



Modern-Day Cowboy



Rancher finding contentment

By Therese Goodlett
Staff Reporter

Jeff Rohrbough's three loves in life are his horse, his dog and his truck.

If that sounds like the ballad of a cowboy, it is.

Rohrbough, 27, grew up in western Kansas, where he lived on a ranch 60 miles from any town, with his father and two stepbrothers. Although his father was a cowboy, Rohrbough said his Uncle John was his main influence.

"He did rodeos in college and has always been in the horse business," Rohrbough said.

His uncle John brought Rohrbough to Nebraska and got him interested in thoroughbred breeding. In Omaha, Springfield and Pleasant Dale, Rohrbough worked under his uncle for Regency Thoroughbred Farms.

When Rohrbough moved to Lincoln, he left the thoroughbred business. Since 1989, he has worked for Cushman, a company that builds lawn equipment.

Although he no longer works with horses for a living, Rohrbough said he wanted to go back to it. Instead of working with thoroughbreds, though, Rohrbough said he wanted to be an equine dentist.

In 1986, he learned horse dentistry from Dale Jeffrey, who has a farm near Waverly.

"I wanted the knowledge; I didn't learn it for a business," Rohrbough said. "It was something I needed to know and every horse owner needs to know."

Now, however, Rohrbough said

he would like to go into the business. The problem is that he is not a veterinarian, which makes the practice illegal in Nebraska.

"We need to change the bylaws of dentistry to make it legal to do teeth," he said. "It will take time to find a happy medium between dentist and veterinarian."

Aside from being trained in fixing horses' teeth, Rohrbough also shoes and trims hooves. But for now, Rohrbough uses his skills mostly on his own horses.

After he finishes his 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift at Cushman, Rohrbough spends the remaining hours of the day grooming horses and doing chores on his farm at 87th and Adams streets. A gravel road leads to Rohrbough's rustic farmhouse, which is heated by a wood stove.

While he does not like traveling through town, Rohrbough said, many evenings he meets friends at Pioneers Park to practice team roping, which is a sport he began practicing four years ago.

In team roping, a team of two horse riders chase and rope steers.

At competitions, all of the players put money into a jackpot. Those with the fastest times win the money and those who don't win must pay more. Rohrbough said he had lost as much as \$500 on the sport.

Although being a modern-day cowboy can be financially difficult, Rohrbough said he would not give it up.

"I enjoy my horses, I enjoy team roping, I enjoy trimming and shoeing and doing teeth and rodeos — it's just what I want to do."



Photos by
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Photos clockwise from left:
Jeff Rohrbough and Dale Jeffrey study a horse skull to learn more about horses' teeth.

Rohrbough fixes his rope before taking his turn at team roping. Rohrbough ropes the horns of the steer and his partner ropes the hooves.

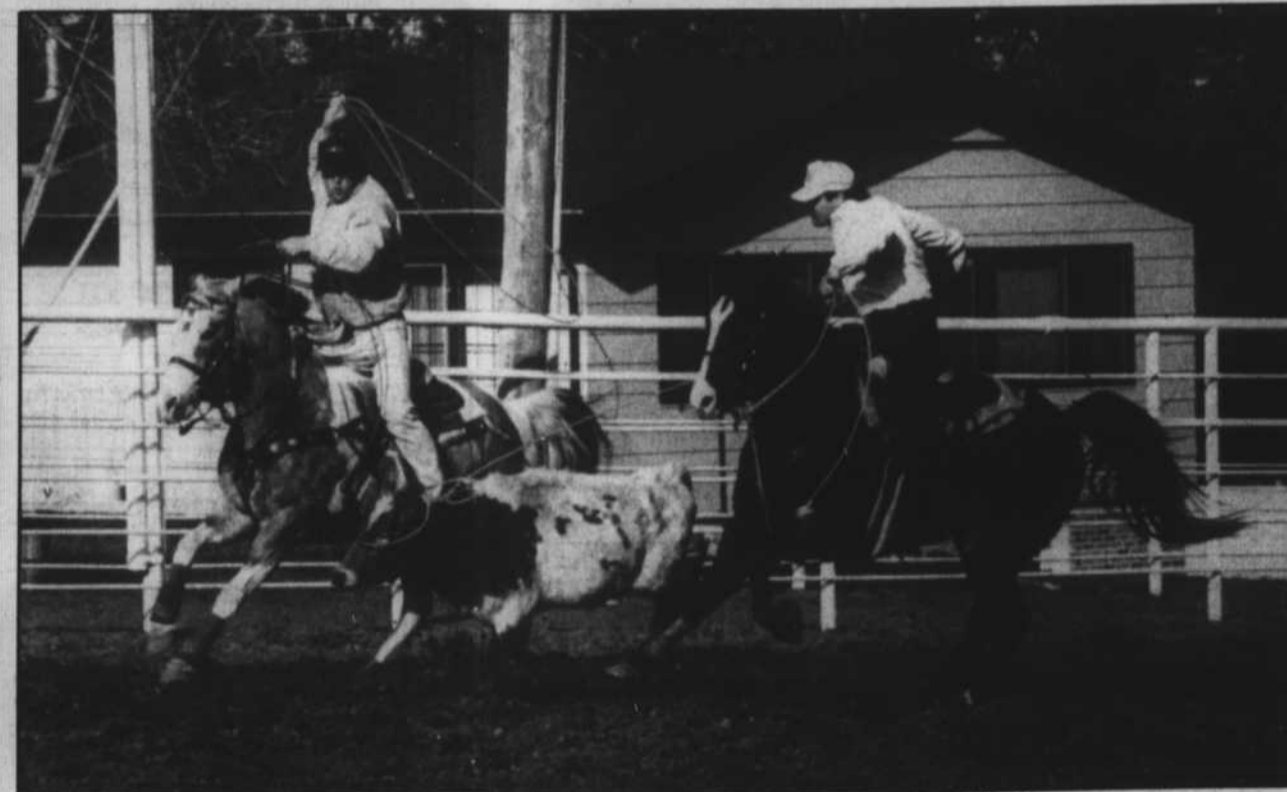
Rohrbough takes a moment from his chores to pet his dog, D-o-g. While Rohrbough does chores, D-o-g grips onto Rohrbough's pant leg with his teeth and drags behind.

Rohrbough and Todd Tuet rope a steer at a team-roping competition at Pioneer Stables Sunday afternoon.

Rohrbough examines his horse's bite for proper occlusion. If the horse's teeth don't come together properly, sharp points of the teeth must be filed down, he said.

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Rohrbough rancher



TRAVIS HARP