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**2015 MERA/Manitoba 4-H Young Horse
Development Project Presentations**

(September 7, 2015 – Brandon, MB) --- The eighteenth annual presentations of the Manitoba 4-H Young Horse Development Project (YHDP) were held September 7, 2015 at the Westoba Agricultural Centre of Excellence, in Brandon, Manitoba. The project provides a venue for senior 4-H members to demonstrate their knowledge gained through the 4-H Equine Program, as well as to showcase the stock being bred and raised on Manitoba's equine ranches.

Each year, interested senior 4-H members (14 years of age by January 1 of the current year) apply to the YHD Project's Advisory Committee. Upon selection, members are given a list of participating Manitoba Equine Ranching Association (MERA) and Saskatchewan Equine Ranching Association (SERA) ranchers from whom they may purchase a weanling. Prices are pre-set and ranchers receive half of the purchase price; the balance is placed in that year's Project Enhancement Fund.

The YHD Project involves a two-year commitment, and teaches 4-H members valuable life skills about taking responsibility, setting goals, and applying the knowledge gained. Members raise and train their horses with the objective of presenting them as a yearling "in hand", and as a two-year-old "under saddle". Members receive payouts through their yearling presentations (1/3 of the Enhancement Fund) and through their two-year-old presentations (the remaining 2/3 of the fund); completing their project books; and by adhering to the rules and regulations. Formal placings for the presentations are irrelevant. Members receive an Enhancement Fund payout based on their individual efforts, so the experience is self-achieving.

In 2015, three 4-H members exhibited their yearlings, one Appaloosa and two Quarter Horses, "in hand". They were evaluated on the elements of basic showmanship skills, conditioning of the horses, and their abilities to teach their horses to work on a longe line and to load into a trailer. Scores ranged from 188 points to 250 points, out of 260 possible points. The members earned a share of the \$466.66 in the 2014 Enhancement Fund. As a group, they accumulated 664 points, averaging 221.3 each, and will be paid \$0.70/point, based on their individual scores. Each yearling presenter received a copy of their evaluation, a tri-coloured neck banner, a Horse Industry Handbook – A Guide to Education, Care and Management, published by the American Youth Horse Council sponsored by the North American Equine Ranching Information Council (NAERIC).

2015 Yearling Presentations (in order of appearance):

4-H Club:	4-H Member:	Horse's Name:	Participating Ranchers:
<i>Rapid City 4-H Rodeo Club</i>	Charlee McLaughlin-Ventnar	<i>DZ Dandy Doll</i>	Kirk & Gail Bridgeman Bridgeman Land & Livestock Rapid City, MB
<i>Ethelbert 4-H Horse & Beef Club</i>	Anthony Coffey	<i>Don't Upset My Style</i>	Kevin & Julie Bridgeman K & J Bridgeman Binscarth, MB
<i>Rapid City 4-H Rodeo Club</i>	Daisy McKee	<i>Flashy Carma</i>	Kirk & Gail Bridgeman Bridgeman Land & Livestock Rapid City, MB

4-H member Daisy McKee, 16, is in grade 11 at Elton Collegiate in Forrest and lives in Minnedosa, Manitoba. This is Daisy's first involvement with the YHD Project, although as she said, "I've been a 4-H member for many years. I wanted to try something new and thought it would be a cool idea and an opportunity for me to train a horse the way I would like. It's been an awesome experience and met my expectations and more, through the success I've had teaching my yearling." When asked why she chose *Flashy Carma* from Bridgeman Land & Livestock, Daisy said, "I was not looking for a specific colour or breeding. I wanted one with a quiet temperament which I felt confident would be easier to work with. She was very quiet and friendly. What I have learned from this project is that the first steps are the most important and if a good foundation is there – it makes it easier later. I plan to keep training my mare to become an all-around horse for future MGRA gymkhanas and working cow horse competitions". Daisy added, "In the future, I am leaning towards a career as an animal science and health technician."

Kirk and Gail Bridgeman, who own and operate Bridgeman Land & Livestock Ltd., at Rapid City, Manitoba, have been equine ranchers for 34 years. They are second generation equine ranchers, as Kirk's late parents, Ken and Janie Bridgeman were pioneers in the business. Gail said, "We farm about 2,200 acres of grain, hay and pasture and have some commercial cattle. Our breeding operation consists of approximately 150 horses, of which 10 are stallions. Quarter Horses make up 75% and Appaloosas make up 25% of our herd. We have been offering weanlings to 4-H members in the YHD Project since the beginning. We feel it gives young people a chance to learn all about raising a horse. We attend the event every year to see them present their horses. For us, it's a measure of enjoyment, and we feel they are the future of our horse industry. A lot of these members have gone on into the agricultural field. And, a lot of the horses have ongoing careers in barrel racing and roping events." Two yearlings and one two-year-old were presented at this year's event from the Bridgeman Land & Livestock's breeding program.

Three 4-H members presented their two-year-olds, all Quarter Horses "under saddle". Each horse and rider was scored based on their individual performance over a predetermined horsemanship pattern. Scores ranged from 213 points to 238 points out of a possible 270 points. The members earned a share of the \$1,050.00 remaining in the 2013 Enhancement Fund. As a group, they accumulated 669 points, averaging 233 each, and will be paid \$1.50/point based on their individual scores. Each member received a copy of their evaluation, a tri-coloured neck banner, and trophy cooler, sponsored by NAERIC.

