



The Romance & Thrill of Driving

by Robyn Cuffey

Carriage driving is one of the fastest growing equestrian sports today. Driving offers pleasures and challenges unequaled in ridden sports and has something to offer just about anyone. Whether your goal is a peaceful jaunt down a country lane or speeding around a challenging obstacle course, carriage driving can fit the bill. Driving can take you on a trip back in time, trotting down a dirt road at a pace that invites you to savor the scenery and the company of a friend in the cart with you.

Traveling at the speed of a horse's trot brings unique insight to the daily challenges and pleasures our forefathers took for granted. Antique carriages and sleighs delight history buffs and invite endless hours of painstaking research and renovation, and a whole new appreciation for the craftsmanship of times gone by. No matter how ambitious or modest your goals, driving has something to offer you.

Just about any equine with a good mind and sound body—be it a draft or a pony, a fast trotter, or an easy-gaited saddle

horse—can be a pleasure to drive. A retired harness racehorse can introduce its new owners to the world of driving for pleasure. A seasoned saddle horse can learn new skills and be enjoyed in a new way. Donkeys, mules, and miniature horses are all well represented in the driving world.

Driving can extend the time you use and enjoy your horses and ponies. A beloved pony may be driven long after its child rider has grown too tall to ride it. A young horse may be taught to drive long before it should be carrying the weight of a rider. Training for driving will pay dividends later as the young, green horse learns to understand the voice and rein aids, learning to trust and obey its handler before being introduced to the saddle. Driving is physically easier for a young horse and gives us a chance to develop its mind and body without undue stress on growing bodies.

Driving offers opportunities to advance your horse's training. Driving or long lining is an excellent way for a horse to learn lateral work, bending, and collection without having to carry