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# EASE NEWS



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*ENVIRONMENTAL ANIMAL SANCTUARY AND EDUCATION*  
THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FRIENDS OF EASE

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## Editorial

**H**ello everyone, and warm greetings to our EASE Friends. Welcome to the summer edition of our newsletter, which seems to have something of an equine theme, with an article from Angela Garner on Equine Facilitated Learning, and one from Hildreth Grace Rinehart on the health benefits of being with horses. This edition also contains some animal-related news stories, and guidance for people dealing with pet bereavement and children.

*I hope you enjoy the newsletter, and thank you for your continued support.*

MELINDA HILL  
EASE PROJECT MANAGER

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## Health Benefits of Being with Horses

Hildreth Grace

**I**n a world overflowing with gifts, many of which we often forget the miracle of – such as water, the five senses, a flower, sunshine and starlight – being able to interact with a horse is truly a powerful and transformative gift among them.

In a similar way that spending quality time with a child or infant opens up certain qualities in an adult – like peace, joy and playfulness – that they may not otherwise experience, so being with a horse can be a powerful, deepening and even life-changing thing. The presence of this ancient, powerful, graceful and dignified creature activates certain inner qualities and states in a person that are not often easily felt in modern life.

Spending time around horses is known to stop depression, anxiety and the general state of

‘fight or flight’ that so many people live in today with such detriment to health and well-being. It is now common to hear stories of people with various disabilities, at-risk youth, war veterans and people with PTSD to name a few, finding deep healing and well-being through interaction with horses.

The horse has fed, clothed and literally carried humanity through wars and conquests of foreign lands, made farming and transport possible and maybe now is being called upon to heal and recalibrate the soul of humanity. How is this possible and what is this twinned destiny of equine and mankind about?

Communication in a horse herd is a natural and mostly pure template that has sustained a resilient and adaptable equine species for 50 million years, about 47 million years before the first known human genetic appeared on Earth.

In most parts of the world, we humans now live in a brain-dominated society that has grown out of balance and out of sync with its environment. So, by connecting with the intelligence of the equine ways of communication and leadership, we can retrain, reassemble and re-synchronize those parts of us that are out of balance.

It usually makes a big impression on a person when they discover that they can cause a 1,000 lb, fast and powerful creature to want to follow their every move, even without words or physical force!

The horse also acts like a biofeedback machine, reflecting back the inner state of others. So a person can experience in a very visceral way how much their inner state (especially when made conscious) of a person in leadership affects the responses and abilities of those they wish to lead.

A person who wishes to expand their training in leadership will discover how flexibility, fluidity, responsiveness, openness, neutrality, close observation and a genuine interest in others brings clarity and strength within oneself, thus creating greater conductivity and easement between all people involved.

Some examples of what working with our horses causes in people that I've observed are:

- 🐾 Increased confidence and comfortability in self
- 🐾 Greater ability to create boundaries, to say no and to respect one's own needs
- 🐾 Ability to be more simple and clear in one's communication
- 🐾 Ability to magnetise parts of oneself, such as having a clear intention and plan and then carrying it out in a way that others can and want to follow
- 🐾 Better skills of concentration; being fully in the present moment with attention to detail as well as to the larger ecology (both physical and energetic)
- 🐾 More in control of one's inner states – nerves, emotions, thoughts
- 🐾 More awareness of what one causes in others
- 🐾 Less reactive, more responsive to need
- 🐾 More trust in oneself



Let's look at a practical level. What are some areas of training and adjustments that a person needs to make in order to really connect with a horse?

- 🐾 Slowing down one's movements, breathing and thoughts
- 🐾 Expanding one's state of awareness to include the entire ecology
- 🐾 Becoming more deliberate in one's movements and the information they convey
- 🐾 Getting into a rhythm of 'call and response' or 'pressure and release' that is the basis for all horse communication
- 🐾 Quieting oneself both verbally and energetically
- 🐾 Taking charge of one's emotions through breath and calming practices

- 🐾 Becoming more centered, grounded and strong in the body
- 🐾 Developing fluidity, continuity, regularity and cohesiveness between one's inner state and outer actions
- 🐾 Becoming ambidextrous and using the right and left hemispheres of the brain in concert
- 🐾 Removing ambition from oneself – becoming more process-oriented and less goal-oriented

Even interacting with a horse in such a simple task as grooming them will naturally evoke these adjustments in many people, with only a few basic instructions and guidelines from an experienced horse person. It is an intuitive exchange that grows with every interaction as a person comes to realize that in this world of the horse, it does not matter so much what you know or how fast you can do something or how you look. What truly matters is what is inside your heart and mind, how much you trust your instinct, your body and your feelings, as well as your ability to flow in rhythmic response as a part of the herd, no longer holding yourself as a completely separate entity.

