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## VOLUNTEER PROFILE: JORDAN BRINKER



Harry and Jordan

We would like to introduce you to Jordan Brinker, our Volunteer of the Month for March.

Jordan grew up in Royal Oak, MI, and was an avid horse lover from a very young age. She would do whatever she could to be around horses including taking riding lessons, going to summer horse camps, and working at Bloomfield Open Hunt Club in the barn.

Jordan went to Albion College where she rode on the equestrian team while earning her bachelor's degree in psychology. While there, she met her husband, Elliot, who also rode on the equestrian team. After graduating, she

attended Wayne State University and earned her master's degree in social work.

Jordan is a social worker at the VA Medical Center in Battle Creek. She works on the Homeless Team, assisting veterans experiencing homelessness to obtain shelter and affordable permanent housing. She also offers therapy services through the BetterHelp app.

While volunteering at Proud Equestrian Program, her instructor told her about Cheff and encouraged her to volunteer with us after she moved to Battle Creek in 2019. She has been with us ever since!

Jordan and her husband have a white German Shephard named Ghost, and enjoy riding their horses, cooking together, and taking walks with their dog.

Jordan enjoys volunteering at Cheff "because I am able to bring joy into a child's day, and I enjoy the relationships that I have built with the staff and the participants."

Jordan loves all the horses but loves Monte for his adorable little jog, and Boomer because he is so responsive and BIG.

Thank you, Jordan for all you do for Cheff, and for the work that you do with veterans!!!



# WELCOME, ALEXA AND ELISE!



*Alexa W*

Alexa W grew up in Grand Haven, MI, and is in the WMU School of Nursing. She will be graduating this April and plans to work at Spectrum/Corewell Health in Grand Rapids as an ICU (Intensive Care) nurse. She is a supplemental instructor of anatomy and physiology in the pre-nursing program, as well as being a student in the nursing school.

Alexa has quite a lot of horse experience—she was part of 4-H since the age of nine and was a part of the equestrian team in high school as well as competing in many different disciplines such as hunt seat, showmanship, trail, speed, etc.

Coming to Cheff was something Alexa was excited about, and she finds it very therapeutic. She spends her free time hanging out with her friends and roommates and loves to do anything outside.



*Elise D*

Meet one of our newest interns, Elise D. Elise comes to us from the WMU Nursing program and will be completing forty hours with us, which will end on April 2. She is here on Thursdays at this time.

Elise originally hails from Rockford, MI, and will be graduating from the school of nursing this year. Her focus is on emergency medicine, and she is looking to work at either Borgess Ascension Hospital or Trinity Health in Grand Rapids after she graduates.

Elise likes to do anything that is outdoors. She is/was an avid tennis player, and she loves to travel. Her favorite destination so far has been Roatan in Honduras where she enjoys snorkeling and the sun and sand.



***We would like to welcome both Elise and Alexa, and although their time here will be relatively short, we are very happy to have them here!***

# HORSE OF THE MONTH: CHIP



Adorable Chip

Say “Hello” to Chip, our latest addition to the Cheff herd - a 17-year-old Miniature horse covered in lovely spots. He stands approximately 9 hands tall and is a tad chonky right now as he is pushing around 500 pounds...just more to love! ❤️

But maybe we should say “Welcome back” since this is Chip’s second time at Cheff. Chip originally arrived with Luna the Fjord about two years ago; previously they were pets of a veterinarian. At that time, Chip wasn’t quite ready for this type of work, so he went to live with our executive director’s stepdaughter, Cassidy, for some remedial training. Cassidy, (who works here on Tuesdays), spent a lot of time with him on in-hand training; Chip is now much more trusting, learning to be caught out in the field, and understands how to be part of the ground program at Cheff.

Kassidy also trained him to put his two front legs up on your shoulders and he can put his front feet on a bucket and hold the position. Although Cheff has not asked this of him, there is photographic evidence that this is possible!

Like many small things, Chip is very feisty and likes to be the boss. But he has made friends with Archie and Blue (we think he is more attached to Blue now!). Chip can be headstrong at times and has been known to run away; if you aren’t a strong leader, he can drag you around!

