



*Cheryl Byers of Lloydminster, SK, and
Country Lanes Little Bluejay..*

Big fun in a small package.

Test-drive a miniature horse.

**2010 Manitoba
International Horse Show.
(Miniatures and Shetlands)
Keystone Centre, Brandon.
July 17, 2010.
Sale July 18, 2010.**

Buy a new car, a new house, or anything like that and for many the trend is to size “up”.

But with miniature horse ownership, many adults have sized “down” from larger horses, but are getting twice as much satisfaction from their trade.

Cheryl and Wayne Byers from Lloydminster, SK, were long-time Arabian owners but after a “flying lesson” they decided they would try out horses of a different size. They have never regretted their decision. Waiting for one of Cheryl’s halter classes to start at the one-day four-judge 2010 Manitoba International Horse Show under AMHR* rules, Wayne said, “We’ve brought three of our horses this weekend; a mare, a gelding and a stallion. We’ve had miniature horses for eight years and do more with our miniatures than we ever did

with our big horses.” He commented on their ease of handling and transport, saying, “We get all three horses and the cart in one trailer.”

Cheryl had entered the driving classes and many halter classes. As well as show ring driving, Wayne said they enjoy both enjoy Combined Driving, especially since in the Marathon element the gates are the same width as for regular sized horses so “the minis whip right through and can turn in half the space of the big guys”. In training, their minis can go 7 km with a driver and groom in the cart and not break a sweat. He commented that Combined Driving is taking off with the smaller horses. The Combined Driving shows are less expensive than Mini shows and they can do a whole Combined Driving Event in one day. The Byers belong to the

Mid West Miniature Horse & Pony Club based out of Lloydminster. Most of their minis have come from Manitoba and as Cheryl and Wayne are retired, they have had time to drive down to Arizona and work with a Miniature Horse trainer there.

Easy to founder

"Feeding a mini can be an issue," said Wayne. One of the things to watch out for is that it's easy to overfeed and founder a mini. He said, "A lot of people think that minis can be "little lawn mowers", however ours are only allowed grazing for two hours a day. The rest of the time they are on dirt pastures. With this they get their daily rations of hay and grain."

Another owner with larger miniature horses in regular work feeds at a rate of half a flake of hay at the night feeding plus two cups complete feed, two cups heavy oats, two cups soaked beet pulp, quarter cup black sunflower seeds, daily wormer and some

minerals at 8:00 am and 4:00 pm feeding. These horses are worked in the round pen 15 - 20 minutes each day, 5 days a week plus some horses also get driven. The message is that minis can vary greatly and body condition should always be monitored carefully because of their size.

A miniature horse not in work should not just be turned out to graze.

If you are considering becoming a miniature horse owner you will find many current owners are happy to help - and of course, work with the breeder/owner of your prospect.

When discussing nature and temperament, Wayne commented that some minis can be harder to handle but they are very affectionate and inquisitive. "They will follow you round the yard when you do chores, to see what you are doing."

Discussions with some miniature horse owners highlighted the challenge to a new owner if they start off their equine ownership with a miniature horse rather



Lead Line class: 6-year-old Christina Unrau, 5-year-old Trooper, with Mom Tanya Unrau. A miniature horse can carry a child up to 60 lbs, but adult supervision is recommended.



Karen Bittner and 34" LTD's Mi Te Fine. Photo by Sandy Black.

than downsizing from a regular horse. If the new owner has little or no horse experience it is so very tempting to fondle and fuss the small horse and allow inappropriate behaviours that would not be allowed in a large horse. It must be noted that competitors who achieve entry to the national level shows are much more likely to treat their minis as horses, not pets.

First time showing minis

A "down-sizer" with lots of experience with full-sized

horses is Karen Bittner of Painted Pasture Ranch in Moosehorn. A first-time competitor in mini classes, Karen was learning the ropes with her stallion LTD's Mi Te Fine. She had been a long-time paint breeder and "collector" of horses but after she starting having issues with her back and other activity-related problems she was unable to ride her horses and did not want to risk exercising the big guys. So she worked her way down from 27 regular

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size horses to 7, which she keeps mainly for her family to trail ride. She laughed as she said, "The trouble is, my mini herd is now up to fourteen!"

Although a first-time competitor, Karen has started to help out with the club, producing the newsletter and maintaining the website. She was one of the few entrants to brave the mini-jumping course (no, she didn't ride – the handler runs alongside holding the lead rope and the mini does the jumps)

Karen's experience with mini-herd numbers is not unusual, as Manitoba International Show coordinator Mary Ann Bartkewich attested to. She said "I have a two-horse trailer with living quarters (5' x 14' horse space) and I brought six horses with me this weekend. My driving cart hangs from the roof of the trailer, over the heads of the horses."

