



The official day of love and romance is fast approaching, with February 14th falling on a Monday this year. In the coming days, the signs of the holiday will start popping up everywhere you go. Ads on TV for jewelry and special surprises, rose bouquets in grocery stores, candy and cards will line drugstore shelves, and romance movies and chick flicks will air throughout the month.

How you celebrate this amorous holiday is up to you, as the beauty of Valentine's Day is you can make it your own and make it special in the most creative ways. Whether you're married, dating, crushing, or single with great friends for this holiday, there are plenty of ways to make this Valentine's Day memorable.

And this memorable holiday would not be complete without some love for your equine buddy.

We're not the only ones who enjoy a nice surprise and some quality time. This Valentine's Day you might consider celebrating with your horse and there are so many great ways to make it fun.

1. Give the gift of a bouquet of beautiful... carrots. No need to buy those expensive rose bouquets when your horse is your valentine. Instead, show up with a large bouquet of fresh and juicy carrots and we can guarantee your equine will be one happy valentine.

2. Nothing says equine buddy love like a box of sweet and colorful... peppermints. So chocolate isn't exactly horse compatible, but no worries, instead of a fancy box of chocolates, you can give a thoughtful case of peppermints to your equine this holiday. We bet they'll go down just as easy as salted caramels or chocolate covered strawberries.

3. A saddle for one and a trail ride for two please. Not sure what kind of horsey activity you can do on the day of romance? Hop in the saddle and have a trail riding date with your horse. You can even pack a lunch for you with treats for your horse or ride to a place with grazing areas. Have a nice picnic with your equine and enjoy.



4. Music and chill? Movies aren't exactly interesting for your horse, but music can be enjoyable for you both. Have a day at the barn and play some music. You can do just about anything, from cleaning the barn, grooming your horse, eating a lunch, or just lounging. Enjoy being around your buddy with some festive tunes. And studies show that horses actually enjoy music like we do, so it's a win win.

5. Buy some bling. Okay, maybe bling is an exaggeration as we don't exactly recommend placing diamonds on your horse. But, you can still glam your horse up with some new wraps, a new saddle blanket, or a new halter. Your horse will be looking spiffy with their new Valentine's present on display.

6. Maybe a wardrobe change isn't really your horse's thing. But we bet they wouldn't object to some new toys. A large blow up ball, a treat toy, a grooming toy, there are many possibilities for a toy that your horse will have fun with, and putting it in their stall on Valentine's day will be entertaining for both them and you.

7. A match made in heaven. Maybe you'd like to see a little love on this holiday, so try using your matchmaking skills. Every horse can have fun with a buddy, especially on a ride. If your horse already has an interest, set up a valentine's date so your equine can spend quality time with his buddy or crush. It can be a ride around, it can be walking side by side, or even just a quick visit at the fence. You may not be the only love in your horse's life, but for today, it's okay.



8. The best way to the heart is through the stomach. Traditionally this is a quote about men, but it works for a horse's appetite too. You can give extra treats this romantic holiday, extra food, or maybe something new altogether to really make your horse and his tummy happy. You can make the treats yourself, let him have extra dinner just for today, or let him have something he doesn't get to have very often. Just for today, it's okay to enjoy some special indulgence.

9. To finish off this romantic and somewhat goofy holiday, try taking some pictures with your horse. Time goes by fast, and pictures can be wonderful sources of memories captured. A nice selfie with your equine may just become one of your most treasured possessions and a great gift to give yourself as Valentine's wraps up for 2022.

While spending Valentine's Day with your horse might seem silly at first, it can actually be a fun and unique way of making this holiday memorable.



Happy Valentine's Day everyone!

Geophagia – The Dirt Eating Horse

By The VHN Writing Team



It's a calm and quiet Saturday morning and you've just turned your horse out in the arena for some free running exercise. You lean against the fence to watch your knucklehead tear around from one end of the arena to the other, tail in the air and nostrils flared with spunky energy.

After your horse has gotten all of the zoomies out, he heads to the edge of the arena and noses around the dirt. At first you think he's just smelling around a bit. He's a piggy and will search anywhere for food, even just the tiniest strand of hay. Maybe he thinks he's found a hidden treat.

Except, now that you're really watching, you can see he isn't just nosing around. He's actually picking up bits of dirt and eating them. He might even lick up some of the dirt as he snuffles about the fence line.