Overall, Chip’s health is good, but he is currently on a diet so he is passing on sweets for now – though he would love a cute new halter!



**MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>**





# EDUCATION CORNER: EQUINE SKIN CONDITIONS

The skin is a horse's largest organ. It performs a critical function: creating a protective barrier between the outside world and the body's internal systems. In general, it just needs basic maintenance to be healthy. But horses can experience a variety of skin issues – here's a look at some of the most common conditions.

**Insect bite hypersensitivity**, also known as **sweet itch**, **Queensland itch** and **summer itch**, is an allergic reaction to insect bites. It's primarily associated with biting midges belonging to the genus *Culicoides* (also called gnats and no-see-ums).

When midges bite, they inject a bit of their saliva. For many horses, the result is just a basic bug bite. But for those with a hypersensitivity to proteins in the saliva, these bites cause intense itchiness (veterinarians call it "pruritus") and, sometimes, lesions, crusting and hives.

The itchiness is extremely annoying for an affected horse. They will rub against things or bite at the itchy area for relief, resulting in hair loss from their coat, a broken-off mane and/or rubbed-out tail. Continual rubbing and scratching may cause skin trauma that can become infected.

Minimizing exposure to biting midges is the primary way to help a horse with IBH, using a combination of tactics:

- Protect the horse with insect repellent and fly gear: a face mask with ear covers, fly sheet with belly band and boots.
- Use fans in the barn and stalls – midges are not strong flyers, so a breeze will blow them away. Mesh curtains on barn doors can also help.
- Eliminate *Culicoides* breeding areas by removing standing water and decaying plant materials.
- Avoid turnout at dawn and dusk, peak times for midges.



*Hair has been rubbed off the tail due to itching*



*Full fly gear coverage*

Topical treatments are often used to reduce itchiness. In some cases, a limited course of corticosteroids is prescribed to stop the itch-scratch cycle. There is reportedly some success with vaccines to desensitize horses that have IBH; research is ongoing in this area.

Horses can also be allergic to bites from other insects, such as black flies and stable flies. For info on the wide variety of insects that hang out around horses, see the [Apr 2021](#) newsletter article on Flies and Mosquitos (on p. 5).

**Dermatophilosis**, also called **rain rot** and **rain scald**, is a skin infection caused by the bacteria *Dermatophilus congolensis*.

This type of bacteria is usually present in the environment and on a horse's skin in a dormant state with no ill effects. However, wet or humid conditions – like being in the rain for an extended period or sweating under a winter blanket without a chance to dry out – can activate the bacteria. Waterlogged skin, minor cuts or abrasions give the bacteria an opportunity to take hold.

Rain rot shows up as painful scabs, usually along a horse's topline. A typical treatment is to cleanse with antimicrobial shampoo, which may need to be repeated over several days.

Treatment kills the infection and also helps loosen and remove the scabs. Clumps of hair often come off with the scabs, leaving temporary bald spots in the horse's coat. In cases that don't respond to topical treatment, a veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics.



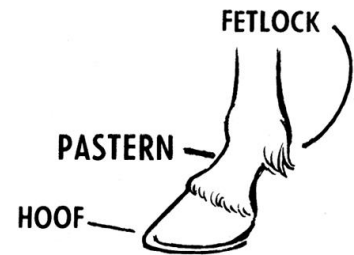
*Rain rot*

Horses with lower immune function due to age, an underlying illness or stress are more susceptible to rain rot. The condition can be transferred to other horses, so it is important to disinfect grooming tools, not share equipment and safely dispose of scabs and hair clumps that have come off.

**Equine Pastern Dermatitis**, also known as **scratches**, **mud fever**, **dew poisoning** and a variety of other descriptive terms, is an inflammation of the skin of the pasterns. EPD is actually an umbrella term for a variety of situations that cause pastern skin issues.

The various triggers of pastern dermatitis tend to affect some horses more than others:

- Draft horses with feathers, like our Clydesdale Tess, tend to have more pastern skin issues than breeds without feathers.
- Horses with white hair over pink skin in the pastern area, with or without feathers, are more affected than those with darker coloring.
- The back of the pastern is generally where problems start, though inflammation can spread around and further up the leg(s).
- Pastern dermatitis tends to occur more on the hind legs, but can affect any or all of a horse's legs.



