

TOP TRAIL PICKS OF  
THE TRAILMEISTER

FACEBOOK POSTS  
FROM OUR READERS

GAIT-WAYS TO  
GREAT GETAWAYS

# trailBLAZER

JUNE 2013 . \$6.95

## GO FORWARD WITH CONFIDENCE

Build a trail horse  
you can count on

## THE GIFT OF RED LIGHT

Helping horses  
heal and perform  
at their best

## NAVICULAR SYNDROME:

Don't let the  
mystery scare you

## FIFTY SHADES OF HAY

Forage facts of life

HOW TO  
SELECT A  
GAITED HORSE  
FOR THE TRAIL

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS SERVING THE  
RECREATIONAL & COMPETITION TRAIL RIDER

FRIENDS OF SOUND HORSES (FOSH) IS ON A MISSION TO END SORING AND PROVIDE HUMANE ALTERNATIVE PERFORMANCE VENUES FOR GAITED HORSES

## “The Horse Comes First”

BY DUTCH HENRY



The Kentucky Mountain Horse Mocha Jack and his owner Becky Lange looking strong after 69 miles on the Tevis Cup trail. Photo by Silent I

A “sound” horse is defined by Friends of Sound Horses (FOSH) as a horse who has not been “sored.” For too long, Tennessee Walking Horses (TWH) shown in certain types of venues known as “big lick” shows have suffered inhumane, reprehensible treatment. Before entering the show ring, a horse is subjected to chemicals smeared on his legs so heavy chains attached to his ankles will inflict intense pain when they hit the tender, chemically sored skin above the hoof with each stride. The pain causes them to fling their legs high in a futile effort to escape the pain with each exaggerated step. Other techniques include shoeing with nails up into the foot causing extreme pain, forcing the horse to try to carry itself more on the back legs and therefore elevating the front end even further. There are other, just as gruesome techniques, but that is the general idea of the “soring” style of training the big lick walker.

This disgusting and despicable practice started being adopted as a fashionable style of “training” sometime in the late 1950s. There are many offered reasons by those who practice, promote and champion this insanity, and none of them take the anguish away for the suffering horses. Over the years, many people have tried to shine a light on the plight of Tennessee Walking Horses forced to endure the horrors of soring, but usually they were local battles and those gallant humanitarians were too often silenced.

## THE VISION OF FOSH

Cherie Beatty had a vision and would not be silenced. She had a vision to eliminate the practice of soring by using a two-front approach that included publicly decrying the practice, and offering a brand new venue for showing sound horses. She knew many owners of TWHs who were forced to show alongside sored horses because there simply were no alternatives. In 1988 Cherie put her plan in motion and founded Friends Of Sound Horses (FOSH). She immediately began to offer showing opportunities for sound horses. Her first national shows were held in Colorado.

About that time Eugene Davis published his now famous book, “From The Horse’s Mouth” and more people than ever came to know about the miseries inflicted on TWHs. When people asked Eugene at book signings and promotions what they could do to help, he would recommend FOSH. People now had a place to go to not only to help stop soring but also to show and enjoy sound, naturally gaited horses with like-minded friends.

Cherie founded FOSH with the concept that “the horse comes first.” For that reason FOSH was founded as a non-voting membership, which means the board of directors makes the decisions, and the board of directors elects the new board members. No trainers can sit on the board of directors. Every decision made by the board is made with the best interest of the horse as the driving force—not ribbons, names, status or money. FOSH will only support flat-shod or barefoot horses and will never endorse any event that allows any artificial means to modify the natural gait of the horse.

