



**SUNFLOWER FARMS**

## **SUNFLOWER SEEDS**

*December 2011*

Will we have a white Christmas this year? Everyone here at the farm is bundled up and ready for winter to hit. We hope you all enjoy spoiling friends and family, four and two legged, this holiday season!

Mr. Robert Troch, the owner of Bell Fuels, Inc. and Sunflower Farms, has moved into the Log Home. When he is on the property he enjoys walking the farm and meeting the boarders. He truly appreciates the atmosphere at the farm and we are very happy to make him feel welcome. If you see him in the barns, say hello and introduce yourself!

We have some new faces to welcome to Sunflower this month! Benny moved in to G barn with his owner Jodie Waller along with Sokko and his owner Lindsay Waller. Other additions to G barn are Sam and his owner Kim Kiriaki along with Enzo, Eli, and Ellie with their owners Mary and Cassie DeFranco. Another new addition to G Barn is Beau with his owner Cindy DeVore- Kuhn. Also, please welcome the new member of our Sunflower Staff, Julee!

Chuck Swan is looking for a share boarder for his 16 year old Quarter Horse. Coach is trained in Dressage and is schooled at Training Level. He would be perfect for an intermediate or advanced rider who is looking for a new equine friend. Please contact the Sunflower Office for more information.

We are working hard on the insides of the barns for an early start to spring cleaning! Thank you to all of the boarders and trainers who have helped keep the doors closed and unused lights off. We have created two large

turn-outs in the front hay field for school horses to be turned out on as a group. This will make more room for boarder's horses during turn-out!

It's never too early to plan for our upcoming IDCTA Schooling Shows! We will be hosting IDCTA Schooling Shows on June 17<sup>th</sup>, August 5<sup>th</sup>, and September 29<sup>th</sup>. We will be giving a very special gift to all fathers who attend our Father's Day Show on June 17<sup>th</sup>. More information about these shows will be posted on our website at a later date.

On September 14<sup>th</sup> - 17<sup>th</sup> Sunflower Farms will welcome Buck Brannaman to Chicago land! More information is available at [www.brannamanchicago.com](http://www.brannamanchicago.com).

JP Giacomini will be hosting a Working Equitation and Classical Dressage Clinic on March 2<sup>nd</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup>. Jean Philippe Giacomini, known as 'J.P.', is an experienced dressage rider who has evented, show-jumped, trained horses to Grand Prix, and coached Olympic level riders. Among many other classicists, J.P. studied with Master Nuno Oliveira and the German master Herbert Rehbein. J.P. is known for teaching piaffe and passage, bringing lasting solutions to unsolved problems, and being an ardent proponent of working equitation.

Working Equitation is a new international sport open to all breeds using the tack and costume of each country from the dressage, hunter/jumper, and Western traditions. Working Equitation competitions have four phases: dressage; ease of handling using obstacles such as a key hole, a gate, a bell, a bridge, balls, barrels, jumps, lances, poles; a

timed obstacle speed phase; and, sometimes a team penning. Please contact the Sunflower Office for more information.

Our winter camp is December 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup>. Don't miss this great opportunity to get your kids the closest thing to a pony for the holidays! Campers will enjoy horsey crafts, facts and rides.

Also, Lesson Cards are still 10% off if you buy two or more until the end of December. Hurry before this deal is over!

For the month of December, Saddlers Row North will be offering a free gift with purchase. Also, free gift wrapping will be provided for any gift purchased at Saddlers Row.

**But it's cold outside Doc!!!**

### **A Vets Perspective on Blanketing in Winter**

*Kevin Nelson DVM of Bristol Veterinary Service*

I vividly remember the day that I was chastised by a woman (a non client never the less) for not knowing the exact temperature at which a blanket was required for her woolly mammoth impersonating horse. She did not like my answer "I let the horse tell me when it needs extra clothing." Whether to blanket or not has been the subject of countless articles and I assume some heated debate. Let's face it most healthy, adequate weight horses are well suited for winter with a little common sense help from us. Access to shelter from wind and wet, plenty of good quality forage and water is all that most require. A quick little aside that pertains to feeding not blanketing is the old wives' tail that providing more grain and concentrates to the diet will keep them warmer. What keeps them toasty is HAY. In the digestion of high fiber diets of hay/forages, a large amount of heat is produced as a byproduct of the digestive process. The best way to supplement heat via diet is extra hay in the winter. If outside boarded, I recommend hay free-choice.