Seeing that he's clearly done running, you head over to halter him and investigate his odd behavior. As you approach, you can clearly see that the fresh dirt he's sifting through and unfortunately eating is just that, dirt.

There's no hay, pellets, leaves, grass, or any sort of foraging on the ground. There isn't even old horse poop to comb through. It's only the arena dirt that's always been there.

Why in the world is your horse taking the time to eat dirt? He's not exactly starving.

While this odd behavior may seem totally random, eating dirt actually has a name. It's called geophagia and many horses partake in this strange habit, both feral and domesticated.

There are a few reasons why you might notice your equine nibbling at the dirt in his stall or another area he frequents.

1. It could be that he's eating something you can't quite see. There's always the possibility that he has indeed found something in the dirt. Horses have a knack for foraging around places and finding even the smallest snippet of food, it's their natural inclination to do so. It might be that he's picking up dirt along with whatever it is that he's found.

2. Your horse could on the other hand be eating straight dirt. And it might be because he's a little hungry. Some horses have what seems to be an insatiable appetite. They can be done with their breakfast and bam, they're out eating small bits of dirt in their stall. While your horse isn't starving by any means, he may just feel he needs more to eat.

To curb this habit, try providing a slow feeder or extra forage that's low in sugar and mainly serves as a filler. This way your horse can serve his natural instinct to forage without ingesting dirt. If your horse has recently gone on a diet because he's a chunky monkey or has a health issue, he might be feeling the strain of less food. This can lead to dirt eating as well, as he tries to fill that loss of food.

3. Your horse might be thirsty. If something has happened, and his water supply ran out without your realizing (perhaps a leak or a bad pipe), he could feel tempted to eat wet soil as a means to help satiate his thirst. Soil will also contain salt along with water content depending on your climate and location.

4. He needs more minerals in his diet. As stated in the previous possibility, soil can contain salt as well as other types of minerals like iron. If your horse has a slight deficiency in minerals, he may start eating dirt as a way to consume those minerals his body is craving. If this seems to be the case, you can have a vet look over your horse's diet to see if he needs proper supplementation, and your vet can also do different blood panels to check for specific deficiencies.

5. His stomach is hurting or he's going to colic. When our horse's have stomach upset from things like ulcers or want to colic for any reason, they can do some strange behaviors. They can toss themselves around, roll back and forth on ground, paw in their stall, pace in circles, and go off of their food and water. One other thing they might do while in this painful mindset is eat dirt. It's thought to be a coping mechanism for the pain or discomfort they're feeling and could be one of the earlier signs of discomfort before the more frantic behaviors start.

6. He's bored out of his gourd. One thing is for sure, a bored horse can do some weird things. They might chew or lick on surfaces, dig around their runs, pace around, or play with their tongue and mouth. They also might nibble at dirt as something to occupy themselves. For a bored horse, increasing his daily activities, whether through riding and exercise, or through entertaining toys, can help alleviate this sense of boredom and prevent him from destructive or otherwise unhealthy habits.

7. He's trying to grind his teeth. A horse that has dental problems or pain or maybe hasn't had his teeth done in awhile could look to dirt for help. Instead of eating a softer soil, your horse might nibble at coarser dirt as a way to file his own teeth down or get to an area of dental pain that he can't reach in any other way.

8. This odd behavior can be the result of a change in your horse's life. Our horses can be very sensitive creatures. Any little change in their routine can throw them off. They might not feel good, you changed their food or water source, there's a new horse next to them, they're in a different stall, or someone else is taking care of them. Any little or big change can cause them to do odd things, and eating dirt could be one of them.

Eating dirt, in normal quantities, is not always a bad thing. It can be regulatory for your horse. But if your horse is eating dirt frequently, or is eating dirt in large quantities, he could become sick. Whether the dirt eating itself is due to an underlying condition, or the dirt eating causes a condition, like impaction, this strange behavior should be monitored.

If you suspect that your horse might have a problem, or your horse just started eating dirt at random, a call to your veterinarian might be a good idea.

Even though geophagia can be a normal horse behavior and can be considered a healthy habit depending on a few factors, it is one habit that should be watched closely.



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How to Pack a Hoof Quick List

by The VHN Writing Team



There are many reasons why you might need to pack you horse's feet. There could be an abscess, bruising, a missing shoe, or overworking on hard ground caused your horse to have tender feet.

