

As Balloon Fiesta draws to a close, another week was survived by the residents of Corrales. Many love the balloons and hope they will land in their back yards. Others hope they will keep flying high and land in Rio Rancho. So what's up? Well there are more "Prohibited Zones" per square mile of Corrales than in any place in America. Those are places that have designated to the balloonists that they do not want them on their land. There is an absolute prohibition. Then there are "Sensitive Zones" where a balloon can only land in an emergency.

We all see the balloons flying our way frequently due to the prevailing winds in October but why do we have those zones? It is mostly due to horses. So you say "What's the big deal? I see the police horses on the field and NM Mounted Search and Rescue every time I go and they are on their horses right in the middle of the balloons." Well the answer isn't as simple as you may think.

Remember that horses are prey animals and their whole life is spent trying to stay alive and not to get eaten by a predator. They live in herds where many eyes can look for predators. They look for a leader who will keep them safe. So why do the horses in a pasture think a balloon in the sky is dangerous and not when it is under a rider at the Fiesta Park?

The police horse is trained to trust it's rider and leader who will keep it safe and never ask it to do anything dangerous. They are a team. The horse in the pasture may not trust the pasture mates to keep it safe and its owner is nowhere to be found to reassure it of the safety. Hence the need for some horse owners to request the balloons stay away.

My favorite picture is of Dick Rowels sitting on his horse with a camera in one hand on the Corrales pedestrian/equestrian bridge on Alameda with balloons all around him splashing and dashing and his horse is basically yawning.

Each owner knows their horses personality and for many the balloons are not a problem, but Fiesta publishes a map with the SZ and PZ sites to help good landowner relations and to insure Fiesta can continue to entertain the community here in the Middle Rio Grande Corridor.

So here is a thanks to all of Corrales and especially the horse community for allowing us to continue to fly so high and so well that mother earth welcomes us

back into her loving arms (in Rio Rancho!). See you on the trail or as I fly the Stork over your home on my way to a great landing in the wide open spaces of Western Rio Rancho.