

MPC Camp 2008 Report
10 September 2008

MPC Camp 2008 was held in Portage la Prairie at the Portage Fair Grounds for the 4th consecutive year.

The camp was open to all Pony Club members with stable management geared to the C and below levels. The instructors were Cornelia McLeod, Kerry Moore and Lorraine Wilson with Susanna Danyliuk doing the Dressage instruction for 2 days during the camp week.

The camp was organized by the Portage Pony Club this year with all member families helping out.

Registration was down this year, so only two barns were required. With the reduced registration came reduced revenue, so we had to be very careful with expenses. The PPC fathers picked up most of the heavy work in setting up and taking down the riding rings. PPC also did the manure removal which cut a considerable amount off the facility rental. A silage trailer was donated by Agasea Farms and a semi tractor was donated by McAllister Seeds. We had to provide the driver and diesel. In order to save on the diesel, we asked that the manure/straw be kept free of garbage and twine so that it could be composted. The silage trailer had to be dumped 3 times at Agasea Farms which is 5 miles north of Portage versus a 15 mile trip to the landfill site.

Straw was purchased from Bachelo Farms at a cost of \$3.00 per bale which was up from last year mostly due to the high fuel costs. We allocated 3 straw bales per stall in an attempt to keep the manure/straw to a manageable amount and not increase the fuel consumption for the manure removal. Most campers managed well with the 3 bales for the 6 days. Hay could be ordered by each camper and this was also purchased from Bachelo Farms. The quoted price from early spring was honoured (\$3.50 per bale), however the actual price of the hay, delivered, was closer to \$5.00 per bale, again due to the increase in fuel. Bachelo Farms has indicated that in the future, the price per bale will be quoted closer to camp.

We had 24 box stalls available in the Light Horse Barn and 14 box stalls available in the Heritage Building. We housed 10 horses in the Heritage Building and 23 horses in the Light Horse Barn, for a total of 33 horses of which 31 were campers. Lorraine Wilson requested stabling for her horse that she was taking to the Derby on the Friday evening and one camper arrived, unexpectedly, with a second horse. A fee of \$65.00 each for the stabling and straw for the week was levied.

We provided a fully enclosed Dressage ring which proved to be very popular and the available dressage spots (32) were completely filled. The 30 minute individual Dressage lesson had a fee of \$10.00.

The Welcome meeting was held at 6 pm on Sunday, 26 July 2008 in the Fair Board Office. The rules and regulations of camp were explained, organizers and instructors introduced, and the welcome bags handed out, complete with t-shirts and income tax receipts.

The Tack Swap/Shop was huge this year, mainly due to Connie Dyck cleaning out one of her tack rooms. There were many contributors from camp as well. The Tack Swap/Shop was open daily mainly from 9 am to 11 am and then from 2 pm to 5 pm.

A PPC mom did all the purchasing and cooking for the instructor snacks and lunches. The instructors were able to have their lunch in the office each day which also doubled as a time to discuss any issues or changes that were required, especially at the start of camp.

Another PPC mom did the purchasing of stall check prizes and then the duty of doing the stall checks was shared between Baldur Pony Club parents and Portage Pony Club parents.

PPC offered the campers a small candy counter selection.

The lunches and stall check worked out very well and left most parents free time to look after their own campers.

With the fewer campers there were very few complaints about the bathrooms or grounds.

The riding schedule was moved ahead by 30 minutes, so the first class of the day started at 8 am. All the riding was done by 3:30 pm and this included a full session of stable management.

The stable management was offered on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of camp, with an extra session on Monday on nutrition by Feed Rite. Each group received 45 minutes of stable management on each of these days, plus the Feed Rite session on Monday which lasted approximately an hour for each group. Four mentors were assigned to one of the instructors for stable management.

The Dressage instruction started at 8 am on the Wednesday with a presentation on dressage in the office on Wednesday evening and then the lessons continuing on Thursday.

