



Balancing Act

Welcome to our new series about what it's really like to be married to a horse trainer. The real lives of horse trainer's wives, if you will. We guarantee this read will be much more of an authentic ride than anything you see on reality television. The chosen ladies in this series aim to share some insight into their daily lives, dissect both the grit and the glamour, address some of the misconceptions that come with the label, and relate the rewards of the lifestyle. Here's what it really takes to be a horse trainer's wife.

By DEANNA BECKLEY
Photos by KRISTA KAY PHOTOGRAPHY



Teri Clearwater
Hanley, Saskatchewan
Age: 30
Married: June 22, 2002
Children: Caleb, 7, and Westin, 3

Teri Clearwater, a shy, soft-spoken woman, did not spend her childhood on the back of a horse. Instead, she spent her days at the local rink in Clavet, Saskatchewan, figure skating. In fact, as far-fetched as it may seem to those who know her now, there was a time when this young lady was terrified of horses.

This was a challenge even before meeting the man who became her husband remembers Clearwater.

"My dad was a team roper and my brother also rode bulls in the amateur rodeo association."

The day came when Clearwater decided it was time to face her fears. "I began taking lessons at Sandhills Stables, just outside of Saskatoon," recalls Clearwater. "Bonne Dewitt took me under her wing and taught me to ride. I was around 15-years-old at the time. It was there that I learned the sport of barrel racing and began to dabble in that a bit, until I graduated from high school."

Clearwater met the man who became her husband, working cow horse trainer Dale Clearwater, through mutual friends while competing on the amateur rodeo circuit. "Dale used to ride broncs and calf rope, and I was barrel racing," tells Clearwater. "We were really good friends for about two years. Dale was my grad escort when I graduated high school, then we began dating about a month later." Six months later, at the young age of 18, the two were engaged. They married once Teri completed college, in the spring of 2002, and Teri became a "horse trainer's wife."

Perfect Team

Teri keeps busy with the herd health, while husband Dale takes charge of the riding, making the perfect trainer and wife combination.

How do you balance family life and the horse training business?

A balance of family and business is actually pretty easy – we make it a priority. We never work on Sundays (unless we are at a show) and this is the day that we go to church and just hang out as a family. Dale tries really hard to be done the days' work by supper-time, so after supper we have the evenings together. We have the privilege of working off our own place so work time doesn't always feel like work. When the boys want to, they can ride with Dale, and in the summer I love to drink my coffee in the morning on the gallery Dale built me that overlooks our outdoor arena. We are always around and all involved in what is going on. I guess you can say that the line between business and family life are blended together quite nicely.

Is it difficult having your husband travel all the time?

The only time that it is really difficult is when the boys and I don't go with him, and that does not happen very often. The boys love going to horse shows, travelling, and playing with all their "horse show friends". When Dale got into this business we agreed that we would be doing this business as a family. I didn't want him to be gone all the time, and me at home with the kids. I am his number one fan, and his boys love to cheer him on. This business has allowed us to travel all over North America and see some amazing places. My boys have done more traveling than I think I did in all my childhood. When we first started out, it was a lot more work traveling back and forth from hotel rooms, but for the last five years we have had a trailer with living quarters and this has made things so much easier, especially for the boys. There are still tough times, especially after a week-long show, but I would rather be with Dale on the road than anywhere else.

What are the "perks" of being a horse trainer's wife?

I guess the biggest perk is that we are self-employed and therefore set our own schedules. If I want to visit with Dale at any time throughout the day, all I have to do is walk across the yard. The boys get to see their dad in the morning, at lunch, and for supper, and pretty much any time in-between (when not in school). This is a luxury that not very many people have these days.

At some of the big shows, we get passes that allow us 'behind the scenes' and that makes me feel special for some reason. Kind

of like being married to a celebrity without the paparazzi! Something about waving my pass either at the gate or security always puts a smile on my face.

What is the hardest thing about being a horse trainer's wife?

