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ISSUES**

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The Pony Express

A Breed Apart

by Jane Mullen

Having been working and breeding this breed for 4 1/2 years now, I have come to the repeated conclusion that no matter what kind of professional you have looking at your animal, no one knows YOUR BREED better than YOU do.

In countless instances, precautions and corrective measures that I would have taken with any other breed of horse have proven unnecessary or "over-kill" with the Lac La Croix Indian Pony.

Although it is not unique to these traits, and perhaps because this breed has had very little human interference in the daily maintenance of it's life both prior to 1977 and since 1977, or perhaps because it has simply been bred into the animals genes, whatever the reason, this breed is extremely hardy and to date, has shown great disease resistance - a true "survivor" amongst the animal kingdom.

Nature selects only the strongest to survive. The Lac La Croix Indian Pony, a breed that has never been stabled, fussed over, vetted or vaccinated, has been surviving for years and years in the bush in Northern Ontario and in the fields of Minnesota.

So, in practical modern terms, what does all this mean? Well, this article is intended to remind you that you are dealing with a heritage breed and more importantly, one that ANY vet is not yet very familiar with. Can we be over cautious? Yes. Can we be lacking in sufficient attention? Absolutely. The key is to find the middle ground that is right for

your animal and that middle ground, in my experience, is somewhat lower than the current level of expected care for horses.



To share my experiences further, while I was out of town in March attending the Can Am Equine Emporium (Murphy's Law at work), one of our young stallions, being the brat that he likes to be, decided to try and go through the wire fence (once again) and go walk-about. Well, for whatever reason, he didn't make it that time and caught the back of his front leg up in the wire. One can only assume that the other horses in that paddock were giving him some grief because, contrary to his nature, he decided to get himself OUT of the fence no matter what and sliced open the back of his leg several places between the knee and elbow. He has been in and through the fence on many occasions with no injuries prior to this time.

My husband, relatively new to handling horses (bless his sole for being willing), was left behind to feed and look after the animals in my absence and is not comfortable with treatments, injuries, injections etc so he called me for advise. What I would have done had I been home was not an option so my advise to him - CALL THE VET and let them deal with it.

By the time the vet arrived it was 9 pm and my ponies live outside in the bush (no lights!). With flashlight in

hand, and a sore, stubborn horse that wouldn't walk up to the house for the yard light, he held while the vet proceeded to clean and dress the wound. The vet advised that she would have stitched it had the stallion been more cooperative and she left my husband with enough antibiotics, to be injected daily, for five days.

I returned home three days later to find that the open wound had not been cleaned once, no ointments or creams applied and no injections had been given.

I managed to wrestle three of the five injections into him (he really is a card when you get to know him) and cleaned his leg twice during that time and low and behold, in the wet, mucky, disgusting stages of spring thaw, his leg managed to heal fine with no difficulties, no lameness and with little or no intervention on our part.

So, would it have healed fine on it's own even if we hadn't called the vet? I am certain of it Had I been home I likely would have cleaned it myself and applied zinc ointment to keep out the water and anything else trying to attach itself to his leg and kept a close eye on it. Would it have healed fine if the vet had managed to stitch it up? Likely as well, but we'll never know. In my environment, running and jumping through the trees and slipping and sliding in the thawed muck, he might just as easily have infected the wound because it was closed and couldn't drain.

I wouldn't trade my vet's office for anything and have a wonderful working relationship, *however*, I constantly remind myself that THEY are not as familiar with this breed as I am.