



# TRAIL

Autumn  
2011

North Shore Horse and Pony Association

AN INVITATION TO THE NSHPA  
2011 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The North Shore Horse and Pony Association was formed in 1975 to ensure that horses and horseriding activities continue to form a vital part of the community and lifestyle in Terrey Hills/Duffys Forest and in Ku-ring-gai and Garigal National Parks.

Please become a member and join us in our efforts.

<http://www.nshpa.org.au>

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on

**Wednesday, July 6, 2011**

at 7.00pm

at the Senior Citizens Hall

Yulong Road, Terrey Hills

(It is the small hall behind the main Community Centre which is located near the Fire Shed)

Supper will be provided

## **EQUINE EXPERTS PANEL DISCUSSION** with ...

Susanna Duveen - Equine Body Therapies

Vicki Morgan- Equine Myofunctional Therapist

Chris Mullen - Human & Equine Osteopath

Come along with your equine questions/problems for the panel to discuss or email them in advance to NSHPA.  
(eg *does an ill-fitting saddle make that much difference to your horse?*)

**The NSHPA Committee looks forward to welcoming new,  
and seeing old members, at the AGM**



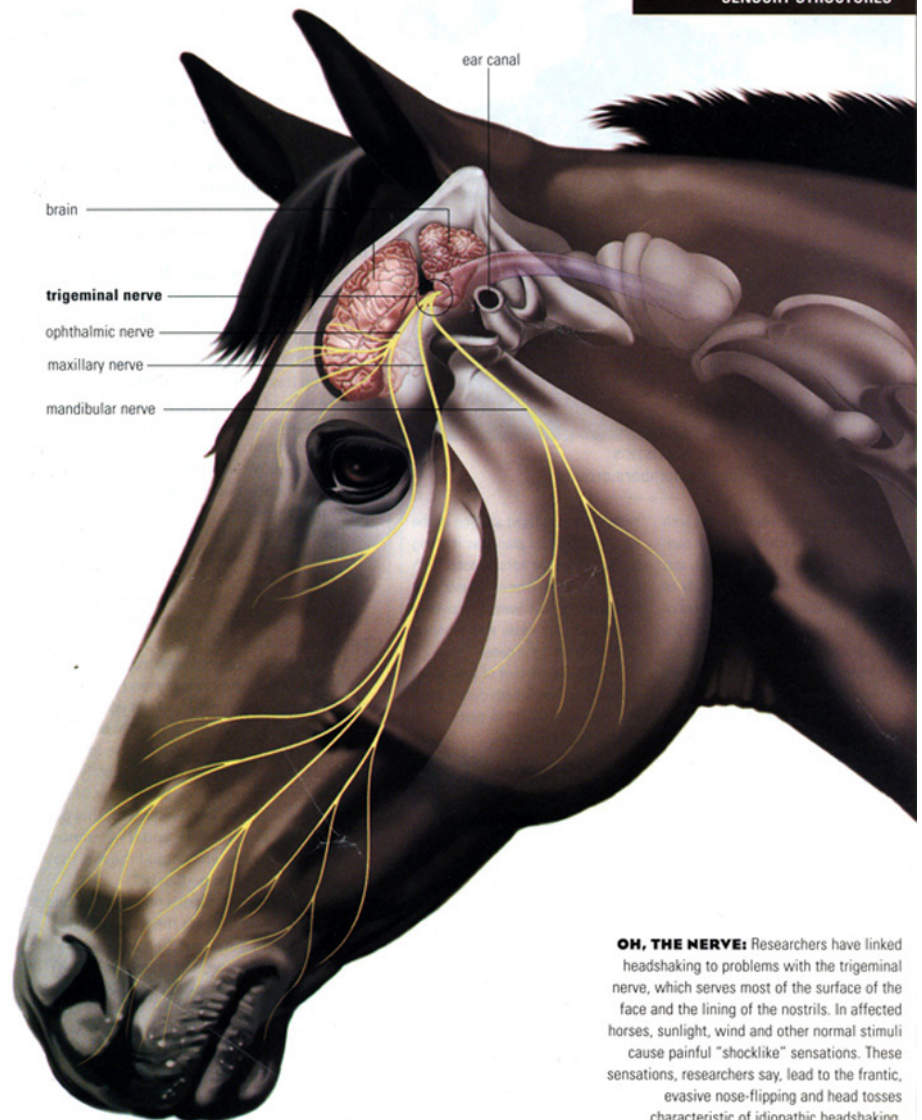
To find out more about the North Shore Horse and Pony Association, contact us:

