

## **2024 Veterans introduction to Horsemanship “Veterans and Horses”**

**GOALS OF THE SESSION:** We hope that this weekend spent with horses will offer veterans a new life interest. We know that a weekend will not turn you into a cowboy or cowgirl but it will introduce you to horses, it will teach you about how a horse thinks, and it may show you something about yourself. The interactions you have with other veterans is also a big part of the session. Winston Churchill is credited with saying “the outside of the horse is good for the inside of the man”. We agree.

A second and important goal for the community is to say thanks to Veterans who served our Nation.

**WHO IS INVITED: If you are a veteran you are invited.**

In the past we have had participants from Iraq and Iran deployments as well as Viet Nam, We have had participant ranging in age from 30 to 70 plus. There is no age limit. We have hosted both men and women. It is best if you are able to walk on uneven terrain but we have made accommodations for a veteran in a wheel chair. If you have limitations please discuss it with Greg Eliel. If you lack transportation let Dennis know. We may be able to help you out. Who are Greg and Dennis, see WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS below.

**HOW MANY PARTICIPANTS CAN ATTEND:** We shoot for 6 participants, but we have hosted 8. If you are not in the first 6 talk to Greg or Dennis and we will see what can be done and we will put you on a waiting list in case of cancellations. We select participants on a “first come first served” basis.

**WHEN:** The session starts **Friday afternoon August 16, 2024**. We break down the session on **Sunday after lunch on August 18, 2024**. You should expect a 6 hour day.

**WHERE IS THE SESSION:** This years gathering will be held at the Felton Ranch which is located at the base of the Beaverhead Range of the Bitterroot Mountains about 18 miles southwest of Wisdom MT on the Twin Lakes Rd. The National Forest is just beyond the Ranch. We plan to take a side trip to Twin Lakes a mountain lake southwest of the Ranch.

If you are coming from the north or west drive to Wisdom and drive south on Highway 278 about 6 miles until you see the Twin Lakes road sign, It is well marked. Turn west and stay on the Twin Lakes road for about 10 miles, The

Feltons own the last ranch on the road which has had multiple names. The last owner the Fosters still have their name on the ranch barn and they called the ranch the Nez Perce Ranch. I think Feltons are in the process of changing that name. Don't be confused by the signs. After the the Indian silhouettes you will come to the main ranch building, about a mile farther, beyond the main ranch, just before you reach the trees you will see a log house on the west side of the road which has an entrance sign which says Guest House. That is your destination. The roads to this point are passible by a car but be careful, If you are coming from the east or south you start at Dillon. Find Highway 278 south of Dillon on I 15 turn west travel through Jackson MT and turn about 12 miles south of Jackson on the Twin Lakes Road which is well marked. Follow the directs above.

**We owe the Felton Family a big Thank You for hosting our event.**

**WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING:** All you need is your personal gear and your cloths. We recommend you plan for warm and cold. Nights can be in the 30 and 40s and days in the 80's, Bring rain gear and sun protection. We have mosquitos; plan for bugs.

The BHVA provides the housing (an 8 bedroom log home) and food as well as the horses and the training facility.

**WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS:** For logistics, directions, weather forecasts and information about the place, call or text **Dennis Havig 406-660-3800**, Dennis and his wife live just off the Twin Lakes Road and Dennis organizes the place and the logistics.

For information about the course, the horsemanship, what to expect in the round pen call or text **Greg Eliel at 206-406-2974**. Greg actually lives in Tennessee but he is eager to help understand the training.

**HISTORY AND WHO IS THE BHVA :** The Big Hole Valley Association (BHVA) is a non-profit corporation in Montana that has been sponsoring the Veterans and Horses events for several years, In addition, each year the organization puts on Wisdom Ski Joring, we create and hold a cow pasture open golf tournament, we host a turkey shoot, we try to make Christmas a little more joyous for residents of the valley and we occasionally help our neighbors financially when the need arises.

Greg Eliel grew up on a ranch in the Big Hole Valley. His family were pioneers in the valley. Besides ranching and being a business man, Greg Eliel is a "horse

whisperer”, for lack of a better term. Greg graduated from college and climbed in a pickup with Buck Brannaman a well known horse trainer. After 30 years of this partnership Greg went out his own. He hosts multiple horse training events each year.

Dennis Havig and his family moved to the valley about 35 years ago, he was the District Ranger for the Forest Service. At the same time his wife owned and operated a restaurant in Wisdom. Dennis retired from the Forest Service and went to work for his wife. Two years ago they sold the restaurant and he mostly retired.

As I said, Greg grew up in the valley and in the mid 2000s he was home helping his elderly father. One day he and Dennis Havig had lunch in Wisdom. Greg described a new and rewarding training program for veterans that he had started on the east and west coast. Dennis asked Greg if he would be willing to work with the BHVA and hold a session in the outside of Wisdom. Excitedly both men began planning the event.

Greg and Dennis are the lead in the event but there are dozens of valley residents who make this event happen.

The Feltons are allowing us to use the ranch as a donation to the community and the veterans.