



Dr. Bryan Parrott,
co-founder of the
Myopia Polo Equine
Welfare Committee.

Changing Attitudes

Renowned equine vet Dr. Bryan Parrott makes a big difference at his small practice through the advancement of good horsemanship. / by Kiley Jacques

WHEN EQUINE INTRIGUE and an innate fondness for science came together in then five-year-old Bryan Parrott, something ignited. That something turned into a lifelong devotion to equestrian medicine and sport. A Rockport native and graduate of Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Parrott has been in practice for 25 years. These days, he spends nearly all of his time ensuring the availability of emergency services 160 hours per week.

The coordination of services, communication with practitioners and clients, emergency calls, appointments, business-related details, pro bono work, and lectures—not to mention a little polo playing in his “spare time”—take up most of this unfailingly committed doctor’s

life. In fact, he says, “This turned into a much larger job than I envisioned myself capable of doing.” Clearly, he’s more than just capable—he was born to it.

Parrott’s equestrian passion lies equally within his dual roles as a doctor and as a polo enthusiast. He cares very much about the sport and its image, which he feels suffers at the hand of poor horsemen. The public’s perception of polo is very much affected by what they see during a competition. He explains it this way: If two hours of spectators’ time are spent enjoying a game and 30 seconds are spent witnessing excessive force or brutality, it’s those 30 seconds that are remembered.

In response to complaints from the sidelines, Parrott joined forces with Myopia’s

Susanna Colloredo-Mansfeld and Cathy Taylor to address a long-standing negative perception of the sport and the maltreatment of horses. Their united efforts led to the formation of the Myopia Polo Equine Welfare Committee (MPEWC), which developed and instituted the “Polo Pony Welfare Guidelines” that are now being adopted by polo associations nationwide. “The MPEWC provides an avenue for the public to take when they see an incident or have a concern,” says Parrott.

Part of MPEWC’s mission is to advocate what Parrott calls thoughtful horsemanship. “Good horsemen always put the horse first,” he says. Changing the attitudes of players who exhibit aggressive behavior is something Parrott takes seriously; he wants players whose attitudes can’t be changed to be banned. “It’s a long process,” says Parrott. “There is a large group of people who care...we want the health and happiness of the horses and the sport.”

Polo attracts highly competitive people, according to Parrott. At times, horses are not sufficiently conditioned, and that puts players at a disadvantage. For Parrott, “Being at a disadvantage is simply that—a disadvantage.” He feels strongly that polo would be a better-played game if that disadvantage were accepted rather than overruled by the desire to win. “If your horse isn’t ready, don’t ask it to do the things you were planning to do,” he says.

Turning this idea into a rule is something the MPEWC has managed to accomplish. Rather than approaching the sport with the attitude of “We are here to compete and we are going to do everything we can to win,” Parrott encourages the good horseman’s mentality of “We are going to do the best we can with what we have.”

The polo-playing equine vet works tirelessly to polish polo’s image, implement rules that protect animal welfare, and rid the sport of poor horsemen. In the midst of all of this, he pauses to reflect on the reason behind his passions: “Providing the wherewithal to help my patients and my clients,” says Parrott, “that’s what feeds my daily life.”