

## Horses pay heed to holistic healer

By Kevin Kidder



Holistic horse healer Sheila Ryan uses a pendulum to check Sundust Cloud for signs of depression and exhaustion during the Equine Affaire at the Ohio Expo Center.

Photo by Tom Dodge | Dispatch

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Woman shares techniques at Equine Affaire

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THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

It was just a joke about a slow horse.

Debra Najecki was riding her horse Lacy and said, "I'm thinking about getting a speedier model."

At her next horse show, Lacy wouldn't behave.

Thanks to holistic horse healer Sheila Ryan, Najecki found out why: Lacy didn't appreciate the comment.

"They understand everything," said Najecki, of Chepachet, R.I.

Ryan, 44, founder and owner of HorseSense, based in Barrington, R.I., has brought her craft to the Ohio Expo Center, where the 10th annual Equine Affaire is running through Sunday.

She reads an animal's energy via metal dowsing rods. She recommends natural diets free of pesticides. She reads chakras — body centers that are considered sources of psychic power. She actually communicates with the horse, she says.

Ryan can even tell if you and your horse have conflicting desires: You want a trail horse, but he would rather be a jumper.

"I break up relationships," she joked.

Her life of communicating with animals began almost 20 years ago, with her neighbor's dog. "I'd say, 'The dog needs to go to the bathroom.' And they'd say, 'How did you know that?'"

Ryan, who has a bachelor's degree in psychology, moved on to people, the occasional house cat, even a mountain lion. Three years ago, she began working with horses.

One of the first horse owners she helped was Najecki, who now works for HorseSense.

Ryan communicated with the horse, Najecki said, and came away with a stunning revelation: "His comment was, 'I'm older than you think I am.'"

A veterinarian confirmed that the horse was 25, not 15.

Not everyone is a believer.

"I can't buy it. No way she's talking to horses," said Peg Shearer of Ann Arbor, Mich., who watched most of Ryan's hourlong presentation yesterday at Equine Affaire. "I just don't see any science behind it. But - she is glib."

But others swarmed to Ryan's booth in the Celeste Center — about 20 yards from the ring where she presented her clinic — to buy her video.

"It's a concrete process, and it's teachable," she said.

She is scheduled to present a final clinic at 4 p.m. today.

"I believe in preventative medicine, and I believe very much in holistic ways," Mary Scoles of Newark said yesterday as she shopped in Ryan's booth. "I thought she was very thorough."

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