



The Contact

SPRING/SUMMER 2020

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The New 2020

Although life as we know it has drastically changed since you last received a newsletter, NDA is still here for all of our members, seeking ways to keep us all connected.

While the spring shows and events have been canceled, most of the summer and fall events are still holding on to their dates in hopes of a positive turn in the future.

Barns in our community are participating in virtual shows, like S & L Stables with their participation in the Virtual WDAA show or Coda Cavallo Riding Academy participating in NDA's Virtual Show. In addition to collaborating on virtual shows, as an organization we are excited to focus on creating additional opportunities for you, such as offering more educational events. Stay tuned for more details on the exciting virtual trivia night we have planned!

Please continue to stay tuned to our emails and Facebook page as we continue to send updates on events and connect with you through these platforms.

Hoping to ride with you all again soon,
Michaela Schieffer
NDA Editor

Letter from the President

2020 has certainly been a unique and challenging year. In the face of an unprecedented global pandemic, we have all—as individuals, organizations, and businesses—struggled to adapt our lives, cancel our plans, rewrite our goals, solve bizarre new problems, and check our expectations at the door.

NDA is no exception. Month after month, week after week, we are working hard to do everything we can to support our members, keeping your health and safety our top priority. We've had to make some heartbreaking (but inevitable) decisions, like canceling The Cornhusker Classic and rain-checking some previously scheduled Educational Events.

Like you, we've been sad to see the cancellation of several schooling shows, but are encouraged that some have managed to reschedule or go on with new health and safety guidelines.

And we're overjoyed that a new option is available to both members and showrunners: virtual schooling shows—which give people another way to experience some of the fun and feedback of showing while keeping everyone as safe and healthy as possible.

And now NDA has an awards series in place just for virtual shows!

The NDA Board and committees will continue to look for every opportunity to put our members first. We are brainstorming more fun virtual events, looking ahead to when in-person events might resume, and trying to problem-solve as much as possible in the meantime. Please know that while 2020 will probably continue to look very different than a typical year, we are going to make the best of it.

Remember that the NDA website (nebraskadressage.org) is your resource for everything NDA. It is always up-to-date with the latest calendar changes, show information, virtual show updates, awards resources, member handbook, and more.

As the pandemic situation continues to evolve, the website is where you can find NDA's most recent response to changing conditions. And on our Contact page, you can also reach out to us with any questions you may have—as we all continue to face 2020's curve balls together.

Stay safe and hug your horse,

Melissa Ward

2020 NDA President



Zack Hamilton

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SPONSOR SPECIAL

Coronavirus: What To Consider When at the Barn

Spring and Summer is show season; but many shows are getting cancelled due to COVID-19. You're riding, you're practicing. Is life going to return to normal? Yes it will; and much sooner if you decide and your friends decide to help. There are actually a few simple things that if everyone did them, the numbers of sick people will start dropping dramatically within a few weeks. Seriously? Yes...seriously, but EVERYONE has to cooperate. If some people make changes but others don't, this won't work. So, take a leadership role and show everyone else how to step up and help end this.

My clinic is on the front line for seeing and diagnosing patients with coronavirus. We were the first clinic in Lincoln to be routinely protecting ourselves when coronavirus came. We see positive Covid-19 patients everyday. Yet, despite pushing ourselves right in front of these sick people, not one single employee or staff member at my clinic has become ill. Why? It's simple....we all wear masks.

There is more and more data coming from the east coast everyday that in communities where masks are mandatory, the spread of illness is stopping. In countries where masks are required in public (Japan, Germany, Austria) the pandemic is already in decline. So why is it so hard for us to do something so simple? Well, let me ask you that question. I know you've heard about this. Do you wear a mask in public? Why not? What are the emotions holding you

back? There's a lot of science behind this. You should do it.

Ask yourself, why do surgeons wear masks? Did you know when surgeons first started wearing masks during an operation it wasn't to keep themselves from getting your germs? It was to keep the doctors from coughing any germs into the patient being operated on. It did also have the benefit of not having blood splashed on your face. Ick! Early masks were simply made of cloth, not particle resistant N95 respirators like we have today. And yet despite their simplicity, cloth masks worked. The doctors were being courteous to the person they were caring for.

