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Percherons:
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Equine Veterinarian Shortage - A Growing Crisis



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(Cover Photo) Pleasant Hill Lake Park - Horse Camp - soft, sandy sites, highlines, and a lovely view of the lake!

Desi (above) is a 15 year old Kentucky Mountain Horse. His owner, Peggy Costic, describes him as the "best trail maintenance horse I could ever ask for." Camping with his family and friends is one of his favorite things to do. Desi excels on trails - especially when Peggy, readily-equipped with a full tool belt, has to clear branches above his head, or fallen logs across their path.

Desi's best buddy, Jose, also known as "Camp Mascot" is an 8-year-old Havanese. Known to throw a tantrum if his mom, Peggy, tries to kayak without him, Jose is right at home on the lake, loves camping, and when he's not busy visiting other campers, he keeps a watchful eye over the horses. According to Peggy, "he's a superstar!"



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FROM THE PUBLISHER

Welcome to the 2023 issue of Ohio Equestrian Directory!

Ohio Equestrian Directory was created for YOU - owners, riders, professionals, and businesses of all disciplines - to help you connect within the local horse community. More than just a business directory, it also features content on trending topics, the best practices and innovators in the industry, plus tips from the pros.

It is with much gratitude that we present you with this new issue.

Imagine taking your horses to one of the most beautiful parks, riding miles of scenic trails, and wrapping up your perfect day to the sounds of a crackling campfire and horses contentedly munching on hay. If this sounds like heaven to you, you will want to read our feature article **Love Camping With Horses? Check Out Pleasant Hill Lake Park!** Located in Perrysville, Ohio, and designed specifically for horse camping with large, level, pull-thru sites, highlines, and proper drainage and footing, PLHP is the only dedicated horse campground on a lake in the state. What began as a passion project almost twenty years ago for avid horseman, Mike Gerard, became a massive collaboration effort between many entities including the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, Mohican State Park, Mohican Memorial State Forest, Malabar Farm Park, and more. Thanks to Gerard's vision, these parks' extensive trail systems connect to PHLP's trails, which, by the way, are lovingly maintained by dedicated volunteers and members of our own Ohio Horseman's Council. Check out our tips for camping with your horses, too.

Our next feature **Kellie and Sam Rettinger of Whispery Pines Percherons: Living the Dream** takes traveling with horses to the next level. Hauling up to 6.5 tons of horsepower, Kellie and Sam Rettinger spend their days on the road with their carriage driving and logging business. Performing at the highest level shows and expositions to county fairs, they love nothing more than to spread joy to others by sharing their gentle giants - eight magnificent Percherons. Brought together by horses as youngsters, Sam and Kellie's life (and love) story is inspiring and endearing, just like the Hallmark movie they were asked to be part of last year!

Speaking of large animals, the equine veterinary industry is facing a serious problem, which many industry experts predict will reach a crisis level in the next five years. **Equine Veterinary Shortage - A Growing Crisis** explains why large animal practices are rapidly declining due to many factors - burnout from long hours on-call, extensive travel to farms, handling emergencies, while paying off a six-figure debt incurred over eight plus years of vet school - issues small animal vets do not face. In 2022, The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) formed the Commission on Equine Veterinary Sustainability to address the diminishing numbers of equine vets and create strategies for recruitment and retention. As a horse owner, you may be wondering what you can do? Read our ideas for simple ways you can help ease the strain on your own vets.

Special thanks to the equestrians who generously shared their stories and the businesses that enthusiastically supported this issue.

We hope you find this to be an invaluable resource and ask you to please support our advertisers, without whom this complimentary directory would not be possible.



Photo by Jessa Janes Photography



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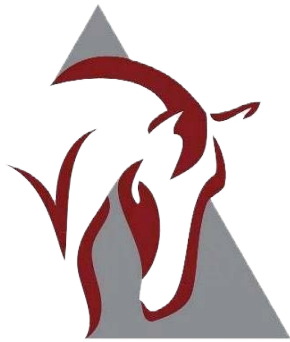
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An Ounce of Prevention - An Interview with Olivia Hegedus, DVM

by **Lisa Kiley**

Some horses seem to be more prone to accidents than others, but if you have horses long enough, you will encounter an emergency that requires a call to your veterinarian for attention. Have you ever wondered what steps you could take to help mitigate some of these injuries, or the best steps to take when they do occur? Dr. Olivia Hegedus of Bella Vista Equine weighed in on what she would recommend when it comes to helping avoid injury, and tips for planning and managing an emergency call.

Conducting routine inspections and repairs in the barn and pasture is key to prevention. Dr. Hegedus advises to be aware of any sharp or exposed edges that could cause cuts and scrapes. Use appropriate bucket hooks that minimize the chance of injury, especially around the face and eyes. Hay nets that are hung too low can be dangerous if the openings are large enough to catch a hoof. Hay nets with small openings are generally safer. Outside the barn, she cites that injuries often occur when materials like barbed wire are used, as horses can become tangled and cut in the fencing. Using t-posts without covers can cause horses to be impaled on the sharp metal. Choose horse-safe materials for fencing and keep pastures maintained.

Becoming a good observer of your horse is the best way to pick up on subtle changes in your horse's behavior that can indicate the onset of a problem. If you can catch these small shifts in behavior early, you may be able to prevent a minor problem from turning into a massive one. Dr. Hegedus encourages owners to take the time to understand what 'normal' is for their horse. Paying attention to how they eat, monitoring water



Olivia Hegedus, DVM with her horse, Fig

consumption, and noting daily behavior in the stall, pasture, and during work will give context for when things seem "off." Having baseline vitals for your horse is another way to assess general health.

Dr. Hegedus stressed that the time to plan for an emergency is before one ever happens. She encourages all horse owners to have a plan for what they will do in these circumstances. Have contact numbers for your veterinarian readily available, as well as information about your horse that will be needed when calling in. Keeping your trailer accessible and serviceable is going to save time if they need to be hauled in. If you don't have your own truck and trailer, plan arrangements with friends or a professional who can offer transportation service.

Routine checkups will also provide a better understanding of your horse's general health.

Dr. Hegedus advocates keeping your horse up to date with regular vaccinations as the best way to prevent many common threats. In addition to standard vaccinations, based on your horse's need, adding shots for botulism, rabies, and/or West Nile can help stave off costly medical bills or even prevent death. She also encourages owners to get a bi-annual oral exam for their horses which can catch dental problems before they cause weight loss or behavioral issues.

In the case of an emergency, while waiting for your veterinarian, Dr. Hegedus recommends that every horse owner have a stocked first aid kit in the barn. Getting a photo or a video of the situation can also be helpful information to share with your veterinarian and can help determine the next steps to take before they get on-site.

Anytime there is an

emergency with our horses, emotions can run high. Planning ahead, being prepared, and doing the best you can to help prevent needless injuries and disease, can help create a better outcome for your horse. Having a good relationship with your veterinarian can give you peace of mind that you are following the best practices to care for the horses you love.

Bio: Olivia Hegedus, DVM is originally from NW Ohio. A graduate of The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, she interned at Littleton Equine Medical Center in Littleton, Colorado. She has been in equine private practice in Ohio since 2019 and is currently an associate with Bella Vista Equine Veterinary Services. ●

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All in the Family (Business)

How one family-owned small business found success by sticking to strong values

by **Erica Larson**

“I was in my booth at a trade show once, I think it was the Equine Affaire,” recalls Andrea Gillespie. “A gentleman approached with a question about my sales team.”

A third-generation business owner, Gillespie is no stranger to sales, marketing, production, and the other aspects of running a successful organization. But she hasn’t necessarily taken the mainstream approach. Rather, she’s stuck to the values her grandfather and father used in the family business. Gillespie now sits at the helm of her family’s Republic Mills, Inc., a northwest Ohio-based corporation that provides manufacturing services in and outside

the agricultural sector, including livestock feed and horse supplements.

At this specific trade show, the gentleman asked about the sales team for Farrier’s Magic, a Republic Mills brand that includes a number of horse supplements.

“I said, ‘It’s me. Me, my booth, and my two sons,’” she recalls.

Who’s your biggest competitor, he wondered.

“I told him I don’t have any competitors,” she says. “I’m the only one who does what I do, the way I do it. I don’t compete with anyone.”

“He didn’t quite know how to react to that,” she adds with a chuckle.

But that concept is nothing out of the ordinary for her. It’s how her grandfather and father

taught her, and it’s what she’s instilling in her sons.

“If you like me and trust me, you’re going to like our products,” she says. “It’s very simple. It’s a family business built on quality and strong values.”

And it’s these values that have helped her keep the family businesses thriving.

Family Business Roots Run Deep

Gillespie’s family has deep roots in owning and running small businesses, and they’ve always done it their way, rather than following the trends.

“Back in the late 1940s, my grandparents had a fine menswear store downtown,” she says. “When they made money in the store, they bought rental homes and then started

buying farmland.”

In the 1950s, however, the quaint downtown shops were losing their luster as malls popped up around the country. Gillespie says her grandfather wasn’t interested in making the shift from his downtown location, so he shifted his focus from selling clothing to farming.

“My grandparents had one son—my dad—who helped in the store, with rentals, and with farming,” she says. “My grandfather was extremely instrumental in putting large tracts of land together in proximity to what we would now call our home farm. The heart of what we love in agriculture is the farm, the community, the neighborhood, and the personal relationships.”

After working alongside

his father for a number of years, Gillespie's father took over the company in the late 1970s and added a local grain elevator, and subsequently a second, to the portfolio. Ultimately, the foray into livestock feed sales would start a series of acquisitions that would shape Republic Mills into one that the Ohio agriculture community still relies on today.

Expansions, Evolutions, and Excellence

"Hudson Feeds had been in business since the '30s," Gillespie says. "They were also a multi-generational family business rooted in agriculture. It was the only feed brand that we carried on our local elevator at the time."

Unfortunately, she says, the company faced some financial challenges and found themselves at risk of shuttering. But a local poultry farmer with a loyalty to the brand, and a loyalty to the local elevator he purchased it from, was the catalyst to the next step.

"He had about 30,000 pullets, which is absolutely nothing compared to the millions we see at today's poultry farms," Gillespie says. "But back in the day, 30,000 birds was a sizable operation. He obviously was a big customer of ours; we kept his birds fed."

At the poultry farmer's insistence on loyalty to Hudson Feeds, the family approached the management with an offer.

"My dad said, 'Let us help you manage this back into profitability,'" Gillespie says. "If we can do that within a specified time frame, we'd like the option to purchase."

Hudson Feeds agreed to the offer. Before long, the feed producer returned to financial stability and it officially became Republic Mills in May of 1995, giving the family business a more vertically integrated business structure.

Like most industries, and thanks to technological and scientific advancements, agriculture and feed production looks much different today than it did in the mid-'90s. Republic Mills has embraced change and, throughout the years since acquiring Hudson Feeds, made new equipment and ideas work for them.

"We still do quite a bit of livestock feed," says Gillespie. "But now, we do all kinds of custom work. We're able to blend and mix

all kinds of formulations. We can run any natural product through our mill. We do all sorts of custom projects across the board for clients all over the world."

And it was one of those custom products that ultimately led Republic Mills to its most recent expansion.

"We'd been manufacturing the supplements for the Farrier's Magic line of products for the past 25 years," Gillespie says.

An avid harness racing trainer began developing the product line for his own horses, in his own barn. An entrepreneur with a background in pharmacology, he created and tested supplements,

liniments, and hoof creams with the goal of selling effective and high-quality products that didn't break the bank. Word about the products quickly spread amongst horsemen and breeders near and far, and it wasn't long before his "side project" (his main business being in the human pharmaceutical industry) took off.

Republic Mills had been producing the consumable products for more than two decades when he sold the parent company—Berlin Industries—in 2016. The buyers were only interested in the more lucrative human pharmaceutical division, so the seller set out to find a new home for Farrier's Magic.

Continued on the next page

Photos Courtesy of Farrier's Magic



All in the Family

Continued from previous page

“Long story short, it ended up in my life,” Gillespie says. “I was the manufacturer, why not be the sales and marketing part of it as well?”

She credits her father for making most of Republic Mills’ recent acquisitions, while she’s mainly focused on maintaining it, Gillespie couldn’t pass up the opportunity to take on Farrier’s Magic.

“I always want to put out a good product that I have 100% confidence in,” she says. “I was attracted to acquiring this line because I knew what was going into it. I know the care that we take in manufacturing things.”

It was a natural fit (as noted on the Farrier’s Magic website: “Farrier’s Magic and Republic Mills are names that are steeped in family and built on tradition. Names that draw their strength from the wisdom, hard work, and values of the generations before them.”), and it wasn’t long before Republic Mills had expanded yet again.

Core Values Still Drive Operations

When Farrier’s Magic joined the Republic Mills family, not much changed on the supplement side—

ingredients, formulations, or offerings—which Gillespie says was by design: “I care about putting out quality products that haven’t changed a lot over time because they work. People trust those products.” And, she added, “if at some point, the products don’t work, we’ll talk about it.”

But Gillespie opted to remove several other products—liniments, gels, and creams—from the line. While at first it might seem like a counterintuitive move, it was driven by some of Republic Mills’ core values: quality, confidence, and excellence.

“I don’t make liquids,” she says. “I couldn’t check every single step of the production process and have 100% confidence in something that I don’t own or manufacture. I want to put out a product that I have 100% confidence in and not spread myself so thin that it’s not a good product.”

Like her grandfather and father before her, Gillespie puts the same thought, care, hard work, and passion into everything she does. And while it’s certainly grown since the first farm became a part of it in the 1950s, Republic



Photos Courtesy of Farrier’s Magic

Mills has remained very much the same, she says.

“I’m an only child of an only child, so when you say a small business, you’re absolutely right. There aren’t very many of us,” she says.

“It’s still family-owned and -operated. I know every step of every process. I can fill in on any step of the process. I’ve got employees that have been with us for over 40 years, employees that were with us when I was a kid. Employees who are like family. Those are the kinds of things that are important to me.”

“You can keep expanding and make all kinds of money, but is that really what it’s all

about? I have no intention of taking advantage of people, no intention of pricing things so high that only the top echelon of our society can afford it. That’s just not where I come from.”

The Future’s Already Begun

Today, Gillespie lives with her husband on the original family farm, where they instilled in their two sons the same values and drive that helped get the family business where it is today.

“My oldest son is involved in the farm operation,” she says. “My youngest son does all of our welding and fabrication for the farm, and both are horsemen.”



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While neither Gillespie nor her husband had much personal involvement in the equine industry, horses have still played a role in their children’s lives. Her younger son, for instance, learned about responsibility from her in-laws’ two horses.

“We took him to spend a lot of time with Grandma and Grandpa to learn about horses, learn how much work they are before we invested in something. That’s not fair to the animal,” she recalls telling him. “If, when you’re old enough, you still want to do it, I’m all in. I’m not doing it for you.”

Ultimately, after some time riding and caring for the horses with his grandparents, her youngest got his own horse.

“We boarded it with Grandma and Grandpa, so he always had someone to ride with,” she says. “He took

care of chores with them frequently. And eventually we moved his horse back home, and our older son ended up buying a horse, too.”