Horses have evolved an excellent built in temperature control system and can actually tolerate the cold better the extremes of high temperatures. A study done in Canada found that the critical lower temperature for horses'

was 5° F. At 5° F the horses' body temperature starts to drop and requires the body to start generating more heat. This is where shelter and more feed and even blanketing come into play. These management tools will lower the ambient temperature that most horses can tolerate.

Blanketing is recommended for many reasons, some our doing and others not;

- Clipping in cold weather for showing or training.
- Does not grow a good winter insulating coat.
  - Under artificial lights that prevent winter coat production or early shedding.
  - Bio-rhythms not acclimated to northern climate.
  - Some just don't grow a good insulating coat????
- Underweight horses due to illness, age or malnutrition.
  - Young or senior horses with less body mass to surface area
  - Medical conditions of all types, teeth problems, cushings, etc
  - Nutritional problems/feed quality and quantity.
- Inadequate shelter when weather conditions are bad.

Like all of us the arrival of winter takes a little getting use to. Horses' are no different and need to become acclimated, which takes between 10-21 days. Therefore should your horse seem chilled at the first day below freezing, chances are within a couple weeks they we be more comfortable.

Whether you sympathize with your horse come the first frost, deciding to blanket or not is of no great medical concern to most veterinarians. Important to most vets are the potential health issues that improper blanketing may lead to. Here are some bullet points to be aware of;

- Improperly fitting blankets can lead to injury from tangled straps or skin sores.
- Make sure that blankets used in snow/rain are of the water resistant

type. Nothing is more stressful to their systems than having a wet blanket on in cold weather. This can lead to generalized illness, temperature regulation problems never the less skin infections. The primary contributor to skin problems in the winter is blankets.

- Make sure the weight of the blanket matches the need. If you use a heavy weight insulated blanket in warmer conditions they will sweat and again potentially become chilled.
- Clean blankets regularly to reduce the chance of secondary skin infections. If shared, wash blankets between letting another use it.
- Remove blankets on a regular basis to check body and skin condition. Horses may appear in good weight, but hands on is the only real way to tell. Check for blanket skin rubs and any skin infections that may be starting. Regular body score checks are critical for horses with age or chronic medical conditions. They may be fine coming of pasture but when the blanket comes off for the first time in February, you may be in for a shock.
- Watch horses that have good coats in November and December but are under lights (16 hours a day plus, training barns with activity at night, cycling mares, or even just an outside security light in the paddock.) These horses may not grow a good coat or start shedding early from having their bio-rhythms fooled. You may have to start blanketing them.
- Horses that have been clipped for show or training reasons may very well need the extra protection of a blanket. When considering a total body clip, consider your needs, turn out and time of year. In this part of the country, body parts not covered by the blanket are more susceptible to the cold and a trace clip may be a better choice. If clipped make

sure after training or bathing they are dry before blanketing and turning out.

Most horses do not need to be blanketed as much as we think. If deciding to recommend blanketing or not, I judge the body condition (enough body fat), coat condition and “let the horse tell me if they need extra” by watching their behavior. Horses that are unhappy about the weather conditions will tell you, just watch. You may see increased use of shelters if available or standing by the doors to go back in, huddling together in groups or turning their hindquarters into the prevailing wind and just standing there. These activities help to conserve heat. The big sign is shivering which is the body’s physiological mechanism to generate more heat. If they tell me these things then I will include blanketing in my options. Just be aware that the benefits of making our equine friends comfortable come with risks that need to be monitored with common sense.



“Home is where the horse is... So I’ll be in the barn!!”