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Knowing first aid can save a horse's life

Subhead

ST. FRANCOIS XAVIER

By **ANDREA GEARY**

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Many Canadians take first aid training to help others if they are injured, and before health professionals arrive on the scene.

Through their actions, lives have been saved.

It's no different for horses, says Kari Hasselriis, a certified instructor with Equi-Health Canada. With the proper training, a horse owner can recognize potentially serious health or behavioural problems in their animal and know how to respond in an emergency.

She noted that horses are notoriously accident-prone.

Hasselriis grew up in Winnipeg, but has lived on a 10-acre property on Highway 26 west of St. Francois Xavier for five years. She and her partner share the land with her two horses, Clem and Penny.

"I use them both in the clinics," she said.

She demonstrates basic skills such as taking a horse's temperature and pulse — vital signs that are important if the owner needs to call a veterinarian.

While some horse owners participated in 4-H equine clubs or took riding lessons, others might buy a horse without having much previous experience in dealing with the large animals.

"People don't always know what's normal or abnormal with their horses," she said.

Hasselriis said she tells her students about "pantry solutions" such as flax, diapers and honey that can be used as a temporary solution for a health problem or in an emergency.



Photo by Andrea Geary

Equine first aid instructor Kari Hasselriis uses her horses Clem and Penny as models during clinics at her home in the RM of St. Francois Xavier.

She offers the eight-hour course on her property and will travel to other locations in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario.

While the knowledge her students gain is practical, it's no substitute for a vet's expertise, she emphasized.

"The course is not the whole answer. It's not about getting away from vet's bills."

She would like to expand her instruction to include first responders who occasionally have to deal with escaped horses or ones that are involved in a highway accident or fire.

She's offering a clinic at Hi Point Horsemanship in Dacotah on July 27.

Hasselriis can be contracted by calling 204-891-2981 or at kari@umaequine.ca

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