

THE COMPLETE GUIDE FOR HORSE ENTHUSIASTS • 2024

OHIO EQUESTRIAN

DIRECTORY

A light-colored horse with a dark mane and tail stands in a stable aisle. To the right is a large blue door with a silver handle. The background shows stable stalls and warm lighting.

From Five Green Acres to a Top-Tier Facility

The Story of the
Equine Specialty
Hospital

Luke Gingerich

Life's Work: Changing the
Lives of Horses and Humans
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Embracing the Pivot:

Life After an Accident



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ABOUT THE COVER

Zara, Luke Gingerich's BLM Mustang, and newest member of the Gingerich herd, strikes a curious pose at the entry doors to Luke's beautiful new Plain City, OH facility.

Photo by ENSO Media Group.



Zara, known for both her athleticism and sensitivity, has had to learn how to just *be* and not *do* anything, according to Luke. Here, she enjoys a quiet bonding moment at home on the farm.

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Welcome to the 2024 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.

As our readership continues to grow, we are honored to receive requests from other states to create a custom directory for them. One in particular, has been pretty persistent - We are proud to announce the premier issue of our newest publication - *Florida Equestrian Directory* - available in 2025!

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

We have been watching Luke Gingerich's career evolve and grow over the past several years and continue to be impressed with, not only his innate understanding of horses, but also his ability to communicate with them on a deeper level. The results manifest in an almost effortless "dance" between horse and trainer, the horse seeming to participate willingly, and without resistance. Luke's training style is unique in that he combines connection-based training and liberty work with high performance goals. The results speak for themselves in happy horses and plenty of ribbons, trophies and championship titles. Our feature article, **Life's Work: Changing the Lives of Horses and Humans Through Education and Empathy** shines the well-deserved spotlight on Ohio's own Luke Gingerich. For those seeking to experience the "magic", Luke offers clinics at his beautiful new facility in Plain City, Ohio.

Another impressive facility in our home state is the Equine Specialty Hospital, located in Burton, Ohio. Celebrating 30 years of serving the equine community, the hospital is staffed 24/7 to accommodate anything from sports injuries to diagnostics to late-night emergencies, by three surgeons - all are Diplomates of the American College of Veterinary surgeons, a title held by those with the highest level of training in their specialty fields. **From Five Green Acres to a Top-Tier Facility - The Story of the Equine Specialty Hospital** shares their journey and honors the hard work and dedication of these top Equine Specialists.

Just as horses need to be put back together following an accident, so, too, do we as riders. **Embracing the Pivot: Life After an Accident** is the personal account of one equestrian's challenge to come back from a life-threatening riding accident. Her story is personal and raw with emotion that is sure to resonate with anyone who's ever been down this road. "If you fall off, get back on." Who hasn't received this advice? If only it were this easy! Fear can be crippling and can sideline one's dreams, or in our writer, Kat Chrysostom's case, can inspire another dream to become reality - and a successful business.

