

HORSE AWARENESS

Approved:

Dr. Heather C. Galloway
Director, University Honors Program

Approved:



Rene LeBlanc
Department of English
Supervising Professor



Mark Todd
Department of Art & Design
Second Reader

HORSE AWARENESS

HONORS THESIS

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By

Stephanie Boyd

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Foreward

As a senior in high school, accepted to Texas State in 2005, I started researching San Marcos for volunteer opportunities. I knew I wanted to work with animals, particularly horses. A friend of a friend told me about AWARE, a therapeutic horseback riding center. With a small group of similarly interested friends, I attended a volunteer training session my first semester in San Marcos. I was a little wary of working with the physically and emotionally handicapped since I'd had no previous experience in that field, but my love of horses won out. Four years later, I've discovered that I enjoy working with young clients the most. Watching them learn is as rewarding as working with the horses, which have long been my favorite animals.

This book is a product of passion and gratitude. With my passion for horses, I knew any thesis I produced would include them in some way. AWARE has given so much fun and experience to me that I feel I need to leave this program with a token of my appreciation. The horses are an integral part of AWARE, and a few pages of recognition might be informative and entertaining for both the clients, instructors, and others who might be interested.

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Introduction

Every day, people are recognized, awarded for their achievements: a heroic act, a winning project, a first bicycle ride. Sometimes, animals are also recognized for their achievements. Perhaps the official praise doesn't mean much to the animal (treats and play time are more rewarding), but it is certainly appreciated by the people who know those animals. Those who don't know the animals may be interested in meeting them. Often, there is not enough information about the individual animals that make a difference in people's lives. The horses of the therapeutic riding center, Always Wanted A Riding Experience (AWARE) impact lives every day, but for the most part, only a handful of instructors and volunteers ever really know the individual horses. Ahead is a peek into the history, senses, and uses of horses; a brief tour of the current instructors at AWARE; and a life and personality profile of each horse living and working at AWARE today.

Horses: A History

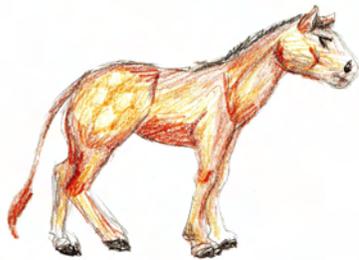
Earth's history is divided into segments, or ages, by its geologic development: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, and Quaternary. We live in the late Quaternary Age, but mammals started changing in the Tertiary, also known as the Age of Mammals for this reason.⁴



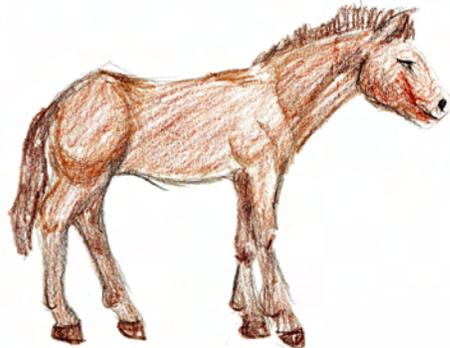
Eohippus, the earliest ancestor of the modern horse, was the size of a fox. Instead of hooves, this early mammal sported four toes on the front feet and three toes on the back. Every horse and pony living today evolved from this creature.⁴



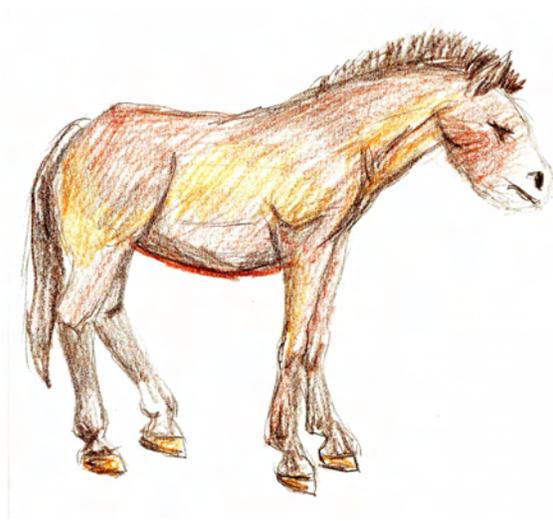
Eohippus changed into *Orohippus*. *Orohippus*'s main difference was size, as he was slightly larger than *Eohippus*, but he kept the same number of toes.⁴



Next in the horse's lineage came *Mesohippus*. He grew to twice the size of *Eohippus*; his legs lengthened in proportion to his body; and his front feet lost the fourth toes.⁴



Merychippus is *Mesohippus*'s direct descendent and has some important evolutionary differences. While he still has three toes on the front feet, he only walks on one of them, the middle one. The two on either side don't touch the ground. This middle toe has also become larger and more oval. His grinding teeth have changed to become longer and flatter, much like the molars of today's horses.⁴



Pliohippus is the last step before *Equus caballus*, today's equines. In fact, there are few differences between the species. *Pliohippus*'s toes were replaced with hooves; his neck lengthened; and his upper jaw decreased in size leaving room for a larger brain.⁴

Equus caballus appeared during the Pleistocene period of the Quaternary Age. This was also the time of the Ice Age. Glaciers pushed most animal life south, so while horse fossils have been found in both North and South America, horses were extinct from North America when Europeans arrived. There is no current explanation as to why horses didn't continue evolving in South America. Horse fossils have been found on every continent except Australia.⁴



In Northern Europe and Asia, large forests developed when the glaciers retreated. Like other animals that pushed south during the Ice Age, horses began to migrate north again. By this time, *Equus caballus* had already diversified into types evidenced by cave paintings in France, the Pyrenees, and the Cantabrian mountains of Spain. Like other species, horses had adapted differently to the environments they were forced to settle in because of the Ice Age. Four types of horses were discovered:



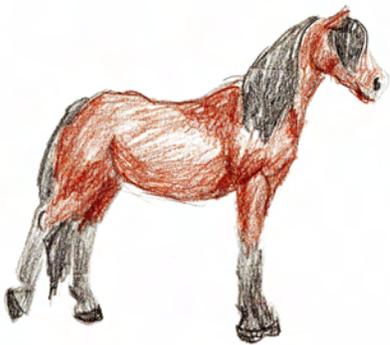
Type 1 is the Celtic, or Atlantic, pony. The Celtic pony was adapted for windy, wet conditions. Their coats were flat and channeled water effectively. Their eyes had ridges, creating what is known as a hooded eye, which kept rain out, and they had a unique jaw structure. Pictured above is an Exmoor pony, a remarkably pure breed having only been crossed one or two times.⁴



Type 2 is the Norse horse, or North European and North Asian Forest horse. These horses were large-boned, heavy horses, the predecessors of draft breeds. They had broad hooves to compensate for the sometimes swampy areas where they lived, a thick, wiry coat to protect them from undergrowth, and possibly a dappled coat for camouflage purposes. Pictured above is a Fjord, a descendent of the Norse.¹⁶



Type 3 is a Central Asian horse from which hot bloods (one of three main categories of horses) descended. These horses evolved to tolerate extreme heat, dry cold, drought, and lack of fresh greens. They had a light build, tapering face, long neck and ears, wide nostrils, and hooded, slanting eyes. Their body was lean and narrow with a dense bone structure, small, strong hooves, and probably a silky coat for reflecting light. Above is an Akhal-Teke, a model desert breed.⁵

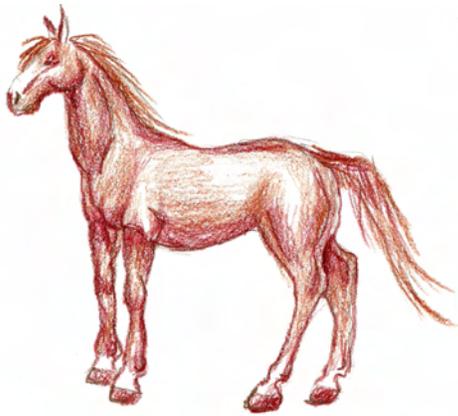


Type 4 was a pony-sized horse from Western Asia. These horses were similar to Type 3. They had a narrow build, dense bones, small, strong hooves, a silky coat, slender limbs, slanted eyes, and wide nostrils. However, they were shorter in stature than the Central Asian horses, and they had short, turned-in ears. Their facial bone structure had the characteristic concave appearance that their Arabian descendents inherited. Pictured above is a Caspian pony, Type 4's modern equivalent.¹³

Although horses and ponies seem enormously different in their sizes, colors, temperaments, etc., they all have the same bone structure uniting them as a single species, *Equus caballus*. Each breed has different qualities emphasized that come from specializing in a particular environment.

