

Recycling project keeps 4-H members “green”

By Cathy Glover

Members of the South Delta Buckaroos 4-H Horse Club spent the better part of a sunny late February afternoon sorting through two large bins of baling twine at Roddicks Feed and Farm Supply in Ladner. The twine, collected from local stables, is destined for a nearby plastics recycler who then processes it into a 50% wood/50% recycled plastic composite that can be made into products like fence rails.

The Buckaroos took on the project last September after reading about Vancouver Island horsewoman Jill Ackerman in *Country Life in BC* and her efforts to prevent twine from heading to the landfill. Ackerman got the idea for the project while visiting her sister and brother-in-law, Gay and Henry Forstbauer, at their Spring Creek Ranch, an 800 acre certified organic cattle and Thoroughbred breeding farm in Fort Steele, near Cranbrook. In a three week period, Ackerman explains, they gathered 2,210 strands of used twine.

Knowing full well the used twine from one Interior ranch was a drop in the bucket compared to what is generated on a daily basis at home, Ackerman made it her mission to find a recycler who could use the twine and then established delivery sites up and down the Island. That was just over a year ago. Now, with funding from the Investment Agriculture Foundation of BC, word of Ackerman's project – the first in Canada – has spread to the mainland and BC's interior. In fact, IAFBC is also funding a larger pilot project operated by the Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen. By late last year, RDOS had shipped out 53,000 kgs of agricultural plastic, including twine and bale wrap, to Fraser Valley-based recyclers.

It took 10 Buckaroos members and their parents almost three hours to sift through the twine that had been collected over the first six months of the 4-H project. The twine must be absolutely free of all debris -- including hay -- otherwise says Ari Kastanis of Simply Plastics Solutions of Delta, it smells like “burnt pancakes” when it is processed and the combined gasses not only contaminate the recycling process but puts his workers at risk as well.

To collect twine, horse people are asked to separate black twine from all other colours (the dark colour can muddy the end product, but is recyclable if separated) and make sure it is free of debris and hung or placed in a dedicated bin or bag that won't be used to collect other garbage. (There was a fair share of coffee cups and candy bar wrappers on the ground, along with enough hay to bale, after the Buckaroos first major sort.)

Baling twine collection will continue in Delta, with the generous support of Roddicks Feed and Farm Supply, who have extended their offer to act as a collection depot for the area. The Buckaroos will continue to manage the project and are looking forward to talking about it on an upcoming episode of April Reeve's television show, *Horse Tales*, on Delta Cable. Even though the club doesn't receive any money for their efforts, they know keeping baling twine out of the landfill is good for the environment and a benefit to everyone who owns a horse in the community.

For more information on baling twine recycling, visit
[www.islandhorses.com/services/ads/ackerman.html]

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Cutline:

Members of the South Delta Buckaroos 4-H Horse Club spent almost three hours sorting through bags of baling twine collected at Roddicks Feed and Farm Supply recently. That twine is now destined for a local recycler instead of the landfill.
(Cathy Glover photos)