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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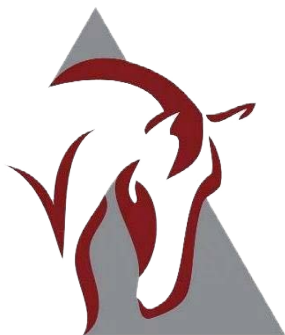
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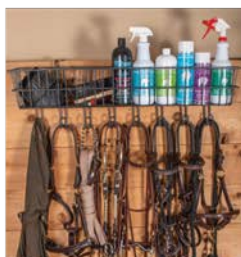
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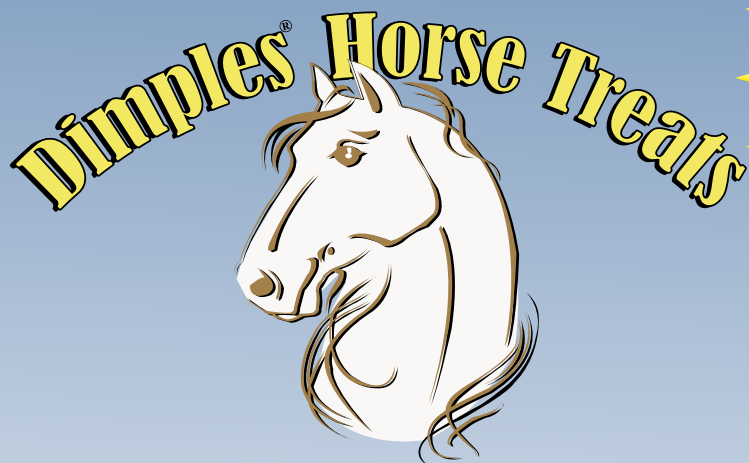
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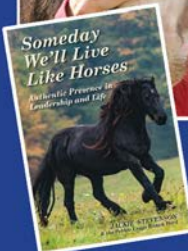
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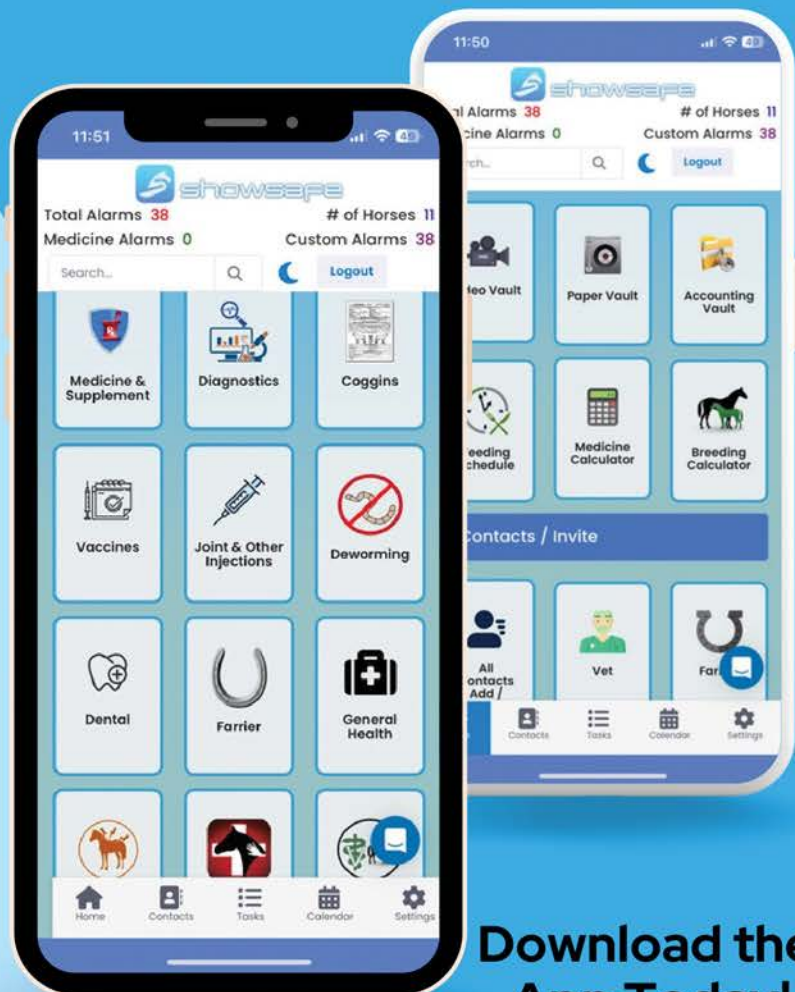
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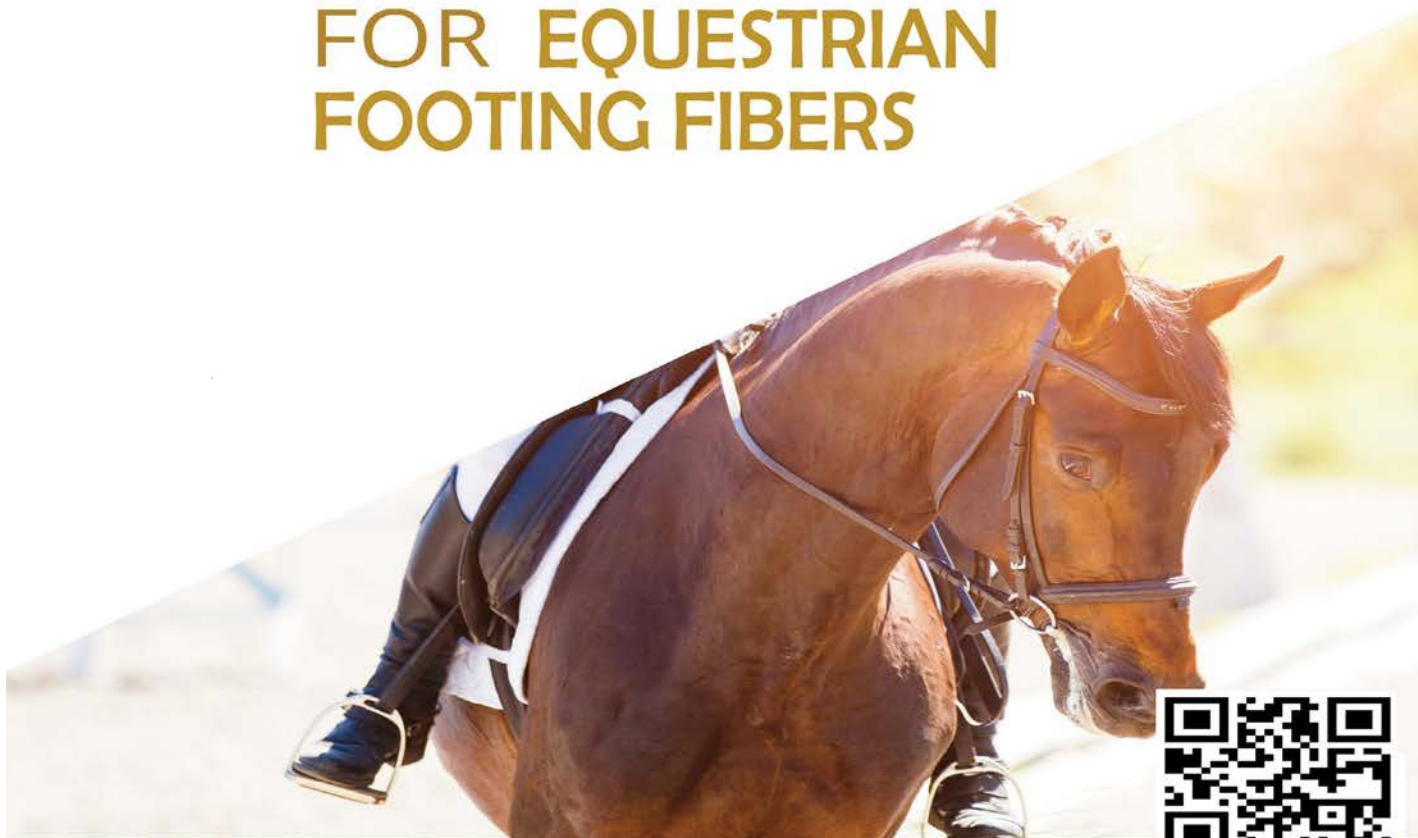


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Enhancing Equine Performance:

Harnessing the Power of Red Light Therapy for the Hyoid Apparatus

by **Donna Woods**

Horses, with their blend of power and grace, never cease to captivate equestrians and enthusiasts alike. Yet, these majestic creatures often communicate their discomfort through subtle behaviors that can mystify even the most seasoned horse owners. In this article, we'll unveil the critical role of the hyoid apparatus in equine health and introduce the groundbreaking use of red light therapy to optimize its function and impact on performance.

The Hyoid Apparatus: A Silent Performance Influencer

Nestled discreetly in a horse's throat, the hyoid apparatus primarily oversees the act of swallowing. While this function might seem unassuming, it serves as the linchpin for healthy digestion and gut well-being in equines. The hyoid's intricate structure not only provides vital support for the larynx, but also orchestrates a symphony of muscles and ligaments to ensure that food and water flow effortlessly into the digestive system.

Beyond Swallowing: The Hyoid's Performance Connection

However, the hyoid's role extends far beyond mere swallowing. It wields considerable influence over a horse's performance,

impacting various aspects such as favoring one side, resisting the bit, and even front-end lameness. A balanced hyoid plays a pivotal role in a horse's comfort, responsiveness to rider cues, and overall physical equilibrium.