Let me explain it in a different way. In wrestling, athletes are required to cover any infection of the skin so it does not spread. Close contact with an open wound will cause spread of germs. Well with coronavirus, your mouth is an open wound spewing millions of droplets of infected particles. Cover it up! Like a surgeon or an athlete, you can be courteous to others in your community. Remember if you are just starting to get sick, you won't even know it and will already be spreading germs.

If this still doesn't make sense, I made a short two minute YouTube Video that explains how everyone wearing masks will stop the infection.

<https://youtu.be/e4LIG6dxbOY>

Ok...so here are my thoughts on you, riding, and the barn where you visit.

1. A barn is more outdoor than indoor. I think people should not get within 6 feet of each other in a barn. If there are a lot of people, your mask would be very helpful. If it's you and just a couple of others, 6 feet with or without your mask. If it is a very small barn without good airflow, a mask is probably better than no mask.
2. When you arrive, you should wash or sanitize your hands. When you leave you should wash your hands. This is a way of being courteous to others if you are sick and don't know it. It is also how you make sure you don't bring it home.
3. If you are outside, in your car, or walking on a path, you don't need a mask.
4. If you are in a store shopping, you should absolutely wear a mask.
5. You don't need to wear a mask when riding. I don't want you to pass out.

Mask use, more than any other protective measure, is what will help us get back to normal. Hospitals and clinics are starting to tell people this needs to happen. You should too. If you don't have a mask, my clinic is sewing them and giving them to people for free. Stop by and pick one up.

Hang in there and keep practicing. We will get through this. You will get through this. It's ok to be concerned. That's normal. But don't ever let fear take a death grip on your actions. One of my favorite quotes actually comes from the chick flick...The Princess Diaries. I leave you with this....

"Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear. The brave may not live forever, but the cautious do not live at all." You can be a leader. Don't be afraid to wear a mask. Show everyone, "This is how it's done." ❖

Don Rice, M.D., FAAFP

Urgent Care Clinic of Lincoln

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center



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Reflecting on Reflections on Equestrian Art, Part 1

by Mel Policicchio

About a month ago, our fabulous local dressage trainer posted something on Facebook about starting an equestrian book club. “Talking about the Saddle Club books with friends?” I thought, “I’m so in!” It took about 4 seconds for me to realize that, being adults, we’d be discussing training and horsemanship books, but my excitement didn’t waver, especially when mention of snacks and wine came up.

Here’s where I confess to being a terrible horse girl: I’ve never really read proper nonfiction books on horses. This might sound crazy, being both an avid reader and a passionate equestrian, but I remember picking up a few as a young teen outgrowing her childhood horse books and feeling completely overwhelmed and then never really trying again (sadly very on brand for me). So when Amazon delivered Nuno Oliveria’s *Reflections on Equestrian Art* I felt equally apprehensive and excited. Would it be over my head? How pretentious could this book be? Will it be helpful or will it say things like “one should be able to perfectly balance a glass of ‘44 merlot on the back of a warmblood and if you cannot you should simply give up now, peasant”?

To my great delight, Oilveria made his bread and butter on rather inexpensive horses, believing firmly that with patience and tact any horse can be a dressage horse. For context, Oilveria was a Portugese trainer who (somewhat liberally) followed the French School of Dressage. This favors smaller, lighter horses than the Germans I’m accustomed to, which should excite anyone who doesn’t ride a handsomely thick warmblood. (As I’ve yet to find a dressage school that favors 14 hand chonky ponies, I’ll remain neutral.) Though Oilveria died in 1989 (I guess the world couldn’t handle having both him and Taylor Swift alive at the same time) his students are alive and well and vocal about his teachings and philosophies on harmony and perfection. Read more about him here.

What is Equestrian art?

I will confess again to being incredibly stupid; when I saw the title of the book I thought we’d be discussing classic oil paintings of horses and the long artistic history of man capturing the beauty of our noble equine partners. To be fair, the cover of the book does feature what I originally thought was a drawing of horse and rider but is actually a very old

photograph. Duh. Then I got a few sentences in and learned that “equestrian art” refers instead of Oilveria’s philosophies. According to him:

Equestrian art is the perfect understanding between the rider and his horse. This harmony allows the horse to work without any contraction in his joints or in his muscles, permitting him to carry out all movements with mental and physical enjoyment, as well as with suppleness and rhythm. The horse is then a partner, rather than a slave who is enforced to obey a rigid master by constraint.