Gillespie says the brothers also work with Bella Run Equine, an Athens, Ohio-based 501(c)3 that focuses on rescuing and rehabilitating horses from the slaughter pipeline.

“One of the horses in our barn right now was adopted through Bella Run; on occasion we foster horses for them,” she says. “But it’s not all about the horses. It’s about the relationships and helping animals in distress that need love and support. That’s kind of where they found their niche.”

Gillespie says a few times each year, the boys will park a camper in Bella Run’s driveway for a week to “help with whatever projects need doing, donate their time,

and have a good time doing it.”

“And Zack and Rachel [Bendler],” she adds, “they run the rescue and are a great married couple that work together and carry strong values with them. As a mom, I think it’s good to send your kids to be around other people who give them such a good example.”

Gillespie says both her sons have finished school, and she’s already enjoying working alongside them in the family business.

“I have every hope and excitement that they’re going to take it and run with it,” she says. “Maybe Mom can retire at some point!”

Gillespie says she’s looking forward to watching the family business grow and flourish in whatever direction her sons elect to take it.

“We’ve instilled in them to do everything with

excellence and quality. You can farm 2,000 acres and you can do it really, really well, or you can farm 8,000, 9,000, or 10,000 acres and maybe not get to, or forget to, harvest a field. That’s not excellence.

Let’s take what we do and do it the very best that we can possibly do it, and let’s be thankful, and understand the blessing of that. Where they take it and run with it, I don’t know, but I’ll be right on board with whatever it looks like.” ♦

Erica Larson holds a degree in journalism from Michigan State University and has been covering the equine industry in varying capacities for nearly 15 years. A Massachusetts native, she currently resides near Lexington, Kentucky, with her two off-track Thoroughbreds, Eldorado’s Tune and Sniper Shot.



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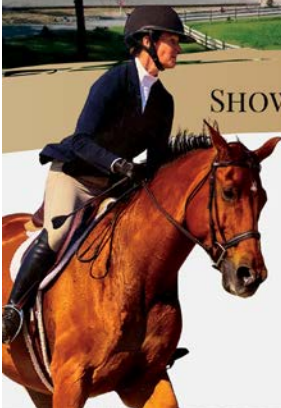
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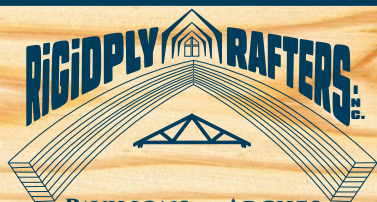
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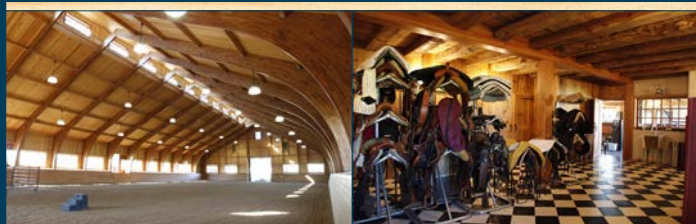
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The Dynamic Duo: Foundations for Equine Business Success

by **Jamie Samples**

When growing your equine business, there are hundreds of options on the path to success.

From direct mail to social media, networking to content creation, Facebook, Google, and Pinterest ads to in-store sales, print advertising to sponsorships, collaborations, and more. It certainly can be overwhelming when deciding how to best market your business. No ‘one size fits all’ plan will work for every business owner.

Wouldn't it be amazing if it were that easy?

I will not share the latest social media trends, how to grow your email list, what you must have on your website, or anything technical by way of a day-to-day marketing strategy, although those are incredibly important.

I will share the two things that have drastically impacted my business, and I am confident you'll agree they are also critical to growing yours.

- Authenticity
- Consistency

Over the last few years, we can all agree that many aspects

of our world are polarized. Many brands are out there just trying to make a buck. Their customer service is non-existent; they use bait and switch and unethical business practices.

The businesses thriving and making an impact in the equine industry all have one thing in common: **AUTHENTICITY.**

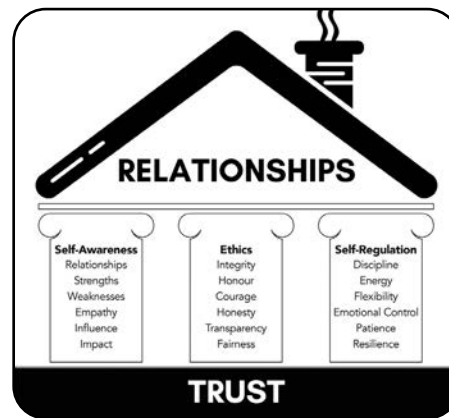
You may be thinking about your bottom line and looking for the day-to-day marketing strategies that will keep you in the black, and that is all fine and well; however, if you do not have a foundation of authenticity, your success may be short-lived.

The three pillars of authenticity are self-awareness, ethical behavior, and self-regulation.

When business owners develop themselves in these areas and encourage staff to do the same, the door is open to building a relationship of complete trust with their audience. You've probably heard the adage that people do business with those they know, like, and TRUST.

When every part of your brand is genuinely authentic,

paired with a consistent day-to-day marketing plan, your ideal client will come to you, spend money with you, be loyal to you, and share you with their family and friends. Isn't that the best-case scenario?



After chatting with hundreds of equine business owners, **CONSISTENCY** is another thing I hear that is an ongoing challenge. Trends and algorithms rapidly change, and just as you feel confident on one platform, another pops up. My many conversations over the years have been riddled with the frustrations of keeping up with it all, which

is a valid concern.

Start with the three things you **KNOW** work for your business, and stay **CONSISTENT** with those. **Test and measure the results and do more of what works and less of what doesn't.** That seems elementary; however, many businesses are just not doing it. They try something for 30-60 days and don't give it the time needed to develop.

Just as authenticity takes time to build relationships, so does consistency. If you start with email marketing and don't get the click-through rate you want in months one and two, don't give up. Commit to being consistent for six to twelve months, at minimum.

Also, just because your competitor is doing something on the hottest new platform does not mean you must. I cannot stress this enough.

KNOW your audience and market to them how they need you to. This may differ from how you want to market to them, so keep that in mind. If your audience prefers video content and you are uncomfortable doing video, you must find a way around that challenge and level up to

meet their needs. I promise it will increase your bottom line.

One of my favorite quotes by General Patton is, "A good plan violently executed is better than a perfect plan next week," which reminds me to keep taking action. Whatever you do in your business, ensure you are 1% better

than you were yesterday.

And remember, when your brand is anchored to consistency, your marketing plan for 2023 will become much simpler. Your business will be built on an unshakable foundation! ●

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Mike Gerard with his wife of 55 years, Barb

Photo by Deb Gerard

Love Camping With Horses? Check Out Pleasant Hill Lake Park!

Pack your tent and haul your horses to the only dedicated equestrian campground on a lake in the state of Ohio

by **Allison Rehnberg**

If you've always dreamed of going camping with your horses, then you're in luck! An equestrian camper's paradise awaits you and your horses in Perrysville, Ohio. Nestled between state parks and cradled by a man-made lake, Pleasant Hill Lake Park (PHLP) is the only dedicated equestrian campground on a lake in the state. In addition to featuring extra large campsites with angled parking spots that make maneuvering rigs a breeze, plus highlines for tying horses overnight, the park serves as an access point for over 70 miles of horseback riding trails that weave through two nearby state parks and a state forest. For horse lovers who enjoy camping, trail riding, bonfires, and everything in between, there's no better

place in Ohio to pitch a tent, hang a hay bag, and then ride from dawn until dusk.

As you might have guessed, a place like this doesn't just come together of its own accord. The PHLP equestrian campground first opened in 2009, but like all great undertakings, it began as an idea – one that first began taking shape in 2004, thanks to Mike Gerard.

Gerard, who's from Wooster, Ohio, is a veteran member of the Ohio Horseman's Council (OHC). An enthusiastic horseman, Gerard enjoyed camping with his horses long before PHLP existed – and that's exactly how he came to realize that equestrians like himself needed a place in Ohio to camp and ride that was just for them.

"Back in the early 2000s, you could camp with

horses in the Mohican State Forest, but you had to have a special permit to do it,” Gerard said. “We realized that we needed a place for people with horses to camp, especially up in the Mohican area, without a special permit. We wanted to meet that need, because we felt we had a tremendous amount to offer people coming into the Mohican area. It was a good reason to do it, and that’s important, because it takes a lot of energy and resources to create a place like this.”

Gerard brought his passion for the project, as well as his talent for working with others, to bear on the situation. That simple idea – the creation of a dedicated equestrian campground in Ohio with access to miles of trails – quickly snowballed into a massive, historic, and

successful collaboration among a host of different organizations, associations, property owners, government entities, state officials, volunteers, members of the OHC, and countless others. PHLP is owned by the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District (MWCD), which is a political subdivision of the state. The trail system that exists today connects the trails at PHLP with bridle trails that crisscross Malabar Farm State Park, Mohican Memorial State Forest, and Mohican State Park, as well as some private properties. With the backing and support of the OHC and the help of his fellow OHC members, Gerard spent several years forming partnerships and agreements with various entities and landowners in order to help make PHLP a

reality and secure access to those trails for equestrian campers for years to come.

“It really was an historic event back in 2004 when we started doing all this,” Gerard reflected. “We went across so many borders and boundaries. We had to connect the parks and the forestry and the MWCD and the Malabar State Park and private property. There were so many entities. We also had to get approval from the governor. You know, a lot of people said the park was never going to happen because we had to work with so many different entities. I said to them, ‘The impossible just takes a little longer. And I still say that, to this day. Sometimes, the impossible just takes a little longer.’”

By 2009, the campground officially opened, but the work was far from over.

For the last 13 or so years, members of the Ashland County chapter of the OHC, and Gerard, have continued to spearhead the maintenance, expansion, and growth of the park, adding amenities like electricity and miles of trail over the years. Today, the campground features 38 campsites overlooking Pleasant Hill Lake, which is a reservoir for Pleasant Hill Dam.

“We’re the only trailhead in the state of Ohio with a campground on the lake,” Gerard said proudly.

Each campsite is horse-friendly, featuring 50 amp electric, a gravel pad large enough to accommodate trucks and horse trailers, a campfire ring, a picnic table, and a highline for tying as many as four horses overnight, plus access to

Continued on the next page

Photo by ENSO Media Group



Camping with Horses

Continued from previous page

communal manure bins for quick and tidy manure disposal. The bins are emptied weekly. Water and restroom facilities, including showers, are also on-site. The camping season lasts from April 1 to November 1.

Equestrian campers at PHLP can access an expansive trail system that's designated exclusively for use by horseback riders and hikers - which means there's no need to worry about sharing trail space with mountain bikers, dirt bikers, or ATVs. Ashland County Chapter OHC members work on a volunteer basis to inspect and maintain the horse trails, which are all clearly marked to help riders find their way out on the trails and back to camp again.

"Everything we do out on those trails is done by volunteers," Gerard affirmed. "If we have a major thing that needs to be done, such as drilling holes, the MWCD will come out and do it for us. We have a good working relationship with them, and that's key. But they're our trails, so we all do it together and work together to keep them in good shape."

Ashland County OHC member and treasurer, Peggy Costic, is a passionate advocate for PHLP. She's also a seasoned regular camper, spending most, if not all, of her free weekends there during the camping season with her Kentucky Mountain horse, Desi.

When she's not riding for pleasure, she's riding for business - that is, taking her tools with her in order to clear fallen branches,



Peggy Costic and Desi

Photo by ENSO Media Group

trim back growth, and ensure the trails are in good riding condition for everyone. For Costic, volunteering her time and energy to work on the trails is a labor of love, and just another way for her to enjoy what she loves to do - being outside with her horses.

"I love being outdoors, and I'm usually out there from sunrise to sunset when I'm camping," Costic said. "I rarely go inside the RV unless I have to. I also

love the camaraderie of camping there. You get to know people from all over because people come from all over to camp with us, like West Virginia, New York, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky. You meet all kinds of people and it's so fun. I also love watching the little ones out there with their ponies, and the way they're always visiting their ponies and taking care of them in camp."

Sharing the park with others and introducing friends to camping with horses is also one of Gerard's greatest joys.

"I love to take people out for the first time on the trails," Gerard said. "They're always so excited and they want to get a horse of their own immediately."

Regular equestrian campers at PHLP often find themselves serving as goodwill ambassadors for the equine industry with the public, too. Non-equestrian campers from nearby regular campgrounds are often intrigued enough to visit the equestrian campground in the hopes of meeting a horse. Gerard especially loves introducing kids to the joys of horses through camping with his horses at PHLP.

"We have a lot of kids come down with their parents to see the horses, and I always enjoy introducing the kids to the horses," Gerard said. "It's so much fun, and pretty soon we know these families by name, and they know our horses by name."

In 2016, the OHC recognized Gerard and his wife, Barb, for their work developing PHLP by presenting them with a lifetime membership award. Gerard says his work still isn't done.

"We're not finished yet," he said. "I have so much excitement about what's in front of us, and I want to make sure our organization is in good shape with younger people who can keep working on solving problems and keep the park going for others to enjoy."

Want to learn more about PHLP? Visit <https://ohconline.com/trail/pleasant-hill-lake-park/>. ♦

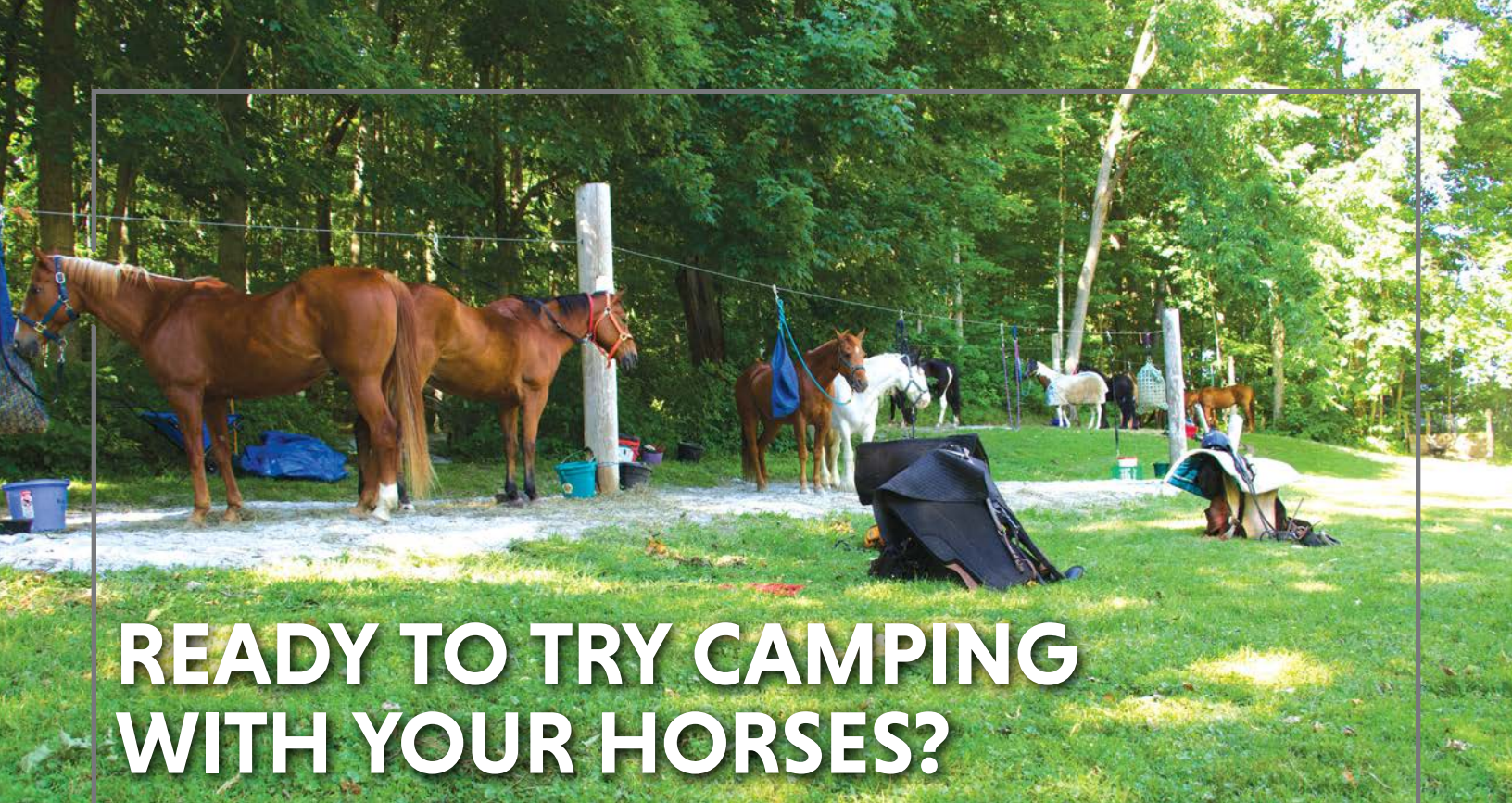


Photo by ENSO Media Group

READY TO TRY CAMPING WITH YOUR HORSES?

