

Kids Korner

Never Too Young To Get Hooked On Horses

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— Get 'em interested when they are really young (like three months!), and no doubt, they will be hooked for life and join 4-H as soon as they can.

This truth is illustrated by children and parents in this story.

To quote one of the mothers, "If we can get these kids really interested and enthusiastic in something like horses, they won't have time to get in trouble. Besides, it is good discipline and

training for them when they have to groom the horse, keep their tack and saddles clean and Also clean the barn floor or stables, or whatever is needed."

Little people often get an early start in riding from the influence and example of their mothers who were in competition in 4-H. Many mothers still compete in open horse shows. Younger sisters are often influenced and inspired by older sisters who ride and compete, all of which makes for good family entertainment.

This is the case with Leah and Mary Foertsch, daughters of David and Rhonda Foertsch of Thompsontown. Fifteen-year-old Leah, a student at East Juniata High School, has been in 4-H for 5 years and rode before that. The family lived in Michigan, where 4-H was not nearly as well-known. In Michigan, she showed at a hunt farm instead of with 4-H. The first she knew about 4-H was when her family stayed with her grandparents for one year in Potter County.

Since coming to Thompson-town, her family has bought the Appaloosa Gelding, Style, which they keep at the Tuck-A-Way farm. Leah spends from 16 to 18 hours a week there, grooming and



Ten-month-old Shanna Hart had her first horse ride when she was only three months old.



Leah Foertsch practice jumps with her Appaloosa, Style.



Five-year-old Jessica Thomas sitting in the saddle is led by his 15-year-old sister Holly during lead line competition.



Seven-year-old Christine Sciortino prepares to compete in an English riding event.



The Juniata County 4-H Pegasus Horse and Pony Club wear the new jackets given them during the annual banquet.

riding Style, as well as practicing jumps and other competition events in the large indoor riding arena. During this interview, Leah was very assured and confident as she worked to get Style ready to ride. When fastening splint boots in place on the horse's lower front legs, she explained that these were important to protect him from injuring himself if his legs were to come together when jumping. Strangely enough, splint boots are not allowed in competition, even though that seems the most likely time for a horse to injure himself.

Leah constantly takes on new challenges of teaching her horse different things as she prepares for future shows. Presently she is gearing up for an event in Harrisburg where six different breeds will compete in six different events. In addition to her training for 4-H competition, Leah worked for the last three summers at Christian Retreat Center near East

Waterford, where children were bused (mainly from the city). Leah taught them the care of horses, trail-riding, barn work, and how to care for cuts and scratches, etc., on the horses.

Members of the 4-H Horse Clubs have to keep record books the same as members of other 4-H Clubs, and so it is not just a matter of learning to ride and then competing. There is a lot of nitty-gritty work in keeping the horse clean and groomed and even in practicing jumping, which was evidenced by the dust that came up in the practice arena. This is why Leah and Mary did not wear their show clothes, which are rather expensive to keep cleaned.

Leah was in 16 shows this year and was Reserve Champion in Reedsville in English riding. She also did very well at the Center Hall show but was unable to complete the events because her horse