What are the signs of pastern dermatitis? It can start with redness, swelling, cracked skin and crusty lesions on the back of one or more pasterns, then worsen into oozing and ulcerations and expand to cover more of the leg. The condition can be itchy and painful.

Feathers may hide initial signs of dermatitis; in that situation, a horse's behavior may be the first indicator of the problem through actions like biting at the itchy area, stomping their hooves and being reluctant to have their legs touched or lifted.



*Pastern dermatitis*

What causes pastern dermatitis? Here are a few scenarios:

- Prolonged periods in wet and muddy conditions, where the lower leg doesn't have a chance to dry, set up a good environment for bacteria to thrive. Feathers that are wet and caked with mud can further trap moisture against the leg. Like with rain rot, waterlogged skin or pre-existing breaks in the skin give opportunities for infection to set in.
- Changes in the bedding in a horse's stall, particularly if chemically treated materials are used, can cause skin reactions in some horses.

- Feather mites (*Chorioptes equi*), also called mange mites, are parasites that can live on the pastern skin under feathers. Mites will bite and irritate the skin, causing redness, sores, and secondary infections.
- Lower legs with white hair and pink skin can be irritated by sunburn or photosensitivity (more on that below).

Since pastern skin problems can be caused by so many different things, working with a veterinarian for a proper diagnosis is often the first step in a treatment plan. For draft breeds with feathers, it may be necessary to trim or entirely shave feathers during treatment so the inflamed or infected skin can be kept clean, dry, and easily accessed.

**Sunburn** and **photosensitization** are ways UV light from the sun can harm a horse's skin. Areas with white hair and pink skin – which are actually unpigmented areas – are where UV light is most dangerous.

Photosensitivity can look like sunburn, but is often worse. It is caused when photodynamic compounds in a horse's body are exposed to UV light, triggering a chemical reaction that damages skin.

Photodynamic compounds get into the body from eating particular plants and from certain medications. Alsike clover and St. John's wort are two of the many plants that can cause photosensitivity in horses. This type of photosensitivity is called primary photosensitivity.



*Alsike clover can cause photosensitivity in horses*

Secondary photosensitivity happens when a horse has liver damage and so cannot metabolize certain chemicals normally. This allows photodynamic compounds that would otherwise have been eliminated to remain in the bloodstream.

Primary photosensitization can be prevented by removing the offending plants, though this may be easier said than done in some pastures. The same procedures used to prevent sunburn will help minimize both kinds of photosensitization, such as:

- Apply sunblock and/or creams containing zinc oxide.
- Use turnout sheets and fly gear with built-in UV protection.
- Have shade available and consider avoiding turnout during peak sunlight hours.

**Dermatophytosis**, better known as **ringworm**, is a disease affecting the skin and hair caused by a fungus (not a worm!). In equines, the specific fungi involved are usually *Trichophyton equinum* and *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*.

These fungi live in the ground, so can transfer to horses when they lie down or roll around outside. Ringworm is very easily transmitted between equines, and to and from humans and other animals, through direct contact and via grooming tools, tack, barn surfaces, etc.



*Ringworm*

Ringworm appears as a pattern of hair loss, usually (but not always) shaped like circles or rings. It often occurs in the area of the saddle and girth and can spread from there, including to a horse's face. The infected areas can be scaly and itchy.

As with many equine skin conditions, horses with lowered immunity tend to be more susceptible to ringworm. This includes horses that are very young with just-developing immune systems, older horses, and those with other health conditions.

Unaddressed, ringworm will usually go away on its own, but that can take a few weeks. Treatment with antifungal shampoos and topical medications is recommended to hasten the recovery time for the affected horse and lessen the likelihood of spreading the fungus. Besides diagnosing and treating, veterinarians can help with a strategy to fully disinfect the barn, equipment, and any other potentially contaminated areas.

Our herd at the Cheff Center is lucky to have a team of professionals on staff that are always monitoring their skin and overall health.