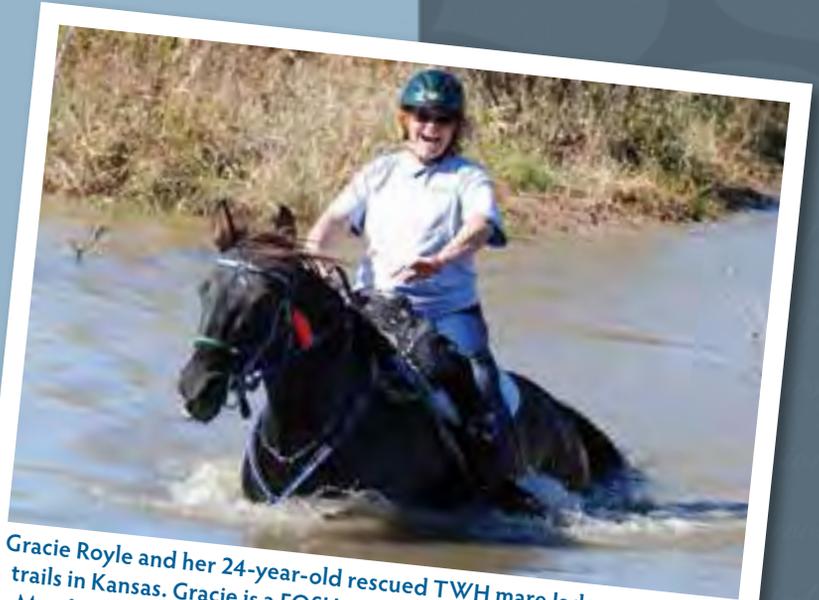
In 2002, FOSH moved its national shows to St. Louis, Missouri to be able to offer sound horse shows and support in an area that was closer to the roots of the problem. At first this proved to be a challenge, but the new venue was well received by TWH owners who believed in the concept of the sound horse. People from all over the country began to seek them out and support the cause.

FOSH has accomplished so much together with volunteers who devote their time, efforts and hearts to safeguarding those horses who have no way of defending themselves. Everyone at FOSH is a volunteer—there is no paid staff. Everyone is there for the sake of the horse.

## BRINGING VIOLATORS TO LIGHT

Past president Lori Northrup spearheaded the creation of a website database listing all the soring violations—thousands of them.

continued next page



Gracie Royle and her 24-year-old rescued TWH mare Jada enjoying the trails in Kansas. Gracie is a FOSH supporter and president of Rainbow Meadows Equine Rescue and Retirement, Inc. Photo by Dawn Kerley



Friends of Sound Horses, Inc.

In 2002, FOSH moved its national shows to St. Louis, Missouri to be able to offer sound horse shows and support in an area that was closer to the roots of the problem. At first this proved to be a challenge, but the new venue was well received by TWH owners who believed in the concept of the sound horse. People from all over the country began to seek them out and support the cause.



Sound Advocate is published bimonthly by FOSH.



Equine Agility is a new program offered by FOSH in its Gaited Sport Horse Program for the first time this year. Here is the Tennessee Walker Lady C weaving through poles with handler Kristi Unsell. Photo by Kate Austin

FOSH has accomplished so much together with volunteers who devote their time, efforts and hearts to safeguarding those horses who have no way of defending themselves. Everyone at FOSH is a volunteer—there is no paid staff. Everyone is there for the sake of the horse.

This astonishing, revolting list of violations and names of the violators, and many more facts of the continued efforts that shine the light on the despicable practice can be found at [www.stopsoring.com](http://www.stopsoring.com). This easy to use database is an important facet of FOSH's effort in using education and publicity to try to get legislation passed that will forever end soring. "The USDA has a practice of regulating soring, not eliminating it. And as long as that's the approach horses will continue to suffer," said FOSH President Teresa Bippen.

Starting with just a handful of members, today FOSH is the fastest growing gaited horse organization in the country and has become an umbrella group for all gaited breeds, striving to not only protect but also to spotlight the greatness of all gaited breeds. FOSH has been on the forefront of popularizing "gaited dressage" and has created a dressage test that makes it possible for riders and owners of any gaited breed to join in the fun, excitement and rewards of dressage.

Their efforts in that arena have introduced hundreds of owners, riders and horses to the benefits of participating in dressage. "Everyone from the most serious competitor to casual trail riders can improve their relationship with their horse by practicing a few dressage techniques, and FOSH is thrilled to be able to offer this venue." Teresa said. "And the US Dressage Federation has even put a link on their website to ours listing our gaited dressage program as a resource for

their judges, as more gaited breeds are entering the dressage world!"

Recently FOSH created "The Gaited Sport Horse Program," reaching out to owners and riders of all gaited horses with exciting programs both inside and outside the show ring. They've

## RELIEF FOR TENNESSEE WALKING HORSES?

By Teresa Bippen, President of FOSH

Tennessee Walking Horses may finally find relief after enduring decades of soring. H.R. 1518 (Prevent All Soring Tactics, or PAST) strengthens penalties for Horse Protection Act soring violations and bans the use of pads and chains (action devices) on Tennessee Walking Horses, Spotted Saddle Horses and Racking Horses. The bill is supported by FOSH and major animal welfare groups such as the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA), Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Horse Council (AHC).

