

# HOOFBEATS

Edited by Heidi Young, entries from club members ...

Membership forms and previous newsletters and articles and an expanded calendar are all on our website at: [www.gaitedhorseclub.com](http://www.gaitedhorseclub.com)

Facebook: Search for "SCGHC" or click <https://www.facebook.com/groups/636027703108388/> and request to be added. Here, club members can post pictures or share quickly and easily. This is a PRIVATE group, for members only. We have a public page as well, where anyone interested can see postings: "Southern Comfort Gaited Horse Club Public Group"

Lifelight Insurance: Club members get a discounted rate of \$15 off the \$60/year rate for a family. We all renew together in the early summer for a policy date of July 1. [www.lifelight.org](http://www.lifelight.org)

## Note from our new club President: Nick Weber

Fellow Southern Comfort Gaited Horse Club members:

As some of you already know, last month behind a heavy veil of secrecy during the monthly club meeting held at an anonymous member's home (I cannot divulge her name for reasons of national security, but her initials are A.M.) a carefully chosen group of club members elected, selected, conspired, conscripted, and hornswaggled me as your newest El Presidente. Thankfully, they also selected the more qualified Catherine Weber as the VP, to whom I intend to delegate virtually all of my duties. Don't laugh. I may delegate the rest of my duties to the commoners.

So far, there has been no media or disgruntled voter backlash, which has been mildly encouraging. Because of that, my VP and I have agreed to host the March meeting on Monday, the 13th, at our home, which will hereinafter be referred to as the Presidential Palace. (12221 W. Langtree Gulch Road in Star. Go north on Can Ada road from State street, turn right on Langtree.) If everyone brings some sort of dish, it should be sufficient to keep us sustained for the length of the meeting, at least. Nothing fancy, just easy and edible.

We have a list of items to discuss as a group, and I want you to know that the free exchange of ideas is heartily encouraged, provided we all remember that at the end of the day, what I say is law, through executive order if necessary.

I'm hoping we can get more participation in the club's gaited horse demo at this year's expo and have some fun. This is the year that we can Make Gaited Horses in America Great Again!

We look forward to seeing you all soon! In the meantime, enjoy the warming weather, live well, laugh often, and love your horses. They are truly a gift. An expensive gift, to be sure, but a gift nevertheless.

Best Wishes, His Excellency: El Presidente / Mr. President / NICK

## 2017 Calendar of Events

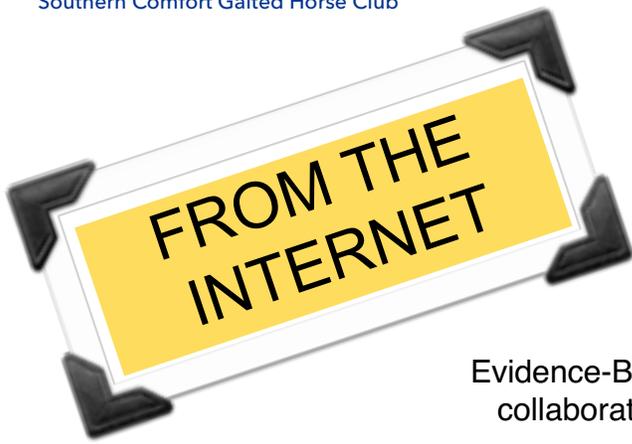
March 13 Club meeting at Weber's house: 6:30 social, meeting at 7 pm.

**Want to be in the club's gaited demonstration at the Expo?**

**Please contact Catherine Weber ASAP: 794-1515**

**Likely dates for club rehearsals are listed below.**

April 2 (Sun)	Both drill teams meet (w/o horses) to walk routines
April 7 (Fri)	Both drill teams - mounted practice
April 8 OR 9	CLUB rehearsal (location TBD - Catherine will coordinate)
April 9 (Sun)	American drill team practice
<b>Mon, April 10</b>	<b>Club meeting (perhaps hold with one of the CLUB rehearsals??)</b>
April 14 (Fri)	Both teams practice (HY sub for Sue B)
April 15 OR 16	CLUB rehearsal (location TBD - Catherine will coordinate)
April 21 (Fri)	Both drill teams: last practice (at Expo grounds??)
<b>April 21-23</b>	<b>Horse Expo weekend</b>
Note on stalls:	Reservations with the Horse Park need to follow their protocols or it will cost you more. There will be a tack stall for any club member to use in row H. Several Spanish drill members will have stalls there as they perform at night too. Stalls could be \$20/ day plus mandatory \$10 bag of shavings. Contact Heidi first!
Sun, May 7	Sandy Young has Birt arena rented - contact her for ideas. (Note: Mom's day)
Mon, May 8	Club meeting
May 20/21	Lawrance Valdez natural horsemanship clinic, Birt arena
June 10/11	Valdez clinic
June 12	Club meeting
TUES July 4	Parade somewhere?
July 10	Club meeting
July 15	Stampede Rodeo Drill Team competition: possible drill performance
August 12/13	Valdez clinic
August 14	Club meeting
September 11	Club meeting
October 9	Club meeting
November 13	Club meeting
December ?	Christmas party



## Good or Bad Learning?

'Same Diff' to Your Horse

Evidence-Based Horsemanship is a cowboy-scientist collaboration by Dr. Stephen Peters and Martin Black.

Article By Maddy Butcher of Best Horse Practices

A horse's learning is often about relief from or release of pressure, also considered [negative reinforcement](#). From a brain chemistry standpoint, this feedback is linked to the release of a chemical or neurotransmitter called dopamine. In barnyard terms, we can think of dopamine release as tied to the relief of pressure.

In other words, horses want comfort and relief from pressure. They will seek out the dopamine release because, quite simply, it feels good to them.

If you're sensitive, observant, patient, and able, you can take advantage of that specific proclivity. You can make your riding cues more and more subtle. You can create a refined, learning machine in your horse. At that point, your horse will perform incredible moves while you sit in the saddle making near-invisible adjustments. And the crowd will roar.

But first, it's crucial to better understand the horse's learning process. For starters, from the horse's perspective, there is no difference between good and bad learning.

We're not talking flying lead changes or piaffes here. Let's take the much beloved task of trailer loading as an example. The horse may load into a trailer and find a release of pressure as the trailer is closed up and he finds hay to eat. There may be a dopamine release and a learning moment here. Alternatively, the horse may pull back, get away from its owner, find relief of pressure, and get a dopamine release. The "learning moment" might be more reinforced if he gets to graze.

Horses don't discriminate between these good and bad learning moments. They will search for the dopamine release regardless of how humans interpret their actions.

Another aspect of learning related to dopamine release is a horse's comfort level. A horse won't learn much if he's scared or really uncomfortable. Nor will the lesson hit home if he's bored or over-drilled. It's when you find a balance between these two ends of comfort that the best learning occurs.

As Martin Black writes: "...When we get the balance just right, the horse can operate at a place where he is interested but not worried. The more he experiences operating in this place, the more he looks for this place because it feels good to him."