For example, the Shire is bred for extreme strength and the Thoroughbred for extreme speed. Both breeds have the same points (mane, hooves, withers, etc.), yet they have been developed for opposite purposes and so are quite different.¹²

A horse must be 14.2 hands in height, a hand being four inches. A pony is under 14.2 hands. The only exception to this rule is the Arab horse, which can be under 14.2 hands but is always considered a horse because the breed does not have other distinctive pony characteristics such as traditionally calmer temperaments, thicker manes and tails, proportionally shorter legs, and broader foreheads.²¹ There are three categories of breeds, classified as hot bloods, cold bloods, and warm bloods. Hot bloods comprise the horses in the racing industry. They have light bodies and a high-strung personality. Horses in this category have delicate legs that must be handled carefully. A few examples of hot bloods are Thoroughbreds,



Arabians,



Pintabians,

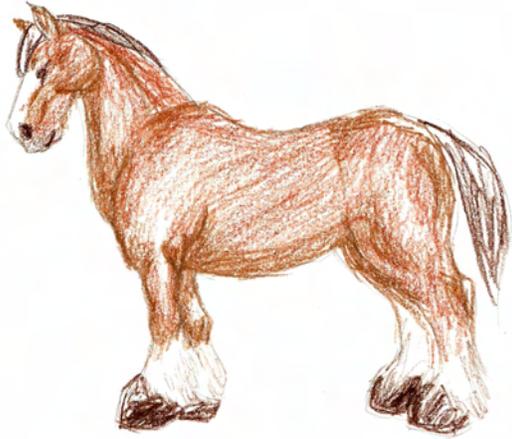


and Spanish Barbs.¹²



Cold bloods are large, solid horses, often with gentle demeanors. They were originally used for farming, hauling, and war (Medieval knights needed horses that could carry their heavy armor). Cold bloods are reputedly very reliable because they are not easily spooked. Some cold bloods are

Clydesdales,



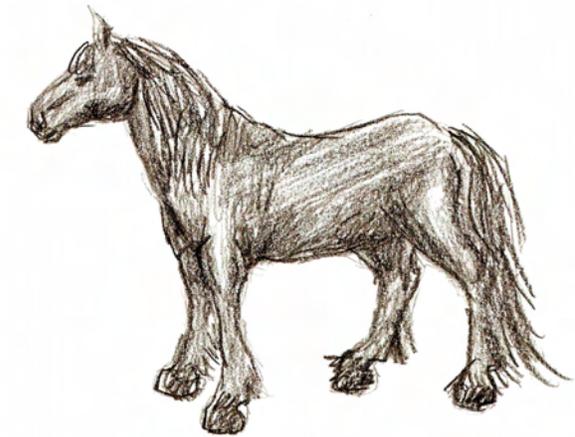
Shires,



Belgian Heavy Drafts,



and Percherons.⁷



Warm bloods originated when the light, quick-tempered hot bloods were crossed with the stolid, gentle cold bloods. What resulted was a medium-build horse with the agility of hot bloods and the mild temperament of cold bloods. They are generally considered good, all-around horses. Some warm bloods are

Appaloosas,



Lipizzaners,



Tennessee Walkers,



and Quarter Horses.²³



The Pony

Although one requirement of ponies is that they be under 14.2 hands, height is not the only feature that sets them apart from horses. Ponies were domesticated much later than horses, so they've had less human influence in how their breeds have developed. In general, a pony's build is stockier than a horse's, so they can carry proportionately more weight than warm bloods and cold bloods. They are surefooted and have a highly developed sense of direction. They also have a distinctly different personality from horses that probably stems from their innate intelligence (higher than the average horse) and self-sufficiency. Even when handled all their lives, ponies retain their independent spirit.⁹

New breeds of horses started appearing after early wars. Invaders took the best horses of the country they captured to improve their own stock through interbreeding, and they invariably left some of their own behind. Lipizzaner horses are descendants of such a war. The ancestors of this breed originated when the Moors invaded Spain in A.D. 800. The Moors brought Barb horses that intermixed with the native Spanish horses and resulted in Andalusians and other Iberian breeds. Types 3 and 4 were the most prized and interbred. Eventually, horses were bred for specific jobs, not just the betterment of the breed, which resulted in the wide variety we have today, each specialized for a particular region, climate, and work. A few breeds, such as the Friesian, already fit

the needs of the locals. As a result, these breeds have changed very little over the centuries. In fact, the Friesian was so well suited for the people's needs that the breed has existed with negligible change for almost a millennium.⁹

Horse Sense

Since the horse is inherently a plains-dwelling prey animal, all his senses are primed for detecting danger, and his actions are geared towards avoiding it. His reflexes have had centuries to reach a heightened sophistication.²

Eyes



Horse eyes are twice the size of human eyes and among the largest in the mammalian kingdom. Their location on the side of the head is typical of prey who must watch a large field of vision for attack. The horse has almost a 360 degree field of vision. His two blind spots are directly behind him and just in front of and beneath his nose. However, the rear blind spot is visible with just a slight angling of the head.²



A rider mounted on the horse, therefore, is completely visible to his or her horse, something a rider may easily forget. Not only can the horse feel the rider's weight and the pressure of his/her legs and hands, he can also see all the movements of the rider's head, torso, arms, hands, and legs, making it important that a rider direct his or her horse with his/her entire body and not just by the reins.²

The second blind spot, a short distance in front of and below the horse's nose, is important in understanding how a horse reacts to a person's approach. Walking up to a horse from the front, a person effectively disappears just when he or she is about to reach the horse. Naturally, the horse will sidestep or startle just to put the person back in his field of vision. The best way to approach a horse is towards his shoulder, an angled approach from the side.²

Though they see a very wide perspective, horse eyes are much more attuned to movement than depth or detail. Consequently, any quick movements can stimulate a fight or flight reflex and should be avoided. It's best to move, not necessarily slowly, but calmly around a horse. Excited or quick movements can trigger his prey response.²

Ears

A horse's ears are keen to hearing the slightest noise and pinpointing its location. His ears can swivel 180 degrees and each can move independently of the other. Horses are most secure on calm days, when they can hear best. Windy days that create lots of unfamiliar rustlings can make a horse nervous. Similarly, loud noises, such as shouting or laughing, can startle him. A horse will be most comfortable with a soothing tone rather than an abrupt one.²



A horse's ears can also be a good indication of his mood or where his attention is. If his ears are pricked forward and up, he is focused on something ahead, probably interesting or alarming. A treat will usually engender this reaction. If his ears are relaxed off to the side, the horse is also probably relaxed, perhaps dozing or listening to something in that direction.¹⁵

Often ears pointed backwards are mistaken for aggression, but the horse is simply paying attention to something behind or on top of him. When his ears are pinned back, tight against his head, then he may be signaling anger, pain, or intense concentration.¹⁵

Nose

In the same way a horse prefers familiar sounds, he also feels most comfortable with familiar smells. Exchanging snorts for horses is like a handshake. When they blow into each other's nose, they trade scents that are unique to each horse. Horses also recognize other animals and objects by their smells.²



The nose and mouth are the most sensitive areas on a horse's body, and some of the most expressive. A horse's nostrils can also be mood indicators. Flared, circular nostrils indicate interest, excitement, or alarm. Calmness or boredom is reflected in relaxed, half-open nostrils. Drawn back or wrinkled nostrils may mean anger, pain, or frustration. The whiskers on a horse's muzzle act as heightened sensory receptors. A horse can detect the best patch of grass or weeds to eat and relay information about other objects under his nose, which is useful since a horse cannot see directly in front of or under his nose.¹⁵

Mouth



Horses can be very picky eaters. A horse's sense of taste is highly developed to avoid eating anything that might upset his/her stomach. This is a very prudent evolutionary trait because if a horse eats something that makes him sick, he can't throw it up to rid his system of it. Horses are incapable of vomiting. Unfortunately, this pickiness can also result in refusing medicine, which often has a bitter or sour taste.²



A relaxed mouth means a relaxed horse. Similarly, a tight mouth suggests anxiety or anticipation, and bared teeth indicate anger (unless he's just yawning). A horse's mouth and muzzle are the most sensitive areas of his body, so a person should always be delicate when handling them.¹⁵

Compared to humans, horses have a limited repertoire of vocalizations. Rather than conveying specific messages, horses usually communicate how they are feeling. The longest and loudest call is

the neigh, or whinny. Horses use this to find other members of their group, important for a herd animal. A nicker is similar to a low neigh and is a vocalization of greeting. After a horse finds his friend with a neigh, he says hello with a nicker.²

Snorts are a horse's danger alarm. They serve both as a warning of a possible threat and as physical preparation for running away. Horses take in deep breaths when they snort which opens their airways and causes their blood to pump faster, readying the muscles for quick action. A blow is similar to a snort in that it is an abrupt exhalation of air through the nose. However, it has a very different meaning. Horses blow out of curiosity or simple contentment.²

Squeals are the loudest call in a horse's repertoire yet are used for close-range warnings. A squeal may be used in defiance against another horse or predator and can also indicate extreme pain. Roars are a form of raw, high-pitched squeals and are rarely heard in domestic situations. They do not resemble a tiger or other big cat's roar. Wild horses roar when extremely angry or extremely scared.²

Other noises, such as grunts, do not have any particular meaning but are simply comfort noises or noises of exertion. Horses sigh and yawn for the same reasons as humans: boredom, irritation, contentment, etc.² Just as a person's mood is sometimes apparent by his/her body language, a horse's mood can also be approximated by body language. People frequently in contact with horses learn to read those signals to interpret horses' attitudes. Someone who doesn't read equine body language is liable to be bitten or kicked by an irritated horse, just as someone who doesn't read human body language might be punched or snapped at by an angry person.