There are always disadvantages, but I try really hard not to dwell on them too much. I guess for me, the biggest hurdle is having to "share" my husband with so many people. There are always people around, or calling, or emailing. This sometimes cuts into the time that we have to spend together, but Dale does a very good job of being professional, and also paying attention to me and the boys. Really, in the big scheme of things, it is not that big of a deal.

Raising a family on the road can be tough. Living out of a trailer is fun for a couple days, but some of the longer shows get really long – it's kind of a catch 22. You look forward to going, but always happy to get home!

Do you feel there are some misconceptions about horse trainers wives?

I think that the biggest one I have heard is that we are stuck up. I think that is a hard thing to have hanging over your head all the time. I know personally, I am a very shy person until I really get to know someone, and even then I am still quiet. So when you are with a trainer whose job it is to talk to people all the time and then there is the wife who may not say as much, they get labeled quickly. I try very hard to be friendly to everyone who comes onto our place, especially because I don't want that label attached to me.

What do you love most about the business and the industry?

I think that the opportunities to go places and meet amazing people are what I love the most. I did not realize this was such a large part of our lives until recently when Dale's dad passed away. This industry is full of really great people and it has been such a blessing to be lifted up by all those people when going through a tough time.

We have been able to travel from Texas, to Nevada to Idaho and across western Canada. It can be great family time - lots of hours to do nothing but talk about life. I treasure those times and sharing it as a family makes it that much better.

What are some of your daily tasks?

Dale and I make a good team as I am not as passionate about actually riding as I am the



Favorite Things & Secret Vices

DRINK: "Tim Horton's coffee. Nothing tastes better, especially in the middle of the night on the way home from somewhere!"

MUSIC: "A little Sugarland makes those long hauls feel not so long."

BOOK: "I am not a big reader – I prefer to watch movies to reading a book. But, I did fall victim to the Twilight Saga."

MOVIE: "Favorite movies are romantic comedies, off the top of my head, Hitch and The Proposal. The Big Bang Theory, NCIS LA and Bones on television; I purchase the series on DVD and we watch them on the road, or in bed in the evening after kids go to bed."

MEAL TO MAKE: "Chili with corn bread"

BOOTS: "High top, square toed Anderson Beans."

COWBOY HAT: "My hat is a brown Serratelli flat top. Most comfy hat I have ever had! Not a big fan of hats in general so it takes a lot to impress me."

herd health and the business side of things. I do all the bookings, arrange for veterinary care, do all the book keeping/office work, and cooking. We are about an hour away from Saskatoon, and at least 30 minutes away from a decent restaurant, so I am often cooking for a crowd. It is common for us to share our dinner table with someone at least a few times a week, be it farriers, equine dentists, or horse owners. I still enjoy riding when we are moving cows around the pasture, but have no desire at this time to take up showing. I think that is why Dale and I work so well together – we are not stepping on each other's toes.

Are you a cowgirl fashionista?

I hate shopping. If someone did all my shopping and picked all my clothes and all I had to do was try them on and send back the ones that didn't fit, I would be a much happier person!

What sort of “pre-requisites” or qualities would you say a woman would need to be a horse trainer’s wife?

I think to be a trainer's wife you must be flexible and be willing to stretch outside your comfort zone. Plans can change at the drop of a hat and you have to be able to roll with the punches, and you have to be comfortable being behind the scenes. So often people want to talk to Dale, interview Dale, ride with Dale. If you are not comfortable with who you are and the relationship that you have, I think it could become quite easy to become jealous of the attention that they get.

What do you think is the key to making a horse training business work and family life work?

For us, I think it comes down to the lifestyle. We love what we do and where we live. We may not be rolling in the dough, and living the “high” life, but we are content. We don't feel the pull of chasing the American dream. We are not looking to make a quick dollar, or searching around each corner for the next big thing. I think that is what makes our business work. We are committed to our business, our clients, and our family and thankful for the blessings that have been provided for us. Dale and I talk about everything and make all the decisions together. This way we can celebrate our success together and rally back from a failed endeavour together. Communication in any marriage is essential, but in a relationship like that of a trainer and his wife, I think it is pivotal.

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