

## Horsepower

**Annette Israel**

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Horse people are a separate breed of pet owner. They must have a strong work ethic because like farmers they perform physically-demanding chores each day to care for these huge and sensitive animals. There are heavy bales of hay and gallons of water to lug grain to measure coats to curry and then there are the veterinarian and farrier visits to schedule and pay for. Annette Israel's book shows why all this work and money is more than rewarded for horse folk and shows the uninitiated reader that horses can make wonderful companions.

Israel like so many girls was crazy for horses through her teen years attending many shows to display her riding skills. A series of traumatic life changes when she left home led to a period of introspection. Israel quit her criminal justice career sold her worldly goods (horses included) and worked for room and board as an adult home aide. For a while Israel studied the Bible and interviewed Holocaust survivors for Steven Spielberg's Holocaust Project; she eventually went back to college. The lure of having animal companions at her own house and barn became her goal.

The author is a passionate animal lover who has surrounded herself with cats dogs and several horses but her tenderest affections were reserved for an elderly Belgian draft horse Ren the self-described "love of her life." He was languishing and in poor health out in a farmer's field when Israel first spotted him. Once she brought him into her life he became her focus and she nursed Ren through many health issues until his death at the age of thirty—an age unheard of for a draft horse.

The author has a plain clean writing style and she explains horsey jargon very clearly. Readers will learn interesting information about equine behavior and the surprisingly delicate health of these powerful animals and they will get to know Israel's Amish neighbors. Several dramatic episodes which test Ren's aging body will bring out the hankies like a classic animal tale.

One does not need to be a horse person to enjoy the book but Israel's story will hold extra appeal for anyone who has ever ridden or owned horses. Overall *Horsepower* is an appealing and sentimental tale that illuminates why there are such powerful attractions between horses and their owners.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (April 15, 2009)

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