

## OVER THE STABLE DOOR BY "HAMISH" From 2007 Cherry Chatters

### JULY

Hello everyone! My name is Hamish and I will be continuing Pablo's articles from now on. As I am only 3 years old, it will be hard act to follow, but I will do my best.

I have been recently broken to saddle and have been out socialising a couple of times. Hey, but I am a laid back character, so everything has gone well. My owners are quite pleased with me. I will be documenting my progress, so let's hope that it continues to improve.

Enough of me. Have you noticed the profusion of weeds in the paddocks? They really are rampant this year. If you haven't done so already, now is a good time to spray. As the ground gets wetter, some weeds become easy to pull too. The main thing is to get them before they flower. The worst ones in these hills areas seem to be capeweed, salvation jane, dock and dandelion. Of course there are other nuisance weeds like blackberry, broom, gorse and olive too. Spraying can be a tricky business, with some poisons being plant specific, so one spray will not necessarily kill all weeds at once. Options are to get in a contractor, which will cost, but they generally know what they are doing, and can do it quickly, especially if you have large areas to cover. Hand spraying or a small boom on an ATV can also be used as well as hand pulling. If that is all too hard, then these weeds can also be slashed before they flower. Be sure to read labels to check for withholding time for stock if any. If you have any doubts,

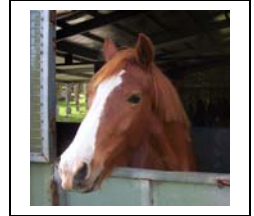
your feed merchant can often be of help with advice.

There can also be issues with when you spray too. For example, a sunny day with no wind is ideal. Usually the poison needs at least four hours on the plant to be effective. If it rains too soon, then all your good work is lost, not to mention the cost of the poison. You may even have to inform your neighbours too. They may be growing sensitive crops or someone in their family may have chemical sensitivities and be intolerant to sprays. Also make sure that you wear protective clothing as advised on the labels and be careful where you clean out your equipment afterwards, as it should not run into any water catchments.

The next step in your paddock program is to provide some competition for those weeds. So oversow with some clover, perennial rye and other paddock grasses. Native grasses, although lower in feed value, are tough and will survive better. Overall, a mixture is probably the best way to go. It also helps to have a soil test done. It is a relatively cheap way of checking your soil and you will know exactly what you should be putting back in the following year. Autumn is the best time to do this.

So good luck with your weed pulling everybody, happy munching and above all safe riding!

**AUGUST** What a wonderful amount of rain we have been having. Dams must be full or nearly so at this stage. Unfortunately for horse and land owners, the weeds have also benefited. There have been one or two days which have been convenient for spraying, but not many. For some of you, it may be too late this year, as it is better to catch those pesky weeds before they flower. If you have run out of time and the weeds get out of control, there is always the option of slashing. At least then you will reduce the seed drop. If on the other hand, you have had some success, you then need to think about the follow up steps. Once the weeds have gone, there will be bare patches of soil and they just love those kinds of places to grow in. So consider sowing something to compete with the weeds and thereby their growth. You may need to fence off small areas at a time to keep stock (be it horses or whatever) off those areas. If you have areas where horses like to congregate, then putting quarry rubble in those areas will help to reduce pugging. This is also useful around watering points if they tend to get too boggy. I realise that it all sounds quite daunting, but be heartened: it does get easier. Doesn't cost a lot, just ongoing maintenance and optimism! Often selective spraying of your weeds is necessary. Your local feed merchant can often help with that, or contact HorseSA. HorseSA is a wonderful reference point for all horse owners. Any horse problem/issue, they can help to point you in the right direction. Also in SA, we are lucky to have free expert help. For example, weed identification and control, paddock management and so on. So good luck with that, remember, healthy paddocks means healthy horses too! It also adds value to your property. As most of you will know, there are some places you drive past which just reflect badly on horsekeepers as a whole. So it is mutually beneficial to you and your equine to be diligent in your paddock management. How serious is all this! On a lighter note, my training is going along ( I think) quite well. I was taken to a dressage day (just to show off not to compete) and after a bit of eavesdropping, I gather that my owners were quite pleased with me. I was tied to the float, given something to eat and then ridden for half an hour or so. I was a very good boy. A bit looky, but obedient. I was also very good to load and float – what a good boy. I must be careful not to get a swelled head. I gather that my next adventure may be a ride out on the road. Wish me luck!



**SEPTEMBER** Since my last article we have had even more rain. After last winter I had forgotten what it was like – not that I have seen many winters, but I do know that it was a lot drier last year. I am quite an active boy in the paddock (something to do with my age!) and I have been rather hard on my synthetic rug. Luckily my owners had reproofed an old canvas rug which I am now wearing. It keeps me mostly dry. So it is a good idea to hang on to those old rugs for use as spares when the regular rug gets extra hard treatment. Being a young fellow, I don't need more than one rug and that is just to mainly keep the chill factor out ( I do have an inbuilt fur coat!).

The next few months will see horses starting to shed their coats, so owners will be busy with extra brushing. Remember, it is not just the horse that needs to be brushed. Check the inside of your horse rugs for that matting of fur and remove it regularly. It can be irritating and itchy for your equine and it is not healthy for him either. Leaving the rug off on a fine day is good for him too. He will want to roll a lot, which will get rid of a lot of that old fur too. And then you will need to brush him again to get rid of the dried mud etc. Never let it be said that a horse owner's life is a lazy one!

