

Horsepower Farm



by Kandee Haertel, Galena, IL

Horses enjoy knee-high pastures at Horsepower Farm

Horsepower. A noun used to describe a unit of power? Sometimes, but not if you live near Galena, Illinois. To local residents, "Horsepower" is the name of the most recent addition to the local equestrian community. The upkeep of the grounds and buildings rival any Kentucky stud farm. The shiny coats and bright eyes of the horses testify to their good care and contentment with their surroundings. The improvements to the facility could be showcased in *Home & Garden Magazine*. All of this has been accomplished in just over a year by the driving force behind this venture, first time farm owners Ray and Carol Scarpelli. Owning a horse farm was not what brought the Scarpellis to the Galena area, but through a series of fortuitous events, Horsepower Farm has come to be.

People in Chicagoland know Ray Scarpelli as the "Ray" in Ray and Raymond Chevrolet, which has a lot to do with how their horse farm came to be known as *Horsepower Farm*. He and his wife, Carol, owned a vacation retreat in the Galena area, where they stayed as often as possible.

Both recreational trail riders, Ray and Carol owned and boarded three horses in Galena. The horses were in a full-care facility, and the Scarpellis felt comfortable visiting them only on weekends, but sometimes wondered if they were missing out on something.

While at a benefit for a Galena animal shelter, the Scarpellis happened to meet a man who had a horse farm for sale not at all that far from where they boarded their horses. The farm had been operated as a successful Rocky Mountain breeding and showing farm for some time, but tragic personal circumstances had led to the sale of the facility. So the couple visited the property, liked what they saw, and began to think it through ... *The farm would be part of their retreat home in Galena, but "home" and "business" were both in Antioch and Foxlake, Illinois.*

That's where Mary Werner came in. The existing farm manager at the sale property, she had promised the owners that she would stay and care for the horses until all of them were sold. She was there when Ray and Carol came to look at the farm, and agreed to stay on as farm manager if they would purchase the farm. That was the key. In the summer of 2005 the Scarpellis purchased the property that would become Horsepower Farm.

The farm was perfect: individual care for their horses and pleasant places to ride whenever they wanted. There was even an 80'x 120' indoor arena to enjoy if the weather was bad. But they missed the camaraderie of a boarding barn. So they invited a few riding friends to move their horses over, and before long, the Horsepower Farm family was born. As the word spread, more and more people asked to move their horses over, so some decisions had to be made.

First, Horsepower Farm became a bona fide boarding facility, and then the decision was made to limit the number of horses. The barn at Horsepower Farm only has eight stalls because the horses generally live naturally – outside – with comfortable shelters to be out of the wind and rain. The size of the herds is matched to the size of the pasture and the shelter so that "disagreements" among the horses are kept to a minimum.

Twice-a-day feeding (hay, grain, and supplements as necessary) are just part of the routine. Grass pastures are rotated to keep them that way. Herds are put together under Mary's vigilant and experienced eye to make certain that pasture mates mix as well. New horses are placed in quarantine before they can mix with the other horses. "Most horses reveal their likes and dislikes after I tend them for a few days," Mary says. "The owners are the more unpredictable ones! But the group here has turned out to be great to have around. They are all sociable and flexible, which makes it easy to have fun."

Probably the most important care given the horses is Mary's watchful eye. "With a relatively small herd, it's not that hard to learn individual horses' attitudes, likes and dislikes. When something is out of the ordinary for a particular horse, it rings a bell with me and I check it out. When you feed and work with them twice a day and perform the rest of the farm chores when they are around, you just get a sense of what's right and wrong," says Mary. She makes it sound easy, but horse owners know and appreciate that special caring and skill.

The trails are a significant bonus at Horsepower Farm. Two neighboring landowners share riding rights with Horsepower, providing what can be a several hour ride over varied terrain. "The trails are *THE BEST!*" says Chris Macdonald. "There are hills and flats. There are creeks to cross. When you get onto the trails, you feel like you are the only person around. You can ride for hours and just enjoy what this beautiful area offers."

Overnight stabling is available for boarder's guests, as long as they provide proper health papers.

A heated, comfortable tack room, bathroom with indoor plumbing, and a campfire pit, all serve to round out the amenities.

What will happen next at Horsepower? Even Ray, Carol, and Mary are not sure. But whatever it is, the horses will come first, but the boarders will certainly benefit from their vision of the perfect place to keep horses.