Going camping with your horses means taking your basic camping trip to the next level – and then some. After all, you’re leaving the safety, security, and calm of the stall, paddock, and barn behind to take your horse into the great outdoors. It may take a lot of planning, preparation, and packing to go camping with your horses safely, but it’s well worth the effort!

At PHLP, horses must be secured to a highline during the day and overnight, which can be an adjustment for horses who have never been tied to a highline before. Before you go camping, make sure your horse knows how to handle himself on a highline. You can practice at home by tying your horse safely to a secure post with a hay bag or feed bag, and gradually lengthening the amount of time your horse remains tied in one place. Supervise your horse closely so that you can intervene if he becomes uncomfortable or frightened. That’s how Peggy Costic taught her horse to become comfortable on a highline.

“You can’t just take a horse that’s never been highlined and expect them to know how to handle it right away,” Costic confirmed. “Some horses can get really nervous about it. But if you train your horses and

prepare them properly, it’s a very easy transition. Plus they get to be outdoors, so it’s really nice for them as well.”

The best camping horses are seasoned trail horses who enjoy the trail riding life. In addition to teaching your horse how to highline, make sure you and your horse know all the basics of riding outdoors and riding trails safely. You should know how to mount your horse from both left and right, and from the ground as well, although there are mounting blocks available at PHLP.

Check out these other tips for going camping with your horses:

Pack smart. Make a checklist of everything you might need for your horse, then check it twice. Ensure you’re bringing enough hay and grain along for the trip. Bring backups of important items, such as reins, bridles, halters, lead ropes, and other essentials. Pack plenty of fly spray and other care items, plus buckets, hay bags, and feed tubs or feed bags.

Bring a human first aid kit and a horse first aid kit. Have comprehensive first aid kits in your trailer or truck, and then make sure to take smaller first aid kits with you on the trail. Dedicate saddlebag space to things like gauze, adhesive wrap, antiseptic solutions, tape, and blunt

nosed first aid scissors.

Use your saddlebags wisely. Pack your small first aid kits, bottled water, snacks, hoof picks, and other essentials in your bags and make sure you pack them evenly to distribute the weight.

Let someone else know your plans and location. Don’t ever go trail riding alone, especially in a new place. In addition to riding with a buddy, let a third party know your plans and expected departure and arrival times. That way, if something goes wrong, someone knows where to start looking.

Take your cell phone with you. Don’t secure your cell phone to your saddle in case you fall and your horse bolts. Keep it on your person, such as in your boot top or on your belt loop.

When in doubt, play it safe. If you encounter an obstacle on the trail such as a downed tree, creek crossing, or bridge, and you don’t feel equal to riding over it or through it, it’s okay to turn around and go back. ♦

Born and raised in Tennessee, Allison Rehnberg has been an avid horse lover and writer all her life. She is an award-winning equine journalist who enjoys discovering and sharing stories about remarkable horses and their people from all over the world.

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Equine Periodontal Disease - nothing to laugh about

by **Gian P. Gargiulo, DVM**

Periodontal disease is prevalent in the horse and often overlooked. Identified early, most cases can be reversed and resolved successfully. When left undiagnosed and untreated, however, periodontal disease will lead to severe discomfort, degradation of the supporting structures of the teeth and, ultimately, tooth loss.

The first step of digestion in the horse is the physical breakdown of feed during mastication or chewing.

This process is most efficient when the mouth is equilibrated, or balanced. When your horse's mouth is equilibrated, the forces of chewing are dissipated among all the teeth and their supporting structures. If the mouth is out of equilibration, the excessive forces created by chewing will be concentrated on specific teeth and their supporting structures. The result will be an overloading of the structures that maintain the stability of the teeth. When overloaded, the possibility of developing periodontal disease is greatly increased.

These oral imbalances in the horse can happen for a number of reasons, including congenital defects, poor oral conformation, or overgrown teeth, and will have the same effect on the supporting structures of the tooth. These structures will become stressed past their functional limits and the tooth will start to move. Once there is movement of the tooth, a cascade of events will commence that, if left uninterrupted, will lead to tooth loss.

Imbalances that lead to even slight mobility of a tooth, create a space where feed gets packed between the tooth



and the structures that hold it in place. This space is called a diastema. The feed that is trapped between the tooth and its supporting structures will start to decay, leading to a change in the pH of the areas where the feed is packing. This change in pH results in an overgrowth of pathogenic bacteria, causing an inflammatory response from the horse. This response

produces inflammatory mediators that will attack the bacteria. A detrimental consequence of this is that these mediators also cause a breakdown of the supporting structures of the teeth. The end result is more mobility of the tooth, more feed packing, more inflammation and further degradation of the structures holding the tooth in place. This cycle of events must be broken in order to stop the devastating effects of periodontitis.

The severity of periodontal disease will determine the choice of treatment. If diagnosed early, most cases will resolve with equilibration of the mouth. More advanced cases will require more invasive treatment, with the goal being preventing feed from packing between the teeth. One treatment option to achieve this is diastema widening. This treatment involves widening the space between the teeth where feed is packing, resulting in the inability for feed to stay packed between the teeth, thus preventing the progression of periodontitis. Another treatment option is to pack the diastema with impression material in order to keep feed from packing. The impression material will also protect the tissues supporting the tooth and facilitates the healing process. Unfortunately, most advanced cases of periodontal disease involve loss of alveolar bone, the area of the jaw that anchors the teeth. Once severely degraded, this bone does not regenerate. In most cases, if alveolar bone loss is significant, extraction of affected teeth is warranted.

The best defense against the development of periodontal disease in the horse is early identification and oral equilibration during annual floats. All too often, the equine dental float is focused solely on the reduction of sharp enamel points. Equilibration of the mouth must also be a part of all dental floats. When your horse is able to chew in an efficient, unencumbered manner, the chances of developing periodontal disease will be greatly reduced. ●

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Feet Aren't Waterproof

by **Lauren New**

The number one cause of lameness in horses isn't footing, it's not bad riding, or too little turnout - it's *water*. Are you surprised? Keep reading and learn how and why *water* is the first contributing factor for lameness.


If you begin with a perfectly healthy foot, the first step taken leading to lameness would be the saturation of the hoof with water. This often happens when horses are left on night turnout during the rainy summer months. In this situation, not only is the ground wet, but the grass (and, therefore, the foot) is also covered in water twice a day, at sunup and sundown, when the dew sets in. You may also have horses that have access to a pond or creek that love to stand in the shallows during their turnout, which saturates the foot and hoof capsule.

When the hoof capsule becomes saturated, the smallest microfibers of the hoof swell, and soften. As these fibers - called laminae - become swollen and soft, they begin to lose their structural integrity. In addition to the laminae becoming soft, the horse's external hoof wall, which should naturally be hard and strong, will also begin to soften and stretch. As both the hoof wall and the laminae lose their weight bearing abilities, the entire structure of the hoof capsule slowly begins 'falling' which can allow the coffin bone angles to change, affecting the entire weight bearing functionality of, not just the foot, but the leg and soft tissues. Now your horse's soundness is at risk. This is when you see obvious symptoms of water damage, such as toes stretching long, soles falling into flat pancake shapes instead of strong convex arches, the white line becoming stretched and wide, frogs and heels flattening and softening. You may also see cracks starting to form on the external hoof wall. These can be actual cracks through the hoof

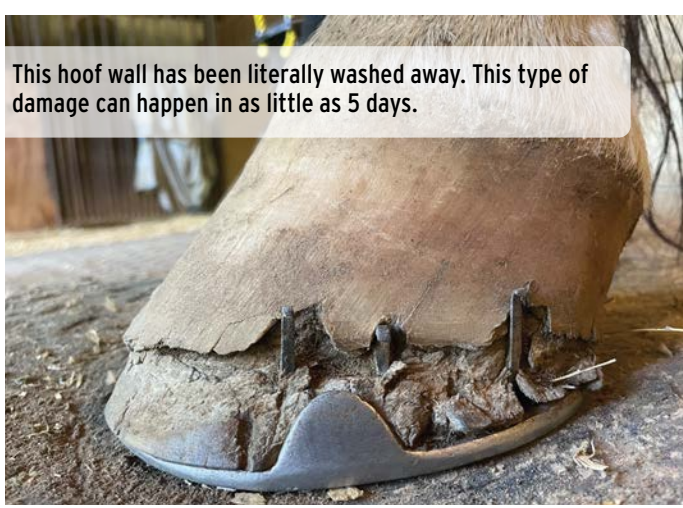
wall or surface cracks that seem simply cosmetic and make the hoof appear to be 'peeling.'

By the time you see this sort


of damage happening to your horse's hoof, it is no longer a quick fix situation. Now, you are probably also seeing fungal



This hoof is beginning to soften and flatten at the toe. As a result, an obvious toe crack has started which will likely turn into seedy toe, otherwise known as white line disease.



This hoof wall has been literally washed away. This type of damage can happen in as little as 5 days.



Thrush infection as evidenced by deep, black central and collateral sulcus and a soft, sponge-like frog.

issues such as thrush and white line disease start to take hold. Both thrush and white line disease are a combination of fungal and bacterial infections that grow in the soft, moist pockets in the hoof. Thrush usually lives around the frog and in the central sulcus, the groove in the middle of the frog. It's smelly and can make the frog appear black and very squishy. White line disease attacks the laminae and can cause large areas of separation between the hoof wall and the internal structures of the hoof. It often first appears as white flakiness when scraping on the white line and can quickly progress up the hoof wall if not treated quickly. Both of these infections and their symptoms (soft, sensitive frogs from thrush, or hoof wall separation from white line disease) can cause major lameness.

While thrush and white line disease are serious problems for your horse's overall health and soundness, they can be easily treated with appropriate products through daily or weekly applications that will kill the active bacteria and fungus and prevent additional infection from taking root. On the other hand, the damage to the structural integrity of your horse's hoof and his long term soundness has been done, and will now take many months to remedy with correct management and appropriate shoeing or trimming.

Rather than trying to work backwards and fix the water damage that can occur in just a few weeks of poor management - work forwards! Prevent this type of damage from occurring to your horse's feet simply by keeping them in dry turnout and in clean, dry stalls. This very simple management program would prevent the majority of the lameness and injuries that farriers see on a daily basis. ●

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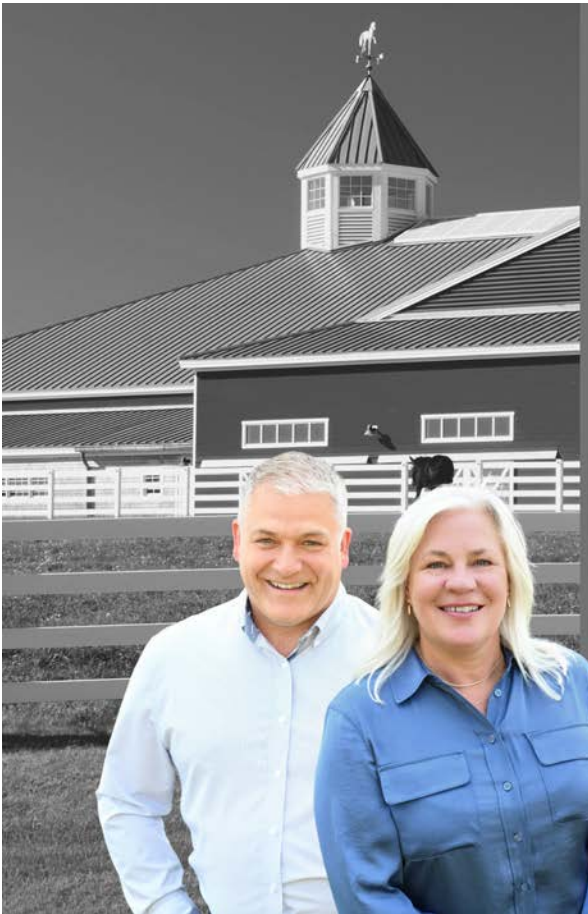
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Ohio State Equine Researchers Study Topical Treatment for Skin Tumors

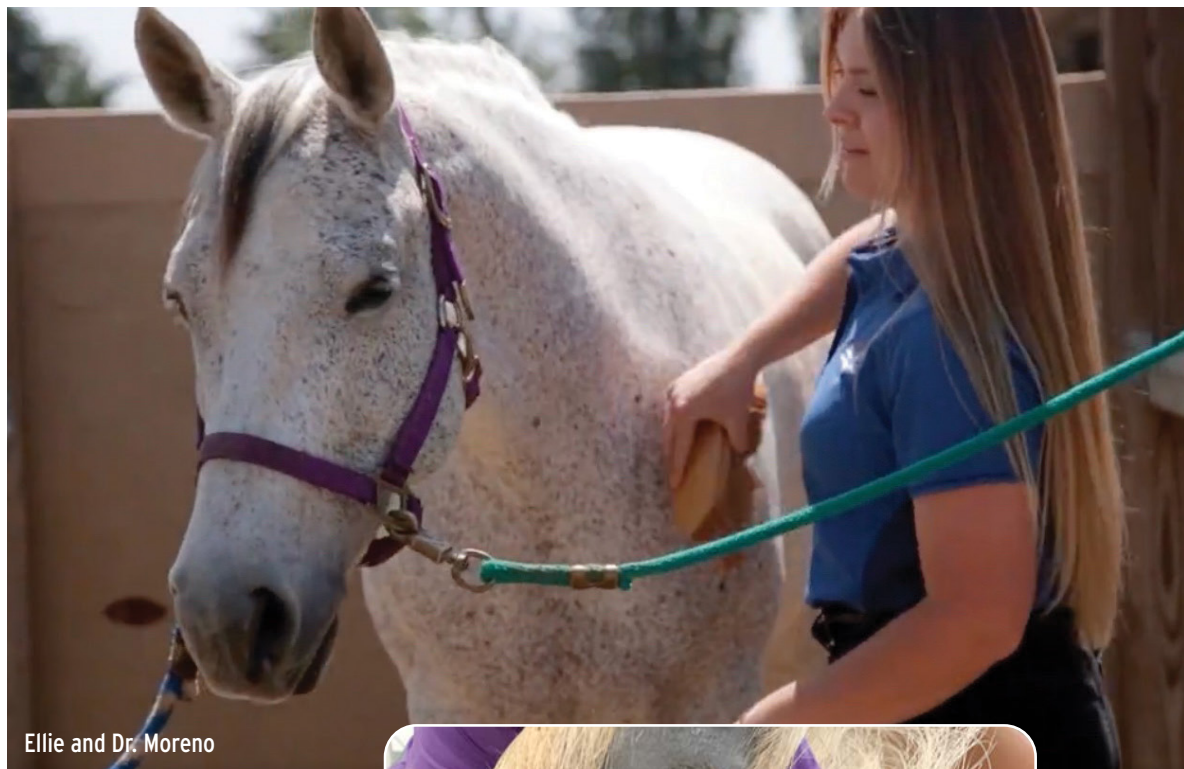
by **Lisa Lopez-Snyder**

Equine melanoma and sarcoid are among the most common equine skin tumors, and their treatment — typically surgery or chemotherapy and radiation — can be invasive and costly.