Volunteers also do a lot – maybe without even realizing it – to help keep the herd’s skin in good shape. This includes grooming, of course. Mucking stalls, applying insect repellent and sunscreen, and putting on fly gear all help everyone’s skin and coat stay clean, dry, protected and feeling good.

In addition, volunteers provide more sets of eyes and hands on the herd to help notice any new skin problems. Please don’t hesitate to report any skin or other issue, no matter how minor, to an instructor or equine staffer. Thank you, volunteers!

#### Sources and More Info

- [Insect Bite Hypersensitivity in Horses: Causes, Diagnosis, Scoring and New Therapies](#), Animals, Aug 2023.
- [Sweet Itch: Itching for a Cure](#), The Horse, Apr 2023.
- [Rain Rot: Take Control](#), Equus Magazine, Oct 2023.
- [Taking a Raincheck on Equine Rain Rot](#), Texas A&M Vet Med, Oct 2021.
- [Struggling with Mud Fever?](#) Horse & Hound (UK), Jan 2024.
- [Feather Mites in Horses](#), Horse & Hound (UK), Mar 2020.
- [Scratches in Horses](#) (infographic about pastern dermatitis), The Horse, Feb 2021.
- [Photosensitization in Horses](#), Horse Illustrated, Sep 2023.
- [Ringworm in Horses](#), UC Davis Vet Med, Apr 2022.
- [5 Ways to Protect Your Horse’s Skin](#), Equus Magazine, Jan 2024.
- Smartpak Equine has a library of short [equine health videos](#), including:
  - [Sweet Itch vs Neck Threadworms](#), 7 min.
  - [What is Rain Rot in Horses?](#) 4 min.
  - [Treatment and Prevention of Scratches in Horses](#), 3 min.

Photos sourced from articles listed and [Wikimedia Commons](#).







Marengo was the famous war horse of the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Named after the Battle of Marengo, through which he carried his rider safely, Marengo was imported to France from Egypt following the Battle of Abukir in 1799 as a six-year-old.

Marengo was a gray Arab stallion and was probably bred at the famous El Naseri stud. Although small in size - only 14.1 hands - he was described as a reliable, steady mount. All of Napoleon's horses were trained to be fearless, obedient, and to remain calm on a chaotic battlefield and Marengo was no exception.

Napoleon is said to have ridden him through many of his campaigns between 1800 and 1815. Marengo was wounded eight times before being captured in 1815 during the Battle of Waterloo and taken to England.

During his life in England, Marengo was a star attraction at public events. He was displayed at exhibitions in Pall Mall and was shown alongside Napoleon's saddle, bridle, and boots. His battle scars along with the bullet that stayed in his tail were mentioned along with the Imperial crown and letter N that were branded on his hind quarters.

Marengo stood at stud (unsuccessfully) at the age of 27. He eventually died at the age of 38 and his skeleton (minus two hooves) was preserved and later passed to the Royal United Services Institute, established by Wellington in 1831. It was moved to the National Army Museum in the 1960s.

For more information:

[Marengo \(horse\) - Wikipedia](#)  
[Marengo: a warhorse's makeover | Natural History Museum \(nhm.ac.uk\)](#)

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*Skeleton of Napoleon's horse, Marengo*



## CHEFF UPDATES

**LOUIE'S 18<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CHARITY GUMBO COOK-OFF** was held on February 25, and once again they chose Cheff as one of the two nonprofits to receive part of the proceeds. With 1,300 presold tickets and another 700 walk-ins, it was the busiest cook-off yet! Thankfully, it was a beautiful day, so people were able to be outside of the tent and the building (which were both filled wall-to-wall with people!). A good time was had by all, and between Cheff staff and volunteers we had 18 people show up to work! The staff at Louie's was very thankful that we had such a showing of support and said that they could not have done it without us!

The Gumbo Cook-off is an important fundraiser for Cheff, and we want to thank Layne E and her husband Jack, Connor P, Mohammad T, Sue H, her husband Jeff, and their friends Mary and Richard S, Doe B, Steve P, Laura W and her son, Brad, and Cathy D with her friend Mara M for giving up part of their weekend to support us!

