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EQUUS MASTERS: IT'S ABOUT THE HORSE, NOT THE HAT

The 21st Western States Horse Expo, Thursday–Sunday, May 9-12 at Murieta Equestrian Center in Rancho Murieta, California, is proud to present an event that honors the horse, not just the trainer. It's no longer about the cowboy who stands in the saddle, cracking a whip overhead on a horse that's exhausted and shut down.

Nope. Equus Masters is all about the horse, not the cowboy. Period.

A featured event this year, this unique experience will showcase starting eight young horses with care and consideration, not just muscle, force and overwhelming the horse's mind. The goal is to build a solid foundation and partnership by using kindness and direction that will be ingrained in the horse for the rest of his life.

Watch as four top trainers test their own unique styles of horsemanship, feel, caring, observational powers and gentleness as they start eight untrained horses — same-age mustangs — right before your eyes. Is this a pedal-to-the-metal competition? No. It's a learning event for the horse — and for you.

Where do these horses come from? You might be surprised. It's not some fancy Quarter Horse ranch, that's for sure.

The eight geldings selected on Thursday at the Expo are horses captured by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and come from the Ridgecrest and Litchfield BLM holding facilities in California. These unstarted horses are currently housed at the R3C County Jail in Elk Grove, California, where there is an active program to start and adopt out these mustangs — but not these eight Equus Masters geldings. “These five-year-olds are nice looking and are ready to be started,” says Miki Nelsen, owner of the Expo. “In fact, many of the horses on the Sacramento Police Mounted Unit and with Yosemite Park rangers came from the BLM and RC3 Ranch.”

The R3C program horses are gentled by jail inmates (not the horses in Equus Masters competition) and proceed through their program from wild to being under saddle. Ten inmates (99% of whom have never been around a horse before) work with the horses for 4 to 6 hours a day, 5 days a week, for approximately 120 days. Many of the adopted horses from this program have gone on to compete in Endurance and Western Dressage.

The esteemed panel of Horse Expo’s Equus Masters judges is comprised of Pat Parelli and Craig Cameron. Parelli says of the Equus Masters event, “I hope this will give the audience food for thought as they listen to the judges’ points of view and perspectives. Being a judge is a great honor that holds with it great responsibility. I need to make sure that when I’m offering an observation, people will understand what quality horsemanship should be and what it looks like. I’m really pleased that this event emphasizes the dignity of the horse.”

Renowned trainer Chris Cox will comment on what you, as an audience member, are observing, giving you an opportunity to “see what the judges see.” They’re watching for how the horse transitions through the use of kindness and compassion, ranking the trainers on their results. The trainer deemed #1 will be crowned Equus Masters 2019.

Equus Masters audiences are invited to this unique event for a one-time fee of \$150 which entitles you to all-access passes for all four Expo days (a \$80 value), and special seating for the horse selection on Thursday, training sessions on Friday and on Saturday evening, and the competition on Sunday morning.

Audiences are encouraged to observe and learn about the real nature of true horsemanship, not just tricks and dominion over the horse. Equus Masters spectators will be afforded stadium seating and special VIP treatment.

Equus Masters: It’s about helping the horses, not awarding the cowboys.

Tickets for Equus Masters can be found at www.horseexpo.com/tickets or can be purchased at the gate.

For more information about the 2019 Western States Horse Expo, held at Rancho Murieta, May 9-12, visit www.horseexpo.com, email letters@horseexpo.com or call 530.672.7490.

About Western States Horse Expo: The 2019 location for the Western States Horse Expo will move to Murieta Equestrian Center, 7200 Lone Pine Drive in Rancho Murieta, CA. The event will celebrate its 21st anniversary May 9-12, 2019. The Western States Horse Expo Pomona, California will celebrate its

eighth year in 2019, and Pomona dates are November 8-10. Founded by horsewoman and entrepreneur Miki Nelsen, the Western States Horse Expos are the largest equine expositions in the United States.