To me, this is like the nirvana of dressage, our ultimate goal and state of final perfection. I can probably count on one hand the number of times I’ve felt perfect understanding with my horse in the last 5 years, and maybe that’s a reflection of my ability or maybe it’s a reflection of how difficult this can be to achieve. (I really hope I’m not the only one who struggles with this.) I love the idea of reaching this harmonious dressage nirvana, because of course I want my horse to be my partner (and really do think of Dizzy and all my pony pals as my partners) but find the demand of obtaining this more than a little overwhelming.

To be an Oilveria Equestrian Artist, you must be both technically knowledgeable and precise in your riding and deeply in tune with your horse’s ability. Which, duh, that’s very important, but this is also really hard. Maybe it’s because I’m not consistently riding with a trainer, but I find myself spending a lot of time analyzing Dizzy’s ability and mental state. It’s very easy to slip into overthinking and self-doubt in these times, so I also try not to do it too much...and then the existentialism kicks into high gear. How much thinking about dressage is too much thinking about dressage? At what point does it become destructive and the “shut up and ride” needs to come back? For the sake of writing a blog about a book that is about thinking about dressage, we’ll say for now “no such thing!” even though there certainly is such a thing.

Tactful Equestrians

One of the most important qualities an equestrian can possess, according to Oliveria, is tact. He urges riders to be tactful with their hands, seat, and (my favorite) head. Since it’s my favorite, let’s start with the tactful mind. Riders should

reward their horse at the slightest indication of obedience, embodying Captain Beudant's words, "ask for much, be content with little, and reward often." Put simply, by tactfully asking your horse only for what he can do, your horse will never tire of your requests.

Only a rider who knows exactly what her horse is capable of can do this, which is easy to say and hard to do. You need to really know your horse and your discipline to confidently know where your horse draws the line on a movement. Is your horse balking at a half pass because your saddle doesn't fit correctly and blocks his shoulder or because he hasn't built the muscle yet or because you're not asking correctly? I love the idea of being fully aware of your horse's capabilities, but since they can change on a daily basis, I think it's important for us to not get too frustrated if this is harder than anticipated.

Reading further, we got to my favorite part of the book so far, where Oliveria says that at his Portuguese school, he had a horse who "did over 500 flying changes at every stride without being tired." This is both wildly impressive and wildly horrifying to me, much like the grid exercises I see that consist of 50 bounce fences in a row except amplified by 100.

Oliveria believes that skill without tact is useless, which reminds me of the da Vinci quote "vision without execution is hallucination" mostly because of the similar sentence structure but also partly because it's so easy to only have half an equation for success. Tact can only be obtained by the people who truly love horses and do their best to understand them.

I'll pause here to say that, in my opinion, we can never fully know our horses, just the same way we can never fully know our partners or children or selves. This doesn't mean we should ever stop trying to understand them as best we can, but when dealing with a living being who is the culmination of their own experiences you're setting yourself up to fail if you think you can only be an equestrian if you fully understand your horse. But if you pursue your riding with the mindset of always trying to know them better, to let your horse show you how they're thinking and feeling within every situation, you're a tactful equestrian in my book.

Luckily for the non-philosophical reader, obtaining a tactful seat and hands is much more literal. This is where lightness plays in, where a rider has an independent seat and giving hands that move with the horse in every exercise. I do appreciate that Oliveria makes a distinction between lightness and passivity, because the riders who sit very still and do

nothing to help their horse can be technically light but also are fairly useless in dressage. I'm calling myself out here because I have a strange and terrible habit of abandoning my horse in a movement (or even over a fence) if I think I'm getting in the way. Oliveria wants to see an active horse and an engaged, light rider, which I see in some of our international dressage riders today, but sadly not enough of them. An engaged horse, he points out, is not one that is robotically completing the movements, but instead is active and through the entire body during a dressage test.

