

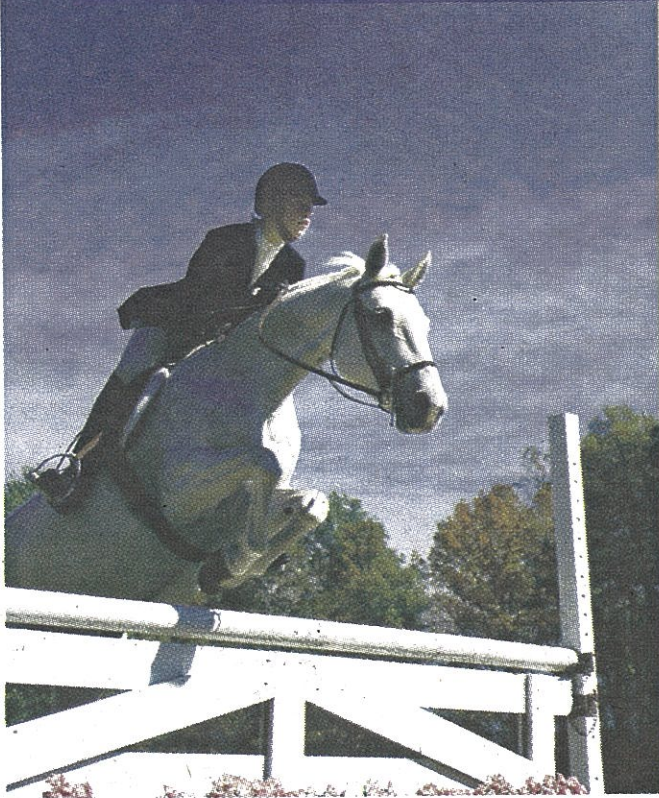
# Valley EQUESTRIAN

2012



Brought to  
you by the  
Daily  
Hampshire  
Gazette

# Valley EQUESTRIAN: Table of contents



New horse barns at Three-County Fairgrounds in Northampton get good reviews ..... Page 3

“Horse-obsessed” Abby Raucher keeps fun at top of list ..... Page 6

Masseuse’s role: Rubbing horses the right way ..... Page 10

How the Equine Wellness Expo strives for horse health ..... Page 14

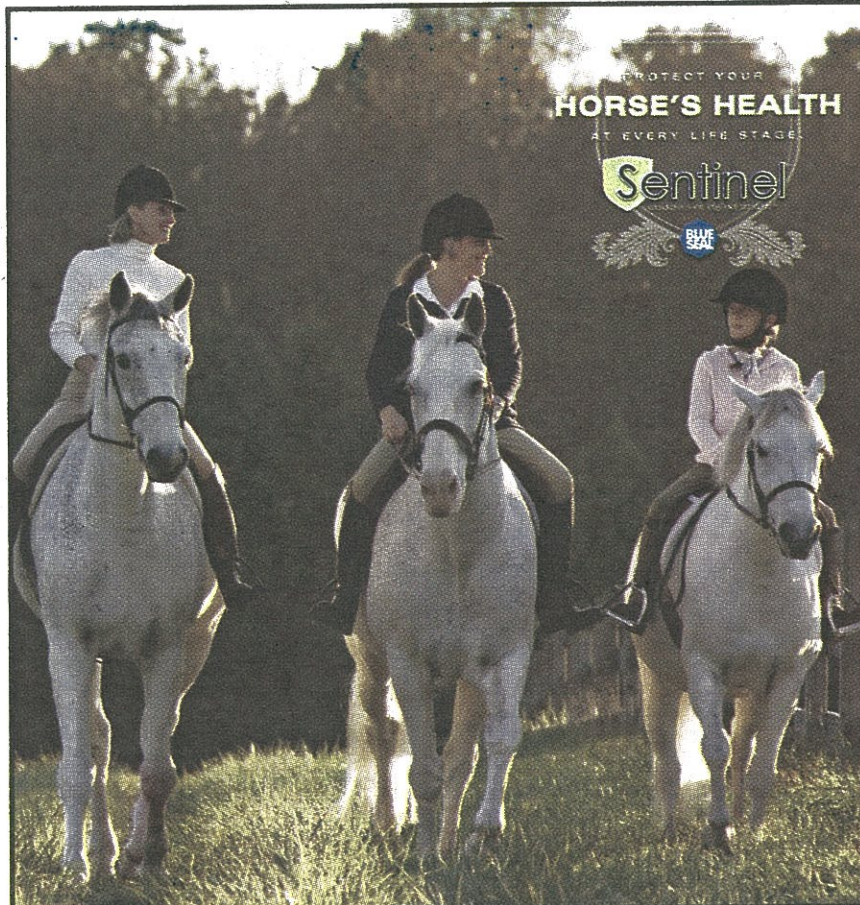
UMass restructures its equestrian programs ..... Page 16