Research scientists at The Ohio State University's Galbreath Equine Center are currently conducting a clinical trial aimed at finding a more efficient and less invasive therapeutic option. The four-week randomized trial explores the use of a topical treatment composed of betulinic acid (BA), a plant-derived compound that has been experimentally shown to kill cancer cells while sparing normal tissue.

"While there are a few topical treatments for equine sarcoid, there are few to no similar options for equine melanoma," says **Dr. Margaret Mudge**, professor-clinical and section head of Equine Surgery and Critical Care at Galbreath Equine Center. "In fact," she says, "current treatments for sarcoids and melanoma are not as sparing to normal tissue, and the topical agents for sarcoids can be extremely irritating."

"Formulated as a moisturizing cream, the BA treatment has been shown to have efficacy against some canine cancer cell lines," she says, "and preliminary studies show its effectiveness against equine melanoma and sarcoid *in vitro*." The research team is working with Ohio State's Veterinary Medical Center (VMC) pharmacy to formulate the cream. The treatment is known to permeate equine skin with little irritation, sparing horses the risks of anesthesia as well as the other side effects that typical chemotherapy and radiation modalities present, not to mention the associated costs to horse owners.



Ellie and Dr. Moreno

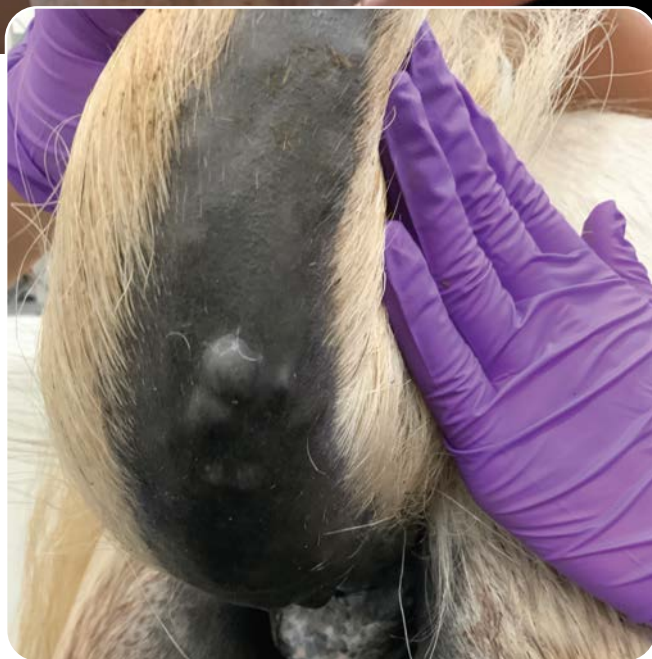
"Melanomas are usually found in older gray horses, often under the tail dock," says co-investigator **Dr. Caitlin Moreno**, a third-year equine surgery resident, whose own gray horse's skin tumor inspired this research. "Even if we surgically excise those, sometimes you can't close the skin, which can lead to managing an open wound," she says. "Sarcoids typically occur around the face, neck, head and ears, generally in young to middle-aged horses," Dr. Mudge says. "While sarcoids do not metastasize internally, left unattended, they can grow and cause comorbidities," she adds.

Drs. Mudge and Moreno emphasize that while they still need horses with equine melanoma, they are especially in need of horses with sarcoid tumors for this clinical trial. Study candidates must be diagnosed with sarcoid or melanoma confined to the skin. The study includes

an initial examination and measurements at the VMC's Galbreath Equine Center. Once home, owners will apply the topical cream to their horse in intervals, and record changes in site appearance and any reactions to the cream. The cost of medications and examination

are covered. The research team will conduct re-checks during the fourth week. ●

For questions about the study, please contact Dr. Mudge at mudge.3@osu.edu or Dr. Moreno at moreno.209@osu.edu.





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Equine Veterinarian Shortage— A Growing Crisis

The increasing veterinary shortage could have serious implications for horse owners



Photo courtesy of Rood + Riddle Equine

by **Jen Roytz**

We have all experienced burnout in one way or another. Maybe it was due to less-than-ideal working conditions; seemingly little appreciation for the long hours, skill and dedication put in each and every day; or a lack of support from management and colleagues. Perhaps it was a litany of rude, ungrateful or demanding customers, or a pay scale that seemed not commensurate with the time, education and skill being invested.

Studies and industry metrics show that large animal veterinary medicine is feeling the effects of burnout, and declining job satisfaction rates are at a higher degree than most other professional career paths.

What does this mean for horse owners? It could mean less veterinarians available to attend to the current population of horses in the U.S., an increase in appointment waiting times, a decrease in on-the-job experience and skill in the workforce, and an overall negative impact on the welfare of horses, especially those in more rural areas.

Where Are the Veterinarians Going?

When it comes to veterinary medicine, small animal versus large animal practice are two entirely different beasts. Whereas most small



animal practitioners work out of a brick and mortar clinic with clients bringing the patients to them, large animal practitioners are often ambulatory, traveling throughout the day from one patient visit to the next, and working primarily out of their vehicle. Small animal clinics typically have regular hours of operation and arrangements for after-hour emergencies, while large animal practitioners are often at the beck and call of their patients, starting early, working late, and staying on call for the majority of the week and weekends to attend to emergencies as they arise.

In addition to a more enviable work-life balance, national statistics gathered by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) show that, on average, small animal practitioners earn higher salaries – significantly higher – than their equine counterparts.

Furthermore, while small animal practitioners are most often attending to beloved family pets, large animal veterinarians' patients are often competitive athletes, or boarded at a stable managed as a for-profit business by the owner.

Everything from the patient itself to the business model is starkly different.

It is no wonder then, that



according to data collected by the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP), only 1.3 percent of veterinary school graduates enter equine practice directly each year, with an additional 4.5 percent who go on to pursue further training in equine-specific internship

positions.

As if that is not concerning enough, surveys conducted by the AVMA show that within five years of working in equine practice, roughly 50 percent of veterinarians either change to a small animal focus, or stop practicing veterinary medicine

altogether.

“This has been happening for a while, but it has somewhat reached a crisis point in that practices are having difficulty filling internships, as well as hiring associates,” said David Foley, executive director of the AAEP. “Long term, if we don’t move the needle the other way, this could have welfare implications for the health of the horse.”

Headquartered in Lexington, Kentucky at the Kentucky Horse Park, the AAEP is a membership-based organization with more than 9,000 members who serve more than 5 million horse owners worldwide. The organization carries out exit interviews for non-renewing members. Foley says that the leading reason former AAEP member veterinarians cite for not renewing their membership (and, one can assume that in many cases this is a sign that they have left equine practice) is “Salary and Lifestyle.”

“We dug much deeper into this statistic in 2021 with some qualitative research to get into specifics,” said Foley. “Yes, compensation is less than small animal medicine, and we need to get those numbers up, but it’s more than being just about money.”

Continued on the next page

Equine Vet Shortage

Continued from previous page

Equine veterinarians tend to work much longer hours than their small animal focused colleagues. They often travel hundreds of miles a day, going from one farm to the next on routine scheduled appointments, fitting in emergency calls for issues such as colic or injuries, in between calls, at the end of the day, or at all hours of the night.

That leaves little off-duty time for family, friends and day-to-day personal tasks and errands.

Combine that with the six-figure debt most young veterinarians have accrued throughout their eight or more years of school, it is no surprise that many either choose to pursue a non-equine focus upon graduation, or transition out of equine practice within their first few years of work. There are simply more equine veterinarians retiring from practice, or otherwise leaving the industry, than there are new veterinary school graduates coming up the ranks to take their place.

The Gender Disparity and Salary Gap

Up until the 21st century, equine veterinary medicine – really veterinary medicine in general – was a male-dominated profession.

Often, it was the male veterinarian working 70 to 80 hours a week, or more, and on call seven days a week to respond to emergencies. If they had a family, it was typically their wife who was taking care of the household and children.

“Veterinarians are really good at setting boundaries... said no one ever,” says Betsy Charles, DVM, MA, a former equine practitioner who

had a focus on sport horses and diagnostic imaging.

“For most successful practitioners, their success was at the expense of their personal lives and their relationships with their families.”

Today, Charles is the vice president of Learning & Leadership Development for Mission Veterinary Partners, a veterinary conglomerate that owns practices around the country, and takes a keen focus on the systemic challenges within veterinary medicine, such as job satisfaction and support for its veterinarians and staff. She is also a board member of the Veterinary Leadership Institute, a non-profit organization committed to the development of healthy and resilient leaders who can make a difference in veterinary medicine. In both her professional and personal life, she is dedicated to creating change in the culture of veterinary medicine.

According to the AAEP, women currently constitute the majority of their membership at 55 percent. While they are still the minority in practice ownership, the AVMA predicts that women will overtake men as practice owners within less than a decade.

“We now have a generation of predominantly female veterinarians, and also more dads who want to be a bigger part of their kids’ lives. The typical schedule of a large animal practitioner, not only the long hours, but also the fact that they’re constantly on the road going from one client to the next, rather than their clients coming to their office as they do with small animals, has become a deterrent to those who don’t otherwise have a deep interest or personal connec-



tion to horses.”

Another deterrent, according to Charles and others, is the starting salaries and earning potential for small animal versus large animal veterinarians.

Compounding that fact, Charles explained, is that the average veterinary college student graduates with over \$200,000 in student loan debt as they embark on their veterinary career, a statistic backed up by the AVMA and AAEP.

“The starting salaries for equine practitioners are typically around \$65,000 to maybe \$85,000 for the few who are lucky enough to get jobs with the premier larger practices, whereas small animal practitioners can earn six figures right out of vet school,” said Charles. “That difference in starting salary can make a huge dent in the student loans they are carrying.”

Compassion Fatigue and Burnout

Charles is quick to point out that it is a much different job dealing with predominantly companion animals, where there is no income expectation or potential, versus boarding stables, competition horses, and breeding stock, which often make up a significant percentage of an equine veterinarian’s client base. While the former are kept simply for enjoyment as pets, the latter are owned or managed as part of a client’s business or livelihood.

“With small animals, owners just want to keep their pets happy and healthy for as long as they can, but with horses, it’s about their performance. People are often making a living from, or competing on some level, with these animals,” said Charles. “When it comes to competitive equine athletes, people are constantly push-

ing the envelope, wanting to try the newest, best thing that they read about online or heard about from so-and-so.”

This difference in the type of clients that practitioners are serving often leads to stark contrasts in their client interactions.

While financial hardship, and a workweek that is roughly twice the number of hours of a traditional full-time job, may be a deterrent for those considering going into equine practice to begin with, it is compassion fatigue and general burnout that is often cited as reasons some leave equine practice for non-veterinary careers.

According to the AVMA, compassion fatigue (a form of mental trauma due to the constant exposure to compassion stress, such as attending to injured or dying animals), and burnout (the psychological response to prolonged chronic interpersonal stressors on the job, such as rude or disrespectful behavior from clients), are common and significant barriers to a suitable quality of life for practitioners, and often lead to them leaving veterinary medicine.

“It is a much different world today than it was 20, 30, 50 or more years ago with regard to how people treat one another. People are tired, they are strapped financially and unsure about the economy, there is a growing political divide, and one unfortunate result is that people are just more comfortable being mean,” said Charles. “When it comes to equine veterinary medicine, people expect to see the same practitioner. They want an immediate response from ‘their’ practitioner, often day or night, and if they do

not get it, they are quick to call someone else or blast them on social media or to colleagues.”

How Can Horse Owners Ease the Strain?

While there is no quick fix to the growing shortage of equine veterinarians, there are some simple things owners, trainers and others who interface with them can do to ease the strain, according to the AAEP.

Observe Business Hours

Unless it is a true emergency, refrain from contacting your veterinarian outside of business hours.

Remember that Your Vet is Running a Business

He or she typically has other people and vendors depending on them for their income. Respect that, like you, they are running a

business and pay them on time for services rendered. Also, consider offering your vet a service fee for taking the time to answer your questions via phone or text to save them, and you, the cost and time associated with an appointment.

Be Ready for Your Appointment

Equine practitioners plan their day, not just from one appointment to the next, but by factoring in drive time and other factors. Having your horse(s) and staff ready at your appointment time will help both you and your vet stay on schedule.

Loyalty Matters

Seeking ways to be a good client creates opportunities for your veterinary team to serve you better. Be receptive and welcoming to veterinarians who are not your regular practitioner, be it the veterinarian on call, or a young veterinarian who might be new to the practice. If possible, use the same clinic for both routine work and emergencies.

Show Your Appreciation

ords and tone matter. Let your veterinarian know how much you appreciate them and the work they do for you. You never know how much a smile or a “thank you” will change someone’s day.

“There are practices out there that have already been evolving to meet the demands of their profession as best as they can without burning out their team,” said Foley. “There are active models for handling emergency coverage via a shared co-op amongst practices, requiring more haul-in services and others.” ♦

AAEP Creates Commission on Equine Veterinary Sustainability

In 2022, the AAEP formed the Commission on Equine Veterinary Sustainability to address the diminishing number of equine veterinarians and to develop strategies to recruit and retain more veterinarians in equine practice.

Led by AAEP member-volunteers, the Commission has five key areas of focus: compensation, strategies for effective emergency coverage, veterinary practice culture, internships, and supporting the growth and development of the equine veterinary student.

“The equine veterinary profession is in crisis,” said AAEP President, Dr. Emma Read. “In order to transform equine practice, we must address the pain points which are driving exceptional horse doctors away. Without change, future veterinary care for our nation’s horses will be greatly jeopardized.”