Of course, this great master presented us with a hundred other ideas, and maybe they'll produce a hundred other blog posts, but I'll leave this one with the question our dressage trainer posed and I've still been thinking about: "Can you have too much tact?" My initial reaction was to say that yes, you can. Working in an office I often struggle to find the best way to communicate, looking for a balance between that which is polite and professional and that which clearly and efficiently gets my point across. With horses, can we face the same challenge? I'm inclined to say yes, but would love to hear your takes! ❖

To read more of Mel's musings on a equestrian things, visit her blog at: melonline.space/existentialventer

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f t i h

The Journal of Coco Moonpie

by Margo Hamilton

I gotta tell y'all...when I heard I was going to be an English horse from now on I was a little sad. Worried about leaving behind all the polished silver of my headstall. Ughhh I moaned to myself, thinking of all the boring white saddle blankets and black tack I would be wearing. I was really relieved when I saw other horses in the barn wearing brightly colored saddle pads, matching wraps and THE MOST DAZZLING jeweled browbands.

It was enough for me to whinny "Yaaaas Queen!" with sheer joy! I started imagining being in that dressage arena, toting my student through a test, both of us dressed up in sequins like Joe Exotic at a Rodeo, the lights glimmering across the arena as we halt and salute. I talked to Margo about my dream, because she, not shy about colors and patterns herself, surely could help me get outfitted properly for my show debut.

When I got to the part about the sequined leg wraps Margo stopped me and explained that apparently there is a difference between what we wear to ride at home, and what we are allowed to wear in a show. Apparently, no leg wraps or boots, not even sparkly bell boots are allowed in a show ring, not even at a schooling show. I'm told we need to "tone it down" for the show ring, both rider and horse and find an "understated look" that compliments our colors, is comfortable and will not cause the judge to have a seizure when we canter by.

I mean, I believe her, but I did check into all of this. While some of the actual USEF and USDF rules are rather vague about color choices it states we stick with "conservative colors." The safest choices are white and black for saddle pads, with some kind of trim. Conservative colors could include navy blue, maybe hunter green or grey. Certainly not electric green with zebra trim. And for sure, no leg wraps, no bell boots not of any color while you are in the competition arena.

And no matter what "conservative color" you go with, make sure that the saddle pad is clean, in good shape. It's probably best to have one or two saddle pads set aside just for shows.

So if horses have to wear conservative colors, riders do as well. Riders I'm told always have to be wearing an ASTM/SEI

approved helmet no matter if they are Classical or Western Dressage, both in the schooling area and in the show ring. Riding britches can be any conservative color: white, tan, navy, black, grey. They should be clean, well kept and fit properly. A collared shirt in a complimentary color something like a show shirt or even a short sleeved polo shirt will do. Again, patterns, such as sequined tiger stripes are sadly frowned upon.

Margo said, probably the easiest way to start your schooling show career is to choose a "traditional look" White saddle pad, tan or white breeches, a belt, and a solid colored polo. All clean and well cared for. Apparently, we can also wear our "Traditional look" at riding clinics. If one opts for colors, like navy or grey she said, make sure the whole look (both horse and rider) is coordinated in some way and DOES NOT distract from your ride. And if you absolutely must wear tiger stripes, limit them to your belt.

Even though I feel a little bit like a rebel, I will follow these new fashion rules. No white horse shoes after Labor Day and I will keep my sparkly bell boots in the tack room for our tests. Margo said, it is possible to have details and personal touches in our show attire, like pink piping or a pattern on the collar of our shirt but our "look" should enhance, not detract from the ride. Everything should be neat and tidy, from top of the helmet to the bottoms of my hooves, so our ride speaks for itself.

Until we meet again my friends! I hope you are all washing your hooves and not touching your faces! I have some great tips on how to keep geldings social distanced but Margo says you guys aren't allowed to kick out at people in the grocery store, so maybe just pin your ears really hard. ❖



Western Dressage Corner

Life has certainly taken a very sharp turn in our Western Dressage World. But quick adjustments have been made by the Western Dressage Association of America and several key barns in the Midwest. Sorensen Equestrian Park in East Troy, WI. Has been hosting WDAA recognized shows for several years as well as the Midwest WDAA Regional Championship show. (Please note that they also run USEF recognized USDF shows as well at their facility).

