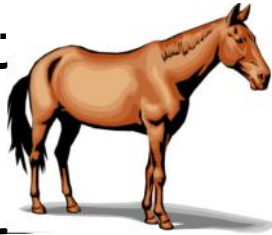


Notes from....



Serrano Creek Ranch Equestrian Center

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25200 Trabuco Road, Lake Forest, CA 92630
Office Phone 949-768-5921

Email: <SerranoCreekRanch@msn.com>

When cable TV first exploded on the scene, there was great optimism about the fare that was being offered. One such channel was BRAVO. Initially, this fine arts channel showcased great operas, classical music, Jazz greats, independent films. . . essentially PBS on steroids. Now, thirty years later, it is home to the *Real Housewives* franchise. So how did we get from women with high pitched voices singing arias, to women with high pitched voices slinging mud at each other? Has BRAVO taken 30 years to finally figure out what we really want to watch, or has society just continued its evitable decline since. . . (your choice of the starting point).

I always believe that our current bad habits ironically played a key role in our survivability (evolutionarily speaking). Take fat and sugar as an example. When food was scarce, those hominoids that sought out these high caloric foods and gorged themselves to put on weight were more likely to survive when the next famine struck. Yet today, ice cream and cookies are now "danger" foods for many. If the pre-humans of 150,000 years ago had sought

out salads and juice bars - sorry you wouldn't be reading this today.

Another danger food of today is gossip. Initially as humans developed speech, gossiping supplanted grooming as a way of building social networks. In a time when oral communication was the primary means of learning, gossip was a way of inculcating the values of the group by punishing those that were approaching the boundaries of appropriate behavior. Today this survival strategy has morphed into an industry. Paparazzis, celebrity magazines, Facebook, stories from the adjacent cubicle, and yes the stable rumor mill, all fulfill this atavistic need for information. Some studies have shown that for some folks, 80% of their communication falls under "gossip".

"Gossip is unconstrained and often derogatory conversation about other people, and can involve betraying confidence and spreading sensitive information or hurtful judgments. Research shows that people who gossip the most have very high levels of anxiety."

Alison Poulson, PhD

So to reiterate, as humans developed verbal communication, gossip replaced physical grooming. The telling of juicy gossip was / is to create a bond between individuals. Information is power, and gossipers can use their "scoops" to gain stature in a group. It is a short cut to upward mobility as compared to accumulating wisdom or wealth. It can help individuals learn social information about other individuals in the organization (often without even having to meet the other individual). It builds social networks of individuals by bonding together and

Please see page 3 for new feeding rates effective August 1st.

affiliating people with each other. And lastly it breaks existing bonds by ostracizing individuals within a group.

Rumors and gossip are used by the gossiper for the sole purpose of deconstructing the existing social structure with the hopes that when it re-forms, their stature has improved. Gossipers accomplish this increase or reestablishment of power in the following ways:

Coercive: When a gossiper tells negative information about a person, their recipient might believe that the gossiper will also spread negative information about them. This causes the gossipers coercive power to increase.

Reward: When a gossiper tells positive information about a person, their recipient might believe that the gossiper will also spread positive information about them. This causes the gossipers reward power to increase.

Expert: When a gossiper seems to have very detailed knowledge of either the organization's values or about others in the work, their expert power becomes enhanced.

Referent: This power can either be reduced or enhanced to a point. When people view gossiping as a petty activity done to waste time, a gossipers referent power can decrease along with their reputation. When a recipient is thought of as being invited into a social circle by being a recipient, the gossipers referent power can increase, but only to a high point where then the recipient begins to resent the gossiper. (Kurland & Pelled)

<http://www.idt.mdh.se/~gdc/work/ARTICLES/08-ETHICOMP/PassingWordGossipWorkplace.pdf>

So while the gossiper's stature may increase from his / her actions, the group as a whole suffers from the negativity. When the stable gets hit with a rumor infection, you see these symptoms and responses affecting our community.

- Erosion of trust and morale among the boarders, employees, trainers.
- Time (in this case recreation) is lost / wasted.
- Anxiety among the boarders increases as rumors circulate without any clear information as to what is fact and what isn't.
- Divisiveness grows as people are forced to take

sides.

- Hurt feelings and reputations multiply, often outlasting the short time that the rumor lives.
- And most importantly good boarders leave the toxic stew that gossipers create. We then end up with a stable full of gossipers along the lines of Real Housewives of the SCR.

One of the messages that we preach in the office is that you create whatever experience you wish here. If you want to come down to the stables and be in the moment of your beautiful horse -then that is what you'll experience. If you want to instead spend your hours complaining about all that is wrong with life, the stables, your fellow boarders, etc., then that is exactly the experience you'll get from the day. It always amazed me that there is a minority of boarders who would pay so much to maintain a horse, and yet do everything possible to make the experience so doomed.

In my perspective, rumors and gossip are a form of cancer. In cancer the cells lose their original purpose, and instead seek just growth. When stables become infected with this type of cancer, the original activity (enjoying our beautiful horses) is lost to a dysfunctional growth of power among a few. So continuing with the theme, how do we attack a cancer cell when we encounter it?

Remember that what the gossiper is really doing: attempting to increase their stature, and you are just a place holder for their efforts. While tens of thousands of years of evolution have programmed us to listen, instead summon the courage to just tell them you're not interested. While this may be uncomfortable for a few seconds, once the gossiper realizes that they will gain nothing from "confiding" in you, they'll go somewhere else. If enough people push back on the gossiper, then the rumormonger will either change their ways, or leave the stable. Just like ice creams, gossip may be initially tasty, but later you'll be spending a lot of hours of sweat to rid yourself of it. Better to have initially passed on it.

What is your reward? Well just hours and hours of equine bliss that will carry beyond your time at the stables. And rest assured that if the gossiper comes to the office to complain that while they tried

to use you for their childish needs, and you wouldn't participate, you'll have our backing. Remember that we are just as dragged down by this negative energy as you are.

While rates for alfalfa have had only minor increases over the last two years, we seen much larger increases in bermuda, orchard , and timothy. Unfortunately, on August 1st, we have to adjust our feed rates as shown in the schedule below.

<u>Description</u>	<u>2.5 lbs</u>	<u>5.5 lbs</u>	<u>9.5 lbs</u>
1 Feeding of Alfalfa	\$26	\$40	\$64
1 Feeding of Bermuda	\$24	\$38	\$60
1 Feeding of Orchard	\$33	\$54	\$87
1 Feeding of Timothy	\$34	\$55	\$89