According to data gathered by the AAEP, approximately 50 percent of equine veterinary practices in the U.S. are one or two doctor practices, which often have different challenges than larger veterinary practices. This commission will ensure that the needs and challenges of practices of this size are carefully considered.

“This is one of the largest initiatives ever undertaken by the AAEP and we look forward to collaborating with equine veterinarians and those who help support them in all facets of practice to change the numbers,” added Read. ♦

Jen Roytz is a marketing and communications specialist based in Central Kentucky with a professional background in Thoroughbred racing and aftercare. Jen is a partner in Topline Communications, a Lexington-based marketing, communications and PR firm serving small and medium-sized businesses. She and her husband, Dr. Stuart Brown, own Brownstead Farm, a 115-acre Thoroughbred breeding, sales, racing and sport horse facility in Versailles, KY.

Jen remains a passionate advocate for Thoroughbred aftercare and regularly speaks on the topic at both the local and national levels. A lifelong equestrian, Jen enjoys competing in the hunter/jumper arenas and specializes in the transition and retraining of Thoroughbreds into amateur-friendly show and recreational mounts.

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[LEARN MORE ABOUT HOSTING!](#)



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A Family's Passion for Conscientious Horse Care Solves One of the Biggest Dilemmas for Equine Owners and Enthusiasts

by **Bobby Williams**

Insect and fly control during warm months are a constant battle for horse owners. Equally challenging is which fly spray to select from the many options available at your favorite tack shop or online vendor. Keeping in mind the need for a product that is effective and safe for you and your horse,

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background to create a non-toxic, effectual spray that she felt good about using. What began as a fly spray for personal use quickly developed into a company whose ethics are deeply rooted in horse, human, and earth stewardship. Laura's inspiration is realized by Guaranteed Horse Products' motto, "Love your horse, love your planet." This passion is shared by her children, Bobby Williams and Angela Jennings, who have continued

Laura's vision and now run the company together.

Guaranteed Horse Products continues to produce a robust and trustworthy line of natural and non-toxic equine care products. All products are cruelty-free and manufactured in the USA. To find out more about this inspirational, trendsetting company and their entire line of equine products, check out their website at: guaranteedhorseproducts.com. ●





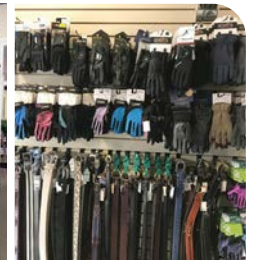
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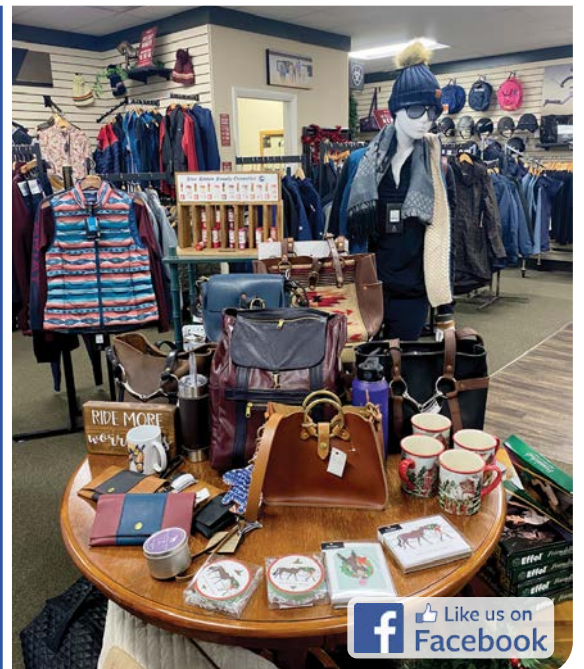
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Kellie and Sam Rettinger of Whispery Pines Percherons: Living the Dream

by **Susanna Massie Thomas**

Kellie and Sam Rettinger of Whispery Pines Percherons in Kingsville, Ohio are living their dream: Making a living together with the horses they love and pursuing their vision of spreading joy and inspiration.

"Sometimes I pinch myself and ask how did I get so lucky? I've got the best husband, the most supportive parents and team, the best job, and, of course, the best horses in the world!" Kellie says incredulously.

Born and raised in Ashtabula County, Ohio, both Kellie and Sam came from horse loving families. Kellie's father rode Western and was also a bronc rider; her mother rode and showed in both Western pleasure and English (hunter/jumpers). Kellie, an only child, had a Quarter Horse on which she did cutting, barrel racing and Western pleasure. But she always had a yen for draft horses, in particular those owned and driven by Sam's grandfather, Richard Stasiak, which she saw at every county fair. "I was in awe of them," she admits.

Sam loved those Percherons, as well. "Grandpa had six that he logged with and showed," says Sam. "Starting at age 3, I was his sidekick, driving and riding with him." At 9, Sam figured out how to harness an 18 hand Percheron with no

assistance by lowering the harness onto the horse's back with a pulley slung over a barn beam. "I was too little to hitch the horse, though, so I'd take him out and line drive him for fun." At 11, Sam was helping his grandfather log with his own team. At 13, he was driving his grandfather's 4- and 6-horse hitches, challenges that whet his appetite to learn more, do more, and share more of his skills and passion with others. And every Saturday throughout the summer, he and his grandfather would be showing at the county fairs with two Dalmatians along for the ride!

Kellie was keen to develop her skills with draft horses, as well. One day, at age 12, while attending the county fair, she mustered up the courage to approach Sam's grandfather. Feeling intrepid, she presented "Grandpa" with one big request. If she mucked his horses' stalls for a week would he let her ride one of his Percherons in an upcoming fun show?

"Luckily for me, he agreed," Kellie says.

From that moment on, she was smitten with the gentleness, kindness, and scope of Percherons. "When you ride one, you feel you could touch the sky. You'd swear you had wings," she says.

She also remembers seeing and being smitten with Grandpa's 15-year-old grandson, the quiet,



redheaded Sam. Sam noticed her too, and several years later, reveling in their mutual love for Percherons, they began a life together.

"He's my rock!" says Kellie. "He's no-nonsense, meticulous, and always has a plan. He has a heart of gold and would do anything for anyone. He's quiet but really funny! And he's totally supportive of me, encouraging me to chase my dreams." Pausing, she adds, "And, Oh Lord, is he handsome!"

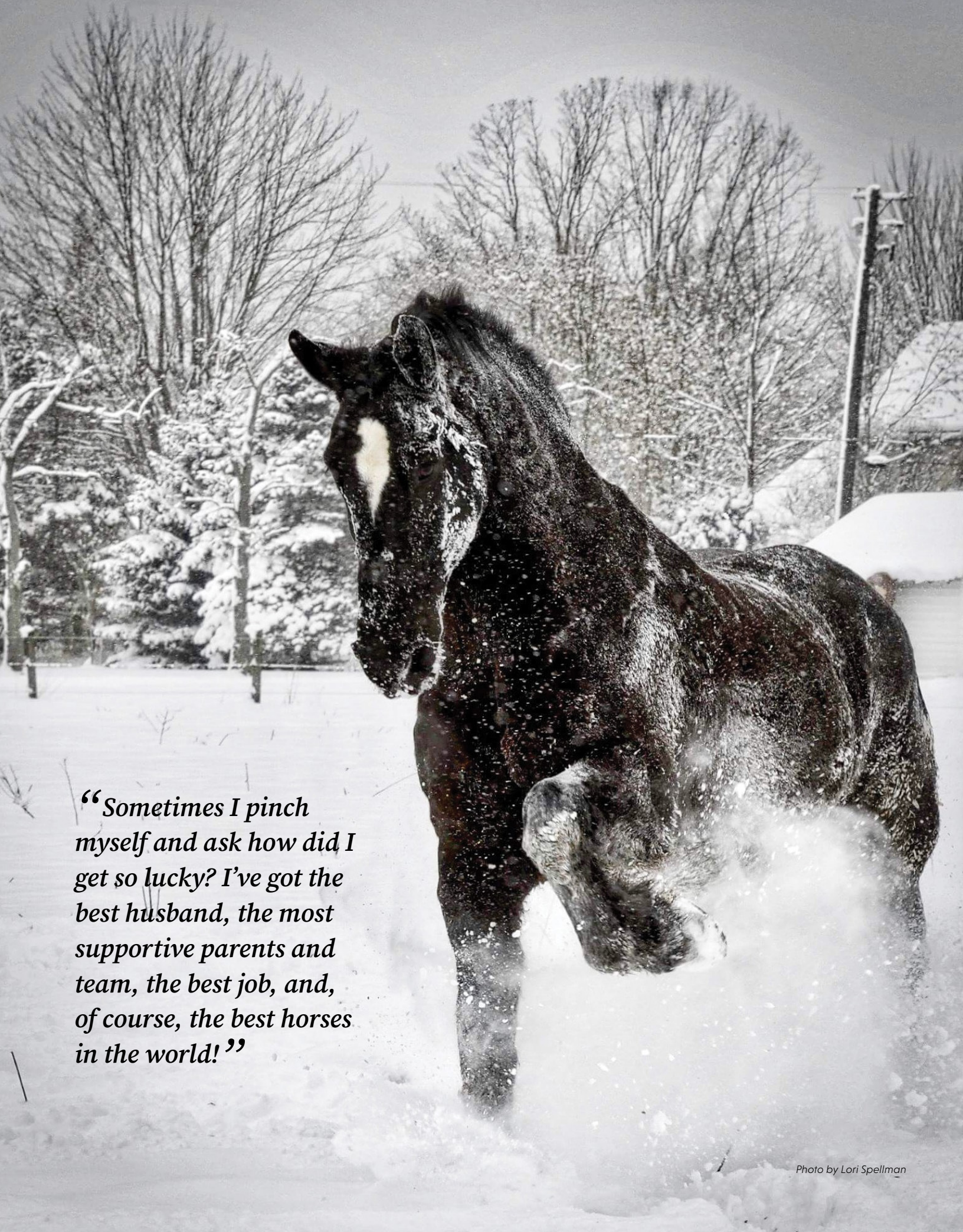
Predictably, Sam gives a no-nonsense response when asked what qualities he likes best about Kellie. "EVERYTHING!" he resolutely states. Push him a little and he'll elaborate,

saying she's fun-loving, adventuresome, creative and loves people. She's also hard-working, excellent with horses, and fiercely loyal - qualities which Kellie says Sam has, in spades, as well.

Clearly, this is one team that gees and haws perfectly!

For almost two decades now, Kellie and Sam have worked ceaselessly to create a thriving carriage driving and logging business with their eight horses, currently, Tony, Goose, Flintstone, Samson, Flash, Colt, Maverick, and Patriot. "If it involves hauling - weddings, funerals, parades, hayrides, sleigh

Continued on page 58



“Sometimes I pinch myself and ask how did I get so lucky? I’ve got the best husband, the most supportive parents and team, the best job, and, of course, the best horses in the world!”

Living the Dream

Continued from page 56

rides, photo shoots - we do it!" Kellie says proudly. "And, being in a movie is something we can cross off our bucket list too!" (Sam had a cameo role as a carriage driver in the rom-com, "Merry Single Christmas", released in November, 2022.)

Logging has long been a prominent industry in the rural and forested community of Kingsville. For Sam, it's a family tradition. As a boy, Sam helped his grandfather harvest hardwood deciduous trees, such as red and white oak, walnut, cherry, and beech. He's got his own logging business today. "Logging is more efficient, more effective, and has much less of an impact on the forest," says Sam, a factor that is important to him. Skidders used by most modern day loggers leave unsightly highways in the forest, of mutilated trunks and trampled undergrowth, destroying natural habitats and the quiet pristine of the woods, he points out. Besides, he is proud of carrying on his grandfather's legacy.

There's much to do when not logging, however. The horses have to be worked to stay fit. Young ones are being brought along by driving them singly, in pairs, and in a hitch with other horses, sometimes as many as eight. Kellie and Sam attend six or seven major shows a year, as well as big expos, such as the Road to the Horse and Equine Affaire.

And you'll see them and their rig at all the county fairs. "Those are very



Photo by Cynthia White



Photo by Cynthia White

important to us." Kellie explains. "We believe in community. We want to share with the crowds the horses, the history, and the art form of driving."

Kellie's performance as Wonder Woman exemplifies the lengths that she goes to in order to please and inspire the audience. "I hired two stunt men for the act to be the villains and I took martial arts lessons to



Photo courtesy of Sam Rettinger

fight with and defeat them. I made the costumes - I love doing that! My aim was to empower women and girls to be kind and strong no matter what, because there is nothing they can't do. My message is always, 'never give up on what you dream of! If you put your heart and your mind to it, you can do it!'"

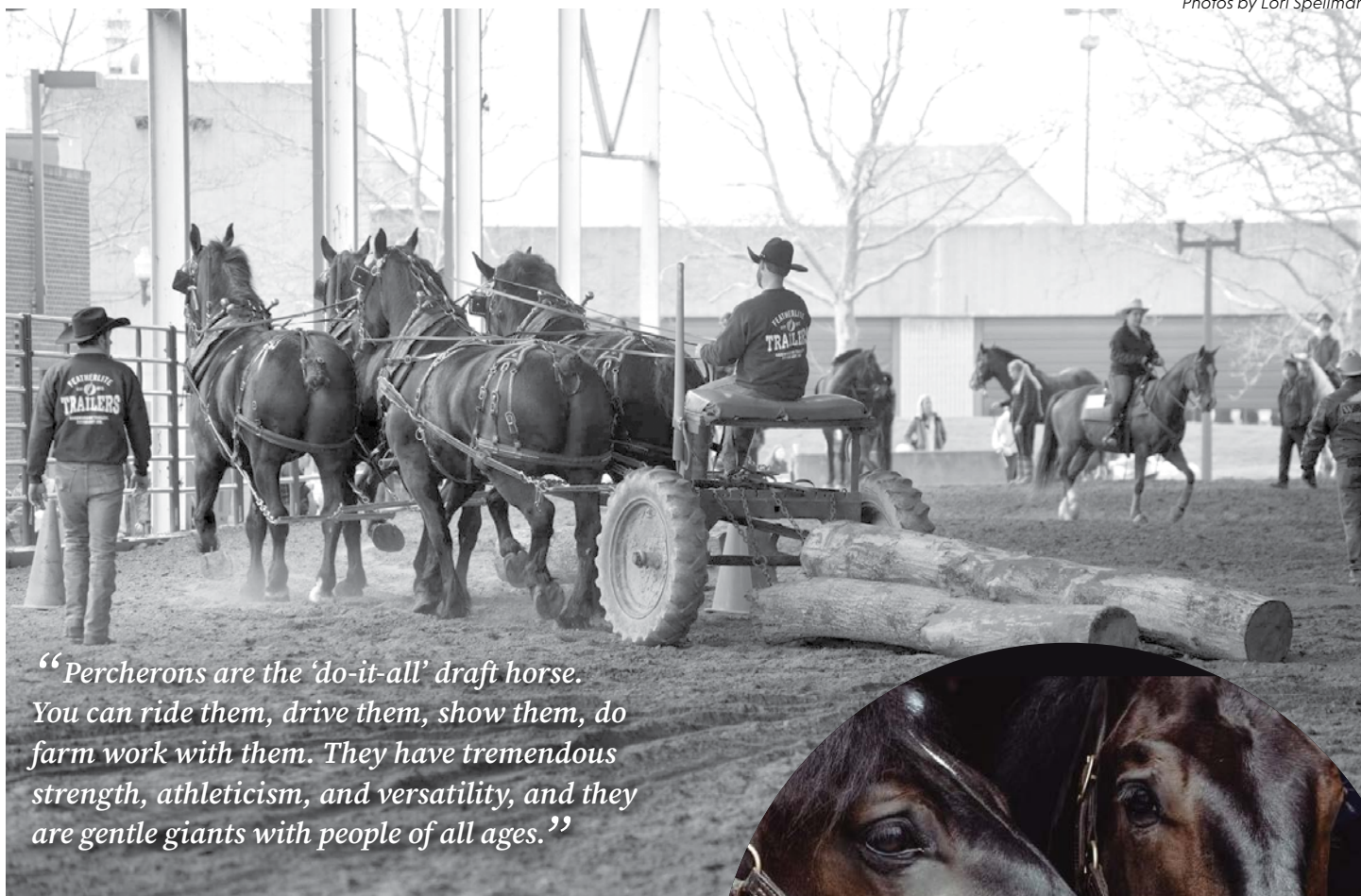
She knows this for a fact, having achieved so

many of her dreams. But she acknowledges the grit and perseverance it takes. "There've been so many early mornings, late nights, and long days. I've felt doubt. I know defeat. I've gotten tired. I've said to myself, 'this is just too hard.' But then I remember the faces of people, lit with joy, when they see our horses. I know how the horses share unconditional love and acceptance, and what that does for people. I tell myself not to settle. I say 'Girl, Get up! Dust off your boots! There are things to get done!' I focus on the end goal. And that makes all it takes sooooo worth it!"

