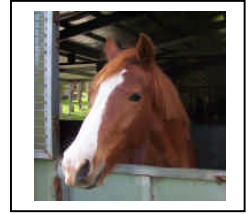


OVER THE STABLE DOOR BY “HAMISH” From 2011 Cherry Chatters

Greeting fellow equines and owners!



MARCH Hope you all had a peaceful and trouble free festive season and New Year. I thought that I would start off 2011 with a little bit of history.....Those of you who ride locally would have noticed alongside road verges a number of posts with a yellow and green design featuring a silhouetted horse & rider in black. Wherever you see those signs, you are on a part of the designated Tom Roberts Trail. The trail traverses such areas as Belair National Park, city of Onkaparinga & surroundings districts. Maps of the trail are available from the Onkaparinga Council, as are pamphlets on riders code of conduct. Also available are maps of the much more extensive Kidman Trail, which travels from Willunga to Kapunda.

Anyway, back to the Tom Roberts Trail – this trail was named in honour of Tom Roberts, OAM.

Following are some excerpts from information on the net. Tom was born in 1900 in India. He joined the British Army at 14 and at 16 became the youngest certified instructor ever in the British Army. At a time when nearly everyone grew up with horses and could ride, this says something for the skills he must have had. It is pretty amazing. In 1925 he migrated to South Australia, where he joined the S.A. Police. He then served in the AIF in the Middle East during WWII. On returning to S.A., he was appointed riding instructor for the S.A. Mounted Police. Over the years he continued to instruct many riders outside the police force. In 1959 he founded the Adelaide dressage Club (with Miss Dorothy Mansom). He was an incredibly talented horseman, way ahead of his time in his understanding of the way horses work and in their training. He also wrote four books on horses and their training. These books are sold world wide and the information in them remains a cornerstone of horse knowledge today. In 1982 he was awarded the OAM for services to equestrian sport. Unfortunately, Tom passed away in 1989. Riders still speak of him today with affection and respect. He had so much knowledge, was always ready to pass it on, always with an answer to any problem. He was a master with difficult horses, especially those who were difficult to load ; making it all look so easy. As a tribute to him in his memory, the trail was named in his honour. The Tom Roberts Trail provides a community asset for horses and riders through our local areas as mentioned earlier. It was initiated by HOSMLR (Horse Owners of the Southern Mount Lofty Ranges), who now partner HorseSA in this ongoing project. HOSMLR has its roots largely in the Cherry Gardens area, so this association is pretty special. So riders, spare a thought for Tom as you ride along the trail named in his honour!

The net has plenty more information on S.A. riding trails.

APRIL Firstly, things to remember now and in the coming weeks if you haven't already done so...Weed control – the usual Salvation Jane and capeweed, but also dock and dandelion. Rugs – make sure those rugs are ready for the coming months. The nights are getting chilly and some of us equines, particularly the elderly, will be looking for that extra warmth. Remember to cater for the individual; not all of us are the same. Yours truly could probably go without a rug all year, except my owner does like to keep me clean sometimes!

You may recall some months ago I spoke about training in the beginning and how important it was for the stop and go signals to be very clear. A young horse will usually learn these signals very quickly, especially if it has been trained from the very beginning. Once it is clear in hand, it is fairly straightforward to do the same training under saddle. As I have said before, it works so much better when the trainer is firm and consistent. The vital ingredient though, is the timing of the release of the pressure. It makes sense doesn't it to stop pulling or stop kicking once the horse has given us the correct response. Now, when you think that you are getting these lovely light and instantaneous

responses, this training can't just be put on the shelf and not revisited. No matter good the horse is, this training should be continued throughout the horse's life. Over time you may notice that instead of travelling alongside you light in hand, that your equine lags behind just that little bit and you have to give him/her a bit of a tug. This is actually a small signal to you, the trainer, that the go response needs a bit of a refresher. (Conversely, he may be 'walking all over' you, in which case it is the stop signal which needs an update). It is very easy to do, even on a daily basis for example when you bring your equine in from the paddock and let him out again. It seems like a small thing, but this can go on unnoticed (because it can be quite subtle) for some time and then what seems like all of a sudden he decides that going through a gate, crossing a ditch, a puddle of water and even loading onto a float is just not going to happen. Unfortunately for you the owner, this detraining has been quietly going on over a period of months or maybe years and you are confronted with an animal that appears to have suddenly become disobedient.

