

“HORSE MOM”

written by
Joan Givens

It's 9 a.m. on a Saturday morning and I'm in line at the local bagel shop – not at this weekend's hunter/jumper horse show. No, my days as a “horse mom” are long past, but not forgotten!

So, other than arising at 6 a.m. (or much earlier depending on where in creation the show is located) to round up your junior equestrian and then head out to the show ring to “school” for an early competition class, what can you, as a “horse parent,” expect?

Expect to sit a lot – while you are:

- *driving your child to and from the stables for riding lessons and practice.
- *waiting during the lesson and practice.
- *watching your rider bid farewell to every horse in each stall and paddock before leaving for home.
- *spending hours in the stands during horse shows.
- *helping to pick out the perfectly fitting boots, breeches, helmet, etc., etc.
- *writing out all those checks!

You will find that yours is, as with other parenting ventures, a support role. It's a form of supply and demand – you supply what your youngster's equine addiction demands. It involves time, money and devotion. And, remember (as my daughter chastised me years ago) you are expected to be “the parent” and not “the teacher.” Any attempts on your part to instruct or coach your progeny on horsemanship will be met with skepticism and resistance. No, the riding instructor is the perceived expert, and this may be an arena in which your child is attempting to develop expertise to demonstrate to you, not get it from you!

Just go ahead and learn to keep your favorite books, periodicals, iPods or laptops with you when you deliver your child into horse world. You may occasionally be called upon to hold a rein, open a gate or give a leg up. It is fun to watch a lesson with one eye/ear, but you always should be prepared to entertain yourself to help pass time. A scheduled one-hour stint at the stables rarely lasts a mere one hour. Horse time expands itself into an alternate chronological dimension!

Finally, don't wear good togs! You'll get almost as layered in dust as your kiddo. There will be other times you are gripping your shoes with your toes to keep them from being sucked off by mud. You'll find that horses DO shed. And, unexpected nibbling horse lips tend to leave green slime kisses on clean sleeves.

Most importantly, you'll discover that you and your child will be collecting priceless experiences and memories resulting from shared involvement in a rewarding sport that builds confidence, empowerment and self-discipline. Oh, and it's fun, too!