

# Generation Farms



People and horses have been connected in relationship for thousands of years. In legend and myth, war, work, and ceremony the bond between human and equine is magic. Trained and trusted horses or ponies can bring confidence, smiles, and laughter, as well as tangible therapeutic results. The people at Generation Farms know first hand the kind of pleasure and joy a guided equine experience can bring to one's life.

"Something magical happens when people meet the Generation Farms herd," says Deborah Marshall, owner of the Nanaimo based horse operation and head of the equine therapy program. Deborah has a deep respect for the wisdom of the horse. Four decades of horse ownership have given this therapist a unique perspective on the bond that can be formed between human and animal.

In 1986, Deborah received her Masters' Degree in Counselling Psychology and went into private practice specializing in family therapy in 1988. For many years, her career focused on treating the after-effects of trauma. But, this registered clinical counsellor had a dream to combine her therapeutic experience with her love of horses.

Brought up in the traditional systems of horsemanship, Deborah says that she has shed many layers of old beliefs in order to truly appreciate the gifts that her horses have to offer. In 2000, she added equine therapy to her list of credits. After years of training, and becoming an Advanced Approved Instructor from the prestigious Epona Equestrian Services in Arizona where she trained with Linda Kohanov, author of *The Tao of Equus* and *Riding Between the Worlds*, Deborah offers a powerful and heart-centered therapeutic approach to her clients.

At Generation Farms, Deborah and her team work to improve the lives of clients through a connection with the horses that happily live on the property. The herd of eleven horses and ponies and two mini-

ature donkeys, create a natural form of therapy for individuals looking to bring a more profound sense of connection to their lives. The farm is managed jointly with Emily Pelletier, who has a B.A. in Child and Youth Care and is a certified riding coach.

Located close to the City of Nanaimo in East Wellington, Generation Farms lies in a small rural valley of agricultural land reserve. There are two barns on the property, an all-weather outdoor sand ring, a covered round pen, a permanent outdoor round pen and a large field for riding. Those visiting the farm can also enjoy the relaxed workshop space known as the Tucson Room, small outdoor sitting areas, and a beautiful cedar gazebo.

Deborah and Emily hold common beliefs about what horses can offer people, and of the quality of life horses deserve to enjoy. Based on this philosophy, the team at Generation Farms offers "HorseWisdom for Humans", programs that make use of the natural attributes of the horse combined with the skill and experience of the therapist. They include Personal Development Workshops, Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy, and empowerment through horsemanship.

Deborah says that even without knowing the names or backgrounds of the horses on the farm, the people who come to the property are often intuitively drawn to the horse that reflects their own background or that can teach them the life lesson they most want to learn.

"Our orphan horse often connects with those who have a recent loss in their lives, and the horses with traumatic pasts will connect with people with similar histories. Women who struggle in their relationships with men may mirror their attraction in their choice of horse, perhaps picking the tall handsome horse that is unpredictable and moody".

"Our horse that was rescued from starvation in a state of malnutrition attracted a young anorexic woman, even though he is now fat

# A Passion for Living

and healthy,” says Deborah. Knowing nothing of his story, the young woman was drawn to the horse’s playfulness. Because of this connection, the woman eventually began to eat, remembering and missing when she had the energy to be playful in her own life.

Emily Pelletier offers HorseEmPower, a program where learning occurs through the practice of horsemanship and the development of respectful and cooperative relationship with a horse. There is nothing like 1000 pounds of horse to help you learn about boundaries!

People have travelled to Generation Farms from all over North America to attend these workshops and have left saying “I will be back!” Workshop participants have included long time horse owners, those who have memories of horses from years past that left a place for horses in their heart, and people with no horse experience who are interested in developing their ability to be more present in their lives.

A favourite local program is Women and Horses. “Three years ago, a group of local women attended this workshop and have continued to come to Generation Farms ever since.” Participants have called their visit to Generation Farms a life changing experience, says the therapist.

The workshops available on the farm include:

- Women and Horses
- Leading the Herd
- Open Your Heart
- Horses and Fear
- Being in ‘Right Relationship’

These workshops are available to people with or without experience with horses. “It will open how you view yourself, how you read others, develop intuition, understand boundaries to a whole new energetic level and build confidence,” says Deborah. The “Leading the Herd” workshop is designed for anyone seeking to understand and develop leadership skills with horses as guides. The goal of the HorseWisdom for Humans programs is to assist the men and women who come in finding their strengths and abilities, finding peace in their lives, seeking emotional and physical discharge of tension, or reducing fear and improving their relationships.

“I have seen first hand the positive changes my clients have made thanks to this kind of therapy.”

Deborah says Equine Facilitated Psychotherapy can be very effective for people who suffer from depression, anxiety, stress, brain injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or burnout and job dissatisfaction. She also says, “It is an especially powerful experience for those who want to live a more passionate life, in the present moment.”

“Horses are wonderful levellers and in their presence it becomes possible to think in clear and beneficial ways. Your confidence builds. You get new perspective. You meet yourself and become more yourself.”

After 25 years in the field of counselling, Deborah believes there are many forms of effective therapy. But, she concedes that she has never witnessed the power and simple healing that she sees every week in the round pen with horses and clients until she established Generation Farms.

“It is truly magical.” ■

Generation Farms



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