Body



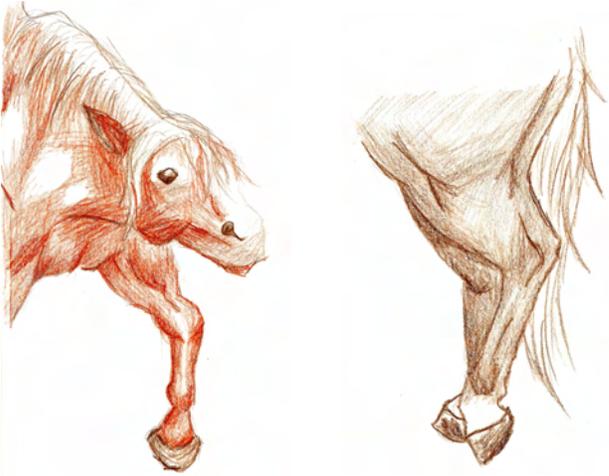
A horse's body is very sensitive to touch. He uses touch to greet other animals, and mutual grooming among herd members strengthens bonds. Similarly, horses develop attachments to the people who groom them.²



A horse can feel a fly land anywhere on his body, and he can twitch almost any muscle under his skin in response. When tickled in some places, such as his belly, a horse may kick or shy away; just as when a person is tickled, he or she may punch or kick convulsively. Using a light touch on most places of a horse's body will tickle him, but a person doesn't want to be heavy-handed either. A medium amount of pressure is best when brushing, petting, or directing a horse.²



Just like the ears, eyes, nose, and vocalizations, the horse's body posture can signal his mood. As in humans, the more relaxed a horse's body is, the more relaxed his demeanor. A droopy head and contrapposto stance (one leg bent and relaxed) indicate drowsiness or weariness. A tense and fidgety body usually means excitement or anticipation. A stiff, nervous body in other animals (and reflected in his own) can mean only one thing to a horse: danger, or perceived danger.²



Tails are also expressive of a horse's attitude. A tail held high at a sharp angle, possibly swishing side to side, shows enthusiasm or excitement. A horse's tail is always slightly lifted during quick movement, but a tail slightly raised can also indicate fearful alertness. A low tail indicates relaxation. If a horse's tail is clamped between his hind legs, he is feeling aggressive and may kick out behind. Often a horse will swish his tail, not out of a particular mood, but to shoo away flies.¹⁵



Mind

All of a horse's natural reactions, reflexes, and thought processes come from years of evolution as prey. Any new situation, noise, or object is suspicious, something to be eyed warily. Even familiar objects, when put in an unfamiliar environment, can become a new predator. For example, a horse can become used to a large, inflatable toy in his pasture, but move it into his barn or feeding corral, and he will shy away from it as if it were a completely new object.¹⁵



Horses, like other herd and pack animals, also have a natural social division known as the pecking order. In a single-sex herd, the most dominant horse will assert his- or herself as the leader, top in the pecking order. Those horses the leader dislikes are at the bottom, and other horses are left to arrange themselves into an order of dominance in the pecking order. In a “co-ed” herd, a stallion will be dominant over the entire herd, but there will also be a lead mare who functions as second in command.

Horse Therapy

Horses have had jobs since their first domestication. From carrying soldiers into war to tilling farms and providing taxi services in cities, horses have eased the lives of working people for centuries. Because machines have taken the place of many industrial functions that horses used to fill, horses are mostly used for pleasure activities in modern times, such as trail riding, sports, and competitions, but there are still some working horses. One of those jobs is therapy.²⁴

Therapeutic riding was used for the disabled as early as the ancient Greeks. Even then, people acknowledged that horses were useful as more than mere beasts of burden. WWI soldiers in England received riding therapy when wounded in battle.²⁴

Therapeutic riding became an accepted, medically approved treatment when Lis Hartel, a woman diagnosed with polio, used equine-assisted therapy to recover and win the silver medal for dressage in the 1952 Olympics. She was an accomplished rider before being struck with the disease. Even after recovery, she was paralyzed from the knees down and had to use crutches, but she

insisted on learning to ride again. Her Olympic win was the first dressage competition in which men and women competed against each other.²⁴ (Pictured below, Lis Hartel and Jubilee.¹⁴)



For the physically handicapped, therapeutic riding is especially beneficial because a horse's gait is very close to a human's, despite being a four-legged variety, so a rider improves muscle strength, balance, coordination, relaxation, and flexibility that can be used in everyday activities. For those with mental or emotional troubles, the companionship, routine, and fun, educational games of therapeutic riding boost self-esteem, motivation, confidence, and patience. These benefits have been acknowledged by the American Physical Therapy Association and the American Occupational Therapy Association.²⁴

*AWARE**(Always Wanted A Riding Experience)*

Cathy Hovey, a special education teacher, started AWARE in San Marcos in 1984 with five horses and five riders. In 1986, the program was incorporated as a non-profit. Riders usually come from Hays and surrounding counties. In 1994, two San Marcos families donated the covered arena, office, and twenty acres where AWARE still resides. The facilities developed from this donation include a classroom area inside the office building, activities inside the covered arena, and short outdoor trails. This variety allows classes to operate throughout the year, regardless of weather. Currently, a school resides on the property directly behind one of AWARE's pastures.

AWARE currently serves clients with cerebral palsy, mental retardation, brain injury, stroke, autism, and other disabilities. Clients must be at least two years old, but there is no upper age limit. Classes are held Monday through Saturday and generally follow a schedule similar to that of Texas State University.

AWARE is an accredited center with the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA) and has certified instructors. AWARE's stated goal is "to improve their quality of life by offering an opportunity for therapy, exercise, and recreation." Through weekly classes, clients improve their concentration, confidence, muscle strength, balance, coordination, and posture.



AWARE Instructors

Rachel

Instructor since 2007

Rachel became interested in AWARE when she learned that it provided an opportunity to work with horses. Her interest was piqued when she learned that the clients had special needs. She wanted to become an instructor because she wanted to further her involvement in the program. She enjoyed volunteering and wanted the challenge the instructor position brings.

Her favorite element of AWARE is the variety of people she gets to work with as an instructor. Poquita is Rachel's favorite horse because "she is dependable and tolerates a lot of movement and noises from clients."

Tracy

Instructor since 1999

Tracy started volunteering for a class at Southwest Texas University. She loved it so much that she kept coming. She became an instructor after volunteering for five years due to the fact that she loves working with horses and children.

Her favorite element of AWARE is getting to see the rewards and accomplishments of the clients. The improvements might be small, but for a large group of our clients, that is all they are looking for. Seeing a child do something for the first time, or hearing a first word, are accomplishments that make being an instructor the most rewarding job.

Tracy's favorite horse is Duke "because he is very kind and gentle. He might be afraid of his own shadow, but he makes up for all his quirks with his love of what he does. Duke has a very unique quality; if his rider starts to fall off, he will step to the direction he/she is falling to try to keep them on. Duke received Therapy Horse of the Year a while back because he is such a great guy."

Carolyn

Instructor since 1993

When Carolyn moved to San Marcos, she began looking for a place to volunteer. She read an ad in the San Marcos Daily Record for volunteers at AWARE and decided, since she loves horses and children, that this was the place for her. After three years, she was invited to become an instructor and is now registered through the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA).

Her favorite element of AWARE is that she receives more than she gives, emotionally. Just being at AWARE lifts her spirits, whether she is teaching a class, schooling a horse, or shoveling manure. Carolyn's favorite horse is Flower because Flower has a wonderful personality and a humorous, mischievous nature. Flower is also gentle with everyone.

Maureen

Instructor since 1992

Like Carolyn, Maureen was also attracted to AWARE, especially the interaction with horses, by an ad in the *San Marcos Daily Record*. She didn't even consider becoming an instructor until she had

volunteered for several years. She was then asked if she was interested in interviewing for an instructor position.

Her favorite element of AWARE is seeing the joy that riding and interacting with horses brings the clients. Maureen's favorite horse is Merlin because when Merlin first came to AWARE, he was very sweet-natured and easy to ride. He's still easy to ride but not so good-natured. He has become grouchier as he has aged, but Maureen loves him regardless.

Suzanne

Instructor since 1991

Suzanne already had experience in riding therapy before she came to AWARE. She had been interested in the practice for years and had done it informally with emotionally disturbed students. When she moved to San Marcos, she found AWARE and started volunteering, which led to becoming an instructor.

Suzanne loves everything about AWARE: the clients, the horses, the camaraderie with her colleagues, and the challenge. Her favorite horse is Poquita because Poquita is "sweet, honest, accepting, patient, and wonderful!" She admits that she's had several favorite horses throughout the years, but right now, Poquita is tops.

Sherry

Instructor since 1990

Sherry and her family were volunteering with Special Olympics prior to AWARE, but they wanted to volunteer with a program at least once a week. Sherry saw an ad for AWARE and decided to try volunteering there. She fell in love with the horses and clients and naturally progressed from volunteering once a week to several times a week, gradually taking on an increasing number of responsibilities until she advanced to being an instructor.

Her favorite element of AWARE is working with the adult riders, especially the traumatic brain injury clients. She enjoys the horses but likes the interaction with adult clients. Sherry's

favorite horse is Flower because Flower is reliable, gentle, a people-lover, and predictable. An instructor can always tell what Flower is thinking and how she will react.

Joy

Instructor since 1990

Joy started volunteering at AWARE because she wanted an activity that her roommates would not want to participate in. Her roommates volunteered with her at first but decided that horses were too smelly for their tastes. Joy started schooling horses and volunteering and was eventually asked to start teaching clients. She is now the program's director.

Her favorite element of AWARE is seeing the clients improve. Joy's favorite horses are Duke and Flower. She loves Duke because he wants to please people; he is very "honest and takes care of his riders, even if he is a wimp." She loves Flower because she owns Flower, and Flower, like Duke, is honest; she lets people know what she thinks.

*Special thanks to Joy for providing a large portion of information about the horses.

