

LIFE ON THE SAN LUCAS • SUCCESSION AT THE CS • THE 3.5 MILLION-ACRE BRUNETTE DOWNS

WESTERN HORSEMAN

JULY  2024



TRIAL BY FIRE

TEXAS RANCHERS RISE FROM THE ASHES
OF THE SMOKEHOUSE CREEK FIRE.

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SUCCESSION ON THE CS

Fifth-generation managing members of the 150-year-old CS Cattle Company explain what they believe has made the historic cow-calf operation a success.

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There's more than a century of social traditions, horizon-spanning work and ties to Texas history at one of Australia's largest cattle stations.

BY BELTON MCMURREY

The CS Cattle Company has horses dating back to the earliest foundation sires of the Quarter Horse breed. Read about the next generation running the CS on page 64.



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FIRST-AID TIPS FOR THE TRAIL

Before heading out into the backcountry, learn about wilderness first-aid and the supplies you'll need to respond to a medical issue on the trail.

STORY BY KATIE NAVARRA • ILLUSTRATION BY RON BONGE

Richard Johnson had ridden out to a hunting camp. When he felt a pain in his chest, he chalked it up to the elevation and the output of effort required to set up camp. After riding back into town, he drove to the doctor, who sent him to the emergency room. The next day, Johnson had heart surgery wherein doctors placed two stents.

"I didn't realize I was having a heart attack," Johnson says.

Johnson grew up exploring the mountains, which served as his playground. He always let someone know where he was headed so that if he didn't return that night, the search party would know where

to start looking. He also told his dad not to come looking for him at night and risk getting lost, too.

Today, Johnson is the trail boss for Willow Creek Horseback Rides, North Fork Trail Rides and Jackson Hole Pack Trips. The United States Forest Service requires all wranglers to complete their first-aid and CPR training, but classes are open to anyone and recommended for any rider planning a backcountry trip.

"Wilderness first-aid courses are excellent and are recommended to anyone planning to do backcountry trips," says Rochelle Latka, a Leesburg, Virginia, trainer who worked as a wrangler at the Spotted Horse Ranch in Wyoming and completed in both the Gaucho Derby and the

Mongol Derby — extreme backcountry races through rugged terrain. "I learned so much the first time I took one and in others since then."

In addition to mandatory first-aid training, Johnson says every wrangler must carry a first-aid kit that is restocked at the beginning of each season and she encourages individual riders to pack one as well. The kit includes such basic supplies as tape, bandages, antiseptic and gauze.

"One of the best things you can have with you is an Ace bandage," Latka says. "You can make a sling out of that. You can get some sticks and make it into a splint. You can use it if something happens to your horse, fix a piece of tack that breaks or create a makeshift rope. It's a super helpful,

versatile piece of equipment that you can use for a lot of different things.”

Along with Ace bandage, Latka finds anti-diarrheal pills helpful to counteract the effects of bad water, as well as basic pain relievers. Before arriving at the starting line for the Gaucho Derby and the Mongol Derby, her grandmother suggested she take along arnica gel, a natural pain remedy.

“I undervalued it at the time, but I used it and was so thankful to have it,” Latka says. “It really helped with body soreness.”

One of the most important things Johnson includes on every backcountry ride is water. When riding from lower to higher elevations, dehydration can happen quickly. He has seen people transition from completely fine one minute to woozy and dizzy the next, as if they were intoxicated.

“You have to stop, rest and get rehydrated,” he says. “Depending on how bad it is, it affects how soon you can get going or if you need to be evacuated out.”

HAVE A PLAN

Cell service is often unreliable in the mountains, and frequent dead spots render phones useless. Two-way radios are designed to provide communication even in remote areas, so leaving one radio with someone at camp — along with an emergency plan — is essential.

“Thank goodness emergencies don’t happen often, but when they do, we have protocols in place for responding if one of our wranglers is requesting emergency services,” Johnson says. “We call immediately and then start documenting what happened and when.”

“Checking weather reports and dressing for the weather might be common sense, but they are not always common to others,” Johnson says. “If you’re riding with others, especially if they’re not experienced, it’s important to recommend they wear long pants and carry clothing for changing weather conditions and gloves.”

SUGGESTED SUPPLIES

Beyond basic first-aid supplies, Latka recommends packing additional supplies

if you’re planning a backcountry trip to avoid a health emergency in the event of weather changes or the need to be out longer than planned.

She suggests using a Ziplock bag or waterproof case to hold a small fire-making kit, such as matches or a lighter, for warmth or signaling. She includes laundry lint, dry pine needles or all the above as a fire starter.

After competing in the Gaucho Derby and the Mongol Derby, she also now recommends an emergency thermal blanket, the tin foil blankets that hold in heat, in case you get caught without a tent or sleeping bag.

“One more thing I suggest bringing is a sugary snack or some type of candy in case you’re riding with someone who is diabetic,” Latka says. “This happened to me on a ride at the ranch. The kid started fading on me. No one had mentioned to me that he was diabetic. Luckily, I had Skittles and gave them to him when I figured it out, and the candy saved the day.”

CALM HEADS PREVAIL

Medical emergencies are never planned and can be frightening. Adrenaline and the instinct to “fix” the situation for yourself or those riding with you have the potential to make the situation worse.

“You can plan for every contingency and not know that somebody [in your group] has an underlying heart or health condition, and then you have to respond to something that is sort of out of your control,” Johnson says. “The main thing is to stay calm. In a lot of situations, calm minds prevail.”

Latka agrees that pausing to assess the situation rather than panicking and forcing yourself or others to “cowboy up” and keep going is critical, whether the emergency is from an underlying health condition or an injury from an accident.

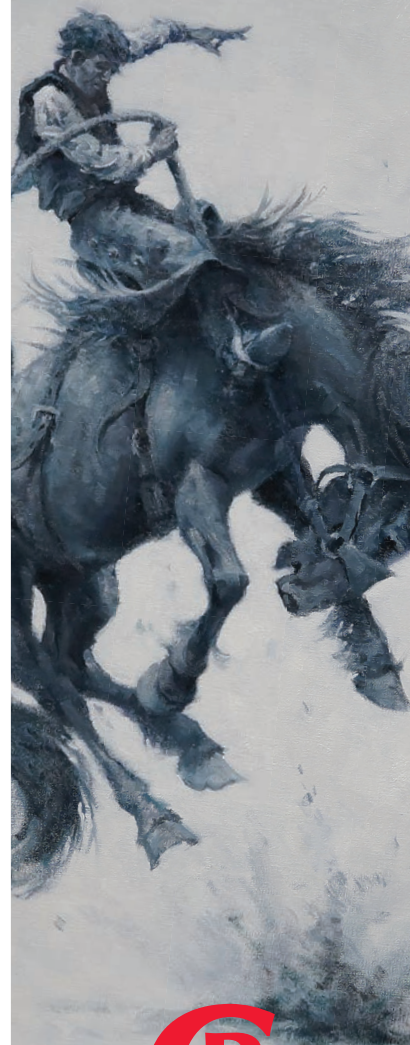
“For a lot of people, it’s an instinct to rush to want to do something and be helpful,” Latka says. “Sometimes, it’s best to take a minute to breathe and do a body assessment to see how [the injured person] feels, so you can respond appropriately.” 🐾

Presenting a group exhibition
celebrating Will James’ impact on
the American West

COWBOYS NORTH & SOUTH

AUGUST 2024

Artwork by Jim Rey



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