Unlocking the Potential: Red Light Therapy for the Hyoid

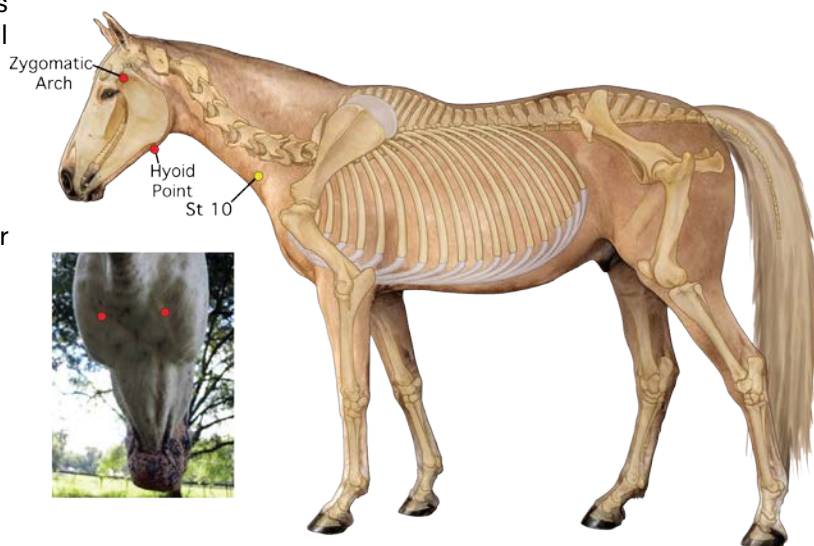
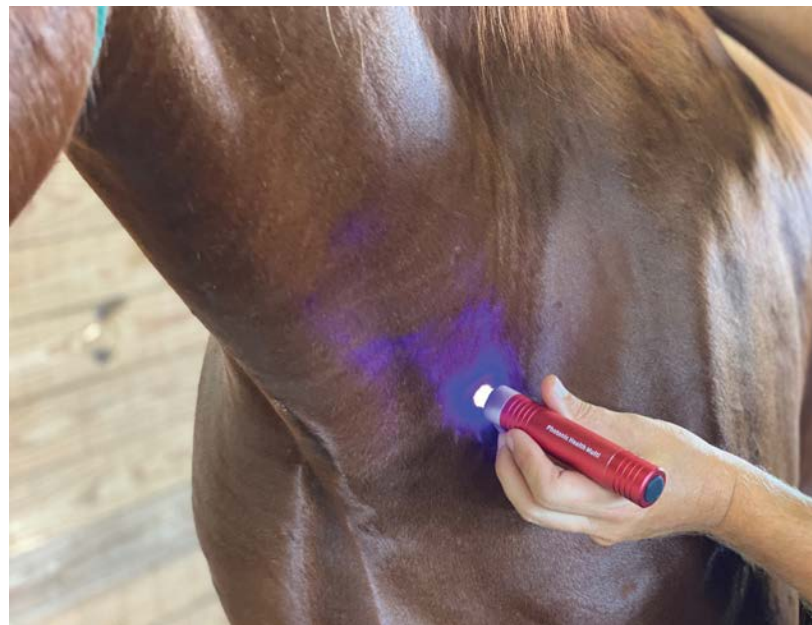
Since 2004, the author has diligently explored effective methods to address hyoid-related performance issues. The result? The Hyoid Release Technique™ using red light therapy. This revolutionary approach harnesses the power of red light therapy, also known as photobiomodulation, to reset and rebalance the hyoid without any risk of harm.

The Safety of Red Light Therapy

Red light therapy's remarkable feature is its safety. Horses can undergo this non-invasive treatment with the utmost confidence in preserving the integrity of their hyoid apparatus. This gentle and highly efficient method effectively addresses hyoid imbalances and discomfort, making it a preferred choice over alternative interventions.

Adapting for Excellence

Following red light therapy, horses may experience a



significant shift in their proprioception (awareness of the position and movement of the body) due to the enhanced hyoid balance. To ensure a seamless transition and harness the full benefits of improved proprioception, it's crucial to allow horses time to reacclimate to their adjusted hyoid function.

In Conclusion

In the realm of equine wellness, the hyoid apparatus wields unparalleled influence, extending its reach well beyond mere swallowing. It holds the key to unlocking a horse's full performance

potential, from balanced movement to responsive bit acceptance and freedom from front-end lameness. Thanks to red light therapy, we now possess a reliable and risk-free means to reset and optimize the hyoid's function.

By recognizing the profound impact of the hyoid on equine performance and harnessing the potential of red light therapy, we empower our horses to lead healthier, happier lives and perform at the peak of their abilities. •

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From Five Green Acres to a Top-Tier Facility

The Story of the Equine Specialty Hospital

by **Janet Barrett**

Stall by stall, the doctors and their staff move down the aisles, stopping at every one to talk about each case, what brought the horse in and how they are doing. This is morning rounds at the Equine Specialty Hospital and the team's course takes them through the two barns for critical care cases and a third barn for non-critical cases. The emergency that may have arrived in the middle of the night, or any time after hours, already attended earlier by the surgeon on call, will likely be among the patients.

What follows is a day

filled with horses coming to the hospital for a variety of elective surgeries, advanced diagnostics in any number of areas, and other treatments. And always, when the call signals that an emergency is en route, the hospital makes ready for that first order of concern.

Three surgeons from all different parts of the country, ended up in Burton, Ohio, to provide specialized veterinary care to equines. Dr. Melissa Milligan, from Iowa, Dr. Nathan McClellan, from Arizona, and Dr. Molly Patton, from North Carolina. All Diplomates of the American College of

Veterinary Surgeons, a title denoting board certification in their specialized field, commonly requiring 3 - 4 years of *additional* training after veterinary school, which assures advanced training in a specialized area, including passing a rigorous examination to confirm these veterinarians adhere to the highest of standards.

Seeing the Need

The hospital was the brainchild of Dr. Arthur Segedy, a local equine practitioner. He had established the Aurora Veterinary Clinic in 1982, yet soon realized the need for more – a high-end

facility exclusively for horses, comparable in service to a major teaching hospital. Choosing five acres of open pasture on the south side of Burton, Ohio, just off Route 422, he opened the Equine Specialty Hospital in 1993.

As it celebrates 30 years in operation, that dream is a firmly established reality, a resource not only for Ohio horses, but also regularly treating horses from Pennsylvania and New York.

Frontline Resource

The hospital sees itself as a frontline resource, available to owners and local veterinarians when horses need more medical help than



Dr. Melissa Milligan



Dr. Nathan McClellan



Dr. Molly Patton

can be delivered at home. In no way does it try to compete with local vets, preferring routine services like vaccinations and deworming be handled by the latter. The hospital's surgeons do not make farm calls, but pride themselves on being only a phone call away if a vet wants to "talk through" a problem case or have another veterinarian look at a set of X-rays.