Every time we handle our equine, whether it be in hand or riding, we are always training him (for better or worse!), so the best way we can equip ourselves to avoid those unwanted behaviours is to be firm, consistent (especially in the timing) and vigilant. By vigilant I mean reading his body language, being extra aware of changes in the responses that we ask for (i.e. speeding up and slowing down). Then at least you will be on top of and therefore much better able to control his training. If you have noticed some changes and don't know how to correct them, get skilled help. Plenty of food for thought there eh? And of course I am always thinking of food.....

MAY We will be well into Autumn by the time you read this and hopefully those summer ailments will be in the past. The mild summer has kept the feed green with hardly any drying off. Several of my fellow equines have been in the wars with complaints varying from founder, to corns and abscesses. Yours truly has also been restricted in my feeding. I just can't seem to shake those kilos! My owner has been very diligent in keeping up my exercise and rationing my feed, but it seems to be quite a battle. One of my paddock mates has also been restricted as he foundered last year and is now more prone to that nasty condition. Our pasture has been excellent (too much so), with plenty of clover. This has proved to be both a curse and a blessing. My owners even sprayed the clover to reduce the quantity (that went against the grain so to speak). Also my owners have been cross grazing the pasture with a couple of cows and a couple of sheep to help keep the feed down.

Historically speaking, us equines are not designed to be eating such rich food, but like humans and chocolate, we do have a sweet tooth. Mostly we should be eating the plainest of hay, our diet should include sufficient roughage to keep our gut healthy. Once we are taken out of our natural habitat and put to work, that is when concentrates can be added to our diet. But even then, roughage is still an important part of our diet. Also the amount we are fed is sometimes too much. At rest or in light work would need around 1.5 – 2 % of our body weight in feed, although that rule cannot be applied across the board, as the horse's age, breed and personal metabolism will affect the amount fed. It is a good idea to weigh your feed (dry weight), even hay bales, as the weight can vary by up to 100% between bales. Feed should always be of the best quality you can get, as in clean, free of dust , weeds, rubbish, vermin etc. Watch out for barley grass, which can become stuck in the soft flesh in the horse's mouth, causing abscesses. If the feed is just dusty, it can be soaked in water in a hay net for half an hour, then hung up to drain for another half an hour before feeding. If you are growing your own, a soil test every 2 – 5 years will ensure that you are up to speed with what your feed contains. Cropping off the same pasture year in, year out is generally not recommended, so that needs to be kept on top of. If you don't have a choice with that, then a soil test will need to be more often and the pasture will need to be rejuvenated more often too. If you are buying feed in, then you may need to visit the site where the hay is grown, or purchase 1 or 2 sample bales to see whether your equines will find it palatable. It certainly pays to shop around where feed is concerned. Have you noticed how I just love to discuss food?

Hopefully I will think of something next month.
Excuse me while I just check my feed bin!

JUNE to the subject of founder. You may recall that one of my paddock mates had suffered from founder last year. Well

he seemed to be going lame on and off again. Naturally our owner checked his feet, especially feeling for a digital pulse (pastern area) as this can be a good indicator of trouble brewing. When a horse is in good health, this pulse can be quite difficult to palpate, but when founder is present, the pulse can be quite strong and easy to find. Anyway, there was a pulse, but not excessively so, so our owner started to restrict his grazing, letting him out for only a few hours a day.

The lameness was still intermittent, so he was put on a course of bute (anti-inflammatory). As an anti-inflammatory, this will ease the pressure in the hoof, making the horse more comfortable. He was then given a light lunge daily to keep his fitness up. In the middle of this, shoeing was due and on discussion with our farrier, we decided to have his feet x-rayed. The x-rays showed that while the pedal bone had not rotated downwards (thank goodness), there was some separation of the laminae of the hoof. This separation was actually from last year, and as the hoof was growing, this part which was separated was bearing more pressure, hence the lameness. Getting him x-rayed enabled our farrier to make accurate adjustments to the shape of the hoof. He is only shod in the front and the shoes have been put on back to front (with the open end towards the toe), giving a better and quicker rollover and reducing pressure on the toe while still supporting the heel.

We all went for a run today, I think a 'roo caused it and my mate ran along with the rest of us no problem. However our owner will still have to keep up the light work with him – on the lunge as the vet does not recommend him being ridden just yet. He also recommends that he is shod with the back to front shoes for the next 6 – 8 months.

Our owner is still restricting his feeding times, but not as strict as before. As he is turning 21 this year and will possibly be more prone to foundering, I know our owner will be keeping a close eye on him (on me too!).

Since my own feeding has been restricted, my crest has softened and my girth has come up a hole! I can't say that I am impressed with this locking up business, but my owners keep telling me that it is for the best.

Did you know? Horses can be affected by a type of 'Ross River' virus. Because of our warm and wetter than usual summer, mosquitoes have been around in larger numbers. Early signs of being infected can include wobbliness and hypertension. If in doubt, ring your vet! Check www.pir.sa.gov.au for further information.

