

Out of the Sea

Today's Chincoteague Pony

Lois Szymanski

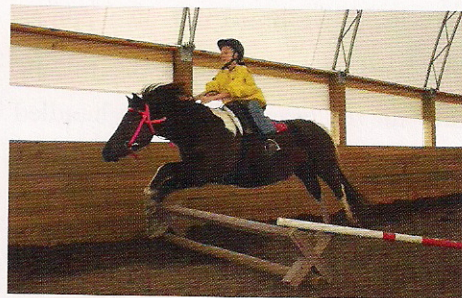
Jennifer Lowe of Lowe's Den Farm in Illinois, said her Chincoteague Pony, Misty Moon Dancer, was a bit of a challenge, but well worth it. "They are more wild and instinctive over sometimes," she said. "It took a lot of time and patience and trust for our pony to be what she was when we had her, a great family pony. Would I own another?" she asks. "A heartbeat!"

Twelve-year-old Veronica Webb of Oklahoma, said her foal Miracle in the Making (nicknamed Miracle) was



Before walking in a Maryland parade, Summer Barrick's Chincoteague Pony fowl, Starlight Blessing, meets Shannon Szymanski's Chincoteague Pony, Sea Feather.

skittish when he first came out of the trailer from Chincoteague. The jumpiness lasted a few days, but Webb's patience won over her new foal.



Misty Moon Dancer of Lowe's Den Farm in IL, now owned by Rocking H Ranch in NY. (Photograph courtesy of Lowe's Den Farm.)

"I sat at the door and rested my arm on the wooden slats so he could come up and smell my hand," she said. "After awhile I could stroke his nose a little. I put a bucket in the stall and sat there, reading a book." Soon Webb was tracing her fingers down Miracle's tiny face.

"Next, I started holding grain in a little pan for him to eat. Once he was eating out of the bucket, I started working down his neck on each side slowly, then down his body." It wasn't long until Webb could rub him all over, beginning the grooming process, getting him used to a soft bristle brush.

While feeding him hay, Webb slipped his halter on. A few days later she said she let him see the lead rope on both sides.

"I clipped it on his halter, and then rubbed it all over him. After he accepted the rope, I stepped in front and pulled. He didn't move, so I had my dad push him on his rump. Once he learned to lean into the pressure, I'd stand at his side and do the same thing. Soon I could lead him from both sides."

Burta and Phil Boysen of 1000 Welcomes Farm raise Chincoteague Ponies at their North Carolina home. "We are

Chapter Eight

What They Are Doing!

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breed, and she is doing just
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still in their winter coats, ribs showing, and no tail braiding,” she added. Someone nearby made the comment, “What do they think they’re showing, Chincoteague Ponies?” Semerad’s blood began to boil. “The man who said it didn’t even realize that Envy is a Chincoteague Pony,” she said.

In 2006, Semerad and Envy had the last laugh when Envy won Champion Two-Year-Old Colt for the Pennsylvania Horse Show Association (PHSA) and Reserve Champion Pony of Zone 2, (New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania) with the United States Equine Federation (USEF).

Burta and Phil Boysen of North Carolina have been raising Chincoteague Ponies for many years, but they have forayed into the show ring only a few times. They said their Chincoteague Pony, Boomer, was a late starter. Although he did not start connecting with his training until he was three years old, this buckskin pinto made up for lost time. In 2006 he was Reserve Beginner Hunter Champion at Boothill Farm in Chapel Hill, NC.

very lucky we breed our own ponies. We have access to them the minute they hit the ground. They are handled by humans immediately,” said Burta Boysen. “We usually don’t mess with them for a couple weeks after their vet check, so they can get settled and accustomed to us being around. By three weeks [of age] we get a halter on them and start getting them used to us, our touch and our smell.”

Boysen said most people begin training their ponies under saddle at two years of age, “But we’ve found this is not always best. Some mature faster than others. Sometimes we should wait until age three.” Boysen said their pony Boomer is a prime example of a pony that should have waited. “He was just too immature and not ready,” she said, “so we put him up for awhile and now he’s doing great.” These days, you can find Boomer in the show ring.

Boysen said their training begins in the round pen. “We have two round pens connected to each other. One is small and the other larger. Before we even think about saddles, lounging or anything else we start in the small pen,” said Boysen.

Boysen’s husband, Phil, does the round pen work. “Once the pony acknowledges us instead of rejecting us and turning the head away, we work at a walk, trot and canter until they do all three on cue.” The Boysens do not use voice commands, except whoa.



Veronica Webb runs with her colt, Miracle in the Making. (Photograph courtesy of Mike Webb.)



Emily Calle lounges her mare, Cricket. Lounging is important to her training program. (Photograph courtesy of Emily Calle.)

about a month of many hours. “It makes a much more focused pony,” she said. “It seems like two steps forward, one step back, but it works for us.” With the solid groundwork behind them, Boysen says, adding the saddle is usually no big deal.

Pony Committee Publicity Chairman Roe Terry said, “These stories in my books from people who go on and on about how easy these ponies are to train. I think it is because they are born in the wild. Once they get the best of food, grooming, and good care, they turn out to be the best ponies out there.”

“We want them to communicate with us by our actions,” said Boysen, “not our voices.”

Next, the Boysens move the ponies to the larger pen. They accustom the ponies to lariats, plastic bags, and old shirts. “When they acknowledge us, allow us to put these things on them, and stand to face us, they are ready for Phil to rope them,” Boysen said.

The ponies respond quickly and easily. “He can teach them to lounge with the rope around their neck and they let him put the rope all over them,” Boysen said.

The last step in the round pen happens when Boysen ropes each of their front legs separately and they learn to respond to the cue of a slight tug, and move forward.

Boysen said the entire process takes



Chincoteague Pony Boomer from 1000 Welcomes Farm in North Carolina takes a jump in an English hunt seat competition. (Photograph by Steven Booth, courtesy of 1000 Welcomes Farm.)