Advice on holistic therapies from April Hart ..... Page 19

Inside King Oak Farm in Southampton ..... Page 22

Calendar of equestrian events ..... Pages 24-28

Paris Finley’s tale of a harrowing horse rescue ..... Page 30



**LT**  
**LIFE TIME FORMULA**

**Sentinel™ Life Time Formula** is formulated specifically for active junior, adult and senior horses specifically where joint health is a potential concern. A fixed-formula high fat, high fiber complete feed fortified with essential nutrients plus *Glucosamine HCl* and *Chondroitin Sulfate* provides superior nutrition to meet the physiological and metabolic needs of active horses for a lifetime of health and performance. **Sentinel™** offers a safe and natural way to provide essential nutrition and calories, is easily digested for optimal nutrient utilization and veterinarian recommended. Visit [www.sentinelfeed.com](http://www.sentinelfeed.com).



3218759

**Amherst Farmers Supply**  
320 South Pleasant St., Amherst, MA  
413-253-3436 • [amherstfarmerssupply.com](http://amherstfarmerssupply.com)  
**Bernardston Farmers Supply**  
43 River St. (off Rte. 10), Bernardston, MA  
413-648-9311 • [bernardstonfarmerssupply.com](http://bernardstonfarmerssupply.com)

# EQUINE WELLNESS EXPO

*Celebrating the body,  
mind & spirit of the horse*



*This year's second-annual Equine Wellness Expo, organized by Nicole Birkholzer, again worked to widen the picture on ways to enhance horse health.*

**By Erica Silber**

April 29 was spa day for horses. Over 300 people gathered at the UMass-Amherst Farm in Hadley for the second annual Equine Wellness Expo, where they watched grateful horses receive holistic treatments such as acupuncture, massage, physical therapy, chiropractic work, magnetic therapy and aromatherapy.

The event was organized by Nicole Birkholzer, who describes herself as “a relationship coach for horses and their humans.”

According to Birkholzer, this may be the only expo in the nation that focuses on holistic equine care. “Sometimes we only look at the physical in horses,” she says, “and don’t pay attention to the mind and the spirit. To build a real connection and relationship with a

horse, we must pay attention to all parts — body, mind, and spirit.”

Birkholzer started the expo last year after witnessing the incredible transformation of her horse, Jesse, a rescue horse adopted from Blue Star Equiculture in Bondsville. Suffering from severe physical difficulties, he seemed to have lost his will to live, but within six weeks of holistic therapies, Jesse was physically fit and spir-

ited again. Amazed, Birkholzer decided to create an expo to bring little-known holistic equine health practitioners and therapies before the eyes of the world.

Funds from the expo supported Blue Star Equiculture, a draft horse sanctuary and horse-powered organic farm in Bondsville, part of Palmer. Now in its third year, Blue Star cares for about 30 horses at a time and has placed over 80 in

## Horses also get depressed when they don't have work to do, a fact many animal rights activists misunderstand.

adoptive homes.

Executive Director Pamela Rickenbach says that horses bond deeply (they have the second-best memory in the animal kingdom, after elephants) and are often traumatized if they lose their homes.

Horses also get depressed when they don't have work to do, a fact many animal rights activists misunderstand. Blue Star takes in retired New York carriage horses, and Rickenbach emphasizes how well the horses are treated, encouraging everyone to enjoy carriage rides in full knowledge that we are supporting the horses by doing so.

Blue Star also educates people about the benefits of horse-power farming, both for the horses themselves and for the environment. "Horses don't want to be seen as pets," she says, "They want to be helpful; they love to do what they're bred for."

The Equine Wellness Expo grew from 10 exhibitors in its first year to 32 in its second. In the next few years, Birkholzer hopes to expand it into a two- to three-day event with workshops for attendees. The exhibitors' holistic methods are appropriate for all horses, pure bred or not. Here are some highlights:

- A powder of safe, naturally occurring microbes can clean stalls and eliminate odors by breaking down urine and feces. Learn more at [www.Young-Enterprises.com](http://www.Young-Enterprises.com).
- Magna Wave, a machine that creates a pulsed electromagnetic field, stimulates healing for a variety of injuries and ailments by exciting cells at the atomic level. It has been FDA approved and double blind studies show that it heals bones three times faster than normal. Learn more at [www.MendingFencesEquine.com](http://www.MendingFencesEquine.com).
- Physical therapy can help a horse regain strength and flexibility and relearn healthy movement, especially within three months after the injury. Steroid shots, com-

monly used instead, reduce pain but do not assist healing. Often only one physical therapy visit is necessary to learn the exercises which will heal the horse. Learn more at [www.hnhpt.com](http://www.hnhpt.com).