The three surgeons, five Registered Veterinary Technicians, and 15 full- and part-time Veterinary Assistants keep the hospital operating through three eight-hour shifts, enabling full coverage for all horses on the premises 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Whether those that come to Burton do so through referral from another veterinarian or by direct appointment does not matter. "No one is ever turned away," says Carl Workman, the hospital's Practice Manager. And that includes the colicky horse that is walked off a trailer after regular business hours.

Ready for All Challenges

Horses coming to Burton benefit from treatment in four main areas of equine

medicine: *Surgical services*, ranging from orthopedic, soft tissue, and colic surgeries to those involving the upper airway, dental and sinus areas. Dystocia (difficult birthing), Cesarean and laparoscopic surgeries as well as laser surgery (minimally invasive procedures) are also performed.

Diagnostic services use the latest in digital imaging including radiography and ultrasound, Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), and nuclear scintigraphy (bone scan) to examine and enable treatment of a variety of problems. Endoscopy, gastroscopy, uterine videendoscopy as well as myelography (which allows examination of the spinal canal to look for possible compression lesions in a horse presenting with an unstable gait) are other diagnostic tools at hand.

The *Equine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation services* target soreness, injuries, joint inflammation and other issues using a range of medical applications that includes shockwave and stem cell therapies.

The fourth service offered by the Equine Specialty Hospital is *Medical*

services. In addition to basic internal medical care, the doctors evaluate and treat neurological, ophthalmic, and respiratory conditions. The facility also provides on-site intensive care for neonatal foals and adults, and perinatal care for high-risk mares and foals.

Among the first-class array of medical equipment and need-specific facilities available for horses, from the sickest to the same-day patient, are 11 critical care stalls, a fully padded neurologic stall, and two neonatal stalls, each complete with its own IV fluid delivery system and oxygen. A separate facility with two isolation stalls also has its own dedicated IV fluid delivery system and oxygen. In addition, the hospital has two surgical suites with overhead hoists and padded induction/recovery stalls. There are 12 non-critical care stalls.

Three exam rooms are available, each fully equipped to conduct routine evaluations of patients as well as perform standing surgeries. The hospital has its own onsite lab, pharmacy, and podiatry facilities.

Dr. Segedy had achieved

his plan when he died in 2003. Four years later, Dr. Milligan joined the practice as an associate, then became a partner in 2011. In 2014, she and her husband bought the practice and in 2020 they acquired the property on which it is located. When she started, she remembers the establishment was already much the same as it is today, an emergency hospital that is open around the clock, every day of the year. Moreover, with its top-tier capabilities it can treat virtually any horse that comes to it for elective surgeries and other procedures besides emergencies.

Colic: Looking for Answers

Following veterinary school at Iowa State University College of Veterinary Medicine, Dr. Milligan went to Edmond, Oklahoma and Equine Medical Associates, where she completed a private practice internship, remaining for more experience there as an associate. She came to the Equine Specialty Hospital from Kansas State University where she had just finished a three-year equine surgical residency. During her

Continued on page 18

Equine Specialty Hospital

Continued from page 17

residency she investigated the complex issues of small intestinal motility, specifically the effects of lidocaine and its use in horses recovering from colic surgery, her favorite surgical procedure.

Colic, the admitted worry of most, if not all, horse owners, turns into the frightening reality for many. Dr. Milligan's oft repeated warning: "Never let the sun set on colic twice. It can move fast. Owners should be very proactive. If they see something is wrong with their horse, they should immediately get veterinary care," she stresses time and again.

Gaining traction at the Equine Specialty Hospital is a focus on the colic patient's future. A majority of colicky horses undergo a gastroscopy, a procedure in which a slender flexible tube with both a small light and a small video camera at the forward end is threaded down the esophagus into the stomach looking for the "why" of the current colic. What it sees is transmitted to a screen in the exam room where doctors can assess for ulcers.

In talking with colleagues at other equine practices, Dr. Nate McClellan finds that the hospital is clearly at the forefront, scoping far more horses than elsewhere, including major teaching hospitals. "As a surgeon, I wasn't trained to do gastroscopies on all the colic (cases) that came through the door," he says of previous places he has worked. "We are pretty proactive here in trying to find an answer. True, sometimes you can't find one.

But it's not like it used to be, 'Oh, the horse colicked. We don't know why.'"

"A lot of times we find ulcers that we would have missed if we didn't look. And getting those treated and managed properly can really make a huge difference in the horse's life in the future,



and prevent future bouts of colic."

If pressed though, Dr. McClellan still admits his first love is for orthopedics, particularly, sports medicine. The root might well be traced back to his first horse, Kilo, a retired posse horse for an Arizona sheriff. Bought when they were both 13, the mare proved to be not quite as 'bomb proof' as described and her spiritedness soon led to her injuring herself. Dr. McClellan was so adept at handling the aftercare that, in short order, he had a job with his vet ... and a plan for his future.

After attending vet school at Kansas State University, he moved around the country advancing his training with different types of horses. In Oklahoma, for his internship, the horses were mostly ranch and rodeo types, plus racehorses from nearby Remington Park in Oklahoma City.

From there, Dr. McClellan

moved to the Bluegrass region around Lexington, Kentucky, as an ambulatory vet tending the high-end Thoroughbreds on breeding farms like Three Chimneys, Hill 'n' Dale, Calumet, and Spendthrift. A job he loved. He says he would have stayed except he wanted to



be a surgeon and a surgical residency opened up at Ohio State. He completed that in 2012, then spent a year in California, mostly treating English show horses. He joined the Equine Specialty Hospital in 2015 and became a partner in 2022.

The hospital's third equine surgeon, Dr. Molly Patton, came on board in 2022, excited by the variety of cases, types of surgeries, and number of different horses, "that walk through the door on a daily basis." She recalls the idea of being a veterinarian materializing the day she watched a friend's horse being treated for colic at their local vet school. However, when she got to vet school, she says, "I tried not to pigeon-hole myself into what I was most comfortable doing." So, her plan, one hundred percent, was to work with elephants and to that end she spent a summer in India working with Asian elephants. Unfortunately, back in the

U.S. she found that full-time paying jobs working with elephants were few and far between.

Re-enter her love of horses and the realization that "every time I was at the barn, it just felt like I was home." After earning her veterinarian degree at North Carolina State University, she interned at Louisiana State University and completed her residency at Virginia Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine. Along the way, she developed her passion for colic, relocating to Burton, Ohio in 2022, becoming Equine Specialty Hospital's third surgeon and third Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons, in 2023.

"I have a big fondness for the horse's abdomen and what can go wrong with it," she says. As she explains, the surgery may well be successful with the immediate problem repaired, but post-surgery, if the guts do not move smoothly in the right direction, there is still an underlying problem to find and correct. Without looking further and addressing the whole situation, the concern is that the horse may suffer another bout of colic.

