



President's Ponderings

HELLO HEAVY LOVERS AND WELCOME TO

February!

.....And before you knew it, it was February. Time really does gallop by! As we settle into the new year here at HHH, our team and herd are as busy as ever giving gentle giants a second chance at life.

Caring for heavy horses continues to drive everything we do. Each rescue story reminds us why this work matters; the trust that returns to their eyes, the strength regained in every careful step, and the bond that forms between horse and human all make the long days more than worthwhile.

Of course, our hearts are also with those facing unimaginable challenges across Australia right now. The ongoing fire situation has left many communities, both people and animals, in distress. To everyone in or near affected areas, and those already feeling the impact, please know that our thoughts are with you. We're inspired by the courage, compassion, and resilience shining through even in the darkest of times.

As we move forward this month, we'll keep sharing stories of hope, healing, and horsepower; proof that kindness truly has the power to change lives.

RESCUE ROUNDUP (INS AND OUTS)

Noah



Noah is a gentle 6-year-old Clydesdale who recently joined us after his elderly owner could no longer provide the care he needed.

While his hooves require some attention, we are already working on getting him back in top shape (and we have the secret weapon, “Magic Matt”).

Moving is a big adjustment for Noah. This is the first time he’s left his original home since he was a foal so he’s been feeling a little overwhelmed.

Despite the big change, he was incredibly calm getting off the truck. A huge thank you to **Riley from RG & Sons Livestock Transport** for delivering this big sweetheart to us safely.





Managing the “Heavy” Burden: Chronic Progressive Lymphedema (CPL)

For owners of heavy horse breeds like the Clydesdale, Shire, and Gypsy Cob, the sight of thick, luxurious "feather" is a point of pride. However, in the Australian climate, where humid summers and muddy winters can play havoc with skin health, those feathers often hide a serious, debilitating condition called Chronic Progressive Lymphedema (CPL).

What is CPL?

CPL is a progressive disease of the lymphatic system, particularly common in draft breeds. It occurs when the lymphatic vessels in the lower legs fail to drain fluid properly. This leads to chronic swelling, skin thickening (hyperkeratosis), and the development of firm skin folds and nodules (often called "grapes"). Because it is thought to be genetic, it is a lifelong challenge that currently has no cure.

The Australian Challenge

In Australia, the condition is often misdiagnosed as "greasy heel" or "mud fever." While those are manageable skin infections, CPL is far more invasive. Our environment can exacerbate the issue:

- **Feather Mites:** The Chorioptic mite thrives in the warm, moist microclimate of a heavy leg. Mite infestations cause intense itching and scratching, which damages the skin and allows bacteria to enter, further scarring the already compromised lymphatic system.
- **Moisture Management:** Australian winters can lead to "standing in mud," which softens the skin and hides the early ripples and nodules that signal the onset of CPL.



Feather Mite



Prevention and Management

Early intervention is the only way to slow the progression of this "elephantiasis-like" disease. Owners should focus on a multi-pronged management strategy:

- **Clipping:** It may be heart-breaking to lose the feathers, but clipping is the most effective way to monitor the skin and apply topical treatments for mites and bacteria.
- **Movement:** The lymphatic system relies on movement. 24/7 turnout is ideal to keep the "muscle pump" in the legs working.
- **Low-Sugar Diet:** Many heavy horses are "easy keepers." Maintaining a healthy weight and a low-sugar (low-NSC) diet reduces systemic inflammation.
- **Hygiene:** Keep legs dry and clean. Treat any sign of mites immediately with veterinary-prescribed washes or injections.

CPL is a marathon, not a sprint. By staying vigilant and prioritizing leg health over aesthetics, we can ensure our "gentle giants" remain comfortable and sound for years to come.



The Iron Giants: When the World Moved on Four Hooves

Welcome to our little trip down memory lane.

While we now admire the Clydesdale, Shire, and Percheron for their majesty and gentle temperaments, it's easy to forget that for centuries, these "Iron Giants" were the literal engines of global civilization.