No matter the reason, being able to successfully and comfortably pack your horse's feet can save you time and peace of mind.

What you will need:

- Hoof pick with a brush
- Diaper, gauze, or sheets of cotton
- Duct tape or a boot that goes on securely
- Your packing material, could be recommended by a vet or farrier depending on your horse's condition
- Disposable gloves
- A temporary boot like bell boots

First, you'll need to clean out the hoof and brush it off. Get all of the nooks and crannies as best you can. Make sure your horse isn't going to move while you're working. The diaper you have is going to hold the packing material (hopefully) in place or if you use a pad with the bandage that works too.

Don't forget your gloves, things can get icky pretty fast.

By placing the packing material in the middle of the diaper and securing it your horse's foot, it should hold it in place and also smear the packing where it needs to go with your horse's hoof pressure. A little added "sculpting" by you can help too.

Once you have the packing in the diaper/ cotton/ gauze roll, you can either place it on the foot or try and set your horse's foot onto the diaper/ material that's on the ground. It really depends on your horse and how cooperative he seems to be. Once you have the diaper set right, wrap with the tape or bandage as best as possible. You want it secure for when your horse's starts to move, otherwise you may have to do it all over again.

If this is to offset the missing shoe, try to pack so that it keeps your horse's foot even with the others.

Placing a bell boot around where you have taped can help keep the tape from peeling away over the course of having the foot packed. It also helps with horse's that are a little too nosey for their own good.

In the end, it doesn't have to look pretty. As long as it stays, it works, and you have successfully packed the hoof.





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**A Farewell
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By Anna Dunstone**

Without you there's a silence
I've never felt before
The absence of your head that poked
Over your stall door
Without you there's a dismal
Atmosphere around
The barn in which your whinny was
The foremost cheerful sound
Without you life is strange
I wish that I could send
A goodbye pet and carrot up
To you, my dearest friend.



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By The VHN Writing Team



The world is full of people who will doubt and judge you. There's no way around, no way of avoiding it. If there's an opinion to be had, someone will have one about you. If there's a bad thing to be heard, it will be heard all over. It's inevitable.

And it's painful.

Remarks about you personally, your animal, the way you ride, what you enjoy, and how you go about doing your thing. Whether you'll succeed or whether you'll fail. Whether you have what it takes to begin with and if your efforts are completely in vain. You'll hear everything you're doing wrong, and not a single thing about doing it right. It will seem like everyone is against you.

Really, you'll be faced with people telling you the harshest thing, that you shouldn't be you.

After all, that's what it is when you're told you shouldn't do something a certain way or at all. When you're made to feel like what you think, what you feel, and what you like is unimportant or even foolish.

When you're afraid to be who you are and do what you enjoy, that's when this article comes in.

So here it is, even in the smallest measurement, the briefest words. Here is your sign, the hand reaching above water to lift you up so you can take a breath, the arms to catch you when the opinions bring you to your knees. Here is the shove forward to keep going, and the shield to guard your back while you head on. Here is the mantra to repeat while you look in the mirror. The words to remind yourself in the car. The advice to take to heart while you leave all others behind.

Be uniquely you. Be uniquely equestrian.



It's not for others to decide what makes you happy or what you should do with your life. It's not for others to say who you are and what you're capable of. It's not for everyone around you to point you in the "right" direction. It's not their story to write or their song to sing.

It's yours.

Every single time, it is yours. There is freedom in that blessing, to truly accept that it's your life at your fingertips, and no matter the noise flooding your ears, the doubts crowding your mind, you have everything you need to make what you want, happen.

If you want to go to the NFR at 70, do it. If you wanna be a male barrel racer, do it. If you want to become the proverbial "cat lady" of the horse community and have ten mini horses to drive, do it. If you wanna get into horses later in life and start from scratch, do it. If you wanna be just as good as the guys, do it. If you want to wear your fancy western get up to the barn every day just because you like it, do it. If you want to go to the Olympics, do it.

For every rider that has questioned themselves. For every horse person who has quit. For every owner who has given up. Right now is the moment to be you and forget the rest. It's your journey to make, and it will keep going without you if you let it.

So, don't let it go.

Be uniquely you, be uniquely equestrian. Every time you go to the barn. Every time you ride your horse. Every decision you make about your equestrian life, do it with gusto and with the confidence that it's what you want, and nobody else.