P O Box 333 Terrey Hills 2084 E-mail: [willpower33@bigpond.com](mailto:willpower33@bigpond.com)  
President: Gillian Eagles 9428 5692 Secretary: Mal Wilson 9450 0546

## HEADSHAKING: NOT JUST SAYING NO

Sophie Fletcher

### SENSORY STRUCTURES



**OH, THE NERVE:** Researchers have linked headshaking to problems with the trigeminal nerve, which serves most of the surface of the face and the lining of the nostrils. In affected horses, sunlight, wind and other normal stimuli cause painful "shocklike" sensations. These sensations, researchers say, lead to the frantic, evasive nose-flipping and head tosses characteristic of idiopathic headshaking.

Imagine getting your horse ready to ride on a lovely spring day: quick brush, saddle and bridle on and off to the arena. Your horse seems a bit agitated once the bridle is on, but you don't take much notice. Once mounted however, it becomes very obvious that something is wrong – your horse is snorting, rubbing his nose on his legs and throwing his head up and down so violently that his front feet are leaving the ground. This was the beginning of Myka's struggle with headshaking syndrome.

Headshaking syndrome is a real and serious disease, often confused with poor fitting tack, bad riding or plain "naughtiness". While these things, as well as other problems such as dental problems, ear mites, sinus blockages and guttural pouch infections can cause horses to shake their heads, headshaking syndrome is idiopathic – it has no apparent cause. Symptoms range from excessive snorting and rubbing of the muzzle on the forelegs or ground, through minor lip twitching, to full on, dangerous and debilitating, usually vertical, shaking of the head and neck. Symptoms are almost always seasonal, occurring most commonly in spring, and are worsened by "triggers" which vary between individuals but include sunlight, wind, stress, exercise or even dusty hay. Affected horses appear to be grouped into two categories, "photic" headshakers who are sensitive to the light and the rest who are sensitive to other triggers.

Myka's story began on a September day in 2007. A warmblood gelding, he was rising 7 years old and otherwise in good health. In his first season headshaking, Myka was not only unable to be ridden, but could not tolerate having a halter on, or being touched on the face. He would stand in the paddock shaking his head, and his face was covered in scratches from hitting it in the stable.

This was definitely **not** a behavioural or training problem – he was in pain or

The image above is from <http://headshakingsyndrome.com>

at least extreme discomfort. The vets were called in and he was checked for infections, ear mites and scoped to check his sinuses and guttural pouch. His teeth had recently been done with no problems. He was loosely diagnosed as a headshaker. By early summer he appeared to be improving, however he began again in March 2008 – he is a spring/autumn headshaker.

We (although my mother, Dominique, must take most of the credit for this) began a long and thorough search for answers to this cryptic disease. Myka was given a whole range of herbal and homeopathic remedies, anti-inflammatories, high-dose steroids,

human anti-allergy nose sprays (difficult to administer to say the least!) and eye drops, as well as being treated by various musculoskeletal therapists and using fly nets and nose nets. Of these treatments we tried in the first year, only the eye drops and supplementing his diet with magnesium appeared to calm the condition so that he was only severely symptomatic when it was windy or during exercise. I was still unable to ride him during spring and autumn, with relaxing trail rides being the only option when the symptoms were milder.

