

# WE LEARNED HOW TO DRIVE!

ATRA/Klondike Driving Clinic September 25, 2011 at Thorsby Haymaker Arena

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On September 25, 2011 a group of seven drivers from the Klondike Chapter of the Alberta Carriage Driving Association met at the Thorsby Haymaker Arena to provide carriage driving opportunities to participants who had expressed a keen interest in learning about carriage driving. The Klondike members brought their well trained driving horses and their 2 wheel carts or their 4 wheel carriages to the clinic to give the participants a hands-on driving experience.

The 15 participants in the clinic were members of the Alberta Trail Riding Association who had signed up and paid up to attend this clinic, some as early as February 2011. These 15 people were divided into groups of 4 so that each person was given a minimum of 1 hour 'hands on' driving with the able assistance of a Klondike driver sitting by their side to help them along.

The morning of the clinic consisted of a short lecture session on driving safety followed by 'ground driving' other participants to get the feel of rein contact and basic driving cues before ground driving an actual horse.

The afternoon sessions had the participants sitting beside an experienced driver on the cart or carriage and handling the reins while directing the horse to change gaits, turn circles, drive through cones and to complete a serpentine pattern.

When not directly involved in driving, the groups attended sessions on

- harnessing, types of driving vehicles, and 'putting to' hosted by Klondike members Steve Reamus and Harry Harrison;
- leather care, cleaning, conditioning and leather repair with discussion about an emergency leather repair kit, hosted by Miriam and Randy James of James Built Saddlery, Tofield;
- 'show and tell' of what some ATRA members carry while trail riding and discussion of a driving 'spares kit' for use in emergency situations while driving, hosted by ATRA member Vicki Lawrence.

The last hour of the day was spent navigating an obstacle course consisting of cones, a flag, going over a tarp, and racing over the finish line. Not everyone took part in this but for those who decided to just watch it was quite entertaining.

Cost of the clinic was 75.00 with 25.00 being given back to those participants who had volunteered at the Klondike Carriage Driving Classic held August 13 and 14, 2011 at

the Beaumont Agricultural Society Fairgrounds. 7 of the 15 participants had volunteered at this Klondike event. ATRA helped with finances by paying for the rental of the facility.

This clinic was a great collaborative effort between the Klondike Driving club and ATRA and many positive comments were received by the Klondike drivers as to what a fun day it was and how much information was shared about driving along with some questions as to when the next clinic could be held.

Many Thanks to Driver/Owners Shirley McFall, Joyann Brown, Tamara Chmilar, Harry Harrison, Tom Cottrell, Steve Remus, Heather Lambrechts and their horses, and to ground helpers Carl Hoybak, Vera DeJong, Dale Bolen, & Lyle Brown.