

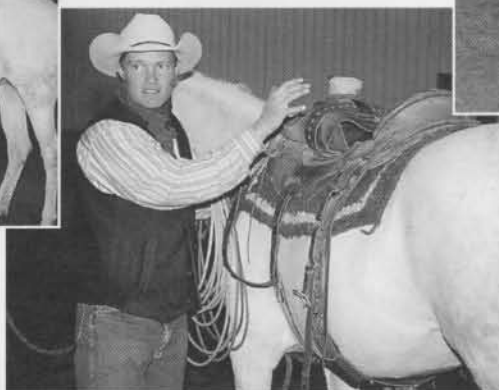
## Tomorrow's Horsemen



Katelyn Riley learns to sort.



Introducing a loop from the ground.



McCann discusses saddle fit and the importance of safe, strong, appropriate gear for roping.



Rian James prepares to divide the herd.

# Owl Canyon Vaqueros: Ridin' Ropin' and Ranchin'

LuAnn Goodyear promotes a new breed of 4-Hers through introducing Vaquero traditions and natural horsemanship.

by Doreen Shumpert

## The Clinic

Nestled inside the protection of LuAnn Goodyear's indoor arena outside of Fort Collins, Colo. during the first cold snap and snow of the year last October, part of the next generation of buckaroos gathered for a daylong clinic on the basics of cattle sorting and ground and ranch roping. Called the Owl Canyon Vaqueros, the 4-H group is led by Goodyear, with her goal being to update age-old 4-H rules for the benefit of kids and horses alike.

The clinic was instructed by Goodyear, who serves as the Larimer County 4-H Horse Program Coordinator, and Tyler McCann, a San Antonio, Texas ranch cowboy with a diverse background ranging from competitive jumping and ranch horse competitions to riding with other horsemanship masters.

Beginning the day, McCann introduced the basic ground roping tech-

niques of how to hold the loop, coil the rope, swing, deliver, and some basic shots to throw at the roping dummies. Some kids had roping backgrounds, but others took their first swing at it—figuring out it wasn't as easy as it looks. Hats hit the ground, and Goodyear and McCann spent some time unraveling figure eights in loops. However, by the end of the day, everybody was getting pretty handy with a rope.

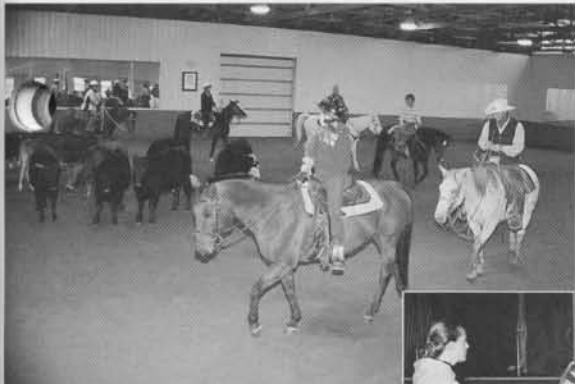
After sore arms were rested and hot chocolate was downed, McCann introduced some basic horsemanship patterns to the kids, explaining certain elements—like a good stop and turnaround—were essential to working cattle. Next, equipment, ropes, and dallying and basic logging were all shown and discussed, with plenty of questions from kids and parents alike.

In the afternoon, the kids were introduced to basic cow work techniques and got to try their hands at holding the herd,

riding through and splitting the herd equally, and the basics of reading and sorting cattle.

Not coincidentally, through it all, they learned the necessity of teamwork through a few escaped cows. They also learned priceless horsemanship concepts by watching a timid horse or two be eased through the herd by following an experienced horse, versus spurring, kicking and trying to force the matter. They also learned you "can't cut 'em off by chasin' 'em"; you have to be up by the shoulder and eye, and slower speeds and angles work the best.

Participants included Dan Rhyan (11), Leandra Pfizenmaier (12), Amy Fisher (14), Rian James (9), Olivia Klinzmann (12), Conner James (12), Cody Moncrief (10), Bailey Neiberger (10), Theresa Fisher (16), Ashley VonRiesen (16), Katelyn Riley (10), Easton Hunter (10), Zach Hooker (10) and Jessica Golden (10).



The kids learn to form a rodear.

Takin' shots at the dummy.



Zach Hooker learns about wrist motion.



Ashley VonRiesen and Amy Fisher work on coiling.



Bailey Neiberger learns to hold a loop.



Drivin' 'em to the barn.

## A New Vision for Horse 4-H

Anyone familiar with the horse 4-H programs across the nation is aware that they have been instrumental in keeping Western heritage alive and in training some of the best horsemen and -women in the world.

Goodyear agrees, but she also sees room for change, progression and adaptation of decades-old rules—such as senior-level horses (over age 6) being required to ride in curb bits. According to Goodyear, that rule originated in Texas years ago because if a young horse would work in a curb bit, he would bring more at auction. But she doesn't think the rule should always apply to youngsters learning to ride—such as a 13-year-old beginner on a 15-year-old horse—because that child wouldn't have the advantage of knowing how a snaffle or a direct rein feels.

"Once they do, they could go from there," she said. "Why can't lower-level riders have the option of showing in whatever they're comfortable with and skilled in, with the option of progressing to a bosal or two-rein in levels three and four?" she pointed out, continuing, "particularly when some kids are still riding in harsh curbs or mechanical hackamores and they get into trouble. The parents are yelling, 'One rein! One rein!' and there's no give to the horse."

"I'd like to see the rules apply to a kid's ability, not just primarily focus on the age of the horse," she added. "It goes back to education. Go a little slower, advance a little quicker."

Her involvement with horse 4-H began almost by necessity about five years ago. A 4-H club had asked for permission to

use her arena for their practices. After observing good-hearted parents trying to help their children since the leader didn't show up, Goodyear couldn't resist stepping in to help—especially after she heard one mom say, "Your horse is being really quiet, so don't walk over that log and scare it!"

"I couldn't stand it any longer," she laughed. "So I worked with the kids, and they soon asked me to be their horse leader."

Thus, the Owl Canyon Vaqueros was formed, and Goodyear says she's got her dream job of combining a passion for both kids and horses. Plus, she sees a prime opportunity to introduce families to natural horsemanship.

Her own introduction came around 1993 when she says she was "in way over her head" with a horse, and received a Buck Brannaman video from a friend.

"I said, 'Who is this man, and where is he?'" she recalls. "The first clinic I attended was at the C Lazy U and I rode with Buck. I realized I was still in over my head with that horse, so I made a trade and came home and started working with one of my older Arabs because I felt safe and could learn something."

Since then, she's ridden with top hands like Bryan Neubert, Peter Campbell and Joe Wolter, and she tries to stay as close to that true style of horsemanship as possible.

Now, with the introduction of ranch versatility competition into 4-H, Goodyear sees the perfect opportunity to encourage vaquero traditions of horsemanship, and strives to "make adjustments of the rules to allow for encouragement and education of true horsemanship."