



Argyle, MB is Horse Country!!

A Sampling of This Farming Community's "Horse People"

(photo: Megan MacLean on Buck)

Argyle is a farming community and, back a few years, the farming was done with horses. Gradually the horses were replaced with tractors and trucks, and horses were kept for recreation and sentiment. Eventually, horses would be seen only occasionally on most farms, especially as farms got larger and farmers got fewer. And then.... well, horses became popular again. People started moving out of the towns and cities to those vacant yardsites, buying acreages where they could pasture and enjoy their horses. To the farming community, these were known as "horse people". And guess what, guys? Farmers in the Argyle community are now WAY out-numbered by horse people!!

Horse-lovers come in all varieties and occupations here. **Don Karlstedt** has heavy horses for showing and wagon rides. **Larry and Carol Good** and their family love riding their horses, and the daughters love to take them show-jumping. **Judy Felbel**, a grandmother who used to breed and sell horses internationally, now rides for pleasure. **Fred Taplin** keeps his horses because they are friends; they will live out their lives in comfort on his pasture. **Ian Smith** (who raises pigs the old-fashioned way) keeps a horse so that his nephew can ride when he visits. **Ken and Janice Nunn** keep horses for those rare days when they have time to ride, usually with friends from a riding club or on an organized trail ride. **Cornie Peters** has always had horses for his daughter's show-jumping passion, and now for his granddaughter as well. **Kim Havedings** enjoys both English- and western-style riding. **Brea Boyd** always enjoyed western riding, and she is now the community's resident farrier! And there are so many more who keep horses for all kinds of reasons – **MacLeans, Browns, Ritchies, and more!**

Let's meet a few of Argyle's horse-lovers:



***Fred deLaroque** is a farmer, a truck driver, and the head of a 3-generation household; he is also a former R.M. councillor. Fred says that horses are his way to "keep my sanity by leaving the cellphone and the problems behind and... just go for a ride!" It takes time to care for his herd of 7 horses (it was 8 until one was hit by lightning last month), but Fred says they provide entertainment for the whole family; the newest rider is granddaughter **Kaydence**.*

Fred especially loves to go on

*organized trail rides, usually with his daughter **Morgan** and son **Travis**. There is the Children's Wish Trail Ride in Woodlands in August, and others in MacGregor, Riding Mountain, the Pembina Hills. And "the camping trip of a lifetime": with his kids and his cousin in the Rocky Mountains a few years ago. Fred suggests that horses may be cheaper to buy and maintain than many other expensive hobbies today; and, of course, there is "no ceiling on how high you want to go!" Happy trails, Fred!*

Now, from that relaxing “just go for a ride”, let’s check out a horse-lover of a different variety: western-style and competitive!



Ashley Lambert and her father Brian Gillespie perform at a roping event.

Heather Gillespie calls her family’s involvement with horses “a way of life”. **Heather and Brian** are both competitive in western-style riding – Heather in barrel-racing, and Brian in roping – and both of them give lessons to local youngsters (and not-so-youngsters), either at their home or at McQueen’s Ranch arena a few miles from home.

Their daughter and son-in-law **Ashley and Miguel Lambert**, also of Argyle, are involved in both the competitions and teaching (including plans for the next 4-H season). Young grandsons **Shane and Matthew** are their newest pupils, although it will be a few years before they’re old enough to compete! As Heather says, “It’s a family thing; we do it together.” This July, they spent a week in Spruce Woods Provincial Park with their horses and their family, a 25-year tradition.

The family has a herd of about 15. They buy colts from recognized blood-lines and train them for competition; if the horses are found not to have the speed or the heart for barrel-racing, they usually train them for roping. Heather (a teacher aide in her day-job) says, “It’s very much like working with children; they have their strengths and weaknesses, and it takes patience and time to bring out the best in them. It’s very rewarding.” Heather works with her horses daily to maintain their training.



Heather Gillespie, a barrel-racing grandmother.

The Gillespies and their family participate in numerous events over the summer, including the local Stonewall Fair in June. In late July, they spent one weekend competing at the Arborg Fair on Saturday, then at a Children’s Wish (western-style) riding event in Carman on Sunday! Competitions are held at different levels according to age, including High School Rodeo (for youths), Wrangler division (for grades 6-7-8 youngsters), and Open; more recently, a Select division was started for those 50+ who may choose not to compete in Open.

Heather feels that riding is a wonderful sport that people can continue to enjoy at any age. There is much camaraderie with riders at all levels cheering each other on, demonstrating once again that “it’s a family thing”!

Now, if “western” is not your style, how about English-style? Check out these seriously competitive show-jumpers from Argyle:

Karen MacLean moved to the Woodroyd/Argyle area in 1983 with her husband Jerry, and they proceeded to gather a menagerie of ducks, geese, dogs and cats, then added horses and sheep, etc. And then they added children: **Megan, Lisa and Shannon**. The girls loved their rural life, including Argyle’s school, Balmoral’s church, Teulon’s soccer, and baseball with friends from all over! But their Mom had another plan for them. Reaching back to her own youth for ideas, Karen began to search for a “Pony Club” for her children to join, and the girls now say “... the rest is history!”.

The Pony Club is a national organization that gives young people an opportunity to train, with school horses or their own, in show-jumping and dressage. The young riders learn and progress through various divisions and levels, but not just in riding; there is a lot of theory and practical training for them to absorb and put into practice – tending to the horses, understanding their needs, and managing their care – as well as progressing through the various levels of competitions. Those competitions often include travel throughout Canada, meeting others like themselves -- a wonderful experience for teens.



Left: Megan, Karen and Shannon MacLean

Right: Shannon and “Spoiled to Perfection”, a.k.a. “Bones”

All 3 girls have been part of the Quarry Ridge Pony Club near Stonewall, where they rode all year round, and summers were packed with competitions and workshops. They’re now out of school, with Shannon still living at home. Lisa enjoys her mare and pleasure riding, but Megan and Shannon remain active in the Pony Club. Both girls say “it’s important for us older Clubb’rs to help the new riders” and both are involved in teaching or assisting the younger “Clubb’rs”. They have won many championships, at both regional and national levels. Megan has travelled from Halifax to Vancouver for Pony Club events and has nearly finished the Club’s entire program. Shannon postponed some of her tests and concentrated on improving her “pro-active horsemanship” and was able to experience a re-birth of her joy in dressage and jumping. She competed in Nova Scotia last year, and has qualified for the Nationals again in Ottawa next year.

Karen started as a “Mom” – driver, organizer and cheerleader – but couldn’t help being drawn into the Club’s organization. She is the long-time District Commissioner for Quarry Ridge Pony Club, is Regional Education Chair, and is now also a Regional Testing Chair. Karen says, “These roles are time-consuming, but are rewarded with watching the pony clubb’rs enjoy success.” So what does she do in her “spare time”? She rides horses! And what about Jerry? Karen says that he “supports these three busy ladies by running the farm while they’re out running with their club. A fishing trip (as opposed to a horse show) is in the near future as a Thank You!”