Partners With the Community

The hospital takes great pride in the position it has achieved within the equine community. Its efforts to build strong relationships have met with considerable approval among professionals and the general public alike. For the past 18 years, the hospital has hosted an educational conference attended by some 100 veterinarians and technicians. Held at an area hotel, the all-day program offers CE credit

and includes a guest speaker, lectures by the hospital's surgeons, lunch, a question-and-answer session with all participants, and vendors showcasing products and services. In 2023, the guest speaker was Brandon Hess, a leadership success coach from Encorevet.

Frequently, Practice Manager, Carl Workman, and one of the surgeons will set up a booth at area horse auctions and other local events, providing an opportunity for attendees to stop by and talk "horse business". With candy and other giveaways for the kids, it's a perfect venue for people to ask questions of the pros and get to know about the hospital and what it offers.

Workman, with a background in public relations and promotion, sees these happenings as an excellent way to build, not only awareness, but trust among members of various segments of the equine community.

At the hospital itself, Saturday morning tours for 4-H clubs and other groups are doing the same thing. For both children and adults alike, walking through the facilities and seeing an operating room and watching as a horse is positioned on an operating table and hooked up to IV fluids are first-time experiences and a valuable chance for the hospital to open the door to its world.

Saturday mornings are also a time for clinics and they, too, are open to the public. Sometimes a shared event or program with a partner, such as a feed provider, will feature a talk by one of the hospital's doctors - a help to owners wanting to learn about treatments for common concerns. Such presentations



last about an hour, after which visitors are given a tour of the hospital.

"I feel that our service is for the community as a whole, including our veterinary professionals," says Dr. McClellan. Nor is it all in-person. "All of us spend quite a bit of time on the phone every day consulting with local general practitioners." He also frequently talks with veterinarians in other states about some techniques he uses that they may not be as familiar with.

"Even in the middle of the night, if they are looking at an emergency out in the field and they need someone to give them some mentorship. You know, someone asking, 'I've never seen this before, what do you think I should do?' Whether the horse is coming to see us, or it doesn't have the option to be referred, our local veterinarians have learned that we're reliable to help them out, no matter what," Dr. McClellan adds. "That

is a big, important role that we don't take lightly. It's an honor that people are comfortable enough to just call for advice."

For the Future

Keeping everything running smoothly and at full tilt has been Workman's challenge since 2019, when he left the corporate world and signed on with the Equine Specialty Hospital. Embracing the role and its possibilities, he constantly looks for ways to make things better. His aim, on behalf of everyone at the hospital, is to make sure that all people and horses that come and go each day are treated like family. As he and the three surgeons look ahead, all share the same desire to continue to build awareness among individuals and groups of all stripes - sport horse owners, the Amish, horsemen from the three racetracks in northern Ohio, and others - the hospital is there for them.

Now, with the huge shortage in equine veterinarians, that becomes even more important. "We're starting to see a lot of horses for the first time coming here because they just don't have a veterinarian on the farm," Milligan says, of the immediate result of practitioners leaving the field. "We will continue to provide the same great care that we always have. We don't require referrals. People can come in, referral or not. If they need help, we're here."

The Equine Specialty Hospital in Burton, OH is open M-F, 9-5; and 24/7 for emergencies. Call 1-440-834-0811. ■

*Janet Barrett is the author of two books about America's warhorses, **They Called Her Reckless—A True Story of War, Love and One Extraordinary Horse** and **Comanche and His Captain—The Warhorse and The Soldier of Fortune**. Next for her, a book about Thoroughbred racing.*

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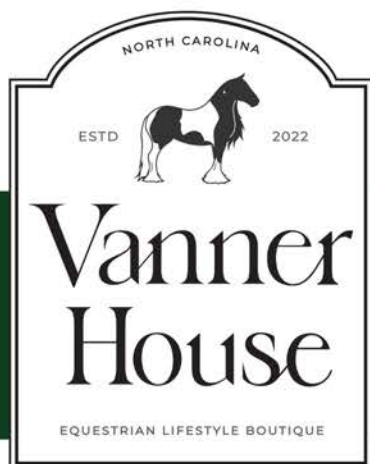
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Addressing the Shortage of Equine Veterinarians: Nationwide Practices Join Together

by **Rood & Riddle
Equine Hospital**

Opportunities in Equine Practice Seminar (OEPS), a professional forum created to encourage students to enter equine practice upon graduation, was held this past Labor Day in Lexington, Kentucky. After a ten-year hiatus, the event was reestablished to address the emerging crisis of the diminishing number of graduating veterinary students entering equine practice.

The seminar hosted third-year veterinary students with practitioners from around the country on hand to present their experiences in various disciplines, from general and mixed practice to board specialties, providing an introductory view of all aspects of equine practice, from the large hospital setting to the solo practitioner, at nominal or no expense to the student. The event is the result of the cooperative efforts of equine practitioners from across North America, with additional financial support from industry sponsors and the American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP).

Attendees could engage in interactive discussions with equine practitioners and industry partners, tour equine hospitals, local horse farms, and Keeneland racetrack, as well as participate in hands-on workshops. OEPS 2023 was an unforgettable experience for those attending.



"We are thrilled to have such an amazing outpouring of support since the announcement of the return of OEPS, and due to the support of the equine practices and industry partners that joined us, we were able to sponsor over 260 students to attend from the US, Canadian, and island schools," said Dr. Craig Lesser, the lead organizer of OEPS. "With dwindling numbers of students pursuing careers in equine practice, we aimed to inspire

and equip students with knowledge about the vast opportunities within equine practice that make our careers uniquely gratifying."

It was a rare opportunity for practices to positively influence hundreds of veterinary students interested in equine practice and cultivate relationships that will lead to future externs, interns, associates, and colleagues. Many attending practices have already pledged support in future years, as they saw

how it was nice to see so many students actively interested in equine practice!

The survey of students after the event had some wonderful responses, including one student saying, "I thought it was an awesome weekend, I left feeling motivated for third year and getting closer to being with the equine vets in the field." And another, "I loved the weekend; I really appreciated the opportunity to network with so many practices and meet other students who were interested in the same thing as me."

One question asked on the survey was: "Based on your knowledge of equine practice before (then after) attending OEPS, how likely will you choose equine practice as your career?" Before the conference, eighty percent of respondents thought they were 80% confident that they would enter equine practice; however, after OEPS, that number rose to ninety-seven percent.