Mary Ann added that she might be tempted to

add to her herd from the sale following the horse show - and would have no problem adding one more horse into the trailer!

Youth classes

The 2010 Manitoba International Horse Show also offered a large number of classes for youth and junior handlers and these were well-supported.

"Pretty in pink" was 8-year-old Montana Conrad, showing family horses from Country Lane Miniatures. After one class in which she received four 1st places with Clayberrys Framed By Reign she handled an interview with grown-up grace. She told us she had been showing horses since she was 2-years-old, and "has a big horse to ride as well". The family has over 100 horses, and all the children do chores, and Montana likes to feed most of all. "Cleaning stalls" was her least favourite. As the only girl in the family of four children, she sometimes has to stand her corner when choosing which horse to

Miniature horses are perfect for children:

In the Costume Class (right) Rebecca Unrau (12), Brooke Unrau (11) turned their mini into a grocery cart, while (below) the Conrad and Unrau's tamed up to build themselves a crayon box. (L to R: Layne Conrad (3), Ty Unrau (7), Montana Conrad (8) and Tina Unrau (6)



show but this weekend the brother who shows in the same division as Montana had to play baseball so she got her first choice in each class. Montana's 17-year-old brother Sheldon was also showing and in some classes went head-to-head with his Mom Tracy, as judges alternated between placing her horse first and then his. With four judges, there were lots of opinions!

Unique classes

The miniature horse show world is unique in offering a full slate of PMC (Physically, Mentally Challenged) classes for Youth and Adults and in past years the Manitoba International Show has had both halter and driving

entries. Miniature carts can be easily customized to run a wheelchair onto the flatbed and be locked in place.

For instance, a cart can even be customized to take a motorized wheelchair for the quadriplegic driver to compete on a par with the rest of his class.

The show drew in many family combinations – mother/daughter, husband/wife, mom/children, but regardless of relationship the competitors formed their own family. When a younger competitor had a disappointing class, more experienced competitors consoled and offered advice for next time. And cheered when the Junior got a 1st in her next class!



Mary Ann Bartkewich and Ben Addiction By George (32").

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The Manitoba International Horse Show is the only miniature show in Canada to offer a four-judge show at which points can be collected. As well as being a qualifying show for the AMHR National Show, they can be used to achieve "All Star" and "Hall of Fame" status, which offers registry benefits for owners who do not wish to travel to Nationals. The Manitoba International committee offers two point shows each year.

Shetland entries

2010 is the second year that the Manitoba International Committee has brought in judges qualified to judge

classes in the American Shetland Pony Registry, and owner Holly Pierce was happy to bring her Shetlands along to be judged.

Holly also is a downsizer, having spent most of her equine life with Morgan horses. However, in the fall of 2001 she was given a couple of miniature horses by a neighbour and enjoyed them so much the Morgans went on to other homes and Holly commenced building her mini herd. She started driving with them straight away, and recalls, "When I saw the Pacific Smart Cart I knew I just had to have one," and promptly sold her custom made Western saddle and her Steuben



Holly Pierce of Cedar Plains Shetlands and Miniatures, with Fox's Sweet Jewell. The Shetland is 4 years old and ASPC registered.

dressage saddle to pay for the cart.

She said it was quite expensive to start downsizing the tack as she did not know too many other miniature horse owners for advice, and brought a lot of her tack in from the States.


Holly got into Shetland horses by accident while searching the Internet. She saw a pinto mare and liked the markings and movement. She said, "I waited all weekend, didn't phone, and thought it would be sold. Come Monday, the horse was still available. So I bought her - and then another, and another ..."

She likes that the Shetlands have a lot more "go" and are bigger moving as they are taller. Two of her horses came as "wild yearlings" and it's taken some time for her to figure them out, but she says the other horse is really nice natured. Holly is starting to learn the bloodlines in order to build a solid band. There have been Shetlands in Manitoba for a few years

but not full bred registered horses. Holly commented that Tracey Conrad (Country Lane Miniatures) has some double registered Mini/Shetland horses but is promoting them as minis, not Shetlands.

The American Shetland Pony Club recognizes two distinct types of Shetland Ponies, the Classic Shetland Pony and the Modern Shetland Pony. In addition, the organization has registries for two types of pony crosses, the American Show Pony and the National Show Pony.

All the small equines in the American Shetland Pony Club share the best attributes of the original Shetland Ponies imported from the Shetland Isles over 120 years ago.

If you want to work with smaller horses, whether you choose a registered Miniature Horse, a Shetland or a VSE (unregistered Very Small Equine), the opportunity is certainly available to get a ton of fun in a small package. 

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