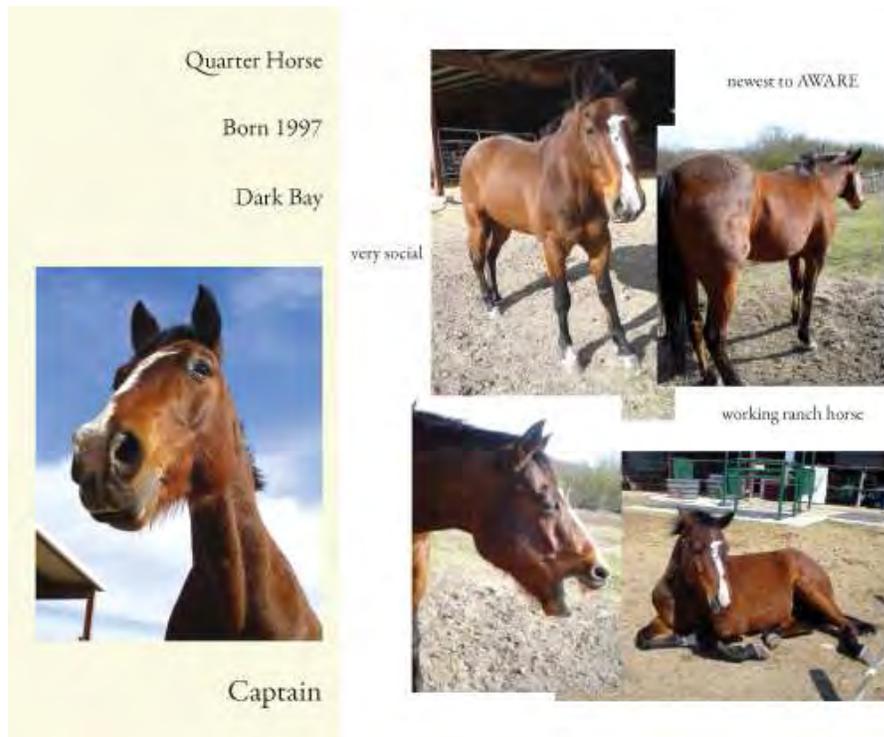
AWARE Horses

Captain



Past

Captain has been a working ranch horse all his life. He worked cattle at a West Texas ranch in the Davis Mountains 9 a.m.-5 p.m. six days a week. The McCoy family donated him because he was getting too old for ranch work.



Life at AWARE

Captain is very new to AWARE and has only met the other horses over the fence. He hasn't been in the same pasture with any of them. Only instructors have ridden him, no clients, so it's not completely predictable how he would react. AWARE might not keep Captain long. His hooves may be hurt too much from ranch life for people to ride him very often. He is still in the trial stage.

Personality

Captain is a very social horse with people. Since he was a working horse all his life, up at daybreak every day, he is always inquisitive. He wants to know where to go and what to do. Because he was a ranch horse, almost nothing startles him. He had never seen a barn before he came to AWARE, but he walked right in, quite calmly, and didn't panic at all. At one point, he became stuck between some fence wires separating the paddocks from the pasture, but he just stood still until someone came to untangle him. He didn't fuss when the wires were pulled over his head and back either.

There is a bridge in the arena that the horses walk over during lessons. Captain wasn't scared, but he didn't know what to do. Being a large horse, it was easier for him to walk around or step over the bridge rather than walk on it. He just needed to be shown what to do, though, and he walked right over.



Captain is very tolerant of anything people do to him, such as grooming, tacking up, etc. He's very eager to please. However, he doesn't like his feet picked up. His shoes were put on by ranch hands, not farriers, so his hooves were clipped a little too flat. Consequently, he walks more on his heels than his toes (horses normally walk more on their toes). This caused him to develop crushed, or collapsed, heels. His hooves may or may not recover fully. If they don't, he'll be partially lame.



When Captain first arrived at AWARE, he smelled like cedar trees because he'd just come from the mountains. Since he's been at AWARE, he's become more sure of himself, and has developed a taste for sweet feed (grains and molasses).

Color

Captain is dark bay. Bays have reddish-brown bodies with black points (i.e., ears, feet, nose, etc.), and theirs is the most common color among horses. They occur in all but a very few breeds. Those breeds have used color as a defining characteristic of the breed, and bay is simply not on the list. At least one breed, the Cleveland Bay, consists only of bays. Folk lore tells that bays are typically cheerful and dependable, yet quiet and somewhat average. Although in racing, bays' careers will tend to start later than chestnuts' due to the speed at which they physically mature, bays claim longer racing lifespans.²⁰

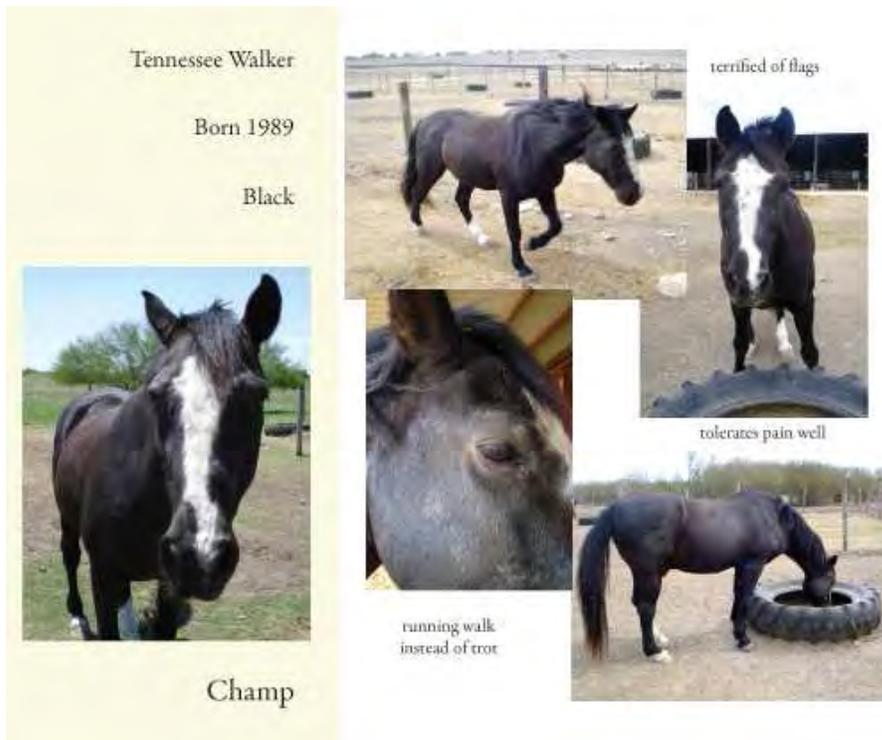


Champ



Past

Champ originally belonged to a man who used him for trail rides. He was then purchased by a lady in Dripping Springs. She developed arthritis, however, and preferred to ride her other horse, so she donated him to AWARE when he was fifteen years old.



Life at AWARE

Champ doesn't have many riders now because he has a dropped pastern (the leg ligaments are too weak to carry riders) and old windpuffs (bulges in the leg ligaments) caused by hard use and/or genetics.

However, he has much experience behind him. When he works with riders, he handles adult head injury patients best because he tolerates leaning and balance issues. He used to handle heavy riders very well and without complaint, but he doesn't carry them anymore. His walking gait doesn't allow him to work well with little kids because it is so big that the kids almost receive too much movement. This has nothing to do with his personality and just is the result of his normal manner of walking. Since he's been at AWARE, he's become more adaptable to unexpected situations.

Personality

Before Champ came to AWARE, he had not been penned with other horses, so he lacked the social skills that AWARE's horses already possessed. He had to relearn herd structure, so he was, unfortunately, the lowest on the pecking order. He is still low on the totem pole, but he tries to work his way up in rank by badgering other low-ranked horses in the same paddock. With other horses, he's not particularly social, though he does groom with Happee occasionally, more on Happee's initiative than his. He doesn't like to be challenged by the other horses. He likes to greet people when they enter the paddock or pasture, but then he resumes his own activities.

For all his blasé nature, Champ is terrified of flags. Other objects he doesn't particularly care about, but flags are a mortal enemy, for some reason. He makes up for this phobia by having a very high tolerance to pain. Some time back, he had a back tooth growing sideways into his cheek.



The instructors couldn't tell because he never fussed when they put on his bridle or when the rider pulled hard on the reins, which were attached to his halter right next to the tooth. He never gave any sign that something was bothering him. It wasn't evident that something was wrong until, one day, he couldn't open his mouth. He was taken to the vet three times before the vet discovered what the problem was. By that time, the tooth had grown into the muscle in his cheek, which must have been very painful, but he still never let on. He ate mashed feed for three days until he could open his mouth again. That experience hasn't diminished his appetite, however. He likes all foods, especially sweet feed, and will nearly run over anyone in between him and the food in his stall.

Color

Champ is black. Black is less common than bay or sorrel and is, in fact, rare in most horse breeds. However, many horse color connoisseurs are quite picky about when the term, black, should be applied. Black is reserved for those horses with no red, brown, or other light colored hairs. Blacks can come in several “depths” of color, though, and while the most stringent observer would choose only the darkest black as truly black, many horses are classified as black even when showing slight patches of lighter colors.²⁰ Folk lore tells that blacks are melancholic, or “sleepier” than other colors. This color holds a somewhat mystic status due to stories such as Black Beauty and The Black Stallion.²⁰



Cooper



Past

Cooper was a youth show horse before coming to AWARE not too long ago. At present, he is on lease to AWARE from one of Joy's friends who was looking to thin out her barn. Cooper wasn't as good as her other show horse, and AWARE needed another larger, stronger horse, so the situation was profitable for both parties. Plus, AWARE had borrowed Cooper for the Houston Stock Show several years in a row, so the instructors already knew he would work well in the program.



Life at AWARE

Cooper works best with riders who want him to be constantly moving. He doesn't like to stand still because he's easily bored, so he becomes impatient if the rider has several activities that require him to stop. Independent riders work best with him for these reasons.