If you need a partner, look no further than your equine. He's right there with you. If you have more than one horse, more than one donkey, more than one mini, if you have a whole group of them, that's your herd. They're waiting for your go ahead, your signal to move forward. And they'll be with you every step of the way.

There will be talk, don't listen. There will be looks, shrug it off. If someone asks why you're doing what you're doing, all you have to say is, "Because I want to."

You don't owe anymore explanation that. You don't have to explain the why's and the how's. You don't have to prove that you can do it. You don't have to prove a single thing. In fact, you don't owe anybody anything, ever, when it's your happiness that's at stake.

It's you that will regret it. It's you that has to live with the knowledge that you didn't try to get what you wanted so badly. It's you that will have to come to terms with the fact that you decided to be only half of yourself.

You decided to dull yourself down and blend in.

So don't blend in. Color outside the lines, break the mould, be wild, be free, be all the things you were scared to be, that you didn't dare embrace.



After all, it's like a really great quote that makes a lot of sense. "Fears are wolves without their teeth."

When the time comes that you sit down exhausted and start to wonder if it's worth it, if you're being silly, if you look stupid, ask yourself if you're making decisions for someone else or for you. Are you being you? Are you being your kind of equestrian?

Music inspiration for this article:
Wolves Without Teeth by The Music Room

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		1	2	3	4	5 LVGA Henderson Saddle Association www.lasvegasmkhanaassociation.com KB TEAM SORTING 9 am Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park SWBRA BARREL RACE 12 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park
6 LVGA Henderson Saddle Association www.lasvegasmkhanaassociation.com	7	8 NSHA GENERAL MEETING 7pm Olive Garden - 1361 S. Decatur Blvd. 702-645-2988 POSS GENERAL MEETING 7pm @ SHOWPOSS.VPWEB.COM for time and place Pahrump 775-727-9576	9 HCON MONTHLY MEETING 7pm Doc's Saddlery 6185 Elkhorn RD LV, NV 702-361-5456 BCH of UTAH WASATCH FRONT CHAPTER 7:00pm American Legion 345 Depot st Clearfield, UT Info. 801-773-9419	10	11 ROCKY MOUNT. JACKPOT SE- RIES BREEDERS CUP LIVESTOCK SHOW 5 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park	12 SNGA Horsemen's Park http://www.snga.biz ROCKY MOUNT. JACKPOT SE- RIES BREEDERS CUP LIVESTOCK SHOW 10 am Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park WCBRA BARREL RACE 12 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park
13 SNGA Horsemen's Park http://www.snga.biz	14 APACHE LAND APPALOOSA CLUB Meeting 7:00pm, Horse- shoe Restaurant, Benson AZ; Contact Fred @ 520-384-5332	15 SSPHC MONTHLY MEETING 7pm IHop Cheyenne & Rainbow 702-373-2673 paintmee@aol.com DIXIE JR LIVESTOCK SHOW CLINIC 4 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park	16 DIXIE JR LIVESTOCK SHOW CLINIC 4 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park	17 DIXIE JR LIVESTOCK SHOW CLINIC 4 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park	18 SWBRA BARREL RACE 7 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park	19 SWBRA BARREL RACE 1 pm Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park
20 SWBRA BARREL RACE 11 am Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park	21	22	23	24	25 JR HIGH SCHOOL RODEO 10am Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park	26 JR HIGH SCHOOL RODEO 9am Hurricane, UT Washington County Regional Park
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15th of EVERY MONTH
valleyhorsenews@gmail.com

MARCH 2022 CALENDER OF EVENTS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY		
		1	2	3	4	5		
<p>*The scheduling of events for all organizations and locations is currently under constant change due to COVID-19. For the most up to date schedules, attendance, and virtual show dates/ info please regularly visit the corresponding websites.* <i>Thank You</i></p>		6	7	8 NSHAV GENERAL MEETING 7pm Olive Garden - 1361 S. Decatur Blvd. 702-645-2988 POSS GENERAL MEETING 7pm @ SHOWPOSS.VPWEB.COM for time and place Pahrump 775-727-9576	9 HCON MONTHLY MEETING 7pm Doc's Saddlery 6185 Elkhorn RD LV, NV 702-361-5456 BCH of UTAH WASATCH FRONT CHAPTER 7:00pm American Legion 345 Depot st Clearfield, UT Info. 801-773-9419	10	11	12
13	14 APACHE LAND APPALOOSA CLUB Meeting 7:00pm, Horse- shoe Restaurant, Benson AZ; Contact Fred @ 520-384-5332	15 SSPHC MONTHLY MEETING 7pm IHop Cheyenne & Rainbow 702-373-2673 paintmee@aol.com	16	17	18	19		
20	21	22	23	24	25	26 SNGA Horsemen's Park http://www.snga.biz		
27 SNGA Horsemen's Park http://www.snga.biz	28 S. NV REGIONAL TRAILS 4701 N Torrey Pines Dr., LV Contact Ed @ 702-645-1791 editoredd@juno.com	29	30	31				