So, she keeps on carrying on and crossing things off her bucket list, one of which is more travel with their horses, spreading the good word about the Percheron breed.

"Percherons are the 'do-it-all' draft horse. You can ride them, drive them, show them, do farm work with them. They have tremendous strength, athleticism, and versatility, and they are gentle giants with people of all ages."

"Percherons have much to teach people," Sam adds. "Patience. Understanding. Observation. Organization. Sensitivity, and Respect, to name a few. They say when you meet a draft horse, you know they're God's creatures," he says. "It's true! The minute you meet a draft horse, you can feel that." On a six-horse hitch, the leaders, weighing 2,200 lbs., are 34 feet away from the driver. Four more horses, and 8,800 lbs. follow behind them. That's 6.5 tons of horsepower, each guided by a one-inch-wide strap of leather, looped over separate fingers of



“Percherons are the ‘do-it-all’ draft horse. You can ride them, drive them, show them, do farm work with them. They have tremendous strength, athleticism, and versatility, and they are gentle giants with people of all ages.”



the driver. “The lines are secondary,” Sam says, “What really matters is having horses that listen to you.” He explains that it takes a long time to build the trust, respect, and partnership, not just with one horse, but with the whole team. They learn key words, and the tone of voice and hand, of the coachman. “When you drive, you can feel each horse through its rein, but you feel something more, too. You feel part of the group, and that group is looking to you as the leader.” The spiritual quality about this understanding and experience makes it “the ultimate experience in horsemanship,” Sam believes.

Kellie calls it an “energetic connection.” “It’s hard to explain, but not only can you feel each horse

through the lines, you can feel that they love what they do, too!” Kellie equates it to music, which she loves. “Horses are my instrument. They give me a sense of peace, joy, fulfillment, and excitement to share with the world.”

And sharing with the world is something Kellie and Sam will continue to do. They will seize every opportunity to show off their horses, to spread joy, and to impart education about driving and the Percheron breed. “Younger generations have few to no opportunities to meet or work with draft horses,” Sam says. “A horse and carriage is a beautiful thing. Driving is an art form that we want to preserve and share. We want to teach. We want to inspire. We want to bring joy. Just like Grandpa did. He’s the one who made

the road for us. Kellie and I, as we go forward, are just doing the blacktopping.”

And, knowing this team, they’ll be blacktopping, as well as forging new roads for the generations to come, for life. ♦

Susanna Massie Thomas, CPC, ELI-MP, and president of Shamrock Legacy Coaching and Consulting, LLC, is a leadership and personal development coach whose online courses, coaching programs and workshops help

individuals and groups maximize personal, professional, and organizational potential and productivity through the way of the horse. A lifelong horsewoman and former executive director of the Secretariat Center, Susanna’s “Horse Centered Reschooling ProgramSM” received national acclaim, and earned her the title of Kentucky Colonel, the highest level of honor bestowed by the Governor of Kentucky for outstanding service and noteworthy accomplishments.

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Why Do Horses Wear Grazing Muzzles?

by GG Equine

Grazing muzzles are an increasingly common sight in pastures and at boarding facilities. Some people wonder: why would a horse need a grazing muzzle? Isn't it cruel? When they hear that a grazing muzzle slows down a horse's eating, the most common response is, "I need a grazing muzzle for myself!" Since the concept immediately clicks with people, why do horse owners still hesitate to fit their horses with muzzles?

People are used to thinking of horses as free spirits. Say the word "horse" and many people imagine a wild herd running across a prairie, manes flying in the wind. In reality, most domestic horses lead sedentary lives within much smaller spaces.

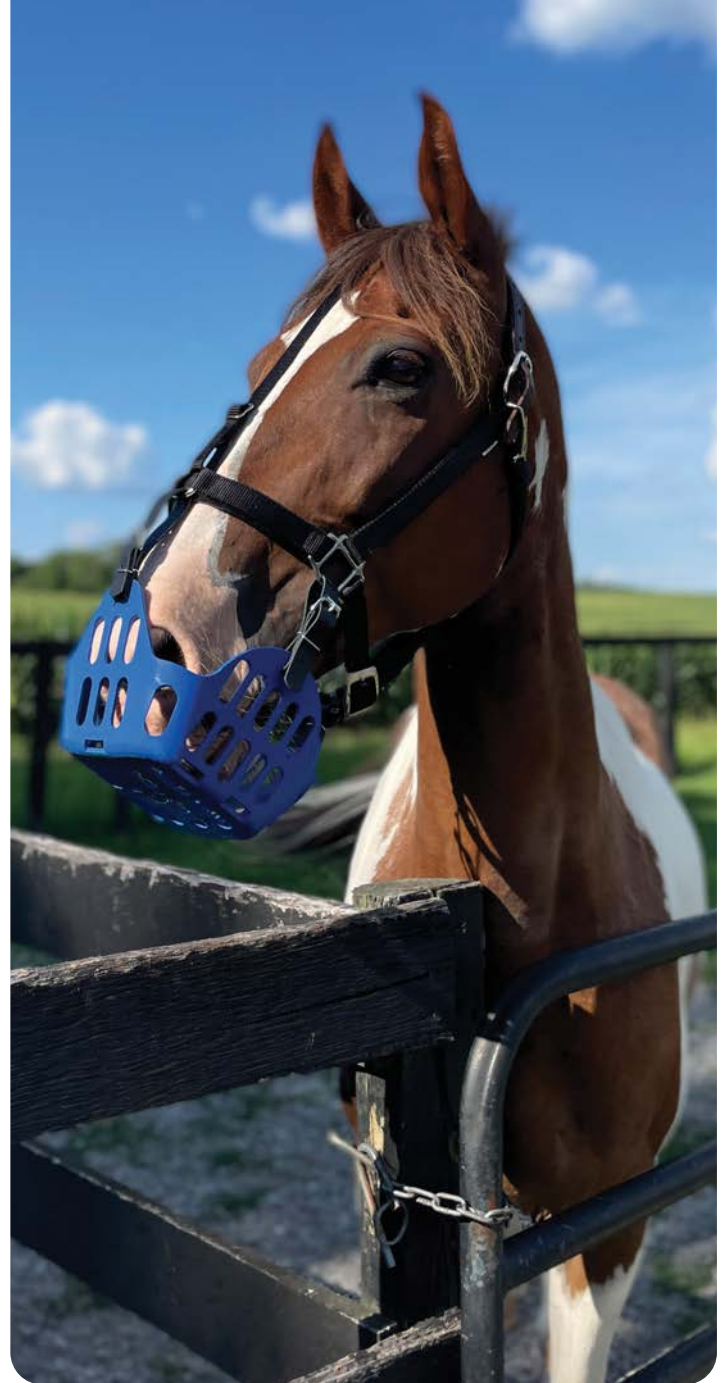
Modern horses tend to graze on lush pastures without the labor they were accustomed to in the past, and without access to wide open prairies to enjoy with their herds. Left to themselves in grass-rich fields, horses will eat as much as they can for as long as we let them. As a result, many are carrying far too much excess weight.

Overweight and obese horses are at risk for a range of health disorders, including laminitis. Some horses simply have trouble processing the sugars and starches in grass. Over time, extra pounds and digestive irregularities can put a real strain on a horse's health, from joints to digestion.

On the other hand, an active equine digestive tract is a healthy one. Horses are essentially half-ton vegetarians meant to be eating during most of their waking hours, so even overweight horses need regular forage intake. If being out in the pasture increases the risk for obesity and metabolic issues, why not just keep horses in stalls or dry lots?

Stalls and dry lots have their own drawbacks. Aside from rest periods, the equine circulatory system is designed for constant movement. Confinement to small spaces severely limits mobility, and horses may experience swelling in their legs and stiffness in their muscles and joints if they are not moving enough.

Limited movement is one thing; limited access to food is another. Stuck in a stall or dry



Photos by Kara Musgrave

lot, a horse will often eat their allotted hay quickly, leaving them nothing until the next feeding, which may be hours away. Horses that endure prolonged stretches without food can develop digestive problems, even colic.

Finally, there is the social component. Because horses are herd animals, being isolated means they are unable to interact with their herdmates. This can be stressful and depressing for horses left behind during turnout time.

Unlimited access to lush pasture is clearly not the best option for horses. Nor is keeping them indefinitely

in stalls or dry lots. What is the solution, then? Instead of restricting their mobility or social time, restrict their grass intake with a grazing muzzle!

A grazing muzzle limits intake while still allowing horses enough forage to keep their digestive tract active. A muzzle protects horses from the consequences of overgrazing, keeps them mentally, physically, and socially active, and gives them the freedom to remain in the pasture where they are happiest. ●

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- IEA shows are held in a variety of facilities including outdoor arenas, private barns, and large show complexes.
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- Membership in the IEA is \$60 for riders, coaches and Adult Members and \$150 per middle/upper school team.
- IEA Class fees are \$45 per class (in 2022). A rider showing in two classes would pay \$90 per show.
- Each coach is responsible for setting their own fees for lessons, coaching and other team requirements.
- Riders and parents are responsible for purchasing show clothing.

How do I find a team to join?

- The IEA website, www.rideiea.org, has maps of current teams under each discipline. Look for FIND A TEAM.
- IEA suggests prospective riders and parents reach out to several coaches in your area to inquire about their team requirements.
- Once you have settled on a team, visit www.rideiea.org to fill out the online membership application on the JOIN page.

When is the best time of year to join an IEA Team?

- IEA membership for the new season opens in June each year. Teams and Riders may join anytime during the season, but the ideal time to join is between JUNE and AUGUST so that teams are ready to start showing when the season opens AUGUST 1st.
- The vast majority of regular season IEA shows happen between September and January.
- Post season shows can begin as early as January and run through April (*or June for Western*).

Have a question about joining the IEA?

Contact
Membership
Coordinator
Jennifer Eaton
jenn@rideiea.org
1-877-RIDE-IEA
ext. 203
or visit
rideiea.org



Being Who We Are and Doing What We Love Inspired and Guided by Horses



Photos courtesy of Spirit of Leadership Team

by **Jackie Stevenson, MSSA, LISW, BCC**

How can horses guide us to know who we are, what we love, and what we love to do as we journey through our personal and professional life?

Horses do not have the answer to what you love, only you will know that, because you are the one who really knows you. In the presence of the horse what CAN be revealed to you is a way of being, a way of knowing yourself better, and then, perhaps, know better what you love and what it is you love to do.

We were born, much like horses, naturally knowing what we loved. Some of us follow the path of what we loved since childhood. But for many of us, we lost our way to that knowing as we tried to please others, were rewarded for doing things

we did not love but were good at, or were taught in subtle ways to fear we might not be good enough to be who we truly are and to do what we loved.

Horses have existed for sixty-five million years by being who they are, sensing their purpose and moving toward what they love:

- Living in harmony with themselves, their herd mates, and their world around them
- Moving towards freedom and what is safe and pleasurable, and away from danger and that which causes fear and distress
- Belonging and seeking companionship within their horse and, even their human, herd
- Being responsible for their own wellbeing and

the wellbeing of the members of their herd and especially their young, ensuring the survival of the next generation

- Being awake and aware through all their senses including their heart sense

How might our lives be more joyful and meaningful if we too live like horses - being who we are, sensing our purpose and moving toward what we love?

In the good company of horses, a space opens where our



Jackie and Reggie

own truths surface without judgment of right or wrong. At the side of a horse, we become more aware of who we are, what we can trust, and what we want to invite into our lives. Heart to heart with a horse we can be who we uniquely are and discover what we genuinely love.

On one beautiful fall, blue-sky day, with the colors of the leaves a spectacular reddish gold and the horses calm and content in their expansive pasture, I guided a coaching session with Matt who came to make decisions about his future in his career. He was well respected for his talent and had been promoted within his company to his current position of Vice President. While there were good opportunities in his current job; he was

secure, well paid, and highly regarded, it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to enjoy and find meaning in his job and be positive at work. He felt a little lost, and hoped that by coming for coaching sessions, he could find his way back to finding meaning in his existing role at work, or to break free from his current position in the company and find what he really loved to do.

Matt was attracted to the idea of his coaching sessions being with horses. Summers spent growing up and being with horses on his grandfather's farm had been his first love.

As we wandered through the pasture toward the Pebble Ledge Ranch herd of five horses and two ponies, the horse that Matt was

most drawn to and eager to meet was Majestic, a proud, 19 hand shiny black Shire mare, the herd's lead mare, CEO, and matriarch.

In the quiet of the pasture, he was far from the distracting noise of his corporate workplace, and farther from the chatter inside himself. He respectfully approached Majestic and stood quietly next to her, drawn to her grounded, calm, confident and sure presence. In this slower pace of herd time and slower pace of life, in the quiet and expanse of space and time, Matt began to find his place of calm and confidence, and was able to listen within to what was hoping to be heard.

"It's my purpose," he said "that I am trying to discover, that which I love, that which makes me unique, happy, and clear about the best way I can contribute to others and make a difference in my world"

I was curious if he would be interested in a simple learning activity with Majestic in order to understand more about his purpose, who he was at the core of his essence, and what he truly loved.

I suggested that he silently explore, from his heart to Majestic's heart, the following three touchstones, one at a time; *I am... I trust... I invite....* (Adapted from the work of Alan Seale, Transformational Presence, Transformational Presence Center, 2017)

I am; who are you, what is being revealed inside you now, what is asking for your attention, who are you in the heart of your being, what do you love?