- A quick thrust from an equine chiropractor can get every joint aligned and moving. When joints are not moving, cartilage is not fed. Dr. Bethany Bowman, D.C., says, "Chiropractic can be used for preventative medicine as well as acute, painful issues. I can get anybody to function a little better. We all use our bodies at least a bit incorrectly." Learn more at [www.equine9chiro.com](http://www.equine9chiro.com).

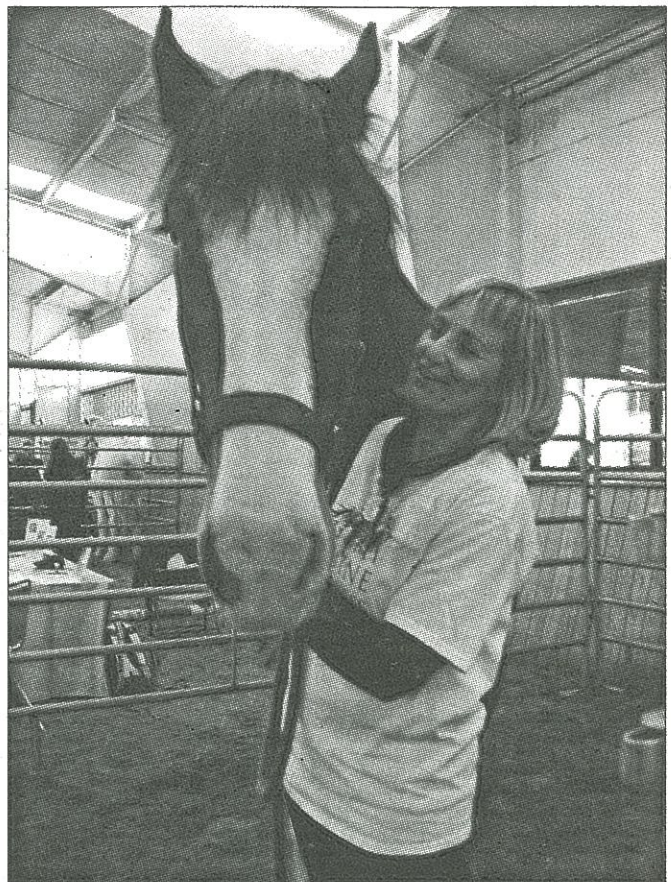
- Flowtrition is a gentle touch along the spine that stimulates the nervous system to release trauma and heal itself. To learn more, email [eve.capkanis@gmail.com](mailto:eve.capkanis@gmail.com).

- Horseshoes decrease circulation in a horse's feet, reduce shock absorption by 80 percent and deform hoof shape over time. Any horse can learn to go barefoot, but there is an adjustment period for feet injured by shoes to heal and adapt. Hoof boots can ease the transition. When Betsy Merritt removes shoes from horses that can barely walk and replaces them with boots and pads, she says that horses frequently start running and bucking. To learn more, email [BetsyMerritt@hotmail.com](mailto:BetsyMerritt@hotmail.com).

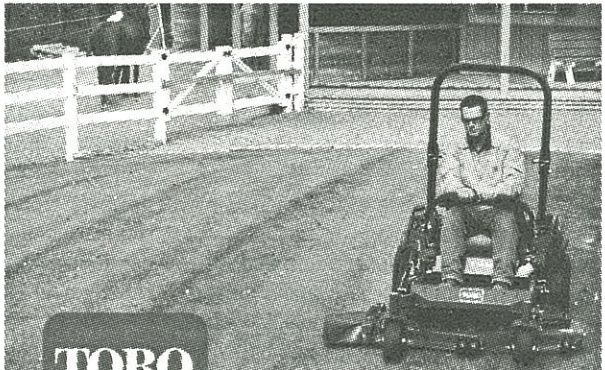
- Magnetic therapy oxygenates tissue to help it heal. A non-invasive therapy that does not interfere with any conventional treatments, it has been used effectively since the beginning of the century. Learn more at [www.neholistic.com/raymondelliott](http://www.neholistic.com/raymondelliott).