From Battlefields to Barley Fields

The lineage of our modern heavy horses is often traced back to the "Great Horse" of the Medieval era. While popular culture depicts them carrying armoured knights into the fray, their true historical impact began when they moved from the battlefield to the furrow.

The invention of the padded horse collar changed everything. Unlike the ancient throat-and-girth harness which choked a horse if it pulled too hard, the padded collar allowed a horse to throw its full weight into a load. Suddenly, a single pair of heavy horses could outwork a team of oxen, accelerating the agricultural revolution and allowing cities to grow because food could finally be transported faster and further.

The Original "Horsepower"

During the 19th century, the heavy horse was the backbone of the industrial world. In cities like London and New York, Shires and Clydesdales were the "delivery vans" of their day.

- The Brewer's Pride: Most famous were the brewery teams. A massive pair could haul tons of ale through cobblestone streets with surgical precision.
- The Shunting Masters: Before diesel engines, heavy horses were used in railway yards to "shunt" individual carriages into place—a job requiring immense strength and a very calm head.

The Close Call

The most poignant chapter of their history is undoubtedly the Great War. Hundreds of thousands of heavy horses were pressed into service to haul artillery and supplies through the knee-deep mud of the Somme. Their bravery was unmatched, but the toll was devastating.

By the mid-1940s, with the rise of the tractor, these breeds faced a "silent extinction." In 1960, the number of registered Clydesdales had dropped so low they were nearly lost to history.

I think it is fair to say that we owe a debt of gratitude to the small group of breeders who refused to let these magnificent lines die out.

Today, when we see a feathered hoof strike the ground at a show or a working farm, we aren't just looking at a horse; we are looking at a living monument to progress.

Reader Puzzle

The 21-Horse Puzzle

A farmer wants to divide his 21 horses among his three children so that:

- Each child receives a whole number of horses,
- The oldest child gets twice as many horses as the middle child,
- The youngest child gets 3 fewer horses than the middle child

How many horses does each child receive?



LAST MONTH'S READER PUZZLE SOLUTION

Did you pick which statements are false? Yep trick questions. They are all true (one way or another).

Horses can't vomit

Their digestive anatomy (especially the strong lower oesophageal sphincter) prevents vomiting.

Horses cannot breathe through their mouths.

They are obligate nasal breathers, meaning airflow only passes through the nostrils.

Horses can sleep standing up.

Thanks to a "stay apparatus" in their legs that locks joints in place. They still need to lie down for REM sleep.

Horses have the largest eyes of any land mammal.

Correct. Their eyes are huge relative to body size.

Horses have nearly 360° vision.

Their eyes are placed on the sides of their head, giving a wide field of view.

Horses have two blind spots, One directly in front of the face (close to the nose). One directly behind the tail.

Correct.

Horses have excellent hearing.

Their ears rotate independently, helping them pinpoint sounds.

Horses can read human facial expressions.

Research shows they can recognise emotions and remember past interactions.



LAST MONTH'S READER PUZZLE SOLUTION - continued

Foals stand and run very quickly after birth. Standing within 1-2 hours.

Running within 24 hours.

Correct.

Horses are highly social herd animals.

They are! They form strong bonds and rely on group behaviour for safety.

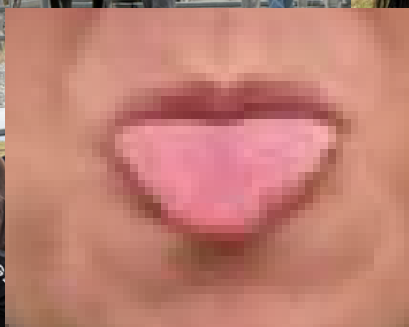
Average gallop speed ~44 kph.

Correct for most horses.

The fastest recorded sprint (~89 kph) is also accurate.

Average lifespan 25-30 years.

Many live into their 30s with good care.



I'm pretty sure we are related



Q and A topic for this month. Nope. Sadly again none received. BUT if you have anything for February, please email to the below by:

Thursday February 26th 2026 via newsletter@heavyhorseheaven.com.au