"It's my purpose," he said "that I am trying to discover, that which I love, that which makes me unique, happy, and clear about the best way I can contribute to others and make a difference in my world"

I trust; taking a deep breath into the heart of your being, what do you truly trust within yourself, within the context of your purpose? What do you trust and what do you not trust? What is waiting to be found without judgment of right or wrong?

I invite: Being clearer about who you are and what you trust, what is important to notice, to bring your attention to? What do you choose to invite into your life as you sense your way into your purpose? This conscious invitation creates

intentional space for inner knowing to emerge, intention to be revealed, purpose to be clearer and what you love to come forward.

Matt and Majestic stood together, shoulder-to-shoulder, as Matt silently explored the three touchstones as a way of discovering his unique way of being and his purpose, what he trusted and wanted to invite into his life. Majestic lowered her head to his chest - as if to offer her quiet strength and calm confidence - as he listened

Continued on next page



Photo courtesy of Spirit of Leadership Team

Guided by Horses *Continued from previous page*

from his heart to what he knew to be true about who he was and what he loved.

Matt took a few steps back and placed his hand on Majestic's neck as she leaned toward him. Matt spoke, "I do not know what I want to do yet, or change in my workplace, or even in my life. I do know that here, in the presence of Majestic, who I am, how I want to be, and what matters most to me. I know what I trust in myself and others, what I

want to pay attention to and invite into my life. I know what I love, how I want to be, and what I want to bring forward.

I want to slow down and spend more quality time with my family. I want to be more patient and present at work, be curious and interested, and learn more about what matters to my team members. Simply put, I want to be more me in my relationships with people and invite them to be more of who they are. I do not feel lost. I know how I can be a better me, and I trust that will inform what I decide to

do. I am hopeful and excited about what opportunities are possible from this way of being me."

The power of being with horses, as Matt demonstrated in his coaching session, helps us come closer to listening from within and trusting our inner knowing, to understand better who we are, how we want to be, and what we love.

The word **POWER** contains within it a pathway to be with horses as our guides, as we traverse life's challenging terrain and journey within, to discover

the treasure of our true self at its best, and to what we love.

The P in power reminds us to pause and prepare, slowing and quieting, grounding and centering, and listening through all our senses to the territory around us, and within us, and to what we love.

The O calls us to open and observe, releasing past judgments, disappointments, and assumptions, in order to notice with present clarity the reality and resources in the now.

The W invites us to

wander and wonder, experiencing the present moment from an expansive and curious perspective, creating a larger field of choice.

The E guides us to enter and engage, stepping beyond our habits and familiar patterns to connect with ourselves, others, and horses, and the life around us through honest communication, compassion, and trustworthy relationships.

The R in power expects us to reflect and respond that we may act with integrity, horse sense, and with the awareness of our way of being, acting, and leading for the well-being of “all our relations” for seven generations to come.

The power and pathway of who we are and what we love is already in our compassionate hearts, in our creative minds, in our capable hands, and sure-footed hooves. “You only have to let the soft animal of your body love what it loves...announcing your place in the family of things.”

(Mary Oliver, American poet, Wild Geese, 2004)

Love is a sacred, embodied relationship in which we see the divine in ourselves,

in another person, and in our horses. It is a knowing deep within, a knowing of who you really are, and seeing the other person or horse with full acceptance, for who they truly are.

“Love, the most powerful of human emotions, the source of all creativity, collaboration, insight and excellence...” (Marcus Buckingham, Love+Work, Harvard Business Review Press, 2022)

How might we explore a more loving way of being and living through the heart of the horse, the wisdom of the herd, and the beauty of nature?

How might we discover, by simply being with horses, the source of our strength, passion, joy, and our unique purpose?

How might we, inspired and guided by horses, journey through life being simply who we are, doing simply what we love, and creating a more loving way of living? ♦

Jackie Stevenson is the founder and CEO of Spirit of Leadership, LLC, providing coaching, leadership, and team building training and seminars for corporations and non-profit organizations. For more info: spirit-of-leadership.com

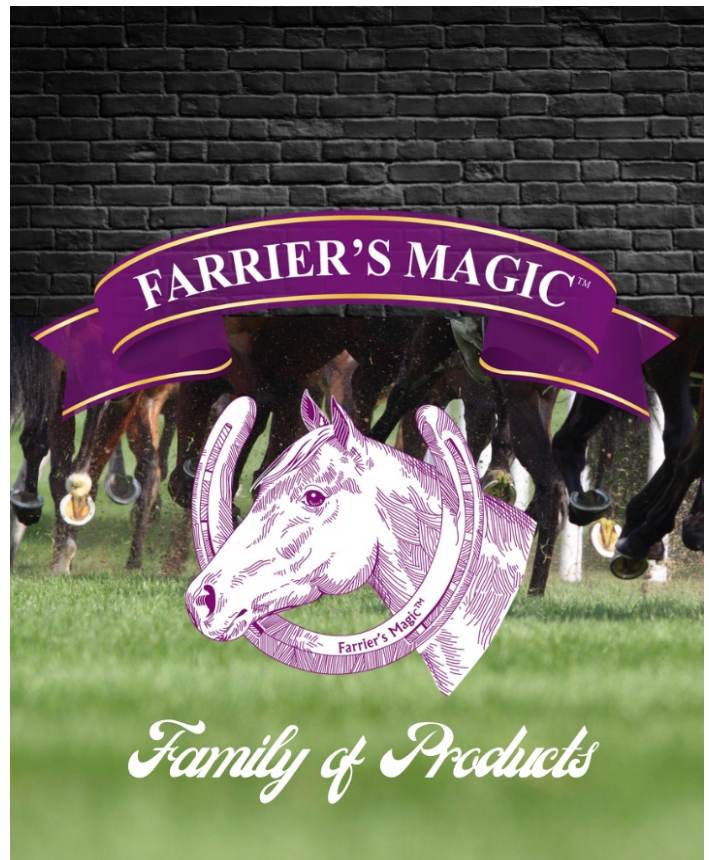


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Think All Helmets Are the Same? Think Again!

Meet the Man Who's Raising the Bar on Helmet Safety

by **Rhys Powell**

With safety and technology paving the way of the future in other sports, the need to improve and raise the safety standards in equestrian sports has become more essential than ever before.

Four years ago while riding at our equestrian property in New Zealand, my horse spooked and I fell off at the walk, breaking my neck (C3). During the five days that followed while in the hospital, unable to move, I designed an equestrian helmet *in my head*, knowing that the severity of injury from my accident could have been prevented. The journey has been a real eye-opener, and I have learned so much more about a sport I am involved in. But most importantly, I learned about head injuries and ways to help minimize them.

I taught myself all about CAD and 3D printing, tooling, molds, different types of materials, you

well-marketed.

For the first two years, I focused purely on safety, as that was the reason I began this process in the first place. After two years of creating a prototype, despite it being really safe, I

as I didn't want that to be a factor influencing the decision process. I wanted the very highest safety standards, best possible materials, brain/concussion protection, (MIPS) safety features, etc. Our patented design and system

being just plastic), including the majority of the most expensive European ones, cannot pass the highest safety standards found in our ARRO helmets.

Key points of this helmet:

1. Obtained the world's highest and latest safety rating - Snell "E2021", a new standard which is significantly higher than all other older standards, i.e., VG1, ASTM, PAS015.

2. MIPS : (Multi-directional Impact Protection System) - an additional liner incorporated inside the helmet, designed to add protection against rotational motion transferred to the head and brain. Rotational motion increases the risk for minor to severe brain injuries. MIPS can reduce rotational motion by redirecting energies and forces otherwise transferred to the brain.

3. Carbon Fibre and Kevlar - the very best materials to use in the outer layer of the helmet: both known for being lightweight but very strong; Kevlar is used in bullet-proof vests.

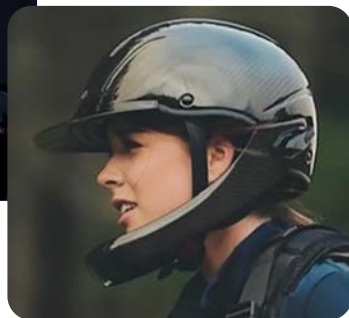
4. Detachable chin guard for facial and neck protection, this can be worn in dual mode, i.e., with or without the chin bar.

5. Removable and breakaway visor. The visor at the front is removable to meet any showing regulations, and breaks away to minimize forces/stresses, and hyperflexion of the neck.

6. Dual density EPS (Expanded Polystyrene) inner liner - to accommodate different impact locations on the head.

While no helmet or impact protection system can prevent a user from all injuries, ARRO helmets give you the confidence to follow your passion with horses in the best possible helmet available. ●

For more information:
arro.nz



name it! I first started cutting helmets in half to see what they were made of; the majority were very disturbing and incredibly basic. Most are just plastic helmets that are very cheap to manufacture - just around \$10 US dollars! Even some of the very expensive European ones were not much better than the very cheapest (\$50) plastic ones on Amazon, they had just been

didn't believe many people would actually wear it - it looked a bit silly! The following two years, I focused on the fashion side and now believe I have both, safety & fashion, which is a very difficult combination to achieve. I purposely didn't worry about material costs or the final price,

include 78 individual parts.

The most concerning thing I learned through this process, is that the level of protection offered by the majority of helmets on the market is significantly lower than what people think - or are led to believe.

And many riders assume helmet safety standards are pretty much all the same, but in reality, they are widely different, with most helmets consisting of multiple lower standards, because they aren't designed to achieve the highest safety standards. I would estimate 99% of helmets (most

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-Pythagoras

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Visit OHCONLINE.com to get maps, learn more about Ohio Horseman's Council and plan your next trail riding adventure.

What is a Colic Massage Clinic?

by **Wendy Usner**

NeighSpa Equine Massage Therapy

Colic. A scary word when you own a horse. You wish they could tell you exactly where it hurts, and when it started. Unfortunately, they can't. So, what do we do? We call the vet, walk the horse, pray like crazy, and try to think of any way to help them. A very stressful time, not only for you, but also your horse. Horses have a harder time relaxing their muscles when they are picking up on our stress levels. Either through our panicked voice, pounding heart, or the heightened energy we produce. They pick up on all of it. So, what can you do?

FIRST, CALL YOUR VET! What I am sharing with you **DOES NOT** replace veterinary care. What I am sharing is a series of gentle massage strokes that can be done while waiting for your vet's arrival, and can help you focus and remain calm so that you can help your horse relax and, possibly, pass some gas. *(Remember when you were small and had a tummy ache? Mom would rub your back or tummy, always making it feel a little better.)* You can do one of the strokes, walk your horse a lap or two, as instructed, then do another of the strokes. They aren't hard to learn, and even



if you only remember a couple, it still gives you something to do while waiting.

I offer my Colic Massage Clinics **FREE OF CHARGE**, preferring at least 3 people per clinic. While the clinic IS free, donations are accepted, with 100% of collected monies gifted to local Ohio humane charities, who work tirelessly to help the animals in their care. Helping to offset some of their costs, it may supply a few bags of feed, or some extra money to throw at a looming vet bill.

My name is Wendy Usner and I'm a certified equine massage therapist (CEMT). I've always loved horses and wanted to find a way to work with them. Becoming an equine massage therapist gives me the opportunity to do just that - work with horses. Four years ago I made the decision to become a massage therapist; I got certified and haven't looked back! I absolutely love what I do and look forward to

Horses have a harder time relaxing their muscles when they are picking up on our stress levels.

meeting new clients and their horses.

What else can massage do for your horse?

By increasing circulation, it can increase range of motion by restoring the muscles to their proper length. It can also lengthen connective tissue, helping to prevent injuries by making the muscles more flexible. It can reduce inflammation in the joints by helping to produce synovial fluid, and helps in removing toxins from the body. It assists in healing muscles by helping move oxygen-rich blood where it's needed and removing lactic acid that can build up

and create soreness.* If you've ever had a massage, you know how good you felt afterward. It's the same with horses and will generally improve their disposition. In addition, horses on "stall rest" can benefit from massage as it helps relieve some of the inevitable stiffness that comes with lack of movement. Regular massage can be a great addition to your normal horse care routine, and I'd love to become a part of your horse's care!

If you are located in northeast Ohio and interested in getting your horse massaged, or having a Colic Clinic at your barn for boarders or friends, please call, and set up an appointment time. ●

(Note- while I am willing to travel a little farther, a travel fee may be required.)

For more information: neighspa.com

*(Massage benefits - Brandenburg University massage training manual)

STOPPING THE SPREAD:



The Equine Disease Communication Center works to protect horses by spreading real-time information about disease outbreaks. Here's how it can help your horse.

by **Allison Rehnberg**

On May 13, 2011, one of North America's largest outbreaks of equine herpesvirus myeloencephalopathy (EHM) ignited at a major cutting horse event in Ogden, Utah. EHM is a particularly deadly syndrome associated with

equine herpesvirus (EHV-1). At first, it was just one confirmed case of EHM in Utah. Then two. Then it crossed to another state, and another, and soon, the number of exposed and affected horses grew like wildfire. By the end of June, when the outbreak was finally classified as contained, there were ninety horses with confirmed or suspected cases of equine herpesvirus 1 (EHV-1) or EHM spread out across twenty-two states. Hundreds of competitions had also been canceled in an attempt to curb the spread, compounding the loss of life with significant economic loss.

If the spread of EHM at that show reads like something out of a horse owner's worst nightmare, that's because it is. It's also a nightmare that's shared by veterinarians, equine event personnel, equine facility managers, state animal health officials, and beyond. But in addition to fighting the disease, everyone involved with the situation in Ogden had to deal with another kind of outbreak – one that was just as hard to trace, and maybe even harder to stop: the spread of rumors and misinformation.

Finding The Positive

In 2011, Nathaniel White, DVM, was the director of the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Va., and past president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP). Although he was more than two thousand miles away from Ogden, it didn't take

long for information about the outbreak to reach him.

"The rumors that started at that show were rampant," White said. "We got calls at my hospital in Virginia from people wondering if the borders of our state were closed because of the outbreak. It was amazing how fast the rumor mill spread the misinformation."

Although the situation at Ogden was unfortunate, the plight of those horses and their owners helped

underscore the American horse industry's need for a national equine health plan, an idea that had already begun brewing the year before in a 2010 meeting between officials from the American Horse Council (AHC) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). It also helped kick-start the development of a nationwide equine disease communication system for the horse industry. Led by White, an AAEP task force partnered with the AHC and animal health officials in

order to create the Equine Disease Communication Center.

"After the Ogden situation, we knew we had to do something," White said. "One, we needed a better way to communicate across the industry. And two, we needed to stress the importance of biosecurity, because lack of good biosecurity practices was one of the reasons the disease spread the way that it did."

With the support of a variety of industry organizations, the Equine Disease Communication

horse industry. All cases and diseases have to be diagnostically confirmed by a state animal health official or an attending veterinarian before they're reported, which means the information is always verified before it's released via the system.

"The whole idea is that if there's an outbreak of an infectious disease in an area, it gets reported to the EDCC," said White, who is the director of the EDCC. "Then we can send out an alert about the outbreak from our database. We have about 8,700 email addresses in our database and

about 18,000 followers on the EDCC Facebook. Anyone can sign up on our website to receive EDCC alerts in their inbox."

