



County of Sonoma

State of California

Date: August 9, 2026

Item Number: _____

Resolution Number: 2026-0758

☐ 4/5 Vote Required

**Resolution of the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma, State of California,
Congratulating Neil Shepard as the 2026 Recipient of the Sonoma County Fair Award of
Excellence in the Horse Industry. (Countywide)**

Whereas, the Sonoma County Fair recognizes individuals whose skill, leadership, and dedication have made lasting contributions to the horse industry and to the agricultural traditions of Sonoma County; and

Whereas, Glen Ellen native Neil Shepard has been selected to receive the 2026 Sonoma County Fair Award of Excellence in the Horse Industry in recognition of his decades of service, education, mentorship, and commitment to preserving the traditions of draft horses and teamstering; and

Whereas, Neil grew up riding horses on the historic Beauty Ranch, once owned by his great-great uncle, renowned author and adventurer Jack London, and developed a lifelong appreciation for horses and Sonoma Valley's agricultural heritage; and

Whereas, in the mid-1980s, Neil developed a passion for draft horses, beginning a journey that would establish him as a respected horseman, educator, and ambassador for the Clydesdale breed; and

Whereas, for more than three decades, Neil and his team of Black Clydesdales have delighted residents and visitors throughout Sonoma and Marin counties by providing rides and demonstrations at the Sonoma County Fair, Marin County Fair, Scottish Games, Harvest Fair,

and many other community events; and

Whereas, Neil and his team have also become a cherished part of the Caroling with Clydesdales program at Jack London State Historic Park, bringing joy to children, families, and community members while strengthening the connection between local history and equestrian traditions;

and

Whereas, Neil is widely admired for his gentle, quiet, and relaxed approach to driving his team, demonstrating a deep understanding of and connection with his horses that has earned the respect of his peers; and

Whereas, Neil has devoted himself to preserving the art of teamstering by providing hayrides, public demonstrations, and educational outreach that introduce new generations to draft horses, traditional horsemanship, and the important role horses have played in agriculture and community life; and

Whereas, Neil has been an especially dedicated mentor to young people, teaching them how to drive a team and encouraging them to learn traditional skills, including wheelwrighting, blacksmithing, and farriery; and

Whereas, Neil is an expert wheelwright, accomplished farrier, and skilled blacksmith whose craftsmanship and practical knowledge reflect years of experience, patience, and devotion to preserving these historic trades; and

Whereas, Neil has served as president of the North Coast Draft Horse and Mule Club and was previously honored with the Sonoma County Horse Council's Equus Award, further demonstrating the high regard in which he is held throughout the equestrian community; and

Whereas, through his humility, thoughtfulness, and willingness to teach others, Neil has helped ensure that the traditions of draft horses, team driving, and related crafts will continue for future generations; and

Whereas, Neil's longtime service to the Sonoma County Fair, his support for local youth, and his commitment to connecting horses and people have made him an exceptional ambassador for the horse industry and for Sonoma County's agricultural heritage.

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Sonoma

congratulates Neil Shepard on receiving the 2026 Sonoma County Fair Award of Excellence in the Horse Industry and recognizes his decades of dedication to draft horses, teamstering, craftsmanship, agricultural education, and community service.

Be It Further Resolved, that the Board of Supervisors extends its sincere appreciation to Neil Shepard for his mentorship of young people, preservation of traditional skills, and enduring contributions to the horse industry and the people of Sonoma County.

Supervisors:

Hermosillo: Rabbitt: Coursey: Gore: Hopkins:

Ayes: Noes: Absent: Abstain:

So Ordered.