

RATON ~ NEW MEXICO NEWS



Photos by Tim Keller

Brittany Rouse sits under the portal after training young colts on the Conchas Ranch.

Brittany Rouse brings out the best in N.M. colts

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Brittney was working in an Amarillo grocery store five years ago - bookkeeping, receiving, managing the front end - when she met Don, a customer. "As a little girl, I dreamed, I prayed, I begged for a horse. Every night, every day, ten times a day But I didn't get one. And you kinda grow up and you leave those child thoughts behind.

"Don put me on a horse and I hated it! I absolutely hated riding horses," she laughs. "It was the most uncomfortable thing in the world. But the more I did it, I got a little more accustomed to it. It didn't hurt as bad. And the opportunity came up for me to go to work with him and be making more money in less time than doing something else, so I took it. Being forced into it, I started loving it." She reflects. "I didn't know that this was my life, until I met Don. Now I can't go back to a desk job."

Since taking over Cabra Springs two years ago, Don's had his hands - and days and nights - full raising hundreds of calves and heifers through their second birth. Brittany has grown into the colt training job, and then some. She has the confidence of a lifetime trainer.

"She's been immersed in it," says Don. "It's not a weekend deal, it's every day." She spends 6 to 10 hours training colts each day - weather permitting. "The winds are too intense sometimes," Brittany says. "You want to set them up for success, so you don't want to take a new situation and add scary to it."

On training colts, she says, "It's kind of like kids". Her daughter Courtnie is 7, son Kyle about to turn 5. "I've watched Don, I've watched other people, but when it comes down to it, it takes common sense. Just like with a kid, what works for one isn't going to work for another. You've got to be flexible. Sometimes you come up with really creative ways of getting through to them."

She and Don have invented many of their own training aids. They have a heavy Purple Cow welded of 2" metal pipe, used to give young colts practice before working real cows. They can do most everything on the Purple Cow, and it doesn't run away. There are pots and pans to hang over the saddle horn to teach colts to stay calm in the midst of ruckus and distraction. There's a heavy ball and chain, a wedding gift to Don from Brittany's brother,

which they've used to train a high-headed horse. Don makes many of their tools and all of their spurs and buckles. "We just rig things up to work," says Brittany. "Our opinion is, if it works, great. We're not very shiny people."

They call all their horses ponies, all the colts babies. Brittany reels off introductions to each horse. "Cayenne can do anything, maybe not as eloquently, but she can take you all around the ranch and she'd never get tired on you. Moop, short for Moopalusa, is a mutt, no papers, but one of Don's favorites. She's nutty. She takes care of Don. She'd die for him, something you get more in mares than in geldings. Wild Thing, short for Chief Wild Thing of the Punkass Tribe, he's my baby. He got his name from his attitude. He was a mean little horse. His mom is good-natured: she's the one my son rides. Wild Thing is going to be a very level-headed, very bomb-proof pony."

Thinking on it, Brittany adds, "Our own horses speak for what we can make." If it's not too windy on the Conchas, she's out there today making a good, happy working horse of someone's colt.



The dun colt prefers the camera to the rope.

Cowboy poet nails ranching on the high plains

By Tim Keller
The Chronicle-News

Don Rouse has trained colts and tended other men's cattle for thirty years. Until he moved out to the middle of nowhere New Mexico a couple years back, he was based in Amarillo which afforded him the opportunity to moonlight as a stand-up comedian and teach comedy defensive driving classes. He's makes a lot of the tools and equipment he needs, as well as all of his family's buckles and spurs.

Today he's responsible for raising hundreds of calves and heifers on the Cabra Springs ranch, a 40,000 acre parcel of the sprawling Singleton Ranches. Early this week he was up at his usual 5 a.m., back for dinner at 8:30 that night, then returned several miles to check on a birth. It was a healthy, unassisted calf so he was home shortly after 10 p.m.

