

der Farming

ILLY

● REPS uncertainty

● New horse restrainer

I.S.P.C.A.

OPENING HOURS

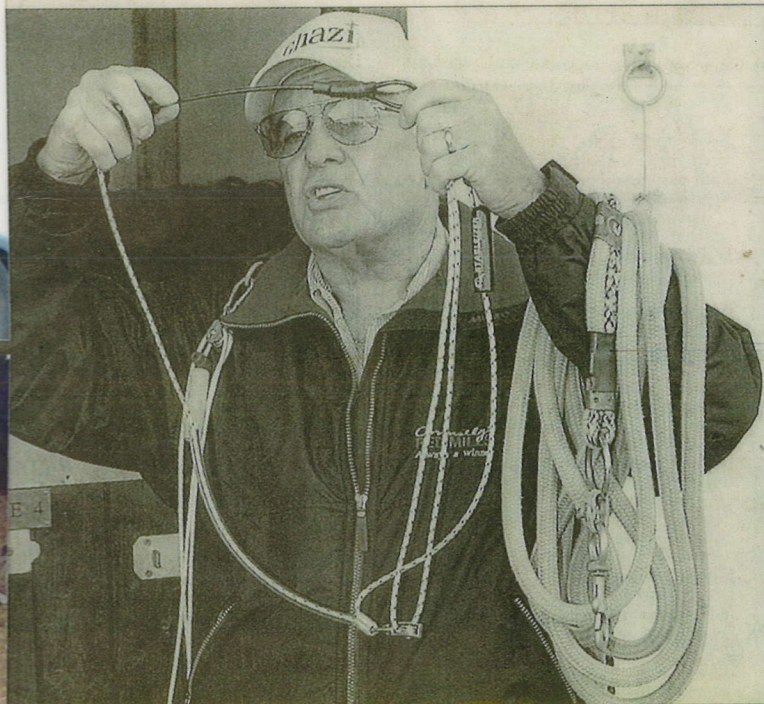
MON - SUN 11.30 - 3.30

EXCEPT WEDNESDAY

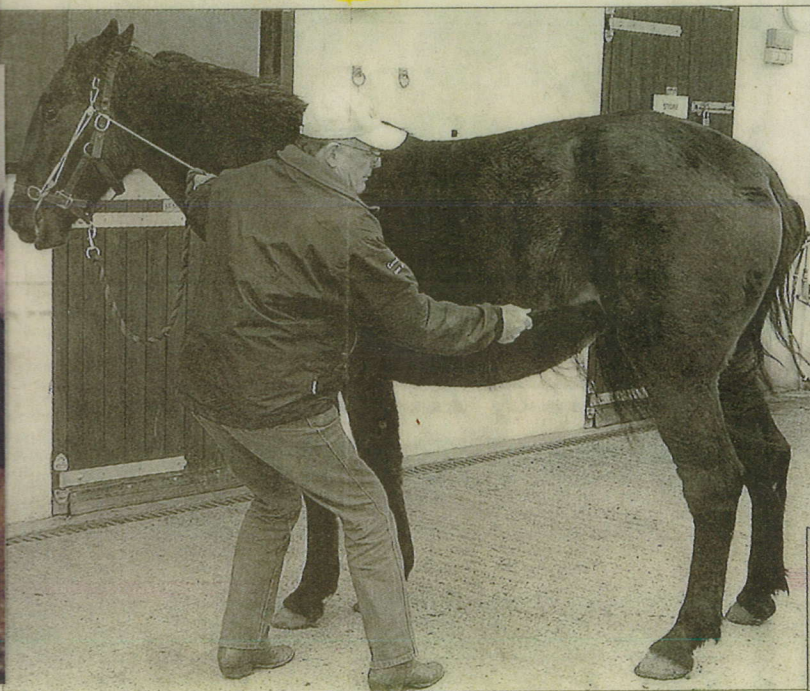
CLOSED ALL DAY

NATIONAL ANIMAL CENTRE

Top US horseman visits the ISPCA headquarters



US horseman, Buck Wheeler demonstrating his Stabiliser horse restrainer at the ISPCA centre recently



■ New horse restrainer now available in Ireland

Buck Wheeler has been with horses all his life and he was at the ISPCA animal sanctuary and head office at Derryclogher (between Lanesboro and Kenagh) last week to demonstrate his Stabiliser.

By Joe Flaherty

Buck is part Sioux and was born on an 8000 acre ranch raising as he says himself, "horse, cattle and hog" for as long as he can remember. Today horses are a major part of the operation and he also stands two top racing stallions at his Minnesota ranch.