2015 Two-year-olds Under Saddle Presentations (in order of appearance):

4-H Club:	4-H Member:	Horse's Name:	Participating Ranchers:
<i>Portage 4-H Canter Club</i>	Amber Hebert	<i>Finch's Flashy Jack</i>	Kirk & Gail Bridgeman Bridgeman Land & Livestock Rapid City, MB
<i>Ethelbert 4-H Horse & Beef Club</i>	Lisa Coffey	<i>Sea My Assets</i>	Kevin & Julie Bridgeman K & J Bridgeman Binscarth, MB
<i>Interlake Trail Blazers</i>	Will Mantik	<i>Fame Is Oh So Smooth</i>	Kelly & Ruby Stuart K & R Stuart Eriksdale, MB

4-H member Lisa Coffey, 17, is home schooled and lives at Ethelbert, Manitoba. This is the second time round in this project as Lisa presented a yearling/two-year-old in 2011-12, which she's hoping to sell as a pleasure horse. Asked why she chose this year's Quarter Horse gelding, *See My Assets* from K & J Bridgeman Farms. Lisa said, "I was looking for a very specific kind who could do both pleasure and roping. He's very showy and correct in conformation and very friendly. His best features are he's smooth and nice to ride, he learns very fast and is easy to train, because he's so sweet and loves attention. What I've learned from this program is you need a lot of patience. You can't push the young ones; you have to get them used to one exercise before moving on. They have very short attention spans." Lisa plans to keep this year's gelding and show him in Ranch Horse futurities.

Kevin and Julie Bridgeman of Binscarth, Manitoba have owned and operated K & J Bridgeman Farms as an Equine Ranch since 1983. Kevin and Julie are also second generation equine ranchers, as Kevin is another son of the late Ken and Janie Bridgeman. Julie is an elementary school teacher with Park West School Division. Julie said, "We own 9 quarter sections, mostly used as pasture and hay land for our horses and 40 commercial cows. Our horse breeding operation is about equally composed of registered American Quarter Horses, Appaloosas and Belgians, from our herd of 100 mares and 15 stallions. About half the light horses we raise are sold as weanlings to be shown at breed shows in Pleasure events, while the other half go on to compete in ranch/rodeo events. Our heavy horse weanlings are raised to be shown as hitch horses. We were initially involved with setting up the Young Horse Development Project and have stayed involved for all eighteen years. We feel it's nice to be able to give youth the opportunity to buy a quality horse that they can have a positive experience with training, and then take on to different venues. Some of the members who have chosen our weanlings have continued on with horses in some fashion. Their initial direction may have changed, but they still have some involvement. It's been a positive experience for them all." One yearling and one two-year-old were presented at this year's event from K & J Bridgeman Farms' breeding program.

Dennis Skoropata of Skoropata Paints and Quarter Horses at Ashern, Manitoba was the evaluator of the yearling and two-year-old presentations. He was assisted by ring steward, Michelle Larson of Eriksdale, Manitoba.

Meghan Sprung, 4-H & Youth Specialist, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives, Brandon, Manitoba said, "We have a total of 2,196 Manitoba 4-H members in 2014-15 and 514 equine projects were undertaken. The YHD Project's Working Committee manages enrollment in the project, provides the project materials, and directly administers the project. The project provides an opportunity for members to establish relations with Manitoba and Saskatchewan equine ranchers and to own and develop a young horse. The members gain advanced skills in selecting, feeding and handling horses, and an increased awareness of the equine industry."

Lynn Coffey, Chairperson of the YHD Project's Advisory Committee said, "There were 7 senior 4-H members approved to select weanlings in 2015. We have a commitment from MERA and SERA ranchers and NAERIC to continue this program through to the 2017 'under saddle' presentations. We are grateful to the Manitoba 4-H Council for sponsoring the fees to cover our project evaluator. We also appreciate the ongoing support of the individual NAERIC-member equine ranchers who offer their weanlings and NAERIC for sponsoring the costs of awards, facilities – including the arena and stabling, post-event press releases, and colour photographs for the members and ranchers."

The YHD Project's Advisory Committee consists of: Lynn Coffey, Ethelbert; Amanda Mantik, Ashern; Darlene Dudar and Marsha Dudar, Ethelbert.

For more information regarding the 4-H Young Horse Development Project, and to view photographs of all the 2015 4-H members with their horses visit: www.naeric.org.

About NAERIC

NAERIC is a non-profit association of equine ranchers that serves its members, the horse industry and general public as an agribusiness resource by providing the latest information and research on all aspects of the equine ranching industry – including equine ranch management, horse care, breeding practices and innovative marketing programs. For complete information, visit www.naeric.org

Photographs by Wilf Davis:

- #1. Group photograph of yearling presenters: (l to r) Michelle Larson (ring steward), Dennis Skoropata (evaluator), 4-H members Anthony Coffey, Charlee McLaughlin-Ventnar and Daisy McKee
- #2. Group photograph of two-year-old presenters: (l to r) Michelle Larson (ring steward), Dennis Skoropata (evaluator), 4-H members Amber Hebert, Will Mantik and Lisa Coffey
- #3. Photo of 4-H member Anthony Coffey of Ethelbert, MB with his yearling gelding *Don't Upset My Style*
- #4. Photo of 4-H member Charlee McLaughlin-Ventnar of Rivers, MB with her yearling filly *DZ Dandy Doll*
- #5. Photo of 4-H member Daisy McKee of Minnedosa, MB with her yearling filly *Flashy Carma*
- #6. Photo of 4-H member Amber Hebert of Portage la Prairie, MB with her two-year-old gelding *Finch's Flashy Jack*
- #7. Photo of 4-H member Lisa Coffey of Ethelbert, MB with her two-year-old gelding *Sea My Assets*
- #8. Photo of 4-H member Will Mantik of Ashern, MB with his two-year-old mare *Fame Is Oh So Smooth*