Personality

Cooper has a very inquisitive nature, more so than typical for horses. Because he's so curious, he's easily distracted and plays with everything. He bangs his feed bucket around. A licking block hanging between his stall and Happee's provides endless entertainment. He sucks on his halter, and like a few of the other horses, chews on his lead rope. He'll play with other horses, such as Feather and Te, over the fence by taking turns play biting. If a big ball were in his paddock, he would probably play with that, too. Even when he's alone, without any more objects to play with, he'll flap

his lip just to have something to do. When he first came to AWARE, he didn't much care for treats, but he's learned how tasty they are.



Cooper doesn't like aggression from the other horses. Since he's the newest horse who lives with the other horses, he is lowest in the pecking order, so if there's an argument, he's most likely to lose. Luckily, the number one in command, Junior, and the number two, Duke, both like him. Cooper also dislikes needles. When he is frightened, he opens his eyes really wide, but his feet never move. He doesn't bolt, start, or jump; he just looks worried. As a young horse, he broke his pastern (the part of the leg just above the hoof), and a plate was put in during surgery. Cooper hasn't changed since he came to AWARE. He has the same inquiring personality as he did on his first day.

Color

Cooper was born chestnut, but his hair has changed color as he has aged. Now, he is roan. Roan describes "any mixture of white and colored hairs in which the white hairs are individually scattered rather than occurring in white patches."²⁰ As gray horses have very dark, usually black, skin with white hair, roans are never truly gray. Roans often begin with a lighter skin color, and their hair color progressively becomes lighter, as Cooper's chestnut coat has become mostly gray. True roans are born roan or turn roan directly after shedding their foal coat. Folk lore tells that roans are

“durable and wear well under hard work.”²⁰ Roan draft horses are often favored in Europe because draft horses are usually solid and reliable, doubly so as roans.²⁰



Duke

Past

For the first ten years of his life, Duke was a ranch horse. Ranch horses often have to stop quickly when working cattle, and most throw their weight on their back legs when they come to a fast stop. This way of stopping is easiest for the person riding. Duke, however, put all his weight on his front legs. This also threw the rider forward onto the saddle horn, which is the part on a western saddle that sticks up in the front. None of the ranch workers wanted to ride Duke. At the same time, AWARE had a retired roping horse that was too much for their riders to handle, so the ranch traded Duke for AWARE's roping horse and that is how Duke became a therapy horse.



Life at AWARE

Duke is very protective of his riders. If a rider is off balance, he will stop until the rider is ready to go on. Instructors cannot teach riders to emergency dismount from Duke because as soon as a rider leans over to slide off, Duke stops because he thinks the rider is falling. For this reason, Duke works best with adults who have suffered head injuries and need to work on balance. Duke has a more side-to-side gait versus forward-back, so instructors usually won't put riders with inner-ear problems on him. In 1999, he won the barrels competition at the Top Hands Houston Stock Show, a show for riders in therapy. Despite his wonderful temperament with riders, Duke was almost sent home in 1991 because he started acting like a stud horse, which means he was possessive of the mares and aggressive towards any of the male horses who came near the mares. He settled down, though, and resumed his normal personality within the herd.



Personality

Although Duke is second in the pecking order among the boys, he is a wimp. He is scared of anything new or unexpected, and bubbles are an uninvited threat. When frightened, he doesn't run or flinch, he simply shakes. He may tremble intensely, but he won't bolt. Once, he refused to come inside the barn on a freezing, rainy day because a new frame he had never seen had been built around the door. Because he was the dominant male at the time, none of the other horses would come in either, and they stood in the cold rain until one horse finally pushed past Duke. Then they all followed suit.

Besides fearing the unknown or unusual, he also fears reprimands from people. Since he is sweet and eager to please, his feelings are easily hurt, and his lower lip will tremble if a person chastises him. He will also withdraw and become unresponsive. Other than scoldings, Duke loves attention from people. He loves to be groomed or bathed, and clippers will put him to sleep.



Duke's favorite activities are speed events, such as barrels, jumping, and hanging out with his friends. He also loves to roll in the mud right by the pond, which has earned him several nicknames such as swamp thing, swamp rat, and tank rat. His favorite foods are sweet feed (grains mixed with molasses), alfalfa, most grains, and watermelon. Eating watermelon makes a horse foam at the mouth and is quite comical to watch. Watermelon is also one of the easier foods for Duke to eat because, as he is older, his teeth are very poor. Like other unknowns, unusual treats such as popcorn and Cheetos are not foods Duke favors, but he does like apples, carrots, and horse treats.

Color

Duke is sorrel, also known as chestnut. Sorrel, like bay, is a dark color tinged red common in most breeds of horses. In contrast to bays, sorrels are red all over with no black points (i.e., ears, feet, nose, etc.). Folk tales herald sorrels to be more impatient and unpredictable than bays, especially when confronted with new objects or experiences. Sorrels are also considered more vigilant and wary, yet they mature physically faster than bays.²⁰



Feather



Past

Feather is leased from a family in San Marcos. He was a 4-H pony for the daughter, but she moved up to a larger horse when she outgrew him. He is currently the only pony working at AWARE.



Life at AWARE

Feather works well with any small rider as long as he has a confident leader. He needs someone to keep him entertained or busy because he'll start misbehaving if he's not occupied. However, he doesn't ignore small riders who may use less strength in the reins. He listens to the reining skills of riders no matter what their size. Feather doesn't have adult riders due to his small stature. He also has a weak right stifle (comparable to the knee in humans). In the arena, he is a sturdy, predictable, all-around good pony.



Personality

Feather is the resident Houdini of AWARE. He can pull his head out of any halter or bridle, so he has a special collar to wear when he's being tacked up. Even that he can slip out of if a volunteer leaves it a bit too loose. Ponies are by nature smarter and more mischievous than horses. Feather doesn't run away when he squirms loose; he just hangs around whoever's outside. Feather's a very social pony, probably the most social of all the horses at AWARE, and he's not just social with people; he's friends with all the horses, too. He is the champion of play biting with the others and likes to groom and be groomed. He'll greet anyone who comes in the pasture or paddock and follow him or her around.

Feather doesn't like to go in his stall, ever. His stall is the first one when the horses come in from the pasture, and he'll pass it by every time. If any of the gates are open, he'll just keep going until something blocks him. He likes all food, but his favorite treat is Smarties candy. Since being at AWARE, Feather hasn't changed. He came in the same pony he still is.

Color

Feather is a paint. The paint pattern "consists of irregular, asymmetric patches of white spotting on the body."²⁰ Paint is also a breed in addition to a pattern of color. The terms can, therefore, be

confusing. Another word for paint, and also a breed, is Pinto. Also, there are several types of paint colorings, such as piebald, skewbald, overo, and tobiano, which sometimes add to the confusion. Some stories suggest the superiority of tobiano paints in performance, though they usually lack a subtle conformation (bone structure, musculature, and body proportion) advantage in shows that other paints have.²⁰



Flower

Past

Flower has lived at AWARE since she was newly weaned. She was brought as a companion for a white donkey, and gave birth to a white mule at two years old. She has since preferred the company of white horses and still has her foaling belly (an enlarged midsection due to carrying a foal). Flower was not broken (trained to the saddle and ridden) until she was six years old. She entered the program as a therapy horse when she was six-and-a-half.



Life at AWARE

Flower works best with very young riders and riders with cerebral palsy because she has a slow, steady walk that helps stretch a rider's muscles without jerking or pulling. Although she works well with most riders now, she used to not like riders with Down's syndrome because they would often be very fidgety on her back. She likes independent riders with whom she can walk, trot, and canter, but they have to not kick her and have gentle hands (be easy with her reins). She doesn't like to be kicked repeatedly, have her reins pulled roughly or constantly, nor be leaned on.

Sometimes, she will dislike a rider immediately, for no apparent reason, and the instructor just has to choose another horse. She is curious of new objects and new riders; she always investigates new toys and likes to smell new riders' feet. In the past, Flower couldn't be used when the pressure dropped from thunderstorms, but she has mellowed over the years and doesn't have that trouble any more.

Personality

Flower is very social with other horses and could never live without their company. She likes to play with them, be groomed by them (and groom them in return), and she likes to share food. Her best horse friend at AWARE is GiGi.



When let out into the pasture, she and GiGi will run along the fence line, kick their feet up, buck, and just play. She will play the same way on a lunge line, but she never acts out with a rider. Though she might not look it, Flower is very athletic and loves energetic activities. She doesn't mind traveling, but she likes to be home at night. She'd rather not spend the night somewhere else.

On the flip side, Flower hates aggression from people or horses. She and GiGi are best friends because they both have easy-going personalities. She dislikes Poquita's unsocial nature and fears Kasey's dominant attitude. She doesn't like being told what to do, and if someone tries to force her, she will put up a wall and become almost completely unresponsive. Instead, she just has to be asked, sometimes repeatedly, to do something. She'll do whatever is asked of her, but she'll do it on her own schedule. Ropes are a source of distrust for her, so any ropes swishing around her head will scare her. She also does not like to step onto the weight scale, which is just a gray mat on the floor. Consequently, her weight is mostly a guesstimate. She exaggerates all her emotions; when she is annoyed, she will flatten her ears and swish her tail quite noticeably.

Flower likes food indiscriminately, but her favorite treats are Jolly Ranchers, particularly the fire hot and strawberry flavors. She will come into the barn office looking for them, and she'll wait at the door for cookies, apples, and carrots. Flower is allergic to alfalfa and clover, a pity because she loves clover.

