

# Horse power to the rescue

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SANTA CRUZ — With a century-old rake hooked behind them, Diamond and Jim might seem like a modern-day environmental solution to anything, let alone saving rare plants.

But they are.

This handsome team of Percherons is part of an experiment to re-establish the Santa Cruz tarplant in Arana Gulch on Santa Cruz's westside.

A one-time dairy farm, the Arana Gulch property once had a healthy crop of the Santa Cruz tarplant, which is on the state's endangered species list.

The tarplant, which is spread by grazing animals, dwindled when the cows moved out. Over the years, non-native grasses have overgrown the tarplant, according to Rudy Quintanar of the city Parks and Recreation Department.

The tarplant now grows in just four sites at

the gulch, which was bought by the city last year as greenbelt property to wrap Santa Cruz's east boundary.

Botanists, state Department of Fish and Game officials and city planners agreed that the best solution was to mow and rake the non-native grasses that compete with the tarplant, allowing the tarplant to come back, said Quintanar.

In other words, the tarplant needed a little shaking up, not idle preservation.

The mowing was done mechanically.

Then the steady steed stepped in. Randy Clayton, a Soquel resident whose business is "Draft Horses for Hire" was paid to do the raking on an experimental basis.

Diamond and Jim went to work Monday on eight acres of the gulch using a dump rake. Working with Clayton were Greg Candell, a horse logger from Washington, and Andy Egger, a resident of Switzerland who is on an agricultural exchange program.

Far from being vestiges of past ages, Can-

dell said, draft horse work is enjoying a thoroughly modern revival.

"It's a misnomer that it's a dead industry or a relic from the past," said Candell. "Because of technology, it's viable."

With a \$1,000 chainsaw and a \$10,000 team of horses, Candell said he can do the same logging jobs as a \$150,000 skidder. Albeit, he does them at a slower, "more cerebral" pace.

These horses won't be put out to pasture long. Later this month, Clayton and his team of horses will log in the Soquel demonstration forest. Clayton is also the man behind the harness of the horse-drawn hay wagon rides at Wilder State Park and Roaring Camp Railroad in Felton. They also give elegant carriage rides for weddings and special occasions and in downtown Santa Cruz.

Another case in point: draft horses started work Monday pulling logs and raking debris on south county beaches. The horses, owned by Fred Silva, will work with tractor opera-

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tors from Reber Construction to clear the wreckage of winter for about a week, said Margie Reber.

Candell publishes an international newsletter for horse loggers. He's reluctant to guess how many people are using horses for logging. "A lot of people that are disposed to doing this don't get in touch. Some of them don't even write," he says.

Candell got started because he

saw that the knowledge of working with horses was dying out with all the old-timers.

Besides being more endearing, horses have advantages fuel-driven machinery doesn't, Clayton says. They're lighter — relatively speaking, of course, you wouldn't want one on your toe — and don't compact the soil like a tractor would. They also require less set-up time on logging jobs.

But that's not why people like

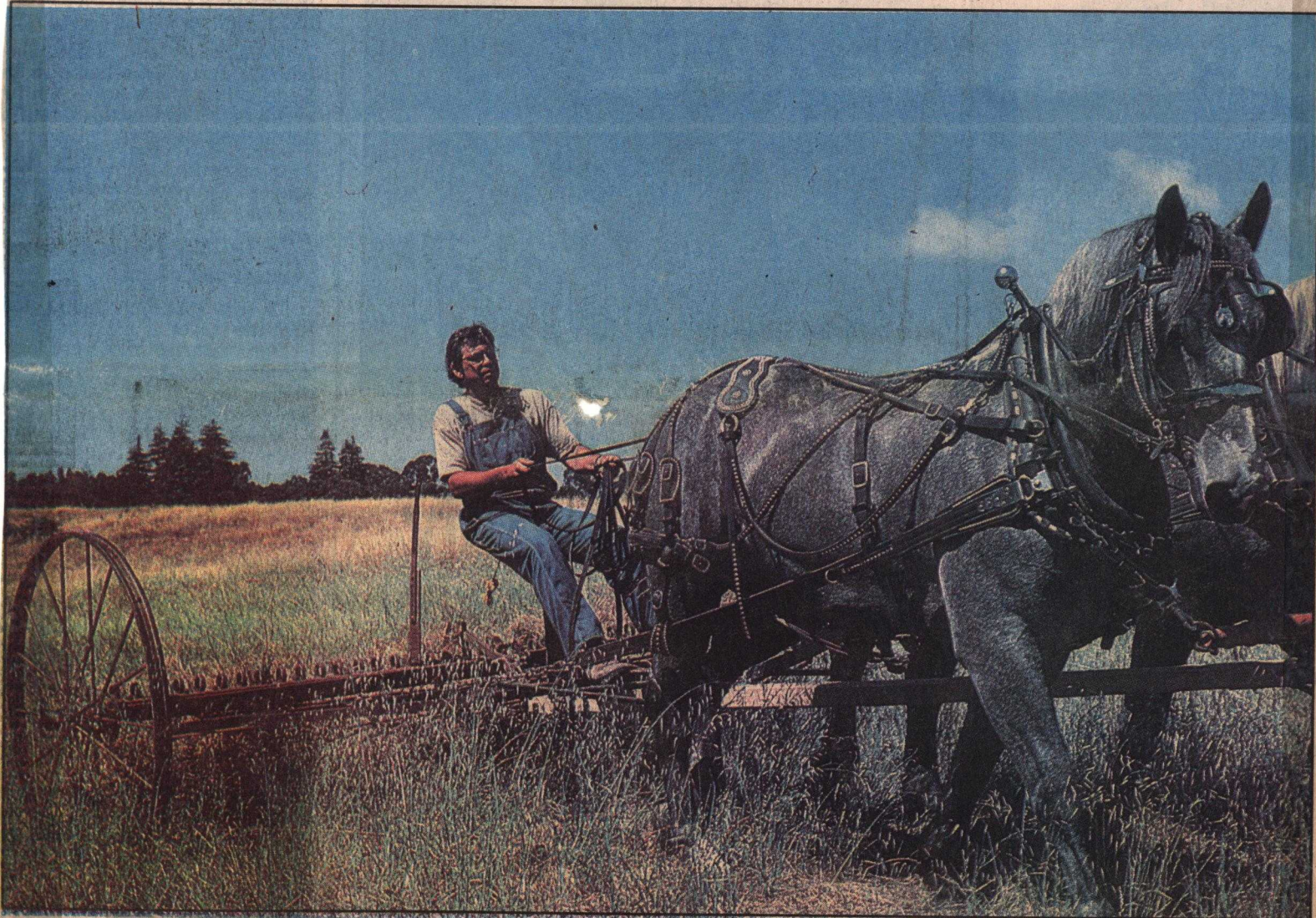
Clayton and Candell are working with horses.

"We do it because we love the horses," said Candell. "That's our first excuse. If you're fortunate enough to make horses pay, you're fortunate indeed."

"You get to live with them. It's a way of life, you see. You just don't park them and put the emergency brake on and leave them until the next job. They're family."



# Draft picks



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Randy Clayton and his team of Percherons operate a dump rake in Arana Gulch in Santa Cruz.