

## Education weekend 2017

### ***Engaged Learning at Pony Club Regional Education Days***

***By Cyndi Rowat***

Approximately 60 members from the Alberta South Region of the Canadian Pony Club were absorbed in a 2-day Educational seminar at the Delacour Pony Club grounds just NE of Chestermere, AB March 18 and 19th.

While most youngsters were still snug in their beds at 9am on a Saturday morning, these eager horse enthusiasts aged 6 to 18 were expanding their knowledge of horse care, anatomy, optimizing their vision, improving their riding fitness and befriending other horse crazy individuals from pony clubs from the surrounding areas and as far away as Brooks and Lethbridge. Organizer, Kathy Marston, has a 40-year relationship with pony club as an 'A' Level pony clubber, coach and volunteer. As the education chair for the region, Marston was pleased with the representation of ten regional clubs as well as one horse masters (adult) member. "This event gives our members access to knowledge many horse people don't have access to."

"It puts (pony club members) way ahead of other organizations because of the kind of horsemanship we offer."

One of the big hits of the weekend was the leg dissection on Saturday morning. Veterinarian Jessica Romanow of Energy Equine Vet Services of Airdrie led the enthusiastic venture through the mechanics and structure of the horse's foreleg. "It was fun." Says Romanow about the session, "It is nice to see excited kids." Romanow's path to veterinary sciences was determined early on by good mentors at a local vet clinic in addition to a rural upbringing. "It is great to see them put a finger in a joint and understand how that joint works. It shapes opportunities." Romanow patiently guided the members through each phase, ensuring the hands-on component satisfied the curious. "This gives them an idea of what their riding." "It was nice to see everyone so engaged, regardless of the level of knowledge. They all got something."

The lessons weren't lost on ten year-old Ruby Ramirez from the Prairie Rose pony club in Lethbridge whose favorite session of the weekend was learning about the endless array of bits and what they do and how they are used. "I love horses and I wanted to learn more to make my riding better."

Sixteen year-old Delacour Pony Club member Ayvree Johnson agreed, finding the hands-on approach of these sessions much more beneficial than looking at pictures in a book. She also found the dissection fascinating. "It's not something you normally get to see...the ligaments and the muscles. It gave me a better way to visualize how the horse is working when I am riding." Johnson, considering veterinary sciences as a career path option, also found that it tied in nicely with what she is learning in her sport medicine class at Beiseker High School: the parallels between horse and human becoming increasingly apparent and the benefit of the seminars increasingly invaluable.

The Region's Education Days are a critical component for preparing for the annual Quiz competition. 'Quiz' tests the theoretical knowledge of horsemanship and general equestrian knowledge. Quiz includes a written test in addition to hands-on type games that challenge and captivate competitors. Regional quiz competitions qualify members to compete at National and even International Quiz competitions. National Quiz was hosted in Calgary in 2015. The Brooks Pony Club will host this year's Regional quiz on April 1, 2017 in Bassano, AB.