

# What to Do When You Can't Ride

by Donna Coble (donnacob@aol.com)  
and George Coble (gacoble@aol.com)

Have you ever wondered what life would be like if you had to give up riding temporarily? As you read this, I will be recovering from two rotator cuff surgeries 4 months apart (thank goodness the human body has only two shoulders). You are probably asking why anyone would want to do that, especially in the midst of riding season. The answer is quite simple: my orthopedic surgeon happens to be familiar with horses and laid down the law that I was not to be around horses until I had both shoulders repaired. Now in my experience with doctors, I have found that I can usually cajole them into letting me ride but in this case, I knew from the outset that that would be totally impossible.

If you have followed our articles in the past, you are aware that George and I do a lot of riding; our normal schedule from mid April until Thanksgiving is to be home 3 days a week at the most unless we hit a very hot streak of weather. To say that our life style has changed is putting it mildly! So, what is life like when the riding season is cut short by almost 5 months and you have one arm immobilized? Here are some ideas:

Keep track of the weather to see what you're missing out on. In our case, we've counted only three, 4-day weekends since the end of June that would have been ideal for camping. Otherwise it has been too hot or wet or cold at least part of a weekend.

With one usable arm, one definitely does not do very much house keeping so you watch the dust bunnies play tag and try to keep the grandkids from writing in the dust on the furniture.

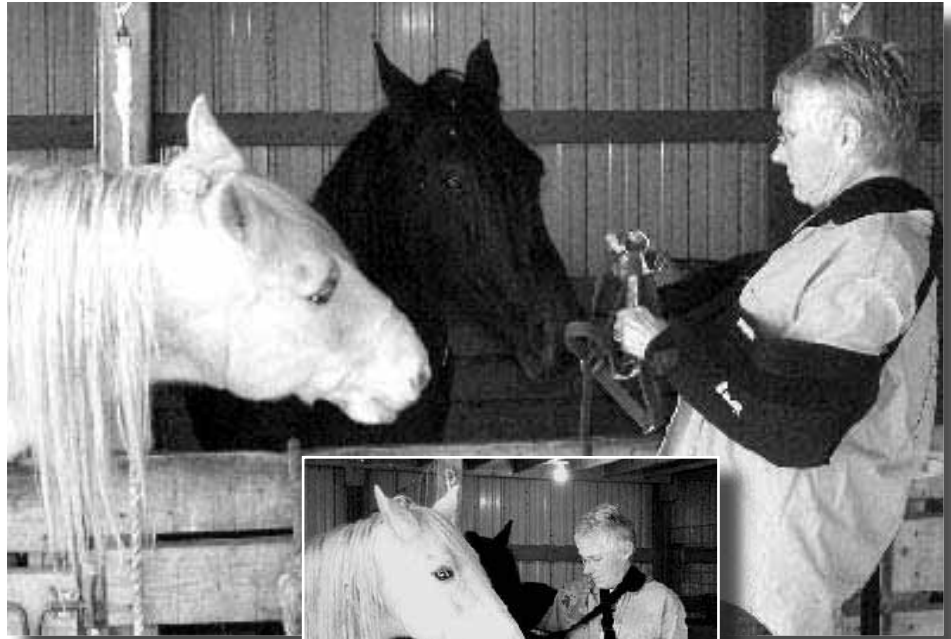
The biggest excitement of the day is taking the sling off to do exercises.

If you are computer literate you will want to surf the Internet but with Murphy's Law in effect, the connections are unstable, so you play lots of solitaire.

With help from the grandkids, you empty the trailer of freezables in August just so you can be in it again. This, of course, will lead to a problem in the spring because you've forgotten where you put everything.

You do all of your shopping in short spurts; having physical therapy three times a week means you might as well stop at the store on every trip.

Being "dressed up" is not a problem because it's a struggle to just get dressed. And it's so nice when you're finally told you



can take a shower only to realize that with just one useable arm, this actually means you merely rinse off.

You finally get the chance to go through a 5 year collection of horse magazines, reread articles and throw away all of the ones you don't want to keep. This usually means most of the accumulation.

You finally have the time to go through all of the catalogues and keep only the most current ones; this usually reduces the stack to less than one fourth of what it was originally.

Forget about "hairdos"— clean and combed is the only choice.

You go through all of the pictures you've been meaning to sort out and finally get those albums in order.

Laundry is done every 3 days instead of once a week because your wardrobe is limited.

You think it's a good time to get all the tack cleaned and then realize there's only one arm that works.

Forget about being able to do anything with the horses; you are only able to supervise someone else doing the worming and clipping and merely watch "the kids" frolic in the pasture and get fat.

You finally have the chance to learn some of the computer programs that you bought. (Now why did I buy that one?)

Besides riding, I'm an avid sewer but had to limit my sewing to the "virtual"

type, doing a lot of planning for that day when I could finally sit at

the machine. In the 2 months that I could actually sew, I almost got caught up with everything that I had planned to do.

This all may sound depressing, but the journey hasn't been all that bad. When I have felt the worst physically or felt glum, I've told myself that this is only temporary and will be well worth it come spring. Actually, the worst part of the whole experience, for me, was in the spring when I finally had to swallow my pride and admit that I could not even lift my saddle and had to have George do that for me.

And what did George do during his down time? He finally had the time to get an almost ten year accumulation in the barn cleaned out and to get his workshop finished which has been an almost 5 year long job. Because our traveling came to a standstill, he was asked to go back to work on contract until spring and is enjoying his 20 hours per week. He also, bless his heart, literally gave me his hands to help with all of the things I couldn't do and was more than willing to sit in the car and wait for me while I shopped at my favorite stores.

So I thank George very much for his help and understanding and thank Dr. Coester for her talented hands that will put me back in the saddle in the spring. Don't expect to find us at home very much in 2007 because we have a lot of riding to make up for.