Looking forward, we plan to once again host OEPS on Labor Day weekend in 2024 for veterinary students entering their third year (2026 graduates). We must continue to encourage gifted students to pursue careers in equine practice and equip them with practical information for launching successful careers. •

For more information on OEPS and ways to participate, please visit: oeeps.com





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Embracing the Pivot:

Life After an Accident

by **Kat Chrysostom,**
Founder of Benefab®

The topic of life with horses after a tragic riding accident is a subject I never anticipated writing about. I've written and spoken about my accident and my personal journey to physical recovery many times. But, what I haven't written much about are the silent things that tend to go unnoticed—the emotional trauma, the anxiety, the fear, and the quiet shame of it all.

Bruises. Broken Bones. Scrapes. Casts. The things you see. The things you express concern for. The things you wish for the healing of. But, what about the things you don't see, and even more importantly, the things you *won't* see?

Trauma. Emotional angst. Fear. Anxiety.

If you fall, get back up. Keep trying. Be brave. Be like *The Little Engine That Could*—Think you can, think you can, think you can.

But, what if you can't? I have come to realize that this is a question most people don't answer wisely. If answered at all, it's often short and simple, as in "yes, you can."

Perhaps, it's not all about overcoming. What if, instead, it's more about the pivot? What if we simply viewed this life as a journey? One that includes bumps and bruises, successes and failures, emotional angst and trauma, as well as victories and triumphs. Each of life's

moments—good or bad—allow us an opportunity to pivot.

Growing up, I had a wonderfully successful junior riding career. I was one of the few junior catch riders in the heart of South Carolina at a prestigious sales barn. My life was full of opportunities with supportive trainers, a God-given talent, and big dreams.

All of that was shattered on March 19, 2011. I was riding a horse back to the barn when he suddenly stumbled and fell. After regaining consciousness, I discovered that the horse was dying, and I was paralyzed. This catapulted me into a two-year journey to recovery that involved setback after setback, but would eventually lead to the discovery of a "healing fabric" that served as a springboard for creating my brand, Benefab®—today's industry leader in the wellness space that specializes in wearables for horses, humans, and hounds.

While the physical ailments of my accident were exhaustive and the recovery was daunting, the physical scars healed with time, while the unanticipated emotional scars seemed to metastasize with time. Little did I know then, they would haunt me for years to come.

During rehabilitation, I had a picture in my mind: I was going to get back in the saddle, and it would be exactly as it had been. In



Photos courtesy of Kat Chrysostom

many ways, that day could not come soon enough—and although it took years to arrive, it did arrive, but was nothing like I expected. The moment the horse stepped up to the mounting block, I felt a pit in my stomach.

Growing fears. Mounting anxieties. A silent guilt.

My foot slipped into the stirrup. Thoughts flooded my mind. Trembling, I pushed myself to keep going, to be brave. The experience was

terrifying and only lasted for moments before I chose to dismount. It's an experience that I could never fully explain with words, but even more inexplicable was the deep sadness I felt for loss. Loss of my safe haven, the saddle. A place that I had known so well, loved so deeply, and yearned for daily.

Despite the disappointing experience, I did continue to get back into the saddle. I read books on overcoming

fears, spoke with specialists, and tried to play the part— But, riding after my accident was never the same.

For some time, I was heartbroken by it all. I didn't want to be with horses because of the sheer grief I felt around them—My heart yearned for them to be in my life, but my mind and body would not allow it.

The limitations were devastating, but they have led me down a path to discover animals more deeply than I ever imagined possible. Along the way, I have met amazing people, learned tremendous lessons, and appreciated each experience from a unique perspective—that I likely never would have developed if it were not for the accident.

Unlike my life with horses before my accident, my ego was removed entirely because there was no longer anything “in it” for me—no blue ribbons, no points, no money, and no desire for other people's approval. This simple, but profound change, opened my mind in ways that I had never experienced. For this, I am forever grateful.

I've often heard that the universe gives us what we need, when we need it. I don't think this could have been truer when it came to my horse, Para, a big-bodied, beautiful horse that had a bright future—or so I was told. After being with multiple trainers and no results, he came back to me with a long list of behavioral issues and two recommendations of humane euthanasia. When he arrived at the farm, he was rearing up and striking out at people who would approach him in his stall, running through fences, and out of control when ridden. Everyone said



Above: With medical halo device and at right: the day it was removed.

he was mean, dangerous, and unpredictable.

I listened intently to each trainer and noticed the fear they had of Para, and even more so, the fear Para had of them. I began searching for other methods and what I found were two extremes: Feed him treats until he loves me or use a whip until he respects me.

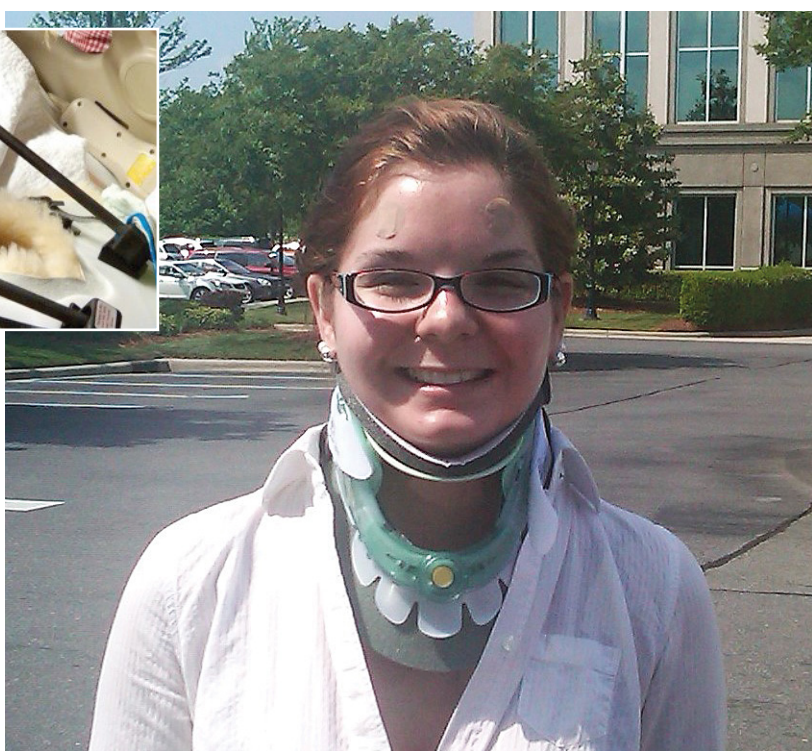
Both felt wrong.