And for some horses, it also matters whether a person carries themselves with dignity and grace, for such is the dance that they most willingly and artfully follow. For these particular horse characters, some more advanced levels of horse communication skills include:

- 🐾 The ability to shift from total, throughout stillness to intensity of action and back again in moments, with correct timing, fairness, clear reasoning and according to need
- 🐾 The ability to bring into unity the various levels of oneself – the physical, emotional, mental, intuitive and creative parts of a person, all working together in concert without contradiction or distraction – so that the personal presence is fully harnessed to a clear purpose and intention
- 🐾 To become an essence carrier of the feeling and knowing that all life is interconnected, and that mutual enhancement, softness, fluidity, call and response and allowance are natural ways of leadership on the this blue planet Earth.

*Hildreth Grace Rinehart is Equine Facilitator and Director of Education at Patch of Diamonds in Vermont, USA: <https://patchofdiamonds.com/>*



## World Watch

### Hong Kong bans ivory trade in an historic vote

**H**ong Kong's lawmakers have voted overwhelmingly to ban the trade in ivory, in a move campaigners described as "a lifeline for elephants". A similar ban was brought in across mainland China earlier this year. Ivory sales will be phased out gradually in Hong Kong, stopping completely in 2021.

Prior to the vote, demonstrators gathered outside Hong Kong's legislature with signs reading: "Do you really need ivory chopsticks?" "Shutting down this massive ivory market has thrown a lifeline to elephants," said Bert Wander of the global advocacy group Avaaz.



Ivory from animal tusks – mostly those of elephants – has been traded in Hong Kong for more than 150 years, and it is considered the world's largest ivory market. WildAid Hong Kong, a conservation group, says the former British colony had a 670-tonne stockpile in 1989, when the global trade was

banned. Only ivory dating from before that period is meant to be sold there, but campaigners say the legal trade is often a cover for illegal activities.

In July 2017, authorities in Hong Kong said they had seized the world's biggest ever haul of ivory tusks – some 7.2 tonnes. More than 90% of those buying ivory in Hong Kong are from the Chinese mainland, which had hitherto been the world's largest importer of elephant tusks.

The trade in Hong Kong will cease in three stages:

First, there will be a ban on hunting trophies and ivory from after 1975, when the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) took effect. Later, ivory obtained before 1975 will also be included. And finally, traders will be obliged to dispose of their stock by 2021.

The penalties for ivory smuggling will also increase considerably. Under the new law, offenders could be fined HK\$10m (\$1.3m; £1m), double the present amount, or imprisoned for ten years instead of the current two.

Many conservationists have hailed the ban as a victory. Alex Hofford of WildAid called it "a great moment in the history of elephant conservation". Hong Kong lawmaker Elizabeth Quat said the vote marked a great day for elephants, but that the changes must be enforced effectively. "It's now up to our law enforcement agencies to ensure the ban is properly implemented," she said.

Some activists feel the timeframe is unnecessarily long, however. They point out that African elephants are still being killed for their tusks in huge numbers. Poaching has seen the population fall by 110,000 over the past decade to just 415,000 animals, according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature.



Dogs are our link to paradise.  
They don't know evil or jealousy or discontent.  
To sit with a dog on a hillside on a glorious  
afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing  
nothing was not boring – it was peace.

*Milan Kundera*

## My Woollie Moment

Angela Garner

**Y**ou'd be forgiven for thinking that this was something to do with sheep, or maybe knitting or crochet, but the story is about a donkey who taught me something important.

I was attending an Equine Facilitated Learning (EFL) session as a client. EFL is where the interaction between the person (client) and the equine (in this case a donkey) allows gentle reflective learning. The donkey acts as a mirror. This happens under the careful supervision of the instructor / facilitator and a 'watcher' whose job it

is to ensure that both donkey and humans remain safe and free from stress.

I was asked by Sally, my instructor, what I'd like to focus upon in my session. This was easy to decide as I'd been finding it difficult to handle stress and pressure in my work and was consequently becoming increasingly reactive, which was hard to handle.

After being taken through a short mindfulness and grounding exercise, I was invited to observe the two donkeys who had joined us in the outside arena. I was asked, "What do you think is going on with the donkeys? What do you think they're feeling?"

To me they both looked like they'd prefer to return to their paddock. These donkeys regularly work in the Donkey Assisted Therapy Centre, where close human contact is the everyday norm, and I didn't feel that they were particularly interested in engaging, although one of them did glance over at us a few times.