JULY Well my poor old paddock mate is still suffering from founder. It looks like it will be an ongoing situation for the rest of the winter. Definitely a day by day process. My owners have invested in some Founderguard to see if that will help to alleviate his discomfort. However it will be wait and see. His grazing is pretty well restricted and he is being fed on almost exclusively roughage (hay), apart from a small daily chaff feed which has the Founderguard in it. I am still being locked up too, but for shorter periods of time. Plus my owner is trying to exercise me regularly to keep that crest and my weight down!

Recently it has been noticed locally that there has been a lack of road courtesy by local riders! Not, one would immediately assume, drivers, but those people on horseback. It was reported to my owners that a driver had slowed down and moved over only to be completely ignored by the rider. This kind of response (or lack thereof) will hardly foster good relations between the horse and non-horse fraternities. That driver will not be encouraged to act in the same thoughtful way next time they encounter a rider on the side of the road. It is surprising that one of our own should be seen to ignore an act of courtesy by a driver in slowing down and moving over. How can riders expect to be treated courteously on the road when they don't even acknowledge a considerate

driver? A nod or a wave as a thank you is sufficient and costs nothing! Good manners on the road between both parties is not only a lot more pleasant, but can promote safer driving and riding. There will always be those who choose not to be polite, but it is far better to act carefully and safely when using the road. Even for drivers, a panicking, half tonne horse skidding on the road and possibly coming through the windscreen is potentially fatal for both parties.

As well as taking your good manners with you on your ride outs, remember to wear some bright clothing, such as a neon vest or neon coloured boots for your horse. Make sure someone at home knows where you are going and for how long. A spare halter is handy (your horse can wear this under his bridle), a mobile phone and a hoof pick are all useful items to take with you.

That's enough of my grumbling for this month, enjoy your riding everyone and keep safe.

AUGUST We are well and truly into winter by now. Hills land owners will have had good average rainfalls. Your paddocks this time of year will be sprouting plenty of weeds. Too late to spray now until early spring, but some weeds are easily pulled by hand, including capeweed and Jane. Even some dock can be pulled if it is in a very wet area, but mostly it is difficult as it has a long tap root and the end tends to break off. Even breaking the heads off as it starts to bud will slow it down and you will have prevented literally thousands of seeds from developing. Weeds will tend to grow in places where there is less competition e.g. in areas of traffic or where horses congregate. Try to restrict these areas by fencing off and/or seeding with some competition grasses.

Another strategy to protect your paddocks is to select a 'sacrificial' area for yards and/or stables. This area needs to be as level as possible, but with some slope to help drainage. Shelter is preferable too, as the horse(s) will not be moving around as much. A good surface will help to prevent pugging.

Depending on the situation, a good cover of kikuyu is beneficial or a base of large rubble topped with dolomite. Having a shelter will help your horse to keep his feet dry and lessen the potential for abscesses or greasy heel.

Even when the weather is foul and you can't ride, it is a good idea to check feet daily and clean out. Any heat in the hoof may be a sign that something is brewing and will need to be inspected further. Of course if you are lucky enough to have large pastures you may not need to confine your animal. Unfortunately if the converse is the case, then be prepared for extra work. No choice – it comes with the package!

Whenever we take the horse out of his natural environment, other factors come into play. We need to keep his living area clean, and that means regular picking up of manure, old or dropped feed and keeping water topped up and clean. He may also need extra rugging if he is not moving around as much. So spare rugs are a must. They also need to be in good repair (one of those autumn jobs!). There is more to owning a horse than meets the eye, 5% of the time spent riding and the rest in care and maintenance! It certainly is one of those things that you have to be passionate about to remain committed.

Just an update on my paddock mate with his laminitis. He is still confined to his stable and having plain meadow hay. His vet and farrier have worked together to help him cope. The front of his hoof has been cut away and shoes removed. He is also on a course of 'bute' (anti inflammatory) to help ease the discomfort. It will take months for him to improve, as all the separated laminae have to grow out. Fortunately the pedal bone has not rotated downwards and the heels are in reasonable condition, so his chances of being back to normal are increased.

SEPTEMBER I hope everyone is enjoying all this wet weather. We have been lucky to have some really beautiful fine days in between the rain. Unfortunately these wet conditions have brought the usual winter woes. On my local grapevine there have been a few cases of abscesses and greasy heel. Both of these conditions can be slow to heal and are a real nuisance value, not to mention quite painful for your equines. This is

where that daily check can be so useful in helping to prevent the onset of either of these conditions.