Farm Animal Adoptions



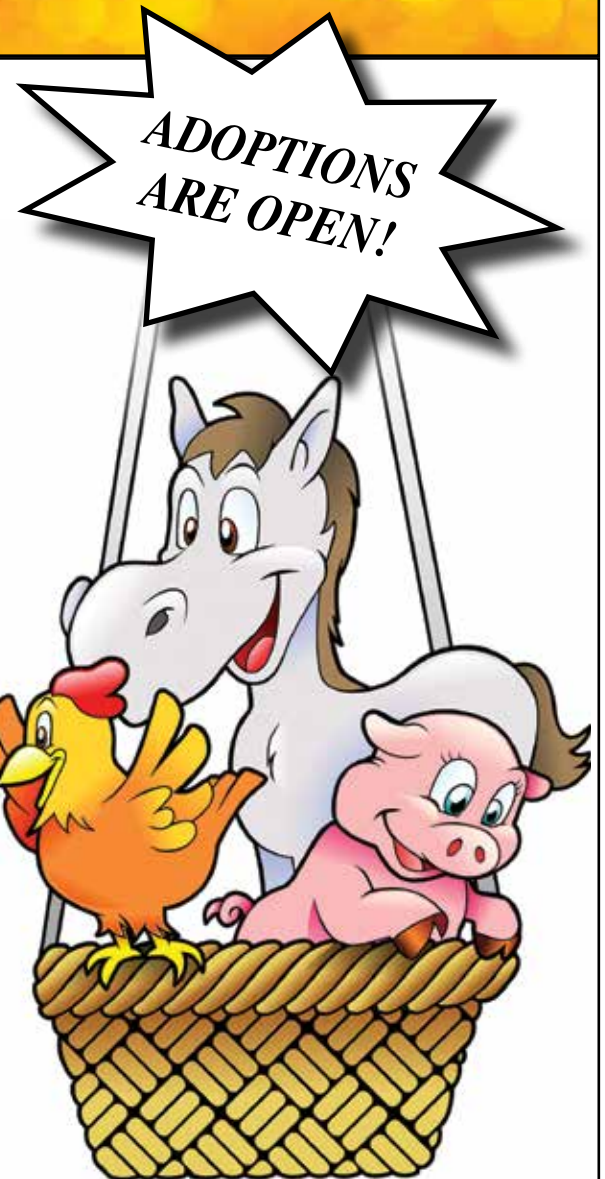
Danny- Born in May 2014. She is a poled Nubian doe. Unfortunately, she can no longer be bred. We are looking for a home for her. She is very friendly, loves company, leads great. She would be a good candidate for a cart goat, but needs training. Her one bad trait is that she is a bully when it comes to food. That is why she looks pregnant, she's just fat. If you are interested in her I can be reached at Blue Moon Farm, **775.220.4378**

All you have to do:

Is provide a photo of the animal/ animals. Give a short description explaining why they are such a great candidate for a new home. And lastly, provide the best contact information for those that are interested. Your photo, description, and contact will go here for everyone to see and hopefully will make it to the perfect new home.

Open to all: Horses, Donkeys, Mules, Miniature Horses, Cattle, Piggies, Goats, Sheep, Chickens, Ducks, Geese, Farm Fowl, Rabbits, Alpaca, and Llamas!

Any farm animal in need has a place in this section for as long as they need it!



Welcome all rescues, sanctuaries, and non-profits!

Now is the chance to give farm animals in need of adopting and fostering an extra spotlight - **on the house**.

Valley Horse News will now have an adoptions section solely for farm animals at shelters and organizations that need to find a loving, forever home. On this page, every month, you will find photos and information about wonderful animals that could be the perfect addition to your home or farm. You will also find the organization that they come from and how you can get in contact.