Life isn't necessarily black and white. There is a lot of gray. When we embrace the gray, our lives become much more colorful. To me, black and white areas are our instincts, and the gray is our reasoning skills—which are derived from our intellect.

This was one of the reasons that I knew there had to be some middle ground for Para.

And quickly, that lesson sank in.

The first day I had Para back in my own care, I saddled up to ride him, and admittedly, I was fearful. As I approached him he was wide-eyed and skeptical. We both had fear of being hurt—him by me and me by him. I've never hurt an animal in my life. It's not in my nature to do so, but all the treats in the world wouldn't have convinced Para of that. Reluctantly, and I'm ashamed to admit, against my principles of avoiding extremes, I gave him a sedative. Selfishly,



it was to protect myself. I walked back into the tack room to take a sip of water, and when I returned, there was a horse who was nearly unrecognizable. His head was resting on the wall with his lip turned sideways and his eyes half shut.

I felt like a monster because I had fallen victim to the human superiority complex. I finally realized that I was listening to everyone except Para—the very life at the heart of it all.

No animal, including Para, deserved that. I promised myself from that day forward I would listen without expectations, love without boundaries, and reward him (and all animals) for any bit of effort.

There was something in Para that I finally understood. I knew exactly what it felt like to be at the mercy of someone else. On the day of my accident, I vividly remember being wheeled into a trauma center under bright lights, already heavily sedated, listening to doctors argue my future.

I knew what he felt like at that moment. Para wasn't mean or unpredictable. His survival instincts had kicked in, understandably.

So, we started over. I turned him out with thirteen other horses, he got back to his natural instincts, established his place in the herd, and started to enjoy his natural environment again. Show horses, like many show animals, tend to be treated artificially and kept in small box stalls without a herd to follow. Through research and observation, I found that this separation from our natural environments, for humans and animals alike, has been proven to cause negative physiological and psychological changes.

Before visiting Para each day, I would quiet my mind, heart, and body by focusing solely on my breath. I would open myself mentally to his partnership and be present with him. Amazing things began to happen. At first, he would take hours to catch—sometimes, I would just give

Continued on page 30

“I’ve discovered that most mammals simply follow evidence. To the contrary, humans overanalyze situations, complicate things, and confuse themselves.”



Embracing the Pivot ***Continued from page 29***

up. Once I made changes in myself, my energy and my approach, he started coming to me. He would leave his herd to approach me calmly and curiously.

Why had he gone from striking out at people to wanting to be with me?

Being a data driven person, I dove into research and found a study conducted in 2018, that showed a horse's heart rate can mimic the rate of the person touching them. Similar to dogs and cats,

horses, too, have been added to the list of animals that are emotionally responsive to humans.

Animals are master discriminators. They can depict the slightest change in smell, as well as emotional and physical changes on faces.

I've discovered that most mammals simply follow evidence. To the contrary, humans overanalyze situations, complicate things, and confuse themselves.

Take a horse, for example. If it senses danger, it leaves. Naturally, because it is a

prey animal and doesn't want to be eaten. On the flip side, a mountain lion senses a horse is nearby, and it runs towards its prey. The mountain lion doesn't think about the horse's family, its newborn foal, or how much the bite will hurt. It simply thinks about its next meal. When the horse sees the mountain lion, he leaves. He doesn't wait to see if the second mountain lion has the same intentions as the first.

Para was sensing things silently. He knew that I wasn't there to hurt him or to do things to him.

Luckily for Para, I wasn't the mountain lion in a human's suit. Instead, I used my intellect to better understand him, and my past experiences to generate empathy for him.

His eyes began to soften. We began to sense each other's body language. As I grew taller, he would back away—when I smiled at him and bent down, he would come say hello.

I started to realize that he was so smart. His instincts were far better than mine because he lacked the intellectual clutter that I held. He simply responded

to evidence in the moment, and acted accordingly. In other words, he lives in the present without complicating simple things like we do everyday as humans.

Nature is what brings us what we need and the connection we so desperately crave. We were not meant to live in air-conditioned houses, scrolling through gossip on small screens under blue lights, day in and day out. Sure, those things may offer some passage of time or instant gratification, but they are not what bring us happiness or connection.

Humans have a very developed neocortex which controls self-awareness, conscious thought, and language. Many other mammals lack this development, making us one of the few mammal species capable of humor, vulnerability, planning for the future, moral decisions and so much more. Used correctly, those things can help us create a fulfilling life. But it's a fine line that we walk, because all of these things suggest reasoning which must be balanced by instincts.

That is what animals can teach us. More than anything else, the ability to be here in the moment, to listen, and to make decisions based on our best judgment and our innate instincts.

Going back to Para, it wasn't about me giving Para a second chance. He gave me the gift of my second chance at discovering the delicate balance between our instincts and intellect. When we truly master the dance between the two, we can live deeper and more fulfilling lives.

I no longer have a yearning to be back in the saddle or in the show ring. I do enjoy riding Para from time to time, but what is most enjoyable for me is to *just be* with him. It sounds so simple, but through observation and quietude with horses, you will observe things that you have likely never noticed. I pray that everyone has this same opportunity without being forced through an accident like mine. Regardless of your ambitions in riding, horses deserve our appreciation for their power and elegance, and so much more.

While this story doesn't yet have an end, it has a clear new beginning. Where that beginning will take me, I am not sure, but I am trusting the unknown. I have come to believe the most important thing is not to push through emotionally, but instead, to accept where you are for the moment. Because at a moment's notice, those feelings may change. Accept that change, too. And, when needed, remind yourself that life is a journey—one that includes bumps and bruises, successes and failures, emotional angst and trauma, victories and triumphs. ■

Kat Chrysostom is known for wearing a lot of hats, but most importantly, she's an animal lover and advocate, entrepreneur and the founder of some awesome brands. Since she was a little girl, her passion has been giving a voice to the voiceless. After a tragic horse-riding accident years ago, she was both physically and emotionally broken. After a long and difficult recovery, she created her first product which has now blossomed into the well-known brand, Benefab®. Find out more at brandedbykat.com

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Equine Care Innovation — It's a Family Tradition



by **Bobby Williams**

Guaranteed Horse Products (GHP) began in 2011 with the goal of providing equine enthusiasts a choice to purchase effective, chemical-free products that are biodegradable. More than 12 years later, GHP is still providing customers with that choice and more. Now a second-generation, family-owned business, GHP has stayed true to its roots, while innovating to meet the needs of horse owners and their equine companions.