Color

Flower is dark bay. Bays have reddish-brown bodies with black points (i.e., ears, feet, nose, etc.), and theirs is the most common color among horses. They occur in all but a very few breeds. Those breeds have used color as a defining characteristic of the breed, and bay is simply not on the list. At least one breed, the Cleveland Bay, consists only of bays. Folk lore tells that bays are typically cheerful and dependable, yet quiet and somewhat average. Although in racing, bays' careers will tend to start later than chestnuts' due to the speed at which they physically mature, bays claim longer racing lifespans.²⁰



GiGi



Past

GiGi started as a ranch horse in Dallas. She was sold to a family in Houston whose daughter wanted to show in several events. After the daughter moved away to college, the parents donated GiGi to AWARE. Her name comes from the brand on her flank: Gray 'n Gray Ranch (hence G/G).



Life at AWARE

GiGi works great with kids; she is very tolerant of squirming and kicking. Although she is tolerant of all riders, in her past, she was always schooled by kids and could get away with stubborn behavior. Because of that, adults mean rules and work, so she is less-inclined to like them as much as she likes kids. Also, GiGi is cold-backed, or thin-skinned. This means that she doesn't like hard brushes or even saddles sometimes. She doesn't like deep pressure on her spine, either, which is another reason to prefer children over adults. Static plays a role as well. Being cold-backed, GiGi is sensitive to these tiny electrical charges. Taking her blanket off can be slightly hazardous; she is likely to buck and kick. Since she's been at AWARE, she's become more consistent as she's adapted to the routine; she is less prone to buck and has a slower, more even trot, which is great for learning the English technique of posting. Posting is moving up and down in the saddle during a trot in harmony with the horse's stride.



Personality

GiGi is inquisitive and social, especially with Flower. She likes to be groomed by people and horses and loves to run, buck, and snort. She is always Flower's partner in play because the other two mares in their paddock aren't very social. She is lowest in the pecking order among the girls, so she fears aggressive behavior in both horses and humans because she will be the one beaten up if there's a fight amongst the mares. Unexpected noises startle her, more so than they do other horses. She is used to the noises that toys make and the noises that crying or excited kids make, but a falling board or hooting owl might make her jump.

GiGi will eat anything: medicines, vaccinations, a volunteer's shirt. . . Her favorite treat, however, is carrots. GiGi, luckily, has no medical problems and can enjoy all her preferred cuisines.



Color

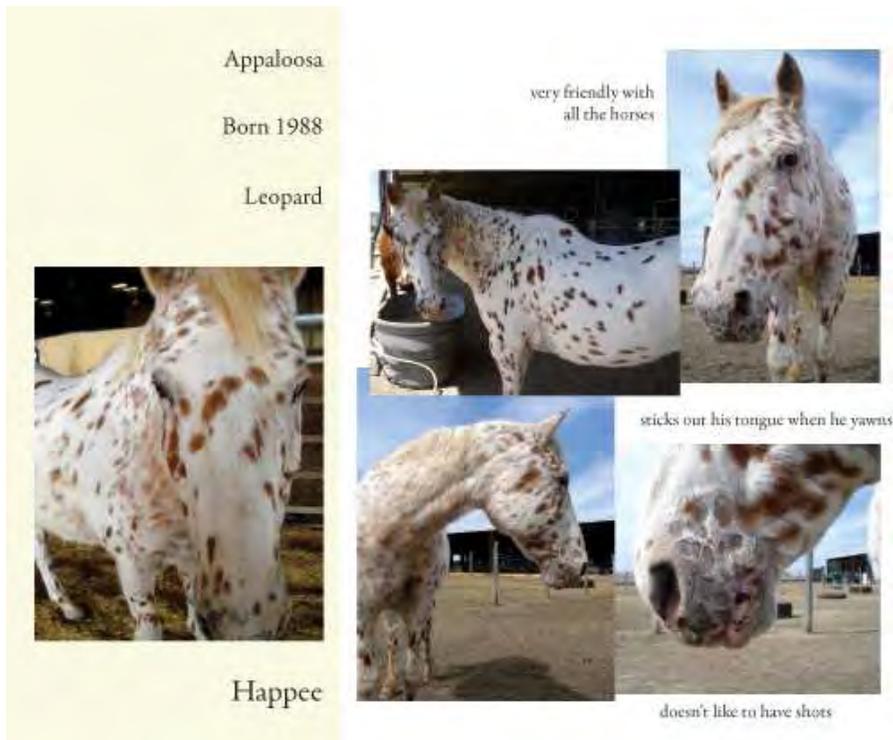
GiGi is gray. There are many different grays, most of which are often mistaken for white. True white horses lack pigment in their skin. Gray horses often have nearly white hair, but their skin is black. Grays are fairly common among most horse breeds and are often favored for official uses. According to folk legend, grays tend to be sluggish and calm with a very willing temperament.²⁰



Happee

Past

Happee was bought from a horse trader by a family who had never owned a horse. According to the horse trader, Happee was an older man's ranch horse previously. The family who bought him rode Happee only a few times a year and during those times, rode him very hard. Since he was ridden so infrequently, he wasn't in shape for the kind of riding the family wanted to do. When the family decided to invest in Foundation Quarter Horses, they donated him to AWARE. As an Appaloosa, he didn't have the traits they needed, but as a tolerant and friendly horse, he fits in great at AWARE.



Life at AWARE

Happee works best with independent riders at the walk because he encourages their riding skills, but he is harder to ride at a trot because he has a very bouncy gait. He is also very tolerant of riders who bang their legs against him or otherwise squirm around on top of him. When not working with independent riders, he likes the leader to pay attention to him. Because of his size and an underdeveloped left shoulder due to an old injury, Happee needs relatively balanced or light-weight riders, so only children and smaller teens ride him.

Personality

Happee is very friendly with all of the horses. He likes to groom and be groomed, and he will share his food. Play biting is a fun pastime with the other horses in his paddock or the next paddock over. He's not high in the pecking order, but he's very friendly, so the other horses don't pester him. He doesn't have a favorite friend; he's social with everyone. From people, he's fond of baths and

grooming, but he doesn't like to be medicated around his face, especially his ears. He also doesn't like to be wormed or have shots, either.



Some time before he came to AWARE, he received a very large injury to his left pectoral muscle. That muscle has a dent shaped like a taco, and Happee may have lost a part of his left lung in the damage. He also has scars all over his face, so the injury may have extended from his shoulder to his head. The vets or other people doctoring him may have ear twitched him (held him by his ears to keep him still) to apply the medicines. Consequently, he doesn't like his ears to be touched at all, particularly not with medicine.

Happee also has a hoof condition known as white line disease, which is the worst form of thrush. This is a chronic fungal infection along the edge of the hoof wall and is similar to athlete's foot in people. It recurs during damp weather most often, just like a person is mostly likely to pick up athlete's foot in a damp area. In addition, Happee has soft hooves, so he is particularly vulnerable to the disease. Along with this condition, he has arthritis in his knees, hocks, and fetlocks, which are all joints on his legs.

Despite these annoyances, Happee is happy. He likes to bob his head up and down, for no particular reason. When he's tied up, he'll throw his lead rope around, or he might lick or chew on his rope if there aren't any grains nearby for him to munch on. When he's bored or when the farrier comes to visit, he'll yawn and stick out his tongue. Since he's come to AWARE, he hasn't changed much at all. He's had the same goofy nature the past five years that he came with.

Color

Happee is a leopard Appaloosa. There are many variations of the leopard complex including mottled, frost, snowflake, varnish roan, speckled, blanket, snow cap blanket, leopard, and few spot leopard. Horses often exhibit two or more of these patterns, and when one pattern occurs within a breed, it is likely that all the patterns will occur within that breed. Most of these patterns are closely related, genetically, though some look visually distinct. A horse's hair can also change patterns as the horse develops.²⁰



Junior



Past

Junior is one of the original Yarrington Road horses that started AWARE. He, along with two others, was given to his owner in a divorce, and she donated him to AWARE in the late 1980s. Before the divorce, he was a show horse. He showed in the World Appaloosa Show when he was five years old. In 1991, he retired from AWARE after developing colic (an intestinal disorder) that resulted in surgery. He came back to work at AWARE in 2003.



Life at AWARE

Junior works best with physically handicapped riders because he tolerates leaning very well. He's also good for independent riders who trot because he has smooth, easy-to-ride gaits and is well-trained, good for boosting a rider's confidence. The instructors say he's like riding a Cadillac because of his extremely easy gaits. He doesn't like loud squeals from people or movements he can't identify, so he works worst with vocal autistics who rock, bounce, shake their hands, etc.

Personality

Junior is first in command in the boys' paddock, although, if he were ever in the same paddock as Te, a different herd structure might emerge. Junior likes to play with the other horses a bit. From people, he likes to be groomed, especially if it includes an ear rub. He also likes treats, but he loves alfalfa. When he is mad at someone, he won't pin his ears back like most horses. Instead, he'll wrinkle his nose. He also sneezes when the clippers are turned on, not out of fear or anticipation of

flying hair; he sneezes just to annoy whoever's around. Since he's been at AWARE, he may have mellowed some, but otherwise hasn't changed in personality.

Junior has a hoof condition known as navicular. There is a bone, porous and shaped like a bowtie, in each of his front hooves that he puts his weight on. That bone doesn't receive an adequate blood supply, so it's slightly painful for him to walk sometimes. Poquita also has this condition, but she wears special shoes to correct it. Junior's navicular is not as advanced as Poquita's, so he doesn't need correction. Navicular is typical in quarter horses and can be genetic or environmental. Junior also has arthritis and is missing twenty-six feet (one third) of his intestines. In 1991, he developed colic, a severe abdominal pain resulting from an obstruction in the intestines. Junior needed surgery to remove the cause of his colic.