After a reminder about the health and safety aspects of staying within their field of vision and not standing right behind the donkeys where they wouldn't see me, I was invited to approach whichever of the two donkeys I chose. At this point Woollie, the larger of the two, appeared more interested than the other in that he was looking at me. So

I slowly approached being mindful of my pace and to ensure he could see me easily. I went up close enough to say Hello and to stroke his neck, which he seemed to enjoy. After a short while he moved away and I returned to Sally. I was asked to reflect on the process.

Before the next step, I was reminded to go to a quiet place within myself, where I could be in the moment, to be with my awareness and to breathe

slowly. This time I was to go up to Woollie and simply stand nearby him without actually doing anything.

Again, slowly and mindfully I approached Woollie and stood quietly in his zone. I stayed still, consciously bringing myself into what I call my neutral gear, reminding myself 'to be' rather than feel the pressure 'to do'. Woollie looked directly at me and then purposefully walked over to me, where I waited calmly, somehow knowing that all was well.

He came and stood right by me, so I quietly said Hello again and stroked him. He moved around, walked off, and I stayed still. He then came back, this time right up close, and then he gently snuggled his head into me, so we ended up in an equine/human embrace! It felt incredibly special – he'd actually chosen to be with me, to share a few moments of mutual warmth and connection.

Afterwards, Sally asked me what I'd felt about that experience. "I loved it!"

What had I learnt from it? Having taken a moment, I reflected that it showed me how being in that quiet, calm, 'neutral' place in myself had allowed the special moment to happen. Woollie hadn't been put under any pressure. It had just happened.

It taught me that I don't have to keep trying to make stuff happen all the time; instead, I could put the pause button on, and simply wait – ready to respond if I chose, without being reactive. This was a revelation to me!

Sally continued to gently question me. "How will you take this experience back into your work situation?"

"Well, that is easy – when I start to feel stressed, I'll remember to press the pause button and have a Woollie Moment!"

*Later, thinking back on the session, I could only wonder and smile to myself at how a donkey had taught me exactly what I needed to learn about the importance of inner stillness and calm. Thank you, Woollie.*



## Animal Companions

*Best friends Henry and Baloo have a lot in common – they have both been rescued and now enjoy long walks in the great outdoors. What makes them special to their many fans is that they are a dog and cat travelling duo.*

Their unlikely friendship and hiking trips around the beautiful mountainous landscapes of Colorado have gained the pair a cult social media following. Hundreds of thousands of people follow their adventures on the photo-sharing platform Instagram. For owners Cynthia Bennett and Andre Sibilsky, their popularity is surreal.

Cynthia and Andre met in Boston, but as New Hampshire and Texas natives, the couple say they are both nature lovers who were destined to move away from city life. The pair started hiking regularly and, once settled, decided to extend their family by adopting a dog. Henry – a tall and lanky German Shepherd, Husky, Boxer, Staffordshire Terrier and Aussie mix – stood out right away. Born as a street puppy, Henry was adopted from a rescue centre that re-homes animals from other states whose shelters have high abandonment and kill rates. A mix of high energy dogs, he took to hiking and long walks straight away.

A year later, Cynthia realised that she was posting too many pictures of Henry on her social media accounts, and decided it would be a fun idea to give him one of his own. It took three years to get 30,000 followers on the account. That number spiralled out of control when they got Baloo. “Henry had really bad separation anxiety when we weren't home. He would be so stressed out that he didn't eat or drink, so we decided we really wanted a buddy for him”, Cynthia says. “I love to take my animals everywhere – and because of Instagram I had seen other people hiking with cats, who really loved being outside,” she adds.

The couple spent months looking for the right match for their unique situation. Like Henry, Baloo was a rescue animal. He was part of a litter of eight kittens belonging to a mother whose owner refused to have neutered. He and his siblings were abandoned immediately. “As soon as he met Henry he attached himself right away. Baloo definitely has an obsession with Henry – if I need him to calm down, I'll put him next to him and he'll just fall asleep.”

Photographs and videos of the cat and dog together, with Baloo riding or running alongside on a leash, have exploded in popularity on social media.



## Children and pet bereavement

Angela Garner

If a pet is coming to the end of their life or has already died, one of the difficulties a parent or carer may face is how to talk about the cycle of life and death to the children. Generally it is best to keep things as simple and clear as possible when talking about death and dying – to use the words ‘dying’ or ‘died’ rather than trying to describe death in other ways that may cause confusion. ‘Euthanasia’ is mostly referred to as being ‘put to sleep’ but this can cause some young children to feel anxious about going to sleep themselves.

