

Buttercup, a faithful +35 year old school pony, has made a huge impact in Alberta by teaching thousands of children how to ride. She was owned by Al Griffin of Griffin Valley Ranch and used in the summer camp program run by Diane Hickey. This special Alberta-bred palomino pony spent her life teaching thousands of children in summer camps, Stampede breakfasts, trail rides, and private lessons. Always patient, she forgave the mistakes of her novice riders and ensured their riding experience was safe and fun. She stood still while children learned grooming techniques and saddling. Her favourite time of the day was right after lunch, when summer camp children would bring her carrots and apples, which she always took gently from their hands.

In 2000 when Buttercup was in her mid-20s, she carried a young boy from Ontario on the Hooves of History Cattle Drive. The historic cattle drive, which encompassed 80 km in 5 days, finished in Cochrane, AB. Being the smallest mount on the drive, Buttercup carried the boy “without a hitch,” says Diane Hickey. Buttercup showed that even the smallest pony can drive cattle with the rest of them!

In the 5 years leading up to her death, Buttercup enjoyed her much-deserved retirement at Windy Ridge looked after by Laura Hughes and the Tremblay family. She was fed a special diet, which included boiled and crushed carrots that she could eat without teeth, and had her own box stall! Known as the “Wal-Mart Greeter” of the barn, she always welcomed people with a nicker. On October 31 2010, she passed away peacefully. She will remain in the hearts and minds of all the children she taught over the years. Diane Hickey remembers her as a “totally reliable and wonderful pony.”