Color

Junior is bay. Bays have reddish-brown bodies with black points (i.e., ears, feet, nose, etc.), and theirs is the most common color among horses. They occur in all but a very few breeds. Those breeds have used color as a defining characteristic of the breed, and bay is simply not on the list. At least one breed, the Cleveland Bay, consists only of bays. Folk lore tells that bays are typically cheerful and dependable, yet quiet and somewhat average. Although in racing, bays' careers will tend to start later than chestnuts' due to the speed at which they physically mature, bays claim longer racing lifespans.²⁰

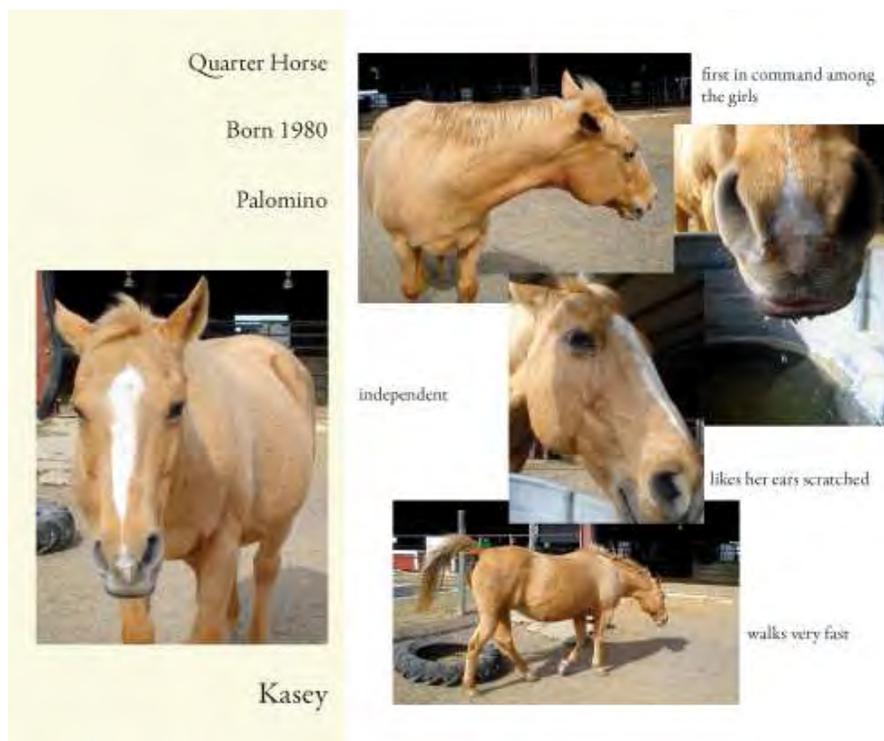


Kasey



Past

Kasey was trained to be a show mare, but she grew too long in the body to have a good chance in competition. Instead, she was sold as a brood mare, a mare whose purpose is breeding. However, that also proved the wrong occupation for her; she is infertile. She found her place in rodeo play days, racing speed events such as barrels and poles. One of the riders at AWARE owned her.



Life at AWARE

Kasey tolerates all riders. She is best for riders, such as those with head trauma, who benefit from a faster pace but not trotting. Riders receive a lot of input from Kasey's quick gait because her strides provide a lot of movement for the rider's muscles to compensate for. Since Kasey moves out very quickly, riders who squeeze their legs aren't the best choice for her because a squeeze is asking her to move faster, into a trot. She doesn't spook at anything, so she's a very solid horse even on stormy days when other horses might be alarmed.

Personality

Kasey is herd leader among the girls but became so only after the previous leader died. She likes other horses to pay attention and not bother her. Though she likes attention from humans, she is very aloof with horses. Horses too close to her or in her territory, such as her stall, irritate her. She likes a wide bubble of personal space and won't tolerate other horses near her food. While some horses crave attention from people, Kasey only likes it occasionally. She doesn't need people for affection or instruction.

When she does want some attention, she likes to be groomed and have her ears scratched. Like most horses, she loves treats, too. Her favorite foods are alfalfa and sweet feed (grains mixed with molasses). She doesn't dislike any foods, however. She devours just about anything edible. She has no stomach problems, but she does have some hoof issues. She is also the only horse at AWARE with a freeze brand, a brand made from a very cold iron instead of a very hot one. This kind of brand is supposed to be less painful.



Color

Kasey is palomino. Palominos are golden or yellow horses with no black points (i.e., ears, nose, feet, etc.). Their manes and tails are lighter in color than their bodies. The yellow shades vary from deep gold to pale yellow. Classically, palominos should be “the color of a newly minted gold coin [with] white manes and tails.” Palominos are sometimes referred to as Isabellas in Spain thanks to a legend about Queen Isabella. She reputedly refused to take off her white dress during a siege until the siege

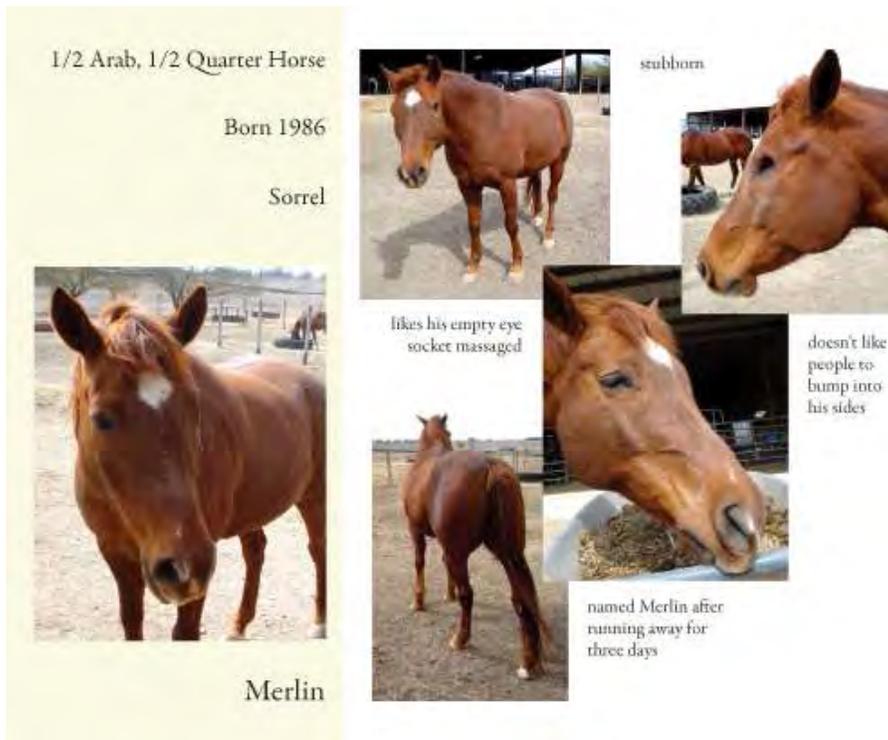
ended. By the time the dispute had been resolved, her dress had yellowed into the golden color of the lighter shades in palominos.²⁰



Merlin

Past

Merlin lived at Westbridge Stables, a hunter/jumper barn in Austin, before he came to AWARE. Originally, his name was Mike, but he was christened Merlin after he let himself and four or five other horses out of the stalls and took a tour of the neighborhood. The other horses were caught fairly quickly, but he evaded capture for three days. People in the neighborhood would catch glimpses of him, but then he'd be gone. He came to AWARE because the lady who owned him quit riding at Westbridge Stables, but no one wanted to buy a hunter/jumper who was going blind in one eye. The owner donated him to AWARE and even delivered him.



Life at AWARE

Merlin works best with independent riders with whom he can walk, trot, and canter because he has easy transitions between his gaits, and he's very consistent. Riders know what to expect, so they can concentrate on improving themselves rather than wondering if Merlin will trot when they ask him to. Another reason Merlin works best with independents is that he dislikes side walkers. He hates people walking beside him and touching him. Consequently, he works worst with riders who do a lot of physical activities with the side walkers because that means the side walkers are constantly bumping into him. Though he's never liked side walkers, he's become less tolerant of them in recent years. When he's annoyed, he'll swish his tail, stomp his foot, and sometimes snap at whoever is leading.

Personality

Merlin has a mischievous and occasionally stubborn nature. He likes to push his limits and know how far he can go before someone catches him. He'll groom with the other horses and play bite with them. Running is one of his favorite activities, along with pulling down buckets and smashing the contents. He'll also play with the toys on the barrels in the arena, anything he can get a hold of that he's not supposed to have. With new volunteers, especially new leaders, he'll see just how foolish he can act before the volunteer learns how to tell him to behave.



Merlin is missing one eye. When he came to AWARE, he was starting to go blind in that eye. The eye eventually started shrinking, which caused painful eye infections, so AWARE just had the eye removed. The socket is completely healed over, and Merlin likes for people to massage the round indentation; it itches from time to time. He doesn't care for people to groom him, however, especially on his back. Merlin is cold-backed, also called thin-skinned. This means that he doesn't like pressure on his back, such as from brushes. He doesn't always like to go into his stall, either, even though that's where he's fed dinner. He likes to peruse the open area in front of the stalls before ambling back to his own. His food preferences include everything edible, and he drinks water like a dog. Horses suck up their water, somewhat like people do, but Merlin laps up his water. He will also scratch his ear like a dog. Instead of rubbing against a pole or gate, he'll put his head down and reach his hind leg forward to tackle an itch. He likes to smell everyone, too.