**LEADING AND MOUNTING CLASS WILL BE HELD APRIL 1st, FROM 6:30-8PM.**

Please let [Sara](#) know if you would like to attend.

**THE HOW-TO'S OF TACK CLASS WILL BE HELD THURSDAY, MARCH 21st, FROM 5:30-7:30PM, IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE LAST DAY OF CLASSES FOR SESSION 1.**

If you would like to attend **OR** were signed up for previously canceled classes and would still like to come, please let [Sara](#) know. We will learn the reasons behind the specific tack we use for riders/horses.

**OUR NEXT VOLUNTEER ORIENTATION IS MARCH 23rd FROM 10AM-1PM.**

Session 2 has a very busy and full schedule, so we need all hands on deck. We hope to see many of you that took Session 1 off! Please make sure to invite your friends, family, and co-workers to attend!

*May luck be your friend in  
whatever you do,  
And may trouble always be a  
stranger to you.  
**HAPPY ST. PATRICK'S DAY!***





## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Hannah A

Doe B

Layne E

Jesse K

Mary M

Alyssa N

Brendan R

Katie B

Chantal C

Susan H

Phoenix K

Sofia M

Patricia P

Abby S

Sue B

Marlise DS

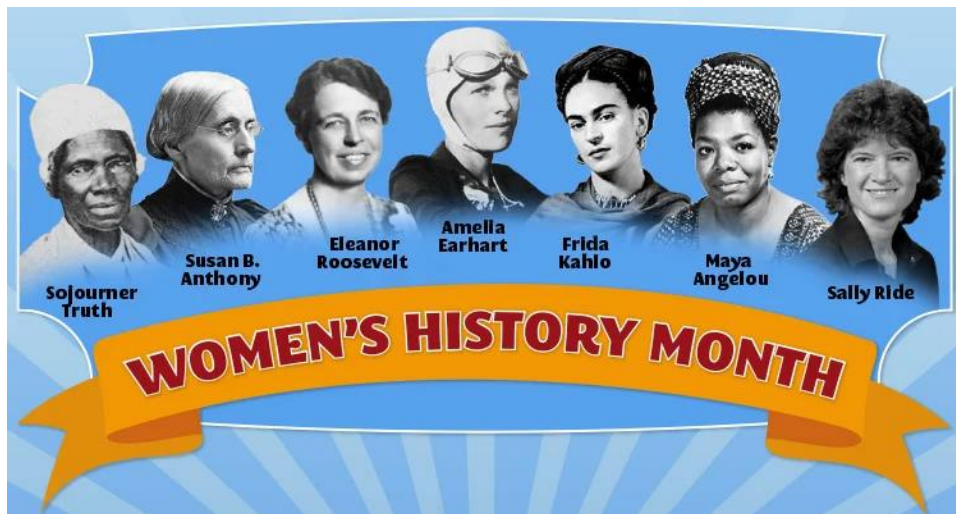
Mitchell J

Selin L

Riley N

Sara P

Samantha W



"The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." ~ Alice Walker

## Harding's

Harding's customers - if you join their Community Rewards program and select the Cheff Center as your organization of choice, we receive a rebate based on your purchase amounts.

Please let your friends and family know—every penny helps! For more information, click on the link: <https://www.hardings.com/savings-and-rewards/community-rewards/>

## Rite Aid

Rite Aid is one of Cheff's partners and extended their shopper rewards program to us. Please consider signing up as a Cheff Supporter. Simply register at: [support.rxfundraising.com/CheffCenter](http://support.rxfundraising.com/CheffCenter)

## Cheff gets a large discount on horse-related products!

If you would like to get more bang for your buck, you could make a [DONATION](#) to Cheff and we will gratefully use it where most needed!

## Any Questions/Comments/Suggestions?

If so, you can contact Sara Putney, Volunteer Administrator, at [sara@cheffcenter.org](mailto:sara@cheffcenter.org)

**Newsletter Contributions by:** Emily Fields, Ann Lindsay, Morgan Meulman, Sara Putney, Marianne Stier

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