

## Moraga Horsemen's Pasture REALITY CHECK

Important Frequently-Asked-Questions (and answers) For MHA Pasture Applicants.

September 2010

MHA Pasture is a wonderful horse boarding opportunity, but not for every horse-owner or every horse.

Please Read the Following Carefully! If you have questions, don't hesitate to call or email.

### **What is MHA Pasture?**

MHA Pasture is primarily watershed/grazing land owned by EBMUD. Trail use with an EBMUD permit goes through and around the pasture. Moraga Horsemen's Association has had a lease with EBMUD for approximately 35 years, and all of the land use/management is under the jurisdiction of EBMUD.

MHA Pasture and Arena are located at the edge of Moraga at 423 Canyon Rd. Although it shares fence-line with urban housing, it also borders miles and miles of trails that lead onto Regional Park Land as well as EBMUD land.

It is approximately 120 acres, cross-fenced into 6 parcels. The horses rotate through these 6 parcels repeatedly throughout the year (moving every week or two). EBMUD regulates the number of animals allowed on this land. At present, MHA is allowed to graze 16 horses annually. The wildlife is amazing and abundant, however it isn't all wonderful. Among the shared community, inhabitants include MANY ticks, mosquitoes, coyote, skunk, turkey, wild pig and mountain lion...to name just a few.

### **Who runs MHA Pasture?**

Moraga Horsemen's Association holds the lease for the pasture, however the pasture members are responsible for all maintenance of the land and facilities as well as the care of the horses. This co-op pasture has annual elections of management, and each "horse space" is responsible for 20 hours of work annually.

### **What does it cost to board a horse at MHA Pasture?**

The present monthly board is \$40.00, which is subject to change should the Association need to make capital improvements or meet increased operational costs or lease increases. Board fee does not include any supplemental feed. The board does include the wormer that is given every other month, when the pasture members meet to discuss any work issues and ideas. All horses are wormed with a rotation of wormers at the same time at the bi-monthly meeting.

### **What is a MHA Pasture Space and how do I get one?**

In order to keep a horse at MHA pasture, a person must first join Moraga Horsemen's Association. Once application and dues have been received, a member is voted into the association at one of the monthly meetings. An application for the pasture may then be turned in to the Vice President. There is usually a waiting list that the applicant will be added to. The new applicant must meet the specified criteria to become an active member before a space may be offered to them. The criteria includes:

New members must wait a minimum of 6 months before being offered a space and meet requirements of being an active member. This requires you to attend at least 4 meetings per year, be involved in at least 3 association activities, and work a minimum of 5 hours in the pasture.

For further information, please contact the Vice President concerning membership, or the pasture manager.

Each horse in the pasture is the sole responsibility of it's owner. There is no feeding in the pasture. Each horse is brought out individually for any supplementary food.

### **What kind of horse facilities does MHA Pasture provide?**

There is a small barn with tack room and minimal hay storage, and 3 corrals that the members share. A dirt/sand arena is maintained throughout the summer. The arena and corrals are useable only during dry weather.

MHA pasture is a boarding pasture only, not a private equestrian center. It does have some rudimentary bonuses, but please do not expect anything special.

There are no shelters for horses.  
NO round pens  
NO grooming facilities  
NO telephone  
NO trailer storage  
Minimal tack/storage area – which is not very secure.  
NO club room  
NO on-site management or security

The horses live in open pasture with its seasonal dust, insects, rain, mud, wind and cold. Most horse owners transport their tack and horse supplies in their own vehicles. All of MHA's lands are open to the public and the horses are accessible to visitors to the watershed land.

#### **What kind of horse does well at MHA pasture?**

Almost any horse can benefit from being in a natural open grazing environment and stable herd situation. However, MHA is not a retirement or lay-up pasture and may present challenges to older horses or those prone to unsoundness. MHA does not allow stallions or foals in the herd. There are no specific breed or age restrictions. However horses under the age of 3 will need special review. Spot holders must provide veterinary certification of their horse's suitability for placement in MHA pasture. Because of free choice grazing, inactive horses are very prone to unhealthy weight gain. Horses must be regularly exercised to maintain optimum weight and well-being. Horses are introduced into the herd over a period of time using an adaptation corral and companion horses, to reduce the possibility of injury to both the newcomer and the herd. New horses are only introduced to the herd during spring and summer when there is adequate feed in the introductory area.

#### **How are the horses fed?**

The horses are expected to live off of the land throughout the year. Some horses will not need any supplemental feed. Depending on their use, age and a variety of other issues, some horses may need more supplementation than is reasonable. These horses would be poor choices for this situation. Supplemental feeding of individual horse is the owner's responsibility. Be prepared to hike out to catch your horse in extreme weather conditions to feed your horse. The horse must be removed from the herd to give him/her supplemental feed.

#### **What kind of equestrian experience do I need to keep a horse at MHA Pasture?**

MHA boarders are experienced and active trail riders. MHA pasture is not for beginner riders or green horses. We strongly recommend that anyone interested in gaining correct basic riding and horse ownership skills do so at supervised and well-equipped boarding stables. Such stables can provide trainers, lessons, clinics, and full-time supervision, as well as the camaraderie of fellow equestrians. We also encourage prospective first-time horse owners to look into a "sponsorship" arrangement at a local stable or barn. This is an excellent way to find out if full-time horse-keeping is worth the time and effort.

