

Moorland Mousie Trust - Winter 06 Newsletter



**Santa's Little Helpers
Cocoa, Treacle and Barney**

Merry Christmas

From All of us at
The Exmoor Pony Centre
and The Moorland Mousie Trust

Well what a busy past few months we have had! We hope you enjoy reading about all our exciting news and welcome people to get in touch and get involved. If you could donate towards our winter feed that would be wonderful.

Newly Opened Centre and Long Summer Days!

The summer was a great time up on Exmoor, the days were long and the sun was shining. The ponies from the Centre loved going out on long rides across the moor and meeting new people, children and adults alike. For the staff the summer was a very busy time with the main event being the Open Day. The Open Day was a great success and will be an annual event from now on. The ponies; Lucy, Bertie and Tom all enjoyed their five minutes of fame during the demonstrations and the other ponies appeared disappointed to not be involved, maybe next time!

Autumn Rainy Days!

The summer drew to an end and the shorter windswept autumn days moved in. We were still very busy here at the Centre as rides and tasters were still in demand. A Table Top Tack sale took place and despite the weather made a little profit for the charity, hopefully this event will get bigger and better, maybe the lack of pony involvement affected turnout numbers. A quiet spell in October signified the lull before the storm; in late October the new intake of foals arrived at the Centre. The various gatherings across Exmoor brought 19 new colt foals to us. The new foals were brought to the Centre to settle in after being weaned and branded, this was the simple part, the hard work was just around the corner! Thanks to Vanessa Bee from Positive Horsemanship who took on two foals prior to our own course starting. A week later the newly named Barney and Jack arrived back at the centre with happy faces willing to learn and spend more time with humans.

Handling the Untouched Foal Course

A day later Sarah Weston from Logical Horsemanship started the course at the Centre where we initiated the start of the foals' education and handling. Within hours Sarah had displayed her talents with the newly named Bourbon (the theme for this year's handling names being biscuits - it was great fun picking them). Bourbon showed how quick desensitisation could happen and staff and visitors alike were very impressed. Within the hour Bourbon was transformed from an afraid little chap to a bold pony with head collar on and being led around the group. Later on that day rising to the challenge of being cuddled and fondled by a family from France. The other ponies developed their skills also and although not all were as eager to please as Bourbon, they all brought joy and confidence to our handlers. All of which found the experience extremely humbling and worthwhile, if at times somewhat emotional. The ponies were joined later on in the course by three yearling colts, a two year old gelding with a bad eye and a six year old stallion. The stallion has gone on to live with Sarah Weston in the New Forest who regularly updates us on his progress and the three yearlings now gelded have gone on to new homes. The two year old lives at the Centre with us, awaiting his operation once handling has progressed to a stage where he will be happy being anaesthetised. One late night in early November we said goodbye to the majority of our new intake. These ponies made

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their way up to Northumberland where they will be handled and distributed amongst the various grazing sites we have up there waiting till they are old enough to return to us for backing. We have been told they are all very happy and settling in well. Thanks to Sarah and the course participants, all of the ponies were handled and can now be led and have their feet picked up.

Winter and the New Year

The departure of the majority of foals brought about a change in direction for staff and volunteers alike. A number of new ponies ranging between three and five years old have arrived at the Centre to continue their work under the saddle and on the ground. The new ponies have all settled in and are all displaying confident and cheeky personalities. A couple of which are fast becoming firm favourites with staff, volunteers and visitors. We welcome all people to the centre to come and meet our ponies; socialisation is a big part of their education. With training commencing with the new ponies all emphasis is also on Christmas and the impending cold winter days. We have grazing licenses for moorland near the Centre and four of our working ponies have gone there for a few months holiday. They can be spotted grazing on East Anstey Common, please let us know if you see them and give them big kisses and hugs for us but please don't feed them!

Forthcoming Events

There are two Pony Days commencing during the Christmas Holidays on the 21st and 28th of December please call the Centre or check the website for details. We have been busy selling our merchandise and promoting the charity at local events, these have included the Dulverton market, North Devon Equine Event at The Big Sheep and recently at the Devon and Cornwall Equine Fair. Staff and volunteers alike love attending these events and we hope to be present at more soon. If you know of any outlets or local events that we could attend please get in touch ; the more we can highlight the plight of the Exmoor Pony the better.

Looking to the New Year we are hoping to get Sarah Weston back for a few days in February to help with schooling and groundwork for our ponies and we shall also be starting training for the Golden Horseshoe Pleasure Sponsored Ride in May. Also look out for our Easter Events Schedule, which will be out after the New Year.

We hope that you have all been watching Johnny Kingdom (Fridays BBC2 8pm) and the fantastic emphasis he has brought to the Exmoor Pony. Dylan our very own pony who features is enjoying his new found fame. We have all had a great couple of months and its so fulfilling to see the dream becoming a reality for The Moorland Mousie Trust. With the help of our dedicated staff, trustees, volunteers and associates we can report a fantastic summer and autumn knowing that as well as making a real difference to many ponies lives we can now offer the chance to meet and ride our very own Moorland Mousie ponies. So please call in and pay us a visit and please keep up to date by checking out the website at www.exmoorponycentre.org.uk where there are many pictures and articles showing the hard work that is going on up on Exmoor. Thank you for your interest and support and please tell everybody you can about the adorable and charming Exmoor ponies.

Val, Laura, Linzi, Claire and Linda (The Team) and all of the Volunteers and Trustees wish you a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year.



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Charity number: Moorland Mousie Trust 1080504