### More Web connections:

- Online Equine Wellness Expo: [www.EquineWellnessExpo.com](http://www.EquineWellnessExpo.com)
- Blue Star Equiculture: [www.equiculture.org](http://www.equiculture.org)
- Nicole Birkholzer, Mindful Connections: [www.mindful-connections.com](http://www.mindful-connections.com)



Nicole Birkholzer organizes the Equine Wellness Expo.




**TORO**

## Hard Working, Long Lasting.

Equine members can **SAVE UP TO 28%**  
on Toro Z Master™ mowers at [equinesavings.com](http://equinesavings.com)!

See more Toro products at  
[www.equinesavings.com/toro-brand](http://www.equinesavings.com/toro-brand)

 EquineSavings.com

## BOYDEN & PERRON, INC.

Outdoor Power Equipment

41 South Whitney Street, Amherst • 253-7358

Mon.-Fri. 8-5:30, Wed. 'til 7pm, Sat. 8-4 [www.boydenandperron.com](http://www.boydenandperron.com)

# HOLISTIC THERAPIES

## Advice from horse trainer and instructor April Hart

By Erica Silber

April Hart has been training horses and teaching horsemanship for 35 years, and for 15 of these, she has used alternative therapies for routine care as well as for treating acute problems. "The important thing to realize about alternative therapies," she said, "is that they are user-friendly and therefore you can learn about and incorporate them into your regular care program. As you do this, you will become familiar with what helps your horse, possibly solving problems before they come to a head."

### Before trying holistic therapies

If a horse has a problem, it is not always best to jump to alternative therapies first. Hart advises five foundational checks to determine the horse's needs: a veterinary exam, a dental exam, a shoe exam, a saddle fit assessment and a training assessment to ensure that the horse is being worked in a biomechanically correct way.

If a horse is consistently directed to do exercise unsuited to her body, or if her saddle does not sit properly, or her shoes are imbalanced, holistic methods alone are not going to solve her problem. Hart emphasizes that every horse should be seen regularly by a vet and dentist and saddle fit should be checked every six to twelve months, since it can change as the horse's muscles change. These checks provide a good foundation to which holistic therapies can be a powerful complement.

### How to explore holistic therapies

Horses' responses to holistic therapies vary by the individual and by the issue. "One horse might respond best to an herbal anxiety remedy, while another responds better to a homeopathic remedy," Hart said. Some therapies work immediately, while others require time to take effect. If your horse is experiencing a severe problem, consult professionals for an immediate solution. For mild, ongoing conditions, Hart suggests beginning with a treatment that interests you and exploring only one at a time. Research in books and online and ask practitioners. Some treatments you can apply yourself, while others require hiring an expert. Hart recommends trying each modality for at least three months to get a good sense of the results before trying another.

### Holistic therapies in routine care

Hart suggests incorporating holistic therapies into your routine care, rather than waiting until your horse has a health problem that requires a reliable immediate solution. Thus, you can keep your horse healthier and happier, preventing many acute problems.

How to add holistic therapies into your routine:

- Herbs can be added to the horse's feed. Most are best given daily, but not 365 days a year. Interval recommendations vary depending on the herb.

- Essential oils can be sprayed on horse blankets, rubbed or sprayed onto a person grooming, or plugged into a diffuser in the horse's stall. A



## Sycamore Stables

### Want to ride on a team?

Join the Sycamore Stables IEA Middle & High School Team!

The Sycamore Stables Interscholastic Equestrian Association (IEA) team consists of middle and high school students from many different local schools. Riders range from beginners through advanced and all enjoy the chance to meet riding enthusiasts their age! There are five horse shows throughout the competition year and five practices. Members are expected to take at least one weekly lesson and participate in fund raising activities as well.



### CALL FOR SUMMER CAMP SCHEDULE

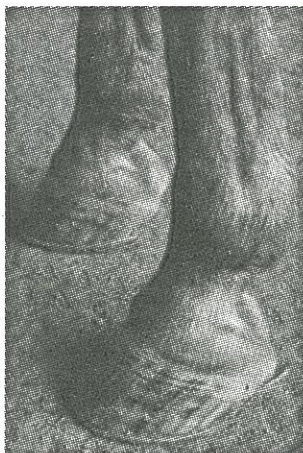


Lessons . Training . Boarding . Sales . Indoor & Outdoor Arenas . Heated Tack Room

Visit [Sycamore-Stables.com](http://Sycamore-Stables.com) for updates on upcoming clinics and shows!