Seeing a need to continue rider's preparations and show experiences, Linda and Reid Sorensen took their schooling shows virtual. The WDAA was quick to recognize a need for continued growth and challenge for their riders and horses and approved virtual shows judged by USEF WDAA judges for a ½ points in their Horse Recognition program.

Thus, a small group of riders from S & L Stables had horses ready to go for their first Virtual Show this April at Sorensen Park. We did our on-line entries, washed and groomed the horses, practiced our tests, did a couple of rehearsals to make sure we got the videotaping correct and learned how to store and prepare the videos for on-line submission (no small task). Four riders dressed up in their finest western attire and entered the show including myself, Anne Loudon, Kristen Loudon and Makayla Regler (Jr). The show had entries from multiple states and I must say waiting several days for the "results" was the hardest part. But everything went so well, our riders were the High pt. AA, Open and Jr. riders for the show and Anne Loudon on

Lenas Four Shogun was the high pt (English + Western) rider with a score of 76.591 for her WDAA Intro 1 test.

Our riders are happy, inspired and want to work more to keep this momentum going. Sorensen Park is going to have monthly virtual shows (English and Western tests) and have added the Virtual Show series to their year-end awards program (which we are all signed up to participate in).

Check out the WDAA calendar and Sorensen's webpage for more information. WDAA also offers a "Ride a Test" analysis program that you may want to take part in for feedback. There is no reason to hide under a hay bale during this COVID restriction. Riding horses in the sun is healthy for you and an easily safe social distancing sport. Let's have some fun during this very unpredictable time and hope for real shows later this summer and fall.

One other good news item for our western riders is that the University of Nebraska received a \$1,000 grant from The Dressage Foundation Lynn Palm Fund to host a Western Dressage clinic with Frances Carbonnel of Colorado (USDF Gold medalist and multiple WDAA National Champion). The clinic will be held early Spring 2021 with more info coming soon.

Wishing everyone a safe time and many wonderful rides on your safe horses.

-Sheila Purdum



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Region 4 News

Have you checked out all the new content on USDF University?

-TD Learning Modules now available to all members and eligible for education credits.

-Short Courses by Topic now available for education credits including new sport horse topics.

-New online courses available for education credits including Dressage Judging Terms and Concepts of Correct Judging and Overview of the Levels.

Check out the USDF official website for access to these courses

Classified Ads

Do you have something to advertise?

Classified ads are \$5 for NDA members and \$10 for non-members. They will appear on this page of the website for 90 days, in addition to one issue of *The Contact*.

Advertising images, documentation, and any questions should be sent to the NDA Fundraising Chair at fundraising@nebraskadressage.org. Payment for ads may be completed with the PayPal button to the right (+\$1 processing fee). If you prefer to pay by check, please contact the NDA Treasurer at treasurer@nebraskadressage.org.

NDA makes no endorsements or representation in connection with advertisements placed in this section.

Junior Corner



Just a reminder to join our Instagram page, @nda.juniors, to stay connected!



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Calendar of Events

- | | | | |
|---------------|--|------------------|--|
| JULY | <p>13 NDA Board Meeting, 7:00 via videoconference</p> <p>22 Online entries due for NDA's Dressage Lovers Deux Schooling E-Show (virtual show)</p> | SEPTEMBER | <p>14 NDA Board Meeting, 7:00 via videoconference</p> <p>20 NDA Schooling Show Championships, Lancaster Event Center, Lincoln NE</p> |
| AUGUST | <p>1 Still Waters Dressage Schooling Show, Hickman, NE</p> <p>10 NDA Board Meeting, 7:00 via videoconference</p> <p>TBD NDA Virtual Trivia Game</p> <p>29-30 Central Nebraska Dressage Classic, Show and Ride-A-Test, Clinic on Sunday, Mountain Rose Ranch, Kearney, NE</p> | OCTOBER | <p>1-4 USDF Region 4 Championships, National Equestrian Center, Lake St. Louis, MO</p> <p>5 Deadline for score submissions for year-end awards</p> |

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Photo by Susan J Stickle:
Olivia LaGoy-Weltz,
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USDF Regional
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Photo by Bob Tarr

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