**The Acts of a Few Affect Many**

The sport of horse showing has been around for many years, and as in every sport, there are a few people whose behavior and practices give the entire horse show world a bad image, bringing unnecessary attention from organizations such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), ASPCA, and the Humane Society. It is up to those of us who care for the wellbeing of these animals that depend on us as their trainers and caretakers to put a stop to police our own and put a stop to any abuse and mistreatment that we see being done to these amazing creatures.

In today’s society, animal cruelty can be defined in multiple ways. For years, supporters for the Humane Society and PETA have been protesting against the treatment of rodeo animals, especially the bucking stock and roping stock, because of the supposedly rough treatment they endure when in the rodeo pen. That attention has shifted to the equestrian show world now, due to the harsh treatment by a few individuals who will do whatever they deem necessary to win big in the show ring. These few who are breaking the rules set by the organizations created to help control the show industry, such as the American Quarter Horse Association and the American Paint Horse Association, are harming the name of horse showing worldwide. They are also giving those of us who do follow the rules, which were created with the health and safety of the horses in mind, a bad name.

It is just like in school when one student misbehaved and ended up getting the entire class in to trouble. Just because one trainer or one contestant practices something that is seen as cruel or abusive by not only other members of the industry, but people outside of the industry as well, does not mean we all practice or train by those methods. In fact, most members of the horse show world agree that underhanded tricks and tactics, such as under feeding and malnourishing the horses in order to keep them passive and less likely to act out, are cruel to the animals. Most of us view our relationships with our horses as a partnership between horse and rider. They put a lot of trust in their rider or handler not to harm them, and it is our duty as their caretakers to ensure that they stay safe and that bond of trust is unbroken. For those who make a living in the show pen, horses are their livelihoods, and doing something harsh and potentially harmful to something they have several thousands of dollars invested in is not exactly in their best interests, and could cost them a lot of money in the long run.

In a society consumed with making everything fair, how is it *fair* for the supporters of organizations such as PETA to try and put a stop to the entire horse showing industry, which will put hundreds of people out of a job and cause us to loose generations of tradition, based on the actions of a few misguided individuals? It is up to those of us who care about the future of the industry, and the wellbeing of the horses to police our own and put a stop to the harsh treatment that we see happening; not just at the horse shows, but at home in the training barn as well. We need to be more attentive to how our fellow competitors and trainers are treating their animals and stand up for what is right by reporting the abuse to the proper authorities or putting a stop to the treatment as soon as we see it happening. In these ways, as well as others, we can help save the horse showing industry for generations to come.