Finally, we stumbled on a small unpublished pilot study conducted in New Zealand by Prof. John Madigan

### SEEKING YOUR SURPLUS CHAFF BAGS

Peggy Brown of The NSW Animal Welfare League is in need of your chaff bags. If you have empty ones lying around the shed she would be grateful for them, they can be dropped off to her at the Manly/Warringah Animal Welfare, 160 Mona Vale Road, Ingleside, or alternatively give her a call on 9913 8731

(UC Davis) and I contacted him personally. A theory was being tested that the seasonality of headshaking, previously thought to be due to allergies, may actually be due to reproductive hormones. The idea is that headshaking horses, which are mainly geldings, produce excessively high levels of LH and FSH (reproductive hormones) due to the lack of negative feedback from testosterone (as there are no testes to produce it). These two hormones (and there may be other involved) then cause the trigeminal nerve to become hypersensitive. This means that stimuli that would otherwise be harmless, such as touch or wind, becomes painful, causing the headshaking. EquiVet® Oestrus Control Vaccine (normally used to stop mares coming into season) was administered to lower the hormone levels. Positive results were found in one third of the horses tested. We decided, as at this point we were considering retiring him at the ripe old age of 8, and with the Vet's assurance that there could be no negative side effects, to give it a go, despite the uncertainty (and the price!).

Myka has now been virtually headshake-free since November 2009. He requires booster injections every 3-6 months to keep it under control, and while he is not "cured", I been able to ride him as a normal horse. We do not know if it will continue to work, however we have high hopes. He was the first horse in Australia to be treated with EquiVet for headshaking.

There is much information available about this condition, and various other treatments that have been successful, on the Internet. A good starting point is the Headshaking Syndrome Centre <http://headshakingsyndrome.com>. Information about the EquiVet experiment is available at [www.thehorse.com](http://www.thehorse.com) in an article titled *Headshaking Triggers and Treatment*. The author of this article has no intentions of replacing qualified veterinary care for the treatment of headshaking syndrome. It is recommended that all owners of horses with headshaking have a thorough work up and evaluation done by their veterinarian.

## RIDING FOR THE DISABLED

Lorraine Ward



Recently, Lorraine Ward (above), Diversity Coordinator at Stockland and NSHPA member used one of her Personal Volunteering days to spend at Riding for the Disabled (RDA) at Box Hill. This is her story:

On a glorious sunny day, I was excited to be spending it outside at RDA "Tall Timbers" on 25 acres of beautiful countryside, something I have wanted to do for many years *but never had the time*.

I was privileged to be assisting a very friendly team of volunteers who dedicate their time to providing horse riding and associated equestrian activities for people with disabilities. Horse riding for the disabled has many benefits such as improving balance and posture, development of fine and gross motor skills, encourages speech and builds self-esteem and confidence, as well as having FUN, and lots of it!

My day was spent assisting with the grooming and saddling of the horses and bringing them into the arena where we waited for our next group of school students to arrive and mount their horses. Together with the other volunteers, we led the horses around the arena and encouraged our students to participate in the various but specific games and exercises.

It was an amazing and humbling experience to see the children's faces light up and smile and laugh as they rode around the arena enjoying their sense of freedom and interacting with their horse and leader.



The phone number for the National Parks & Wildlife Service if you encounter motorised bikes, or fallen trees on the trails is 9472 8949 which is a multi answer phone service.



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## **2011 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL/APPLICATION**

**Annual subscriptions (beginning 1st January) to the NSHPA can be sent to:**

The Treasurer, P.O. Box 333, Terrey Hills, 2084, or  
for renewals without any changes of details, you can now EFT your subscription to NSHPA at:

BSB: 112 879

ACCOUNT: 127 223 252

If paying by EFT please send us an email with your name and date of your payment:

Email: nshandpa@gmail.com

**\$20 Single    \$30 Family    \$55 Club**

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Address .....

..... P/Code.....

Telephone Home .....Bus..... Mobile.....

E-mail .....

I would be interested to know about and perhaps participate in working bees!

Yes.....No .....

As most people are aware, we are constantly forced to protect our access to trails in the National Parks. NSHPA needs your support with membership if we are to have a louder voice when negotiating to keep trails open in the National Parks and local horse facilities maintained.

**Meetings are held 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of each month. All members are encouraged to attend.**