My 'breaking in' continues steadily. I am still learning what it is to go in a straight line. You may not realise, but it doesn't come naturally to us equines to walk in a straight line. As my 'go' response from the leg becomes clearer, so it becomes easier for me to go straight (something to do with me being a rear engined creature). So straightness is an ongoing thing at present. I am also learning to 'turn'. First of all the turn is shown to me by the reins. When my rider wants me to go left, there is a softish vibration or pressure on my left rein until I turn left. As soon as I have cottoned on to that, then the vibration stops! Of course this works to the right as well. Being the smart fellow that I am, this is becoming better all the time. When I am supposed to 'stop', my rider puts a light pressure on both reins to encourage me to stop. I find this really easy and sometimes stop too quickly, nearly tipping my rider off! The pressure on the reins also ceases when I have stopped. Usually I get a kind word and my rider dismounts to reward me as 'end of lesson' or we do a few more 'go forward' transitions. None of my riding sessions are very long, but they are all very calm and pleasant and I think that I am quite enjoying them!

**OCTOBER** No prizes this month for guessing the topic. Unfortunately for us all, equine influenza has arrived in Australia. Thanks to responsible action on the part of most event organisers, equine events all over the state have been cancelled until further notice. By keeping our equines on their own property and owners keeping away from other owners horses can we help to contain this potentially fatal disease. PIRSA has a website on the net with up to date information and news. Or you can direct queries to HorseSA. The horse industry is, or was the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest industry in Australia, so the effect on people, their jobs, the companies that employ them and the industry itself will suffer enormously from this outbreak.. Let's hope that it can be contained in the Eastern states and that life will return to normal before long. Keep tuned to the net or HorseSA for the latest news.

We need more rain. What an amazing thing to say at this time of year. A hot dry summer is predicted, so fly veils, nose covers and insect repellent will be needed this summer. Please owners, don't leave us with 'doona' rugs or double rugs on on a warm day. You know we sweat off our good condition by over rugging – we do come with our own 'in built' fur coat! If you must keep us covered, then a light weight, light coloured summer sheet will suffice during the day, with perhaps a heavier rug at night.

My education is coming along well. I have been to another 'clinic' for one day and behaved very well. I did walk, trot and canter and leg yield. I have also been on 3 rides with one of my paddock mates for company. Once a cow made a bit of a snort at me, which scared me no end. After my rider gave me time to get used to the smell and watched it walk around for a while I settled down and we continued our ride. We always finish well. I think that I will manage to get used to it before long.

Well that's all for this month, happy munching, safe riding and do please be vigilant about your horse related activities.

**NOVEMBER** Unfortunately the Equine Influenza is still with us. As most of you probably know, thousands of horses in the eastern states have now been vaccinated against the virus. However there are still outbreaks occurring, which means we are not out of the woods yet. As far as I know, all horse gatherings (except for thoroughbred and harness racing) have been cancelled until at least after Christmas. So we still need to stay very much up to date on what is happening interstate. Unfortunately the virus is spread easily by humans and while the movement of horses can be mostly controlled, the movement of humans is much more difficult. If you are not sure where things are at, HorseSA will be able to provide you with up to date information. Let's hope that the virus can be contained so that in the new year we can all get on with being normal again.

On a lighter note, while I have not been out and about to any shows or gatherings, I have been ridden out of my arena in company with an older horse and also with a group of horses. I must admit to being a little uptight the first few times, but I am getting more and more relaxed as time goes on. The

rides are reasonably short, so I don't get too stressed, and I do a lot of walking, with the occasional trot. In the arena I am also doing some canters. So all in all things are progressing well. My owners are keeping everything very low key so that I am relaxed in my work, which makes it so much easier for me to learn.

By the way, snakes have been evident lately, so do make sure that areas around stables etc are clear of long grass or any other odds and ends. That's all for now, happy munching and safe riding.

**DECEMBER** Well the Equine Influence seems to have abated somewhat, but it is still recommended to keep horse movement to a minimum until after Dec 31<sup>st</sup>. If in doubt, check with the HorseSA website. Let us hope that it has been contained within the contaminated areas.

I wonder if all this has given some owners more time to catch up on horse maintenance, ie. gear cleaning, putting winter rugs in for repairs and so on. Or has it been an opportunity to catch up with non horsey friends and be 'normal' for a while?

As I said last month do keep areas around stables, sheds and the like clear of rubbish and long grass. Snakes are always a worry and are best left alone, but we don't want our best friends accidentally stepping on them! Of course they are a hazard for humans and equines alike!

My training continues..... Recently my owners took me and a paddock companion to the Oakridge Road arena to test the sand. It went well and I was a pretty good boy .....until it came time to go home. Up to now I have always loaded onto the float without any problems, but this day it took 5 minutes. Now it is a new float, one which I am not used to, so that may have been the reason why I was not completely obedient. The next time my owner went to load me, I was still reluctant, so she has decided that there is a bit of a gap in my training and that some 'homework' needs to be done! Meanwhile I am busy munching away and generally enjoying myself. I have been for lots more rides and mostly enjoy them and am well behaved. I am also enjoying popping over a few small logs and jumps. I do like to stop on the other side though, which I gather my rider does not expect! However, mostly we are harmonious. Well by and large, I am an obliging young fellow and willing to please. On that note I wish you all a very happy and safe Christmas and New Year.