Children may ask all kinds of questions, such as “Why does my pet have to die?” which, of



*Baloo is known for his unusual sleeping position – on top of Henry's head*

course, is difficult to answer; however, natural analogy can be helpful. For example:

*“We all live on a planet called Earth, and there are lots of planets and stars that you can see when you look up at the night sky. Earth is a beautiful big blue ball that whizzes around the Sun. Look around and you can see that there are lots of things living here – flowers, trees, birds, animals, fish, people and insects.*

*Many different things appear, grow and live – some like elephants and whales for many years, and some like flowers, tiny insects and butterflies, only for a short time. When they come to the end of their life, they die. You can see this happen with plants and flowers in a garden or park – they go back to the earth. Have you seen the dandelions as they die back? They leave lots of seeds that float through the air so that more flowers can grow another season.*



*Why do things die? If nothing ever died on Planet Earth it would keep filling up and filling up, and then there would be no more space left for new lives to appear. Pets die too. Of course, it is very sad when much-loved pets die because we miss them. But while they were alive you cared for them with kindness and gave them lots of love, which helped them to be happy.”*

While you don't need to give your child upsetting details about a pet's illness or the nature of their death, being honest and straightforward is considered to be the best way forward. Telling the truth engenders trust and avoids unnecessary difficulties and misunderstandings later on. It is obviously very difficult to tell a child that their much-loved pet will soon die, but it can help to explain that you don't want the pet to suffer. Similarly, if the pet has already died, it can be a

comfort to know that they weren't allowed to be in pain for any length of time.

You may feel that the children, especially teenagers, should be involved in the important decision about the need for euthanasia and the timing of it, but this obviously depends on their age and how you think they would cope. Alternatively, it may work better to make the decision and to then gently explain to the children what is going to happen, when and why.

Saying goodbye is difficult for the whole family. If possible, offer each child a little private time to say their goodbye and to tell the pet how much they loved them. If the animal has died unexpectedly and you are worried about the children seeing any injuries or wounds, carefully cover the body leaving a part that's intact for them to see and touch if they wish.

Ceremonies and memorials are a good way for the family to gather together to say a final goodbye to a much-loved pet, whether they are being buried in the garden or otherwise. Children sometimes want to create a special place in the garden by arranging stones and bits and pieces to mark the grave or memorial site.



### Activities for children

Some children like to put together a memory box of mementos and write poems or letters to the pet they are grieving over.

Children do not necessarily show their grief in the same way as adults, and sometimes they start to grieve some weeks after the loss, in which case you may not automatically link how they are at that point to the pet bereavement. While a child gives the impression that he or she is perfectly okay and not too upset around the time of death, it is important to remember and be aware that it's possible that their grief hasn't yet found its way to the surface.

Besides crying or possibly becoming withdrawn, they may suffer nightmares, have stomach ache or headaches, or be off their food.

There may be problems at school, such as behaving differently in class, or their standard of work dropping. Sometimes it is worth mentioning to the class teacher what has happened so that they can be aware.

Reassure them that it is okay to feel sad, upset or however they may feel. Let them know that you recognise what a special relationship they had with the pet, and how they personally contributed to helping to make their life a happy one. You can give examples to back this up, such as, "You remember how you always gave Bunny a little treat and a cuddle each evening? He used to love that and would look forward to seeing you."

While you may feel that you don't want to show that you yourself are upset in front of the children, grieving as a family encourages an openness and freedom to express what you're all going through together. After all, if the pet was considered a much-loved member of the family, the sense of loss will be significant and each of you will need to work through the grief. It is always good to have support and to be able to talk, not only about how you feel but also to remember your pet's many special qualities and the happy times you all shared.

To download EASE's free children's bereavement activity book, visit:

<https://ease-animals.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/bereavementactivitybook.pdf>



## Animal Companions

**A** dog has "adopted" nine ducklings after their mother disappeared. Fred, a ten-year-old Labrador has become "dad" to the baby birds at Mountfitchet Castle, a tourist attraction near Stansted Airport in Essex.

The ducklings' mother was nowhere to be found when staff noticed them waddling around alone, but Fred immediately took to them and has been babysitting ever since. They have even followed him into the castle moat for a swim, staff said.

The reconstructed Norman castle is home to a number of rescued animals, but Fred is the

'resident dog'. A spokeswoman said staff were "very worried" when the ducklings' mother disappeared on Thursday, leaving them "looking a little bit lost".

But Fred, who belongs to one of the attraction's owners, Jeremy Goldsmith, stepped in to help. "We brought the ducklings into the house as they are too young to fend for themselves, and Fred just took them under his paw – rather than his wing," said Mr Goldsmith.



"He's got a lovely nature and has grown up around rescued animals." The ducklings sleep in the dog basket with Fred and follow him around as though he was their mother. "They absolutely adore him and he has now resigned himself to being a stay-at-home dad looking after the nine baby ducklings," Mr Goldsmith said.

When they are old enough to fend for themselves, Fred's babysitting duties will cease. Mr Goldsmith said he only expected Fred's babysitting services to last a few weeks, after which the ducklings will be free to stay at the castle or leave.



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