Merlin's stubborn side is especially evident when he needs to be loaded into a trailer. Sometimes, he'll walk right in like any well-trained horse. Sometimes, however, he just doesn't want to go in, and no amount of treats or coaxing will convince him. A girl who rode him at Westbridge Stables said that whoever drew his name to ride in a show had to arrive at the barn four hours early just to load him. He might walk right in, but it might take four hours and many different methods to finally have him loaded and ready to go.

Color

Merlin is sorrel, also known as chestnut. Sorrel, like bay, is a dark color tinged red common in most breeds of horses. In contrast to bays, sorrels are red all over with no black points (i.e., ears, feet, nose, etc.). Folk tales herald sorrels to be more impatient and unpredictable than bays, especially when confronted with new objects or experiences. They are also considered more vigilant and wary, yet they mature physically faster than bays.²⁰



Monty



Past

Monty was trained to be a show horse, but he was employed for trail rides on a ranch instead. He was eventually bought by a couple with very young children. The children were not old enough to ride him, so he was put out to pasture for two years. This is where AWARE found him. AWARE leased him as a therapy horse, and he caught the eye of one particular instructor, Maureen. When the family who owned him put him up for sale, Maureen snatched him up before another prospective buyer could collect him.



Life at AWARE

Monty works well with all riders, but he is well-suited for adults because he is very tall and has an easy trot. He is also good for riders with head injuries because he has long strides and so can move quickly without trotting, which keeps the rider from being jarred but still gives the rider a lot of movement. He is very tolerant of kicking, slapping, and squirming, so he works great with kids as well. Nothing bothers him, so he's not easily startled by new objects or experiences. However, he did take some time to become familiar with a small bridge used in the arena. His legs are so long that he didn't understand why he had to walk onto the bridge when he could just step over it. He's a better horse with a leader rather than with independent riders because he likes reassurance from the leader. Independent riders need to have good riding skills to keep him in good posture and moving forward. He has a very sweet disposition towards people, and since he's been at AWARE, he's become even friendlier.



Personality

Monty tolerates all the horses at AWARE, and he is assertive in the herd. Feather is his favorite pal. Monty is the only horse who tolerates Te-N-Te, so he is, consequently, Te's only paddock mate. Although he tolerates all the horses, he very much likes to be with people. He loves to be groomed by both people and other horses. There is no personal bubble with Monty. He's very nosy and wants to be in your space. If someone steps into his paddock, he will come up to say "hi," then follows that person around to see what he/she is doing.

Because he is so inquisitive, Monty has developed a unique way of reaching food and playing with Feather in the next paddock over. He will stretch his front legs and head out, like a giraffe stooping for a drink. This way, he can reach under the fence and nip at Feather, steal food from a nearby bucket, or snatch mouthfuls of hay. He has no picky eating habits and will eat any food under his nose. In fact, he's quite fond of chewing on lead ropes.

Monty is currently the horse model for an oil painting by Lorin Friesen. The painting is of Stephen F. Austin's courier delivering the letter that set Texas and Mexico at war, the war in which the Alamo played a very large role. Monty is the courier's horse.

Color

Monty is an Appaloosa. He has a white blanket with red-brown spots. Common in this breed and coloration is thin hair. Monty has a very short mane and tail along with very fine hair over his entire

body. Appaloosa coloring occurs in several breeds, though is not as prominent as bay and sorrel. Some breeds, such as the American Quarter Horse and the Connemara Pony, will not recognize the Appaloosa coloring in shows.²⁰



Poquita



Past

Poquita was a show mare in Del Rio for eight years. She competed in showmanship, western pleasure, horsemanship, western riding, and trail and has several awards. She still remembers all her show training, and if someone rides her who knows what to do, she'll respond as if she's never been away from shows. After her show career, she was sold to a lady in Seguin who used her for a 4-H horse. The lady eventually didn't have time for Poquita, though, and wanted to sell her. A farrier suggested that she might be wanted at AWARE.



Life at AWARE

Poquita works best with autistic children and squirmy kids who don't sit in the center of her back. She also enjoys small independent riders. She's great with all riders; instructors trust anyone on her, but she dislikes very excited riders who want her to go, go, go! As a show horse, she has a slow, smooth gait, not a quick one. Even if a child does kick and poke her, she won't move any faster. She always tries to please the person in charge and do what is required of her, earning her the reputation of being extremely dependable. Some of the instructors believe she is "worth her weight in gold." In fact, every time AWARE takes her to the Top Hands show in Houston, someone tries to buy her. Since she's been at AWARE, she has become more accepting of different people handling her. As a show horse, only a very small number of people ever interacted with her. Now, many volunteers lead her and tack her up.

Personality

Poquita is second in command of the girls, following Kasey. While she is not as aloof as Kasey and does want the company of other horses, she also demands her space and is very territorial. She can't outwardly demand anything from Kasey because Kasey might beat her up, but she won't tolerate Flower or GiGi being in her bubble. In her stall, she will kick and act aggressive since that is the only safe place she can be aggressive without facing retaliation from Kasey. No one rooms in the stall beside her for this reason.

Despite her somewhat unsocial attitude with horses, she likes interaction with humans. Being groomed is a favorite activity for her, as long as it doesn't lead to work, because it was part of her show routine. She loves treats for the same reason. Horses are fed treats in shows to reinforce good behavior and to keep their attention. Her favorite treats are alfalfa cubes, and she will nicker for them if she sees someone coming. Unlike some of the other horses, she won't eat just anything. She dislikes medication that has to be eaten, especially iron supplements, possibly because she was given them so often during her show years.

Poquita has a hoof condition known as navicular. There is a bone, porous and shaped like a bowtie, in each of her front hooves that she puts her weight on. That bone doesn't receive an adequate blood supply, so it's painful for her to walk. She wears special shoes on her front hooves that tip her weight slightly forward off the bone. When she wore her first pair, she walked funny until she became familiar with the new balance. This condition is typical in quarter horses and can be genetic or environmental.



Color

Poquita is bay. Bays have reddish-brown bodies with black points (i.e., ears, feet, nose, etc.), and theirs is the most common color among horses. They occur in all but a very few breeds. Those breeds have used color as a defining characteristic of the breed, and bay is simply not on the list. At least one breed, the Cleveland Bay, consists only of bays. Folk lore tells that bays are typically cheerful and dependable, yet quiet and somewhat average. Although in racing, bays' careers will tend to start later than chestnuts' due to the speed at which they physically mature, bays claim longer racing lifespans.²⁰



Te-N-Te Special



Past

Te-N-Te Special was a show horse who competed in western pleasure, showmanship, western riding, western equitation, and speed events. As an all-around show horse, he was ridden very hard and often. He was also turned out (let loose in his pasture) by himself, so he was not comfortable sharing space with other horses when he arrived at AWARE. AWARE does not own Te; he is leased from the owner.



Life at AWARE

Te works well with any type of rider. He is great for beginning riders because he has a very comfortable trot. Children and teens are better for him physically because they put less stress on his joints. However, with independent riders, he's more apt to ignore kids than adults. While he's familiar with the routines his riders go through, the unexpected makes him nervous. He is also thin-skinned like GiGi so does not like pressure on his spine.

Personality

Te is aggressive and dominant with other horses. He lacks the social skills to make friends with all of them. Even so, he likes to play with some of them. He and Feather play under the gate when they're in separate paddocks, but when Te's done playing, he's done. His paddock companion is Monty. Since they came from the same place, Te tolerates Monty better than he does the other horses. Te

would probably be first in command if he were ever turned out with Junior and Duke. He's especially protective of his food and doesn't tolerate any other horse coming to near.



As bad tempered as he can be with other horses, Te likes attention from people. He loves to be groomed, all but the brushing; he likes his mane and tail to be combed; and he likes to be clipped and bathed, anything at all except brushing because he's thin skinned and doesn't like the pressure of a brush. He also loves treats, especially apples and carrots, though he'll eat anything. He even chews on his lead rope just like Monty does. Even though he thinks he's a big, bad horse, he does have a few fears. He is afraid of being reprimanded by people, and he is afraid of cows, which can be troublesome for him because the pasture next to AWARE has cows in it.

Te also has a few medical conditions. He has navicular; there is a bone, porous and shaped like a bowtie, in each of his front hooves that he puts his weight on. That bone doesn't receive an adequate blood supply, so it is sometimes uncomfortable for him to walk. This condition is typical in quarter horses and can be genetic or environmental. Te is also stifled in his hocks (the knees in his back legs), which means he has arthritis. He has several old scars running down his legs from his days of doing speed events.

Color

There is bay. Bays have reddish-brown bodies with black points (i.e., ears, feet, nose, etc.), and this is the most common color among horses. They occur in all but a very few breeds. Those breeds have used color as a defining characteristic of the breed, and bay is simply not on the list. At least one breed, the Cleveland Bay, consists only of bays. Folklore tells that bays are typically cheerful and dependable, yet quiet and somewhat average. Although in racing, bays' careers will tend to start later than chestnuts' due to the speed at which they physically mature, bays claim longer racing lifespans.²⁰



Design

All the information above is collected into a single book for the benefit of AWARE instructors, clients, and visitors. Since the people who come into AWARE are many and varied, this book has to appeal both to very young children and older adults. To this end, each section begins with a “kid

page.” This page is textured, thicker than the body pages, and has big pictures with short captions to summarize the main idea of the section. Each section’s pages are a quarter inch longer than the previous section’s, so children are most likely to land on a kid page if they just flip the book open. After each kid page is a more in-depth exploration of the subject that section covers. These pages are meant to appeal to older children and adults. AWARE’s version of this book will be a post book to allow the instructors to add information about new horses or take out information about horses that die or are given back to their owners.

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