There are no ordinary stallions either and while on a short tour of Ireland he made a point of meeting up with Dermot Weld, who has a few of his stallions' progeny in training.

Buck was in Ireland at the invitation of Meath man, Eric Ryan, who is marketing and distributing the Stabiliser product in Ireland.

Retailing at 45 euro, it's basically a much more manageable alternative to the old fashioned twitch and its inventor, Buck Wheeler explained that it's a modern day adaptation of the old Indian war bridle.

Basically the Stabiliser relaxes and sedates the horse, and yet the horse can still be led whilst wearing it and this would not be the case with a twitch.

Buck is your typical American and he talks a good show and there was no doubting his knowledge of the equine world and as he demonstrated the Stabiliser to those in attendance he also passed on several useful tips and suggestions.

Among those looking on were the five new inspectors working across the country for the ISPCA and its horrific the intolerable suffering that so many animals still endure at the hands of humans is horrific.

The Society has five stables at the Centre and all were full when we visited. Centre manager, Tony Bell, told me that they seized three ponies from Travellers at Ballinasloe Fair earlier this year.

The Gardai had to intervene to protect the ISPCA personnel when they tried to recover an injured horse which the Travellers were basically racing to death on a sulky track. The pony had been speared by a sulky spoke and rather than stop and have it treated they raced it on and on....

Sadly the pony had to be put down there and then, while a second horse seized was put down the following day back at the centre.

However the good news is that they were able to save a little miniature pony and he was one of the star attractions when we visited the Centre more than a month later.

On a bitterly cold November day the wind literally cut through us at the Centre and yet the most chilling aspect to the

With his Stabiliser horse restrainer in place, Buck Wheeler, shows the level of control he's able to exercise over a highly relaxed Daisy

PHOTOS - Joe McDonagh

day was the fact there are still so many people out there willing and prepared to inflict such pain on animals and then others who are prepared to condone the same behaviour.

Also there for the demonstration was the centre's vet, James Victory, who agreed that the Stabiliser is a most effective means of controlling horse while their farrier, Trevor Badger, also endorsed the product. He says he had been using one for the past week and he would certainly recommend it.

For the purpose of his demonstration, Buck engaged the services of another of the centre's residents, Daisy. She looks much better now but had been in terrible condition when seized off a farm down the country.

She's very nervous and difficult to handle and as such was a perfect model on which to use the Stabiliser. For his part, Buck Wheeler, has no doubts about the effectiveness of the product, having used it "on everything from Lamas to Kentucky Derby winners."

It's basically a simple concept and Buck explained that by simply tightening the device, you activate pressure points behind the ears, releasing endorphins that tend to block out pain and make the horse feel calm and relaxed.

A pulley system maintains the pressure point beneath the upper lip and this blocks the release of adrenaline, relaxing the horse even more.

With the Stabiliser in place and with a confidence and surehandedness that comes from spending a lifetime with horses, Buck was basically able to do what he wanted with Daisy.

Horse people are like people who are forever reading self-help books and watching the videos - if we see a product that could make life easier, we'll snap it up.

I couldn't wait to get away with my Stabiliser - in fact I was so excited that I forgot to pay Eric Ryan. Typical horse man some might say, but if Eric is reading this, the 45 euro is in the post!

For a number of reasons I've missed the first few hunts of the new season and one of the main ones was that I was putting off clipping (shaving or shearing the winter coat) my 17.2hh Irish Draught gelding, Ben.

It's a nightmare task (that's being polite about it) and ever since he took the urge to try and castrate me with his front foot three years ago, I sedated him each time after that.

With my new Stabiliser however, I was confident that horsemanship would win out.

To cut a long story short I didn't get to hunt at the weekend. Ben still looks like one of the Furey Brothers and I thought I broke a leg.

He never did look as comfortable as Daisy had with the Stabiliser on and I knew that it definitely wasn't going to work when he tried to jump out the stable door and all two tonnes of him came down on my shin bone.

To be fair, it will probably take time to get a little knack to use the Stabiliser properly and from what I saw at the centre, it's definitely a effective and welcome new product. Whether it will work on every horse is another thing.

Big hairy Ben isn't a lama and he will never win the Kentucky Derby but he definitely told me and Buck Wheeler where to go with our Stabiliser. And yes it does rhyme with Buck!

• You can get the Stabiliser directly from Eric Ryan at 046-9549290.