50 Station Rd. Amherst, MA (413)256-0816 [www.sycamore-stables.com](http://www.sycamore-stables.com)

clean cotton cloth with a few drops of essential oil between its folds (not touching the horse's skin) can be placed over the noseband of the halter during grooming. (It can take time for the horse to become accustomed to the feel of the cloth.) Some essential oils can be added to a carrier oil and rubbed directly on the horse's skin, but others should not contact the skin directly. Hart recommends using aromatherapy every day or two, and testing the horse every 6-8 weeks to see it is time to switch remedies.



- Flower essences can be dripped into the horse's water, onto sugar cubes or apples, or onto your hand for the horse to lick off. They can be given once or twice a day. Hart suggests creating a new remedy once a year or whenever major changes occur.

- Massage is most useful right before exercise or at another time during the day, but can also be done after exercise. Hart advises massaging your horse two or three times a week. If you have the resources, consider hiring a professional massage therapist every three months for regular maintenance. If the horse has difficulty in training, discomfort, or a soundness issue, more frequent massage may help.

- Stretching a horse can be very helpful before riding. Chiropractors and physical therapists can teach you stretching techniques.

- Chiropractic work is good to try if a horse has a sore back or chronic lameness. (Remember that chiropractic work should never be attempted by a non-professional, but professionals will generally teach you exercises you can do to complement their treatments.)

- Energy work such as reiki can be done at any time.

**Amy Plavin, DVM, CVA, CVSMT**  
**Windy Hollow Veterinary Clinic**

**Chiropractic**  
**Acupuncture**  
**Herbal Medicine**

**Equine and Small Animal**

Our practice focuses on an integrative approach using acupuncture, chiropractic, and traditional western medicine to help achieve optimal health.

Acupuncture and chiropractic care are used for lameness, sports injuries, musculoskeletal disorders and general maintenance of joint and spinal health.

**68 Sunderland Rd., Montague, MA**  
**(413) 367-0062**  
**www.windyhollowvet.com**

**Favorite treatments for common problems**

- Hormones can be balanced with herbal raspberry leaf. It is safe and effective for mares in heat. "I have never seen a mare go on raspberry leaf who wasn't helped by it," Hart says.
- Arthritis can be treated with herbal devils claw and yucca.
- Respiratory issues can be eased with rosemary essential oil.
- Hoof abscesses can be healed with lavender oil applied directly to the hoof.
- Anxiety can be relieved with Rescue Remedy, a Bach Flower Essence mixture that Hart says all horse owners should have.

**Favorite recipe for a salve for scrapes and cuts**

Ingredients: 60g beeswax, 500ml olive oil, 60g dried or 150g fresh plantain, 60g dried 150g of fresh comfrey. Optional: 6 drops rosemary essential oil, 6 drops lavender essential oil.

Some people have allergies to these ingredients, but using rubber gloves can prevent reactions.

Mix all ingredients in a crock pot and keep it just below simmering for 45-60 minutes. Then strain it through cheesecloth. You can also add 6 drops of rosemary or lavender oil, both antibacterial, just before it congeals.

Store it in an opaque container, ready to spread on injuries as they occur. This salve will help scrapes and cuts heal faster, but is not meant for puncture wounds.

**Massage oil for sore tendons, muscles, and joints**

Ingredients: 8 oz castor oil, 2-3 handfuls comfrey. Optional: 6 drops each essential oils of your choice.

Mix ingredients in a crock pot and heat to just below simmering for 45 minutes. Then strain it through cheesecloth and store it in an opaque container. You can choose appropriate essential oils to add in.

**Poultice for sprains, strains, swellings, infected tissues**

Ingredients: 1 cup oatmeal, 2-3 handfuls seaweed, 6 drops rosemary essential oil and/or 6 drops lavender essential oil.

Add seaweed to the oatmeal as it cooks. Let it cool, then add essential oils. Immediately spread it on the injury.

**Bug repellent**

Buy a natural insect repellent and add insect-repelling essential oils to it. If you switch oils every time you start a new bottle, insects will remain more sensitive to the repellent.

Insect-repelling essential oils: gardenia, geranium, rosemary, lavender, cedar (also good for ticks)

**Book Recommendations**

- A Modern Horse Herbal by Hilary Page Self
- The Treatment of Horses by Homeopathy by George Macleod
- Veterinary Aromatherapy by Nelly Grosjean

April Hart has her own barn in Shutesbury, where she offers horse training, riding instruction, summer and winter vacation camps for children and teens, and workshops on horse care.

Website: [www.ridewithahart.com](http://www.ridewithahart.com)

Email: [equineapril@gmail.com](mailto:equineapril@gmail.com)

Phone: (413) 259-1509