Rouse has a talent for combining his skills, producing humorous cowboy poetry. His most recent poem, "Welcome to Cabra", expresses the frustrations of dryland ranching typical of southeastern Colorado and northeastern New Mexico.



Photos by Tim Keller

Rancher and horseman Don Rouse is a former comic. Rouse makes all his family's buckles and spurs. This spur gives wry commentary to nature of a rancher's job.

Welcome to Cabra

By Don Rouse
Cabra Springs, on the Conchas Ranch

Welcome to Cabra
If it's spost to make water
It probably won't
If it's spost to hold water
It probably don't
You can't hardly pray it out of the sky
We have one season
It's dry
Cause Cabra's where
Rain clouds go to die
I've swore, I've cussed
I've thrown fits of rage
Wantin to pour sumptin sides dust
Out of a gauge
It's just this place's fate
I've seen storms turned
By a Powder River gate
You can give it your blood
You can give it your labors
You want to see mud
You can jig to the neighbor's
We watch the clouds buildin
We think it'll end
They get rain
We get wind
The mills, they rattle and creak

S'a wonder they don't kill cattle
The stuff they puke out
Would make anything leak
It's venom
That's in 'em
It's acidic, it corrodes
Cabra's where water goes
When Hell flushes commodes
You try to be cautious
It still makes you nauseous
The smell makes you gasp
Like you swallowed a rasp
We can't do without it
I never would doubt it
But this stuff will etch glass
And eat plastic
You won't go unscathed
If you've ever been bathed
You can bet your ass it's that drastic
There is no protection
From a leprous complexion
And here's the real kicker
What good's a shower
If you have to take it
In your damned slicker?



Brittany untrailers Cholla and Wild Thing.

COLFAX COUNTY CALENDAR

■ **April 11**
"Kids Paranormal," youth grades 7-12 to discuss paranormal topics, Angel Fire Community Center, 71 Valley Road, noon - 4 p.m. Free. Information: Janet Sailor: (575)377-2667.

■ **April 13 - 14**
Auditions for Raton Youth Theater performance of "Arabian Nights." 3:30 p.m. in the Shuler Theater. Grades 2 through 12 eligible.

■ **April 13 -**
Suicide Prevention Meeting, 1:00 p.m. United Methodist Church.

DWI meeting, noon at K-Bob's. For more information call (575) 445-8191.

■ **April 14 -**
Retired Public Employees of N.M., Chapter 18, Raton Senior Citizens Center, 440 S. First St., 2 p.m.

■ **April 18 -**
Raton Optimist's "Under the

Sea" Extravaganza. Call Desiree at (575) 445-9680 or Michelle at (575)447-9681 or April at (575)445-4000.

■ **April 18 & 19 -**
Spay-neuter-shots clinic. The Saturday clinic will be held at the Eagle Nest Community Center and the Sunday clinic will be at th Cimarron E.S. Gym. Registration begins a 7 a.m. For more information or to make an appointment call, 575-445-8756.

■ **April 20 -**
Diabetes and Obesity Prevention Meeting, noon at YES office. For more information call (575) 445-8191.

■ **April 20 -**
Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention Meeting, 9 a.m. at CYFD office. For more information call (575) 445-8191.

■ **April 23 - 18th**
Annual Family Health Fair, Raton Convention Center, 9 am - 4 pm. For more information call

(575) 445-8071.

■ **April 27 -**
Maternal Child Health Meeting, noon at the Sands Restaurant.

■ **April 30 -**
Substance Abuse Prevention Meeting, 10 a.m. in YES office. For more information call (575) 445-8191.

CORRECTION

Although every effort is made to ensure accuracy in our reporting, at times mistakes are made. In Tuesday's article about the Raton Water Works award from ESRG, the name of Sgt. First Class Verdin was incorrectly given as First Sgt.

Verdin. And both Staff Sgt. Padilla and Sgt. First Class served in Iraq 2005-2007, not Afghanistan. They were then, and are now members of the Colorado National Guard, 947th Engineer Company.