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## **“Excellence in Endurance” clinic a comprehensive two-day introduction to the sport of endurance riding**



*Dr. Arthur King, a veterinary judge and head veterinarian at equine endurance rides for over three decades, comments on an endurance saddle at last weekend's APEX Excellence in Endurance clinic in Finch. Looking on is John Crandell III, left, the clinic's second keynote speaker who is a top US top champion in the sport.*

If John Crandell III had been born in, say 1845, he might have liked the life of a Pony Express dispatch rider riding hard, full-tilt through the heart of the Old West and over the Rockies to deliver transcontinental mail in record time.

Instead, Mr. Crandell, a Virginian in his mid-forties with a compact build who wears tight jeans and a silver rodeo belt buckle, is one of the world's best endurance riders, 2007 Horseman of the Year and the 2006 US Endurance “Triple Crown” champion winning the Old Dominion, the Tevis Cup and the National Championship.

And there's a good chance you've never heard of him or the events he has won. That's because endurance riding, one of the world's most exciting, challenging and colorful equestrian sports, is only now getting attention in North America.

Equine endurance racing, with its origins from long before the days of the Pony Express, is not just a race against the clock. Generally 25 to 100 miles in length and sometimes lasting several days, the goal is to make the best time but also finish the race with a horse in excellent physical condition.

Horses undergo veterinary examinations at set stops checking pulse rate, heart rate, weight, and overall condition and exhausted horses are eliminated from the race.

On Saturday and Sunday, John Crandell, also a professional horseman and consulting farrier, was joined by Dr. Arthur King of Niagara Falls, a Canadian federal government veterinarian who for thirty years has been a veterinary judge and head veterinarian for endurance riding events all over the world, in presenting an APEX endurance riding clinic at the community centre in Finch.

APEX (A Partnership for Endurance Xcellence) is the US based nonprofit organization whose mission statement is “Partnering in training and academic advancement to achieve the highest performance levels in endurance horses, riders, and teams.”

Sixteen people attended the clinic, most of them local riders, but also seasoned 3-day 100-mile competitor Carol Stoddard who travelled from Hampden, Massachusetts to attend.

“This is my third APEX clinic and I’m here because they are always fantastic,” said Ms. Stoddard.

The clinic was hosted by the Seaway Valley Arabian Horse Association (SVAHA) and organized by SVAHA President Dessia Miller and Event Coordinator Kim Woolley.

Most of the clinic participants were from North Stormont, some of them new to endurance riding. What they heard over two intense and engrossing days touched every aspect of endurance horse evaluation, training, conditioning, health and nutrition, shoeing, and rider conditioning.

Dr. King and Mr. Cardrell evaluated slides of participant’s horses and answered specific questions relating to conformation, posture, hooves and shoeing, and provided detailed explanations and solutions.

The key speakers performed as a tag team, pointing to and discussing projected slides and photographs and jointly answering many questions from the audience. Their presentation was informative, enthusiastic, with no shortage of humour.

The next Seaway Valley Arabian Horse Association endurance riding event is a two-day clinic, May 9-10, with training rides in the Warwick Forest, Finch and Berwick area.

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