Apollo picked as ultimate pin-up in Golden Oldies Gallery
Danni Twose

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Earlier this year, to celebrate the many reasons why it’s amazing to own a senior horse or pony, we invited anyone with a precious senior equine friend to share their story. From the numerous entries received the SPILLERS brand team selected the top ten and one overall champion Golden Oldie. Apollo, a 28-year-old ex-Harrods coach horse has been chosen as the ultimate Golden Oldie in the SPILLERS brand’s Golden Oldies Gallery.

“I had a wonderful time reading all the entries,” said Danni Twose, Marketing Assistant at Mars Horsecare, home of the SPILLERS brand. “And I must admit that I had some tear-jerking moments too! It was a very tough call for us to whittle down the list to our favourite

ten and then to choose an overall Golden Oldie but Apollo's magical story moved us all and we were unanimous with our decision."

Clare O'Keefe has owned Apollo for 21 years. The Friesian gelding came over from Holland as a four-year-old stallion to start his training as a carriage driving horse. He became part of the Harrods coach and horse team and he and his driving partner Spartacus regularly pulled the Harrods carriage around London, advertising the iconic store. They made deliveries, greeted tourists and regularly visited Kensington Palace where they met several members of the royal family. They often carried important guests to Harrods in the carriage including Santa at Christmas time!

"I worked at the Harrods stables looking after Apollo and Spartacus," said Clare. "I was lucky enough to be able to buy Apollo in 2002 when it was announced that the stables were closing, and all the horses were being sold.

"Apollo had a busy life in his younger years and worked very hard so now he's older I take it easy with him and don't do much, though he still likes to get out and about otherwise he gets bored. We still enjoy hacking out, riding around the farm where he's kept and going to the occasional local show.

"When I had a bad riding accident on another horse, I almost gave up riding, but it was thanks to Apollo for rebuilding my confidence that I carried on. Lots of my friends and their children have also enjoyed riding him over the years.

"Apollo can be very cheeky at times and likes to slip his headcollar off when he's tied up, though he doesn't usually go very far when he does. He can also undo gates and at my previous yard he used to undo the field gate and let all the horses out!

"Now he's getting older Apollo has trouble with his teeth and can't eat hay - he occasionally tries to but can't chew it and ends up spitting it out. Instead, I give him SPILLERS Senior Super-Mash which he loves, as well as SPILLERS High Fibre Cubes (soaked). He's getting very fussy in his old age though still enjoys carrots and parsnips (if sliced up), various soft horse treats and his absolute favourite...brown bread (though only a couple of slices a day).

"Apollo is such a special boy and means everything to me - I can't imagine life without him," she said. "We've been through so much together and he's got me through some really difficult times.

Thank you so much to at Spillers for choosing Apollo as the champion Golden Oldie and a huge thank you for sending me some Spillers feed vouchers."

Here at SPILLERS we have a history of respect and admiration for senior horses which is reflected in our ongoing international research projects. For the past 20 years, via the WALTHAM™ Equine Studies Group, we have been involved with numerous research collaborations which bring together world-leading equine veterinary, nutrition and research experts to support the wellbeing, performance and longevity of senior horses and ponies. The journey began in the early 2000s investigating age related changes in taste and feeding behaviour in stabled horses. Since then, research has extended to include nutrient digestibility, protein requirements, insulin response, gut microflora, travelling stress and PPID.

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