The onset of an abscess is usually indicated by some lameness and localised heat in the hoof. Sometimes your farrier will notice some extra sensitivity. If you are lucky, the abscess will come out through the sole of the hoof and once gone, your equine will be amazingly sound again. Some abscesses however, will not work their way down through the hoof, but come out at the coronet. These usually take longer, because they have to work their way upwards and there is no way to relieve the pressure. One method of speeding things along a bit is to soak the hoof in a bucket of reasonably warm water and Epsom salts (a good handful) twice a day. Once a day is better than nothing. Keep the hoof in the bucket for as long as the horse will tolerate it. Another method is to make up a bran poultice and wrap it under the hoof. Make the mixture up with Epsom salts and warm water (not too wet, preferably almost crumbly). Of course your equine would preferably need to be confined to keep the poultice on. Change it daily. Once your equine has had an abscess, it often means that it will recur again. Abscess also appear to be more common in horses with poorly shaped feet, especially those thoroughbreds with flat feet and no heel and even horses with a more upright hoof with contracted heels. Whichever way, once they have had one, you will need to be on the lookout. Keeping the shoeing up to date and not letting toes get too long, keeping your equine out of boggy or badly drained areas will also help as preventative maintenance.

Greasy heel can also occur during the winter months, or during warm, humid conditions. It can be quite easy to miss as it generally starts down in the back pastern area and if your equine has a few feathers, they can hide this. After you have cleaned out the feet, just run your hand down and around the pastern to feel for any crusty lumps. They may just be dried mud, in which case brush it out, if not clean off those crusty lumps as best you can. The earlier greasy heel is spotted, the easier it is to treat. One of the other early signs may even be lameness, as the skin can become very sore and cracked, even bleeding. It is very painful for your equine. Once you have cleaned the area, treat with a medicated paste (recommended by your vet). Usually it needs to be applied liberally twice a day. If your horse has feathers, then trim them away as short as possible to help keep the area clean. Then try to keep your horse comfortable away from any damp, boggy areas. He may even need to be stabled if the condition is really established. Horses with feathers and/or white feet and legs can be more prone to this condition.

As with most things equine, this is all very labour intensive, so preventative maintenance is definitely the way to go, both for us and our trusty steeds.

My paddock mate is soldiering on with his laminitis. It is a day by day thing as we wait for the hoof to grow out. Meanwhile he is mostly stabled and yarded, while our owners try to keep him as comfortable as possible.

OCTOBER Spring has well and truly sprung! The paddocks are so green one almost needs glasses to reduce the brightness. Spring chores include keeping on top of those pesky weeds. Main offenders are salvation jane, capeweed and dandelion. Check with your local supplier for the most appropriate broad leaf spray if hand pulling is too big a job. Other common weeds you may notice in your pastures can include dock, sorrel, sour sobs, scotch thistle. There are many not so common weeds and if you check your pasture regularly, you may notice any new invaders. If you find something which you cannot identify, then it is a good idea to ring your NRM board for an identification. Their advice is free and they will even visit your property should you have real concerns with weed identification.

A couple of articles ago, I mentioned courtesy on the road. Also the wearing of appropriate brightly coloured gear for ease of visibility. I was very impressed the other day to see a young rider not only riding on the correct side of the road, but well turned out in sensible riding gear – jods, boots and helmet. Also to complete the outfit he was wearing a nice brightly coloured vest. The whole picture was very impressive and this young rider was also extremely visible to anyone driving along the road. To whoever this

was, well done, you were setting a great example not only to the general public, but to other riders as well.

A follow up on my paddock mate – the good news is that he seems to have turned the corner. He is now not as crippled as he was and can be let out of his yard for very short periods each day. Usually an hour or so and then back in he goes! He is still on a diet of good quality plain meadow hay. His farrier is due next week, so it will be interesting to see how that goes, as his feet will be needing a little bit of a trim. Last time he could barely pick up one hoof at a time without wanting to fall over. We are hoping that he will continue to improve, although it is still going to be a fine line in management with him. Well that's all for this month – short and sweet (like my good self actually!)

NOVEMBER Now that we are having the occasional (!) fine day, riders will be wanting to be out and about. Horses may be a bit fresh and keen.

Riders, you may have your agenda about what you want to do with your trusty equine, but remember that his main agenda is to eat. The point being that always keep in mind the big picture when your mount is coming back into work. He will need to be introduced by stages, depending on his age and level of experience. He will be the one who will govern the rate at which you progress, whether it is just fitness or exposure to the dramas of road riding and or competition.

If he is getting stressed over whatever activity you are doing, then you need to consider the causes.

If he is an inexperienced horse, then perhaps more time needs to be spent on the basics.

