

Living in a One-Horse Town

By Leslie Potter

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I'm lucky enough to have my dream horse. I may have had to wait 21 years to enter the world of horse ownership, but it was well worth it. I couldn't ask for more than Snoopy. But that doesn't stop me from looking.

I'm not actually in the market for another horse. I think I could maybe afford to double my board and farrier bills if I rode my bike everywhere so I didn't have to pay for gas. And if I mostly gave up luxuries like, I dunno, eating.

I think that Snoopy would like it if I got another horse. He's in great shape for his age, and he still gets admiring comments when we venture out to horse shows, but I do have to remind myself that he's a senior citizen. After years of primarily riding saddle seat, I'd like to do more jumping. Snoopy's an accommodating fellow and he would probably give it the old college try, but he is a 21-year-old horse with 21-year-old bones and joints, and I don't think that's a career change he needs to make.

In my fantasy land where horses are inexpensive to keep, I'd search for a younger horse with some jumping ability (by which I do not mean Grand Prix jumper ability, I mean the ability to more or less take care of me as I attempt to relearn everything I've forgotten since my college foray into the hunter/jumper world.) Then Snoopy could make a career move to full-time trail horse/lawnmower extraordinaire. I'd have a horse to help me advance as a rider and take to shows, and a horse to just relax with. I'd be able to invite horseless friends to go riding with me. Perfect, right?

On the other hand, there are some advantages to being owned by just one horse. When I go out to the barn, Snoopy gets my undivided attention. I don't have to rush through grooming. I can take a leisurely ride without worrying about getting in a second ride afterwards. I can let him graze on the lawn afterwards before putting him back out in the paddock.

I've gotten in the habit of cleaning Snoopy's fly mask every day. He has two, so I'll clean one and hang it up to dry while he wears the other one, then switch them the next day. He wears a flysheet if he stays outside during the day, so sometimes I'll wash that, too. He's on full care board, so his basics are covered, but when I'm out at the barn I'll usually clean his stall and change his water if he's been inside. The other day I stopped to wonder if I would really take the time to do stuff like that if there were multiple horses involved. I'd like to think I would, but realistically, who knows?

For now, this pesky idea of financial responsibility is going to keep me in the ranks of the single-horse owners. But the one I've got is a good one.

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