

The Golden Years

Older horses don't have to be put out to pasture.

By Summer Best

Have you noticed how many of your friends ride older horses these days? With advancements in equine nutrition and veterinary care – as well as improved owner awareness – horses' active careers are lasting longer than ever.

Sure, senior horses might have a few gray whiskers on their cheeks, but they can be spunky and dependable. Several *ec* magazine readers wrote in to tell us just how special their older fellas are.

A Horse Named Frog

Lisa Robinson's 26-year-old American Quarter Horse gelding, "Frog," is technically an equine senior citizen, but he's not even slightly interested in retirement yet.

"He doesn't know he's old, and we haven't told him," Lisa says with a chuckle when describing her faithful friend. "He thinks he just has to go to the shows with us, and my daughter can show him and win. He won't have it any other way."

Frog's youthfulness can be credited in part to his diet – a mix of forage and Seminole's Senior Formula, which is carefully formulated with ingredients that help older horses digest their food properly.

"If anything, he's a little on the pudgy side," Lisa says of Frog. "I started feeding him Senior Formula about two and a half years ago because his teeth were wearing down and I wanted him to be able to masticate all his food. He's 26 now and looks great. His back is down a little, but otherwise, we treat him like he's 10. Right now, he's mostly a pasture ornament but still commands the respect of his pasture mates. He will always be an important member of our family.

"We just got Frog some elevator shoes to help with his old man feet, and he is feeling exceptionally handsome!" she adds.

Lisa, who is a regional manager for Trammell Crow Residential Services in Winter Park, Florida, is one of Seminole Feed's most loyal customers, having made her treks to Seminole feed stores faithfully since she got her mare in 1969.

Skeeter the Speedster

Gwenn Wilds has to think back a little to remember the day in 1983 when her husband gave her one of the best birthday presents ever – a fast,

athletic sorrel Quarter Horse nicknamed Skeeter. Skeeter

“He was the first horse I had the opportunity to compete on in futurities, and we have competed all over the Southeast in local amateur rodeos as well as the Women’s Professional Rodeo Association,” Gwenn says. She adds that the duo has picked up “quite a bit of cash, saddles and buckles,” throughout their competitive years.

Skeeter, who is trained by Gwenn, has won within the National Barrel Horse Association, too, including 1996 Open 2-D District Champion, Florida state Open 2-D Champion and the 2-D Sweepstakes Championship in Augusta at the NBHA World Show.

“He has qualified me four times to go to the World Championships in Augusta,” Gwenn says. “This year, we will be competing in the open division along with the senior (over 50) division. I am excited to have accomplished this much on this horse.”

So what’s the secret? Gwenn says it has a lot to do with her feeding program, which consists primarily of good forage and Seminole Blue Ribbon 12.

“He is a wonderful tribute to a good feed program, and I attribute his condition and health a lot to Seminole Feed,” Gwenn says. “Skeeter has been on Seminole Feed for about 15 years or better – thus his excellent condition and health. He is very fit and beautiful.”

Skeeter continues to win with Gwenn’s 15-year-old granddaughter, Ashley Williams, who has ridden the gelding to the NBHA Youth World Championships for the past three years.

“This gelding is admired by our friends, fellow competitors and family, due to his good looks and accomplishments,” Gwenn says. “He is truly a great barrel horse. I hope to continue competing on him as long as I can and he is happy and sound, so Ashley and I can have another chance at a world championship.”

For free tips on how to best care for your senior horse’s nutritional and dental needs, check out page 7 of the Fall 2002 ec magazine, or access the story online at www.ecmagazine.net. Call 1-800-683-1881 to speak with an equine nutritionist.