MHA pasture is also not appropriate for those whose equestrian activities are arena-centric such as dressage, show, jumping, eventing, rodeo, etc. Anyone who is active in horse events other than trail riding would have a difficult time practicing their skills except during summer months. There is no on-site manager or staff. MHA pasture members may see each other at the pasture at infrequent intervals. While new spot holders will receive sufficient information and support to make the integration of their horse into the herd safe for all concerned, they should already have a very high level of riding, horse handling and horse-keeping skills. It is likely that any horse owner will encounter—perhaps alone, at night, in bad weather, or under other adverse circumstances—a wide variety of situations demanding appropriate emergency action. Examples: multiple loose horses, broken fences, serious or life-threatening horse or human injuries, environmental catastrophes, etc. MHA members depend upon each other to identify and respond to such problems efficiently and effectively. Space holders must also have sufficient horse experience to monitor and judge individual horses for changes in attitude and soundness.

MHA and EBMUD do not allow children under the age of 18 to own a space in the pasture. Minors must be accompanied by adults at all times. Parents may own a space and keep a horse for their child, however the parent must be an active member and accompany their child at the pasture. . Adults may not "proxy" a spot as a way to circumvent this restriction. There are safety and security issues for minors at MHA Pasture. MHA Pasture is very suitable for the active and experienced trail rider, in particular the equestrian who has cared for their horse daily in a variety of settings, including horse camping and backyard horse-keeping. All applications for a Space will be reviewed prior to acceptance. You may be asked for additional information or a personal interview at MHA's discretion. Your equestrian references will be checked.

#### **What do I need to know about trail riding at MHA Pasture?**

MHA's trail riding opportunities are varied, spectacular and some of the finest in the world, but we must offer some caveats. There is no significant riding within the pasture fence line... our riding is beyond the pasture.

The many miles of trail we have available are quite enjoyable but are shared with many other users: cyclists, dog-walkers, hikers, joggers and so forth. A significant number of our fine trails are accessed via the busy Iron Horse Trail. The trails we ride are not private bridle paths; they include multiple-user thoroughfares, mountain fire roads, narrow single tracks... and the occasional suburban street.

If you are not completely comfortable with trail riding that includes steep terrain, sudden surprises, and lots of people, dogs and bikes, we strongly recommend that you NOT apply for a MHA spot. If you are unclear about what sort of riding is available from MHA pasture, please call for more information. We'll be happy to answer your questions.

#### **Do I have to live near MHA Pasture?**

There are no requirements regarding residency but please note that travel to and from MHA pasture via all routes can be extremely difficult during peak traffic hours (7 -10 AM, 3 - 7 PM) Your regular visits to MHA Pasture may require more travel time than you have available. Feeding responsibilities, maintenance and just general care of your horse will require that you make frequent trips to the pasture. It is recommended that all horses be seen by their owners at least twice per week, and often more than that during fall and winter when the feed supply is low. All of this would suggest that it is better if you live closer to the pasture, allowing ease in attending to your horse.

#### **What else should I consider before applying for a MHA space?**

MHA strongly discourages potential spot applicants if they:

... are planning to keep one or more additional horses at other facilities while holding a spot at MHA;

...expect to arrange financial sponsorship or share the care and use of their horse by others at the pasture;

...regard a MHA spot as a temporary situation;

...have good intentions about increasing involvement with their horse as soon as more pressing personal issues resolve;

...are attracted by MHA's location and cost only, and have not fully considered other practical aspects.

#### **What is expected of space holders at MHA pasture?**

A MHA Pasture Space holder is expected to make a significant commitment of time and energy to the care of their horse and the herd, and to MHA activities. This includes:

*Horse care:* Regular basic grooming, hoof care, supplemental feeding, if necessary, and regular exercise (riding). Your horse is your daily responsibility.

*Financial:* Monthly pasture rent and vet clinic billings kept current, plus any assessments agreed upon by the Association.

*Co-op participation:* Attendance at pasture meetings; participation in work parties, completing at least 20 hours per year, feeding and manure pickup,.

*Neighborhood:* Be comfortable with having your horse on public lands open to all passive recreational uses. Be an ambassador for MHA and all horsemen in the community... enjoy meeting local neighbors and sharing your personal store of horse knowledge.

*Trail community:* Ride the local trails and help support and promote MHA's equestrian culture.

What are MHA's responsibilities?

The Association will:

- Maintain a grazing lease and a good working relationship with East Bay Municipal Water District.
- Maintain adequate Association liability insurance to meet lease requirements, and insuring that all members carry personal liability insurance covering their horse activities.
- Set up regular on-site group vet clinics for routine procedures (vaccinations, worming, etc.)
- Handle banking and bookkeeping in an efficient and transparent manner; maintain historic records; respond to member concerns; conduct regular elections and business meetings.
- Oversee filling of pasture spots in a manner acceptable to the association and EBMUD
- Set and enforce horse welfare policy for MHA and encourage the highest level of enlightened and humane horse-keeping.
- Promote good relations with MHA's neighbors and the community at large.
- Work to promote equestrian trail access and trail riding in Contra Costa County.

The information above is designed to help you make an informed decision about applying for a space in the Moraga Horsemen's Pasture. If you have further questions, don't hesitate to call.

Thank you.

MHA