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# GAMES!!!

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by Stephanie Bryson, 16 year old member of Silver Bits Pony Club, Cedar Falls, IA.

All Photos by Bridget Bryson

I have tried many different riding disciplines, from show jumping to dressage, polocrosse to hunter, equitation to eventing, but I have to say that in my mind, **Games** overrides them all. I'm not talking about Western Games; I'm talking about "English Games."

Think of English Games as relay Games on horseback. There are some Games that are similar to Western (like Speed Weavers, a game that is incredibly similar to bending), but our Games include getting on and off your pony, passing off objects to your teammates, dunking tennis balls and socks in buckets on the ground, stacking containers similar to Tupperware, and even playing a little hockey! Four or more teams compete at one time, with four players on each team. Talk about an adrenaline rush!

Let me explain the basics a little. Every team consists of four to five players. Each team has to have at least 4 ponies or horses. There are many different skills including passing off tennis balls, socks, bottles, batons, hockey sticks, ropes, potato sacks, flags, balloon sticks, spoons, and more!



Dropping the carton; Kelsey on "Tess"

Some other skills are being able to pick up objects off the ground (while on your horse) and being able to vault on and off without using stirrups; don't forget, English saddle... nothing to grab hold of! There is nothing to compare it to.....finding your balance through Games!

There are different levels you can compete at and many different groups

to play Games with. A few of these are MGAA (Mounted Games Across America), USPC (United States Pony Club), and USMGA (United States Mounted Games Association). I played mostly MGAA this year, with USPC practices and rallies in between. The first MGAA level is novice. This division is for beginners. The riders are working at consistently doing all their skills at a trot, and they aren't expected to vault. The next level is intermediate. At this level, some skills are done at a canter or gallop, and many can vault. The hardest level is master. At this level, all the Games are played at a gallop, and you are expected to vault.

But Games aren't just for kids! People of any age can be in any division with MGAA, but for those adults who don't want to try to keep up with Games players who are vaulting on at a gallop, there is a division specifically for adults called "The Fossils." Many Games kids' parents play in this division.

I was lucky enough to find a team that was only five hours away who needed a fifth player. This made the rest of the team happy because not everyone is good at every game, and only four people can play in each game. This means that the person who was worst at that particular skill could sit it out. I was thrilled because I found a team! We set a goal of going to MGAA Nationals, and we worked hard for it. I went to stay with my team for two weeks before the competition, and we practiced A LOT! We ended up doing very well at nationals, and I was very excited. After nationals, our team (minus one person) went to Kentucky for a week to get ready to ride in Breyerfest in an exhibition. We were in the big indoor arena at Kentucky Horse Park; it was very exciting and we did really well and we were thrilled. I can't wait to compete more! I've made lots of great friends with other Games teams, and I've had a lot of fun.

I would have to say that I would recommend Games to everyone. Whether you're a beginner or a professional, Games are a fun way to develop new skills and improve old ones. I really hope that you'll go give Games a chance. You can visit the MGAA site ([mountedGames.org](http://mountedGames.org)) for more information.



"The Fossils" warm up - GAMES are fun for EVERYONE!



Five Flag; Jessica on "Katie-Bella"



Steph on "Amigo," owned by the Hainline family

"The Seed Spitters"  
- My team's name -

Other team members were Caitlan and Savannah



Steph on "Pony Bob"

## Letters to the Editor

Dear Apples 'n Oats --

A letter to the editor in the summer issue of *Apples 'n Oats* wishes that the point be made that NAIS is voluntary in Iowa; yes, it is currently voluntary. However, Dr. David Schmitt, the state of Iowa head veterinarian, readily states that he wants the premise ID part of NAIS made mandatory in Iowa. There are many horse owners in Iowa that oppose any portion becoming mandatory. If premise ID is mandatory, then it is much more likely that the other aspects of NAIS will follow suit.

It is admitted that there is some rational basis for a premise ID; convenience to the state vet's office if an animal disease "outbreak" should occur. Finding and notifying owners of species of livestock involved would definitely be simpler if there is a database of all such livestock owners.

However, despite all the claims that such a database would be private and secure; it just will not be the case. Even if one discounts the possibility of someone "hacking" into the database, as happens routinely with other types of government databases; there exists another example of just how non-private such information would be kept.

In the Farm Bureau newsletter in Iowa, there is a news brief stating: "Court Orders FSA to Release Farm Data." This brief deals with the fact that the USDA's Farm Service Agency was ordered by a U.S. Court of Appeals to release data that can be used to gain details about farms based on geographical location, to a commercial vendor that had requested such information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).

One has to make the assumption that any information held by the USDA is therefore subject to such requests. On a personal level, I do not care to have such information available to commercial or private vendors without my permission. If I need a product or service from such, I will seek it out on my own. The government does not need to "aid and abet" such activities.

Sincerely,  
Marsha Achenbach  
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Addendum: NAIS is not mandatory in the state of Illinois.