In addition to containing a database of all submitted disease alerts – which are searchable by state, disease, start date, and end date – the EDCC website is a valuable educational resource for horse owners. The site contains resources on biosecurity, info sheets about equine diseases and vaccinations, a list of state veterinary offices, and a host of other items that can be helpful for horse owners who want to learn more about preventing the spread of disease. The EDCC

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Stopping the Spread

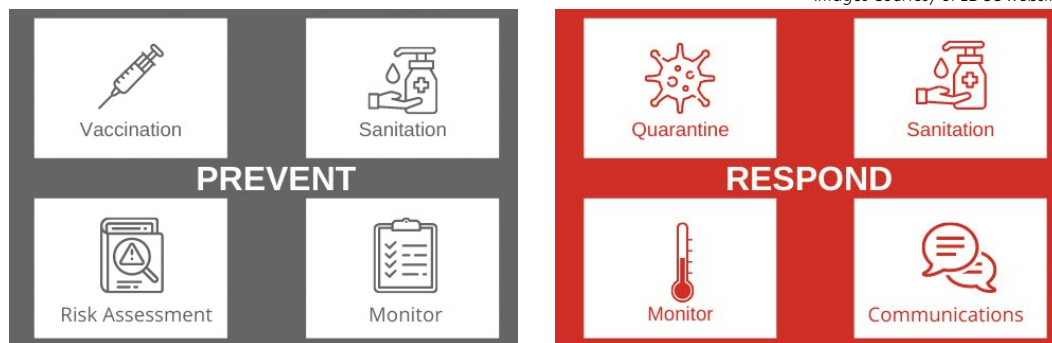
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website also provides access to the text of the National Equine Health Plan, which serves as a kind of roadmap to help horse owners, industry organizations, veterinarians, and animal health officials work together to respond to disease outbreaks or other environmental disasters.

How Does The EDCC Help Horse Owners And Their Horses?


For horse owners, the EDCC's disease alert service can be a valuable source of reliable, verified, timely information about disease outbreaks in their own state as well as in neighboring states. When disease strikes, rumors and misinformation can spread fear and uncertainty. The goal of the EDCC is to disseminate reliable information and offer education to horse owners so they can make better, more informed decisions based on facts.

"Having a tool that anyone can sign up for disease alerts to be delivered promptly to your inbox is really valuable for everyone," said Emily Nietrzeba, DVM, a veterinarian specialist for the California Department of Food & Agriculture, Animal Health Branch. "Especially this past year in California, where we've had quite a few high profile significant equine disease outbreaks, getting highly accurate information out there as quickly as possible helps, not only our horse owners in California, but horse owners in other states, as well, to have situational awareness. A lot of show circuits often move between states such





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Eastern/ Western Equine Encephalomyelitis 3 dose series	Eastern/ Western Equine Encephalomyelitis Annual-spring prior to vector season	Eastern/ Western Equine Encephalomyelitis Annual 4-6 weeks pre-partum
West Nile Virus (WNV) 3 dose series	West Nile Virus (WNV) Annual-spring, prior to vector season	West Nile Virus (WNV) Annual 4-6 weeks pre-partum
Rabies 2 dose series (refer to manufacture guidelines)	Rabies Annual	Rabies Annual

* First at 4-6 months, 2nd dose 4-6 weeks after first, 3rd dose at 10-12 months. ** Previously vaccinated against the disease indicated.

Always consult with your veterinarian for your horse's history and need for risk-based vaccinations

as California, Florida, and Kentucky. This means we can share information and then veterinarians or animal health officials in other states can respond, or show personnel can create or adjust requirements at shows, based on that information."

Although alerts do broadcast the general location of the sick animal, horse owners should know that no other personally identifying information is shared in an EDCC alert. EDCC alerts typically include the disease, the county and state of the diseased horse, the quarantine status of the horse, the vaccination status of the horse, and the source of the report, along with additional notes as needed.

Otherwise, the alerts are anonymous.

"Privacy and confidentiality are strictly enforced," Nietrzeba said. "Nothing is released that can personally identify a horse or its owner or its facility."

So, the question arises: how can horse owners actually use the EDCC? First, they need to know what kind of information they're getting. It's important to realize that the EDCC doesn't necessarily report on all disease outbreaks in a given state, just those that are submitted. Included are reportable diseases, which are those that need to be reported to the state veterinarian, and these are often different in each state. You can find out

what diseases are reportable in your state on the EDCC website. For example, here is the list of equine diseases that are reportable by law in the state of Ohio:

- Eastern encephalitis
- EHV-1 (neurological)
- Equine infectious anemia
- Equine viral arteritis
- Leptospirosis
- Lyme disease
- Rabies
- Vesicular stomatitis
- Western encephalitis

These diseases are legally reportable in part because they're contagious and carry a high probability of severe illness or death. Learning about nearby outbreaks of infectious diseases like

these can help Ohio horse owners make better decisions about timely boosting of their horses' vaccinations prior to travel, where to travel for shows or trail rides, or in some cases, whether to travel at all," says Joe Fisch, DVM.

"Information is power," said Fisch, who is the Bureau Chief of Animal Disease Control in the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Animal Industry. "Biosecurity is the key to protecting horses. so that you don't have one sick horse turn into a hundred sick horses. I think the EDCC shows horse owners that these diseases may be out there so that they can better protect their horses. The reason we talk about biosecurity is because whenever you're returning from a horse show, you've just put yourself and your horses at additional risk for spreading potential disease. For people who want more information about biosecurity, the EDCC is a great resource to learn more."

Biosecurity is all about following practices that can help prevent the spread of disease, such as:

Vaccinating your horses for all the recommended core diseases, such as rabies, tetanus, Eastern/Western encephalitis, and West Nile virus.

Consulting with your veterinarian about adding risk-based vaccines, such as equine herpesvirus, flu, equine leptospirosis, Potomac Horse Fever, and others.

Following good hygiene protocols at your home barn and at facilities for horse shows, racing, or at group events, such as trail rides, including:

Washing your hands often when moving between horses.

Assigning each horse their own equipment, such as bucket, bits, blankets, and grooming tools, and Disinfecting all equipment regularly.

To learn about more ways to protect your horse, visit equinediseasecc.org and check out the resources there.

"In the end, the goal of the EDCC is to help people take better care of the horses and to slow or prevent the spread of disease," says White.

"There may always be infectious disease somewhere, but if people react right away, contact their veterinarian, and isolate their sick horses, they can really slow down the spread and stop some potential devastation," White said. "That's what we think we can do through the EDCC."

How Can Horse Owners Help The EDCC?

If you're interested in helping the EDCC continue and expand its mission, donations are tax deductible.

"The EDCC is entirely funded by the industry and has all been possible by donation," White said. "We've been very lucky to have companies, associations, and individuals who have been willing to donate. We're constantly fundraising, so people can help by donating any amount."

To donate to the EDCC, visit equinediseasecc.org ♦

Born and raised in Tennessee, Allison Rehnberg has been an avid horse lover and writer all her life. She is an award-winning equine journalist who enjoys discovering and sharing stories about remarkable horses and their people from all over the world.

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accurately assess a situation and gather key information to relay to their veterinarian to prepare them for what they will be treating upon arrival.

"I think knowing how to take basic vitals, such as temperature, heart rate and respiratory rate can be very beneficial," said Browne. "If a horse owner is unfamiliar with how to take any of these vitals, their veterinarian can demonstrate the proper technique."* (see sidebar)

Browne advises that horses should be "trained" in advance of an emergency situation to allow their temperature to be taken.

"The respiratory rate can easily be taken by watching the horse's chest excursion and counting the number of breaths in a minute," she said.

For an adult horse, the normal respiratory rate should be 10 to 25 breaths per minute and the normal heart rate should be 30 to 50 beats per minute. The normal temperature for a horse ranges from 98 to 101.5 degrees.

"These are a few simple parameters that can help identify the severity of the situation," said Browne. "If these parameters are abnormal, it may allow your veterinarian to determine how quickly they need to come see your horse."

Common Emergency Situations and How to Respond

The following are some of the most common emergency situations horse owners are likely to deal with:

Colic – Typical signs of colic include pawing, getting up and down repeatedly, rolling, kicking or biting at their abdomen. If you

notice these signs, take the horse's vitals and call your veterinarian immediately. They will likely offer further instructions to carry out while they are en route.

Lacerations – These can occur in any part of the body and, depending on the location, can range from mild to serious or even life-threatening. If there is excessive bleeding from the wound, apply pressure.



What is "Normal" for a Horse?

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) offers the following guidelines for resting vitals for a healthy adult horse:

Heart rate: 28 - 44 beats per minute (depending on the horse's size).

Respiration: 10 - 24 breaths per minute

Capillary refill time: If you press your finger against a horse's gums, the point of pressure should return to a pink color within 1-2 seconds.

Mucous membranes: A horse's gums should be moist, healthy and pink.

For more information, go to www.aaep.org
Dr. Browne suggests asking your vet to show you how to take vitals on your horse.

Jen Roytz is a marketing and communications specialist based in Central Kentucky with a professional background in Thoroughbred racing and aftercare. Jen is a partner in Topline Communications, a Lexington-based marketing, communications and PR firm serving small and medium-sized businesses. She and her husband, Dr. Stuart Brown, own Brownstead Farm, a 115-acre Thoroughbred breeding, sales, racing and sport horse facility in Versailles, KY.

Jen remains a passionate advocate for Thoroughbred aftercare and regularly speaks on the topic at both the local and national levels. A lifelong equestrian, Jen enjoys competing in the hunter/jumper arenas and specializes in the transition and retraining of Thoroughbreds into amateur-friendly show and recreational mounts.

Using clean - preferably sterile - gauze or bandages can be helpful. If a clean water source is available, cold hose the area or use saline solution and a syringe to flush any debris out of the wound. Next, clean the wound with dilute betadine solution and clean/sterile gauze. If the wound is superficial, an application of wound spray can help keep the area clean. If the

wound is deep, if bleeding is unable to be controlled, if there is debris or an object protruding from the wound, or if the wound is near a joint or tendon/ligament, it may be beneficial to have a veterinarian examine it.

Eye Injuries – Horses can also get scrapes on their corneas, which are typically quite painful. Horses will often squint or tear in the affected eye, and may also present with discharge and/or swelling around the eyelid. It is always important to notify your veterinarian in the event of an eye injury, as they can progress rapidly. After speaking with your veterinarian, they may advise you to flush the eye with sterile saline and/or apply triple antibiotic eye ointment while waiting for their arrival.

Abscesses and Lameness – Lameness or hoof abscesses can present as emergency situations. Identify which leg is affected and feel all areas of the leg and hoof for heat, swelling or abrasions. If a hoof abscess is suspected, soak the hoof in warm water and Epsom salt for 15-20 minutes, then apply an Animalintex hoof pack on the foot until a veterinarian can examine it. If heat or swelling is found above the hoof in the leg, cold hose the affected area for 15 minutes and keep the horse in a confined area with minimal activity (such as a stall) until the veterinarian arrives.

With any of these, or other, presentations, taking the horse's vitals (temperature, heart rate and respiratory rate) prior to calling your veterinarian will provide key information as to the type, severity and chronology of the ailment, and save time once they arrive. ♦

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PROGRAM

This is a 2-hour workshop for each participant.

The morning is a combination of a biomechanical evaluation and physical therapy exercises on horseback. Beginner to advanced riders. English, Western, Dressage, Jumping, Saddleseat, and racehorses. All disciplines are welcome. B.J. can also help you with exercises to bring a horse through an injury. Regain confidence; develop a partnership with your horse. B.J. is an expert on how the rider's position affects the horse's ability to move.

In the afternoon, each horse will have a full body sports massage and acupressure session lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. B.J. will include stress reduction, relaxation, Swedish massage, acupressure and other alternative modalities to help relieve muscle soreness, release toxins, and help mental clarity for improving focus on training and performance.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTOR

Barbara BJ Hartmann-Sasak is the owner of Miracle Farm, Ohio's first rehabilitation facility that merges traditional therapies

with alternative modalities for horses, dogs, and people. Miracle Farm is the home of both Alternative For All, the company that she founded in 1995, and Miracle Farm Rescue Foundation, Inc., a non-profit foundation for the rescue and rehabilitation of slaughterhouse and sport horses. She attended Lakeland Community College and Cleveland State University. She has certifications in Human Sports Massage, Chiropractic Assistant, Equine Acupressure Level 1 and 2, Equine Sports Massage, Geobiology Research, Canine Acupressure Level 1 and 2, Reiki Level 1, Biodynamics, and Programming Small Computers. She is the creator of the video production, "Grooming for the Health of Your Horse" and is the author of "The Missing Link - Understanding the True Connection Between Horse and Rider." She has done demonstrations and has been a speaker at national equine and health expos since 1996.

REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

This clinic can be very beneficial, not only for show horses, but for pleasure horses,

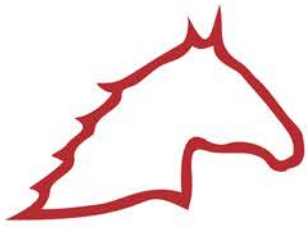
too. Does your horse have an unexplainable lameness? Does he have an uneven stride? Does he carry his head too high? Are you having trouble with transitions? Is your dressage horse having trouble with certain movements? Would you like your horse to create a better frame? Would you like your horse to increase the length of his stride? Has your horse been injured and needs to have exercises to bring him back to use? Would you like to get more speed and agility out of your barrel racer? Would you like to improve the endurance of your trail horse? Do you love your horse and want to improve its health and well being? These are all reasons why this clinic would be beneficial for you and your horse.

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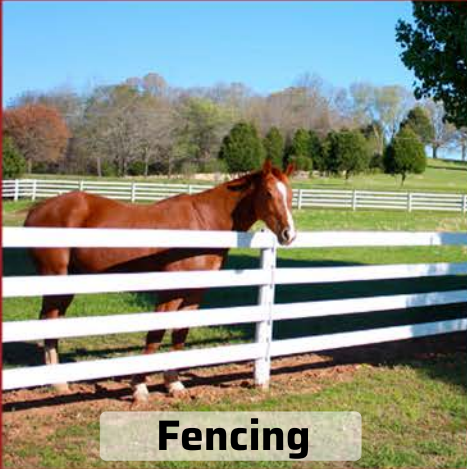
Contact Barbara BJ Hartmann-Sasak at 1-440-318-4113 for available dates and more information. I charge \$150.00 for the two hour biomechanical evaluation/massage session or if you prefer to do one or the other, that is fine too. Some clients will do a ride on the first day, and then



a second ride and a massage on the second day. I usually do 4 horses each day (8 sessions) but at times have done 5 (10 sessions). I pay for my own airfare, but transportation, housing, and food is the host's responsibility. The host keeps all auditing fees. I also offer my "Grooming for the Health of Your Horse" demonstration to groups of people (4-H Clubs, Pony Clubs, Riding Clubs, horse facilities) in the evening after the clinic. I like to have at least a 10-person minimum and the demonstration lasts approximately 1-1 1/2 hours. The charge is \$5.00 per person. If there is a club hosting it, I donate \$1.00 per person back to the club, plus their members only pay \$4.00. ●



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