

My First Horse

Think you're ready for your first horse? Listen up as lifelong horse enthusiast, Angie Bryant, shares the joys and challenges of getting her first horse, Levi, just one year ago.

By Angie Bryant

Wanted: A Horse of My Own

Horses...every girl dreams of them, including me, and I'm all grown up! I have been around horses since the age of 7, but never had one to call my own until this past year. My first job was cleaning stalls at a AI, Levi and Angie Bryant.neighbor's barn. Just to smell, touch, and be around those mysterious creatures, I was in pure heaven! Later, as a student Auburn University, I began as a veterinary medicine major, but then felt a pull to do something else. Back then, I did not know what that "something else" would be, but I knew that wherever my path led, it would be the right thing.

Then there was Levi

Today, I'm an Equine Nutrition Consultant – a job that has been rewarding in so many ways. I enjoy seeing the hundreds of horses of all sizes and colors every week, and I enjoy educating and advising people on ways to provide the best nutrition, environment and pastures for their horses. But up until last summer, I STILL dreamt of having my very own horse.

On July 12, 2003, a request from a customer changed my life. "I've got four horses for you to look at that I need to sell," he said. I told him I'd be over that afternoon to take a peek...after all, to sell them; you've got to inspect them! I looked at the first three, all former racehorses that needed a new career. Then there was Levi. "How Ds Super Levi," to be exact. He was what I have always dreamed my horse to be...the "John Wayne horse," a big, red Quarter Horse with a big, white face, like Wayne always rode in his films.

Ironically, my husband, Al, and I joked about the John Wayne horse all the time...it was what we both wanted when it came time for me to start looking. Well, I took one look at Levi, gasped and said to myself, "John Wayne horse," laughed, then cried, then called my husband. Needless to say, I brought Al back that evening to see Levi, and it took about one minute for him to say, "DO YOU WANT HIM? THEN GET HIM."

The Challenges

Okay, all of you out there. Get the property BEFORE the horse. I got lucky and had an angel of a friend, Tracey, that took Levi in until I could find a permanent place to board him. In this predicament, you do not want to impose on your friend for too long. (Eventually, we found Levi a great, yet modest, facility) You learn to think fast and find money in the checkbook that you didn't know existed, just to board your horse in decent modesty

and especially, to keep your friend! Well, we still do not have the property, but the horse stays and Tracey is my best trail riding buddy! Having to board, you learn to compromise, budget and do without, like having a child, I suppose. Levi is our child and like all “parents” of a horse, you are VERY protective.

All of his needs must be met, and if any portion of this plan fails, you are back to square one...think fast and find more money! Other challenges have popped up. Once, Levi's weight dropped off, and this I KNEW how to fix myself! He was getting thin through the hips, and to safely put the weight back on, without the starch overload, I fed him Seminole Victory! (a 12% protein, 8% fat, beet-pulp based sweet feed) at a rate of 4 ½ pounds twice daily and 2 pounds of Seminole Ultra Bloom daily until he was at his ideal weight (1,240 pounds) and an ideal body condition score. Next, he had a bout with colic, my veterinarian is sure it was due to a reaction from a long-acting fly spray that was introduced earlier the same day. The veterinarian is the most important person in your horse's life! If you do not establish a relationship with him/her when your horse is well, this same doctor is not going to be very excited to visit you in the middle of the night with an emergency! Get to know them, especially when you don't need them.

$E=mc^2$ The Theory of Relativity

Levi has a personality all his own...and it draws people to him when we go trail riding. He is a big clown, like his “mother” I guess, so it's kismet. Levi has enhanced my availability to do some PR for the company I work for, even when my work “hat” is left at home. I have used Levi for selfish reasons, to help me escape from a hectic day, into a place that is most soothing. The volume of dirt and horse hair on my clothes when I get home at night is in direct proportion to the calmness that I feel walking in the door. Let's all say, “AAAHHH.”

If you're a new horse owner, don't underestimate the time, money and resources your horse deserves. Good, quality resources are available to you via other horse owners, seminars, books, clinics and lessons and the Internet. Even with all the added time, money and work required to own a horse, there's nothing quite so rewarding. Be sure to read my column in the Winter 2003 issue of ec magazine, when I'll share the true story about my 1,240-pound termite!

Angie Bryant has been an Equine Nutrition Consultant for Seminole Feed in Ocala, Florida, for three years. Angie's husband, Al, is convinced Angie loves Levi more than him. If Levi could cook, who knows...