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Hello folks!

This week was a great way to start the season out. We had nine guests, so it made the changeover easier on the cooks and housekeeping staff, for whom the workings of the guest season are completely new.

Our new dining hall makes things much easier since there's so much space to work with. It's a wonder we were able to fit as many folks as we used to in the old dining room!

It was a snowy Sunday but by Friday it was a comfortable 66 degrees! Jill doesn't seem to mind the snow at all.



Today it's just Dori and I here with the housekeepers and cooks, as Randy and the boys are roping at Corey's annual branding, and Erin, Brianna and Stephanie are taking pictures and working the ground.

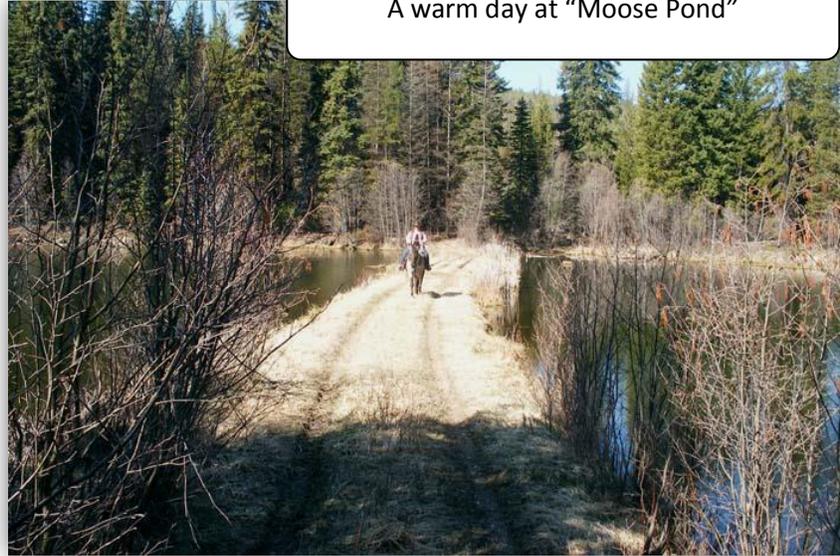
All of our guests this week came and worked on their horsemanship, and several took rides out throughout the week as well. Keith and

Lise stayed their third and final week (for this go-around) and made huge breakthroughs with their horses. Keith had Guenzler rating to him at the lope and Lise had the life and the flexions that she had been working on getting with Cowboy.

Christina had Roby ride her horse, Cooper a few times this week to get some good stuff built into him. In the meantime she rode a few of our horses and they helped her understand how to be better for her horse, Cooper. When I watched her ride Cooper on Thursday morning I was all smiles because the transformation in Cooper and Christina was mind-boggling. Last week when she rode him she was

having a very hard time keeping him in her rectangle with her legs, and he would get quite sour when asked to go anything above a slow walk in the arena. By Thursday she was riding around me in half the arena, going from a walk to a trot to a lope and back down to a trot and a hard stop—with a loose rein—entirely with her BODY!

Christina said that over the years she had done lots of schooling, retreats and intensive weeks of learning—but that McGinnis took the cake. She said it was the most enriching learning experience she had ever had as well as the most challenging. But the neat part, she said, was that the challenge was equaled by the support of all of us. What a neat thing to hear! She's leaving with a lot to work with and we are looking forward to seeing her here again next year.



A warm day at "Moose Pond"

I saw a Ray Hunt quote that seemed fitting for us and our guests this week. "There is no way that the horse will ever try to take advantage of you. He's as honest and as truthful as anything you could ever work with. He has no ego that gets in his way. He has no pride that gets in his way. He doesn't know what win or lose is. And those are the four things that get in the human's way."

Our guest Janny experienced this firsthand...when we were doing walk/trot/lope transitions in the arena

Jeff is the man on the hill!



on Friday, her mount Paco started to drift into those of us inside the circle instead of leg yielding to the fence. She was getting frustrated because she couldn't understand why he was doing that. We explained to her that he was, in essence, doing what she had asked because she hadn't given him the structure in her body and with her reins to have him leg yield. As soon as she offered him that

structure he did great, and by getting everything just right at the walk and trot, by the time she asked for the lope he knew exactly what she wanted and stayed to the outside of the circle just with her body structure.

It's something I have to ask myself often when things aren't going the way I think they should with my horses. Am I presenting it in a way that they will understand? Am I offering with one part of my body but blocking with another part? How could I make it work better?

Jeff and Angela came here with a couple of Foxtrotters they own. Jeff's horse was significantly calmer than Angela's but was a little bit braced in his flexions. We were working on circles and oftentimes a horse that is braced in its head and neck will be riding the circle with his feet, but his head will be looking outside of the circle. We use our inside leg to draw the horse's eye back into that circle he's riding so that his whole body is united. Just as soon as Jeff understood this concept his horse was looking in without trouble.

Angela's horse was a pistol and had a hard time rating and just standing still in general. Randy and Dori spent a lot of time with her, helping her to ride quieter and to use her body to rate the horse instead of pulling back on the reins, which just got her pony more bothered. She got lots of practice with one rein stops and serpentine too!



An afternoon hike through the horse herd



Brownie and Dunny enjoying their oats at days end

Jill and Heather from England also joined us for their yearly trip to the ranch this year. The two friends have been coming here since 2002! They are always a pleasure to have and spent the week dividing their time between working on horsemanship, riding out and hiking around the ranch.

Dori was able to spend most of the week riding

with Brianna. I think it must have been neat for Bri to see how much Dori has grown in her teaching. Late in the week, Dori and the big draft horse she was riding, Chief, had a "meeting of the minds" which

left Dori with a little bit of a concussion. On Friday morning, Randy took Dori home to rest and as Nathan and I were discussing her condition, we heard a gun-shot come right from Randy and Dori's house! Nathan said, "OMG! He must have put her down!"

Actually, they had discovered a mountain lion kill just as they got home and Randy had just fired a shot in the air to scare off anything that might still be sticking around. Sue took Dori to the doctor yesterday and Dori got the free and clear to take it easy for a few days. It's a well needed and much deserved rest for Dori!

Shayne and Jo-Anne are back from their clinic run with Buck and it sounds like Shayne has a lot of new things to teach us when he starts riding with us again next week.

We're all eager to learn more!

Have a great weekend guys and gals,

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Austin is back for the season and very excited to have Isaiah in his string!