

One of the two is injured.

So now, a wagon pulled by the two Holiday Horses is impossible. Nothing like if Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer is injured, but a disappointment for sure. Riding in a tractor-drawn wagon is not the same as being taken to the Christmas trees in a horse-drawn wagon. It just is not the same experience. Horses emit power. Tractors ooze horse power.

This holiday season one of the two horses at the nearby Christmas Tree Farm is on “medical leave.” His vet is prescribing rest to heal him. The printed notice posted on the gate as we drive into the tree farm parking lot gets lots of attention. Another notice on the entryway as we walk into the farmland earns verbal disappointment from potential tree buyers. “Oh, I really wanted to ride the horse wagon again,” laments a preteen. “We can go see them, though,” says his mom. The sign suggests that everyone say “hello” to the horses on sick leave. The two Palomino Percherons “are ready for petting and photos” while grazing in their corral.

Wagon rides are accepted “as is” by most tree seekers selecting the “perfect fit” for the star to sit at the top of the tree. Another tractor pulling wagon picks up the trees cut down by the buyers and transports them to the “barn” where the trees are shaken, wrapped in mesh, and carried to the vehicles after purchase. The tree farm is open during rain, sleet, snow. The cold is tolerated by horse, human, and tractor. Quilts to cover riders are welcome, although none are brought. The ride from the barn to the trees is fast but satisfying.

The festive feel is catchy as buyers meet others awaiting their turn at the process. Volunteers prepare trees for transport, guide buyers to beverages, the gift hut, and the pay station. The tree farm is the beginning of the Christmas Season. Music warms the heartstrings, apple cider warms the body, and laughter ignites the memories at past visits.

A young couple arrive with their two preschool boys, their first visit to the farm. One son has a toy chainsaw in his arms. He is ready for “cutting” down his first Christmas tree and making a fond memory. His brother dances from one foot to the other ready to visit the horses he sees. They are just a hop, skip, and a jump away. (If only his mom and dad would stop visiting with these older people.) As we leave the family saunters toward the horses as the smallest son grins. The chainsaw lumberjack son looks toward the trees; brothers together but far apart. This Christmastime will be a memorable experience for the parents as they age.

Time seems to fly by faster than Santa’s sleigh. Wasn’t the Fourth of July last month? Now it is time to drink eggnog, wrap gifts, and perhaps this year hug family again. Now the tree is up and decorated, the menu is ready and the sleeping arrangements are made for visitors. Like years before, this Christmas with Santa and Family will feel as though it slips right into next summer.

And while Angels sing along church chimes, the horse mends in time for the next Christmas season, just around the corner.

Lana Russ