This section will remain in the paper *indefinitely*.

As long as there is an animal that needs it, it will be open for listings. With COVID on the decline many animals are in need of new homes, so here will be the space to feature them.

Are you an organization or know of an organization that helps farm animals? Contact now for more information and to be featured on this page every month. Remember, this page is for **adoptions only**.

Animals for sale by owner must be advertised in other sections.

Please spread the word far and wide about this section so we can facilitate as many adoptions as possible. These precious animals need and deserve all the help we can get. It is a personal goal to make this section explode every single month! A home for every animal that comes on this page is not only a worthwhile but completely possible goal.

Just imagine what could be done by this time next year. So let's make it happen!

Have questions? Email us at valleyhorsenews@gmail.com or call 702-808-7669

We will provide all of the information you need and answer any inquiries you may have.



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in Las Vegas



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Sommer McDaniel
702-370-2404

~ NE Las Vegas, PAHRUMP ~

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702-528-5473



1330 Morning Sun. Huge elevated .89 acre lot. Gorgeous location nestled at the base of sunrise mtn. Strip, valley & mtn views. Perfect setting for custom home. Zoned for horses. \$190K



1341 East Nevada Highway 372. 1.03 Acres Commercially Zoned in Pahrump. Great Location Right by NV State Rd 160 & Stores. 1 Hour From Las Vegas \$249K



2161 West Charleston Park Ave. Over 4 Acres of Land in Pahrump. 1 Hour From Vegas. Mountain Views. Corner Lot. Zoned for Multi-Use \$89,000



290 South Valerio St. 5 acres in Pahrump, 1 hour from Las Vegas! Quiet location with 360 mountain views. \$45,000 5800 Belmont. Almost 1/2 acre land in Pahrump. \$34,900

Excellent Land Lenders - 80% Financing!!



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#1 Horse Property Specialists in Las Vegas

Cindy Parker
702-528-1048

Sommer McDaniel
702-370-2404

**- SE Las Vegas, MOAPA,
HENDERSON -**

Terri Gamboa
702-528-5473



7080 S Pecos Rd. 3.9 Acre Secluded Prop., 2 bed/ 2 bath house to live in while build then as guest house. 10 car garage converted horse barn, electric gate, 100 tall pine trees \$1,975,000



10375 Gilespe St. 1 Acre Equestrian Prop. 2,436sqft/4 Bed Ranch Style House. Gorgeous Pool. Completely Upgraded. 6 Stall Barn, Tack Rm, Wash Rack, Arena, Round Pen \$899,000



4185 Nevada 168. In Moapa NV. Horse Property on almost 7 Acres w/ Water Rights. Renovated. Pastures, Round Pen, Hay Storage, Extra Corrals \$999,500



426 Box Elder Way. Newly remodeled 3bed/2bath home. Open floor plan, remodeled kitchen. New paint & floors. Ceiling fans throughout. Covered patio. \$365,000

**Call the #1 Horse Property TEAM to list your property here!
Call us to find your DREAM Horse Property!!**



"Ride in Floyd Lamb Park,
approx. 2,000 acres, best ride in town!"

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~ NW & NW by *FLOYD LAMB* ~

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1A Torrey Pines & Buckskin. Almost 1 Acre in the NW. Build Your Dream Home on this Corner Lot. Water Main Installed, Power Right at Corner of Property. Quiet Location. \$235,000



4335 N Fort Apache Rd. 1/2 Acre Lot in Private 4 Lot Cul-de-Sac. Block Wall Perimeter & Can Be Gated. Blocks From Lone Mountain Regional Park \$274,000



7077 Mustang St. 1.14 Acre Horse Prop. 4 Bedm, Contemporary Finishes. 8 Stall Mare Motel, 155' X 95' Lighted & Watered Arena, 50' Round Pen, Tack/Feed Rms, Wash Racks, Hay Storage \$749K



7380 Elkhorn Rd. Completely remodeled custom home with beautiful finishes on .41 acres with pool, 4bed, RV hookups, horse permitted. \$808,000

Floyd Lamb Park - 1,500 Acres - NEW TRAILS - Best Ride in Town!

*****GREEN ROLLING HILLS, PONDS, BIG TREES, TRAILS!*****



"Ride in Floyd Lamb Park,
approx. 2,000 acres, best ride in town!"

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