If your mount is well grounded and his training consolidated, then you may need to consider things like fitness, gear and the fitting thereof, health i.e. teeth.

If your mount has had a bit of a holiday during the winter months, then it can be useful to get a clean bill of health before coming into serious work.

If his shoes have been off during the break, then the farrier will be needed (he may also have been trimmed whilst being out).

Make sure that his worming has been kept up to date.

A visit by the chiropractor doesn't go amiss either, as during that time off, no doubt your beloved will have been having a good run around the paddock. At least then you know you will be starting with a clean slate and not asking your equine to be performing at his best when in fact he can't cope physically.

This is where lungeing as part of your horse's repertoire is useful. A preliminary lunge to assess how he is travelling will give you some idea of where he is at. Do not use lungeing as a means for your horse to gallop around as he will associate this with the flight response and he will very quickly learn to accelerate when on the lunge. The risks there, especially when unfit include injury to both yourself and him. Use it rather as a means of assessment as well as getting him fitter, more supple and obedient to the voice.

These days many vet checks include showing the horse both under saddle and on the lunge, so consider that lungeing is merely just part of his training.

A word on my paddock mate. He continues to improve daily. Last month the farrier came and trimmed his feet, taking off more hoof growth, while leaving most of the weight to be taken on the sole. By taking the weight of the wall of the hoof, this removes some of the pressure, enabling the hoof to re-grow better.

Up until last month our owner had been taping pads of polystyrene to his feet during the day while he was in the yard and removing them at night. The theory being that he felt more confident to move around without being stressed. After the trim he was a little lame, but soon came good. He no longer wears the pads and has been able to be walked and trotted for 10 mins per day (or every second day). Yesterday he did his first canter and was very good.

He is looking much cheerier in himself and wanting to go forward. The walking and trotting was firstly done in hand, then progressed to the lunge and so far has been ridden four times.

His grazing is still restricted and is still on plain feed, but the picture is looking good.

DECEMBER After some very changeable weather we seem to be into summer. Those of you cutting their own hay will hopefully have it all shedded by now. It is always a big relief to have that hay put away. Even if you don't grow your own, if the season is poor, then it puts the price up for the next year's feed. And funny enough, it never seems to go down again!

I presume that all those working equines are now into a work routine and that those lucky enough to be retired are being well looked after. Just like humans, horses vary in the amount of work they can cope with. Depending on the discipline they are involved in, the workload will vary too.

Horses doing competition work will require to be on a fitness schedule in preparation for their events. Owners need to be dedicated and consistent to keep their mounts at premium fitness.

As we horses don't normally gallop around paddocks over and into jumps, chase balls, go for 160km rides, do concentrated work in a rectangular area or chase cows etc etc, our feed also needs to be closely monitored. Horses used for that once a week pleasure ride will most times not need their basic feed of roughage changed.

Once that level of activity increases, then more energy feed is required. Any changes need to be made gradually and carefully.

Owners need to watch for any major changes in manure (ie. getting the runs), drinking, personality changes, weight gains or losses. A horse's gut is mainly designed to process roughage (ie hay), so when various additives are brought in it can have quite some side effects.

Some of us are even allergic to lucerne!

Apart from certain trace elements, there are two main items to be included in a horse's diet. They are phosphorous and calcium. A batt of lucerne hay per day for an average horse will generally supply this. Suppose your equine is allergic to lucerne, then there are products available which will supply those ingredients. Your local feed merchant can usually help in this regard.

If you are mainly feeding from a paddock, then that is where a soil test done every 2-3 years will put you up to date on what is exactly going into your hay, and what is needed to bring it up to scratch. Whatever you have to add in will usually be available in your hay after about a year. After about five years, it will be back to scratch again, so it is a good idea to keep up to date with your soil. So, lucerne is a good source of calcium. Bran is a good source of phosphorous. Bran is a good roughage (it is the ground up husk of wheat) and horses generally love it. The best way to make a bran mash is to boil some water, add a sprinkle of salt, maybe a bit of molasses and mix well. The consistency to look for is such that if you take a handful of the mash in your hand and squeeze, then a small amount of milky fluid should come out. If not, then add a bit more water, or if more watery, then add more bran. Leave the mixture to stand until it is just warm. It can be given as just a mash, or mixed in with the regular hard feed.

My paddock mate seems to be recovering well now. He is in regular, but still light work. The damaged part of his hoof is now about half way down, so it will be another 6 months before he will have decent feet. In the meantime progress is sure and steady.

Well, that will do for now. I hope you get plenty of carrots for Christmas morning and have a safe and enjoyable Christmas break.

Hamish.