Such relief cannot arrive too soon for walking horses. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) released swabbing results for 2012 TWH shows, and the results were appalling. Of 24 shows swabbed, the overall average for testing positive for foreign substances, including numbing agents, was 65%. Numbing agents are used on a horse's front legs to ensure

they pass inspection when checked by a designated qualified person (DQP) before entering the show ring. The numbing agents wear off by the time the horse is exhibited so they still achieve their pain induced, high-stepping gait.

The percentage of foreign substances abuse is even higher for the walking horse industry's most revered show, the National Celebration in Shelbyville, Tennessee, held each year in August. In 2012, the USDA swabbed 190 horses, and 145 tested positive (76%) for foreign substances including caustic agents and numbing substances. It is highly possible the horses that tested positive went on to win their classes and now hold titles of World Grand Champions (WGC) on their registration papers. Although swabbing has been ongoing by the USDA for several years, at this time there has been no effort by Celebration management or the Tennessee Walking Horse Breeders and Exhibitors Association (TWHBEA) to remove titles from horses that tested positive for foreign substances.

set up a dynamic website full of contacts, ideas and opportunities at [www.foshgaitedsporthorse.com](http://www.foshgaitedsporthorse.com)

One program generating a lot of interest is Gaited Distance. A trail mileage program complete with awards and recognition, the new program is recognized by both the North American Trail Ride Conference (NATRC) and American Endurance Ride Conference (AERC). So if you ride a gaited trail horse, join FOSH, sign up and hit the trails!

Another innovative program is the Equine Agility Program. Spearheaded by Sue DeLaurentis of Imagine a Horse, this program offers fun and learning in a non-mounted competitive arena. It has wide-ranging appeal in that it creates an environment for young horses to learn and compete in hand and at liberty. This fits perfectly in FOSH's structure that no horse shall be shown under saddle until they are three years old. Because there are classes in Equine Agility for all ages, there are wonderful opportunities for retired and semi-retired horses to have fun and compete, too.

Education, news, fun and scheduled events are all part of FOSH's bimonthly publication, *Sound Advocate*. Distributed both electronically and in print, each issue is loaded with current events, show schedules and resources such as sound horse clinicians, breeders as well as informative articles on horse health, training and other topics.

FOSH is the gold standard for promoting all gaited breeds and creating venues for showing, playing, riding and learning. Each endeavor begins with the commitment, "The horse comes first." Since Cheri first set her sights on a Tennessee Walker world without soring, the tireless and devoted volunteers have marched and gaited toward that end. Pending legislation may soon bring that dream into sight. Progress has been made but there is still much to do. Visit the FOSH website [www.fosh.info](http://www.fosh.info) to learn how you can help them help.



## GAITED SPORT HORSE PROGRAM AT-A-GLANCE

- \* **Gaited Distance**—Honors and rewards gaited horses competing in endurance, limited distance and competitive trail competitions.
- \* **Gaited Agility**—honors and rewards gaited horses competing in agility classes in hand.
- \* **Gaited Dressage**—honors and rewards gaited horses competing in dressage.

For further information, visit [www.foshgaitedsporthorse.com](http://www.foshgaitedsporthorse.com)



Dutch Henry is a novelist and writer who writes about "People & Horses Helping Horses & People" and resides in Virginia with his wife of 36 years, Robin; along with one horse, dogs, cats and chickens. Dutch also does free "Therapy For Therapy Horse Clinics" at therapeutic riding centers across the country to help horses maintain proper posture, free-and-easy movement and body carriage. You can reach Dutch at [dutchhenry@hughes.net](mailto:dutchhenry@hughes.net) He would love to hear from you. Join his blog at, <http://dutchhenry.blogspot.com> His novel "We'll Have the Summer," is available on Amazon and Dutch's website [www.dutchhenryauthor.com](http://www.dutchhenryauthor.com)



Illustration by Troy Palmer Hughes

**LISA RUNYEN SHARES HER STORY:** Disco is a great trail horse but very prissy about getting his feet wet. We have no problem with bridge crossings, bobcats, coyotes, wild horses and low-flying hawks. However, we are still building confidence over water crossings. Our last attempt involved backing him into the small trickle of a creek, a quarter turn on the haunches, and what I planned to be a calm ascent up the trail on the other side. Instead, Disco leaped 4 feet vertically into the air, achieved a quarter turn mid-air, and bolted up the embankment through bamboo and brush thick enough to tear my cell phone holder from my half chap. Another rider witnessed the "Airs Above the Ground" maneuver, but sadly no video was taken.