Evening activities also included a Parelli demo on Monday with Heather Davey and Kitten. This is a very popular demo. Tuesday evening was free with many taking advantage of the cheap night at the movies. Wednesday evening was the Dressage presentation and Thursday evening was the Pool Party at Splash Island. This was included in the camp fee for the campers with a \$2.00 charge to others who wished to attend. It was also a popular attraction.

Friday evening was the Show Jumping. All three rings were utilized and it went off very smoothly. Unfortunately we could not stretch the sound system cord out to the infield, so our Judge, Mrs. Bev Moore, had to rely on her voice out there.

Two PPC moms ran the craft activity which was decorating a halter. Each camper who wished to participate was asked to bring a clean halter. We did have to ask for some adults to help supervise this activity. A \$5.00 fee was levied to cover the cost of supplies. Along with the craft fee the campers received two photographs, one of themselves with their horse and one with their riding/stable management/craft group. Again, one of our PPC mom's donated her time and talent to do this project.

Regular lessons were held on Saturday morning for the most part. Bev and Kerry did bring some PPG equipment, so were able to offer those riding in the sand ring the opportunity to test the PPG discipline. This was very well run – thank you Bev! The camp wound up around 11:30 am. Stall clean out went well although we didn't get all the stall checks returned, none were cashed.

Most of those camping were located in the main campground and this seemed to work out very well also. There were no 'fire' scares although the weather did co-operate this year as well. Those tenting had plenty of space in the group camping areas!

PPC held a D/D1 test day immediately following camp. This started about 1 pm on the Saturday and wrapped up about 5 pm.

Camp Survey results:

What was the best -

- well organized
- tack sale great
- ability to purchase a photo CD great
- facility clean and well set up
- everything close and handy
- mentoring great
- smaller groups great
- instructors great
- camping great
- confidence builder
- jumping, craft and making friends were the best
- Dressage instruction great

Suggestions –

- set aside 10 minutes at the end of each riding lesson for the instructor to talk with the campers
- more than 3 bales of straw needed to 6 days

- include more age levels
- ride twice a day which would give more opportunity for more flat work, PPG, trail riding, cross country, etc
- have stable management every day
- have the groups put on a skit
- have the older/higher level campers help the younger ones with mucking, feeding, tacking up, craft, getting to their lessons on time, etc which would decrease the dependence of the younger ones on their parents and improve their independence plus give the older camper's mentoring/organizations skills.

Recommendations for MPC Camp 2009:

From the responses received –

- keep the senior camp separate as it's a big advantage for those testing
- have one camp open to all levels as the more experienced ones are great to watch and more opportunity for the older campers to mentor
- shorten camp by a day or two
- if camp goes 6 full days, more than 3 bales of straw are needed
- have stable management only the afternoon
- those campers who attended both camps enjoyed both equally
- run the two camps simultaneously
- camaraderie was lacking due to the low attendance
- young riders are inspired by watching the more advanced riders, on the ground and in the saddle

The Portage Fair Grounds has been tentatively booked from 18 to 24 July 2009. The construction of the multiplex is still uncertain at this point in time. The Fair Board is saying that they will accommodate us best as possible next year however, realistically, with the green space that may be available, we are of the opinion that the maximum number of horses that can be accommodated at the Portage Fair Grounds next year, if the construction actually goes through, is 61 horses. If camp is run similar to this year, approximately 36 horses are needed in the regular camp to break even. That leaves potentially 25 spaces for an advance camp which could be run simultaneously. This would eliminate two facility charges but would require good communication and co-ordination between the two camps. Each camp would be responsible for their own instructors and could have different camp fees. Wherever camp is being held, straw needs to be ordered immediately. A call should go out as widely as possible for anyone interested in instructing at camp to submit their resume to the organizing group. Manitoba instructors can provide excellent instruction for the week. A separate cross country clinic or camp needs to be held for those wanting instruction in this discipline as there is no space available at the Portage Fair Grounds to offer any type of cross country instruction.

It was a fun, family oriented camp and I loved every minute of it! Thank you!

Barb Bradley