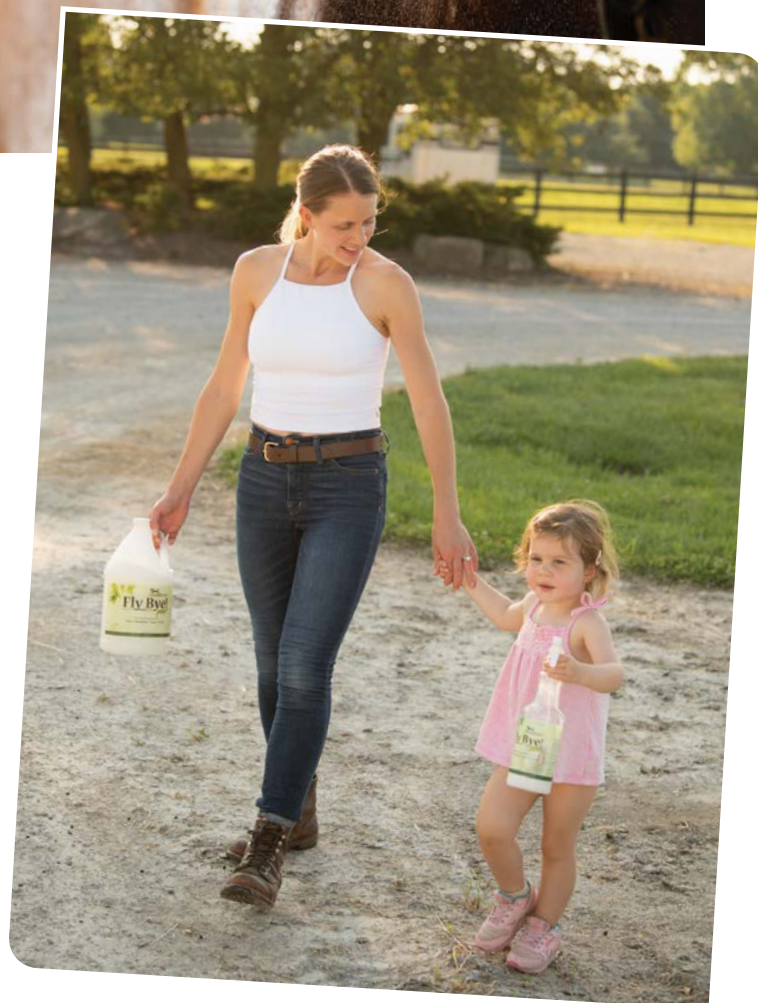
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Being an equestrian or horse enthusiast is often more than a hobby, it is a way of life! Each waking moment spent with your companion is priceless. To help make the most of time spent at the barn, GHP takes great pride in providing innovative and efficient products that allow riders to spend more quality time with their horse. From their fly spray, Fly Bye! Plus, to shampoo and detangler,

Pony Polish for Luxurious Locks, GHP's products are developed to make life easier on the rider, horse, and environment. GHP's team understands this importance because their products are created by riders, for riders. For example, their shampoo is infused with Fly Bye! Plus to provide all of the benefits of a shampoo with the bonus of fly protection. This helps to mitigate and reduce movement while in cross ties during bathing, and adds an extra layer of fly protection after the bath. Fly Bye! Plus comes in various sizes, including a 2.5-gallon container with customized spout to provide a convenient refill option and ensure your horse is always protected.

A Family Tradition

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The image features a central product shot of a white spray bottle with a green label. The label has the 'GUARANTEED' logo at the top, followed by 'Fly Bye' in large bold letters and 'plus' in a script font. Below that, it says 'Specially formulated for Flies • Mosquitos • Gnats • Ticks'. The bottle is surrounded by a whimsical illustration of a light orange unicorn with a yellow mane and tail, standing next to stylized red and purple leaves and flowers. The background is a soft pink with scattered stars and swirls. A white banner with cursive text is positioned below the bottle, and a website URL is at the bottom.

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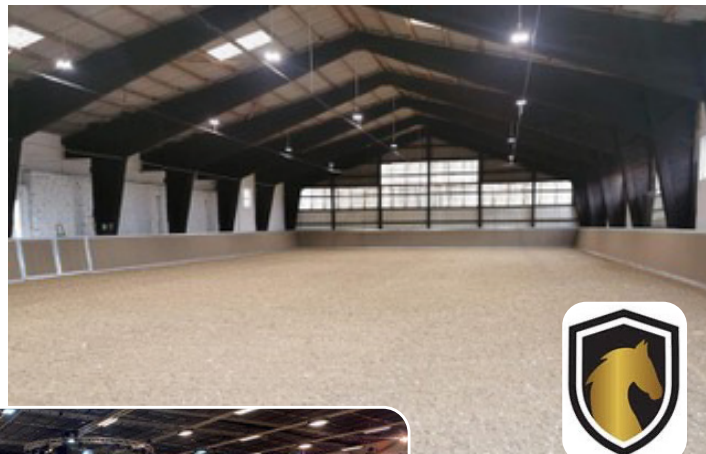
Our footing additives are made from premium synthetic materials, carefully selected for their properties. We've blended these materials together

to create a formula that can provide your arena surface with optimal traction, cushioning, and stability. These qualities ensure your horse can perform their best while staying safe and comfortable.

One of the most important things when it comes to footing is traction. Our footing additives are designed to give your horse excellent traction, which helps them feel confident while performing. Good traction means your horse can take sharper turns, jump higher and make smoother transitions.

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training and competition and the right cushioning can help reduce the risk of injury and improve their comfort. Our footing additives provide optimal cushioning, reducing the impact on your horse's joints to help them recover more quickly from intense training and competition.

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Life's Work

Changing the Lives of Horses and Humans Through Education and Empathy

Luke Gingerich

Photo courtesy of Weaver Leather

by **Jen Roytz**

“Do what you love and you’ll never work another day in your life.”

Whether getting career advice or reading a motivational poster or bumper sticker, we’ve all come across the saying in one form or another. Some people spend the better part of a lifetime chasing that seemingly elusive dream, asking themselves, “how can I make a living doing what I truly love to do?”

Then there are those, like Luke Gingerich, whose skills are so intrinsic, and the need for what they have to offer so profound, that their passion and profession intersect quite naturally.

A lifelong horseman with an undeniable talent for liberty horse training and coaching, Gingerich has become one of the most sought-after clinicians in the country. His approach, which

focuses on the foundational connection between horses and humans to achieve high performance results, has helped thousands of horse owners throughout North America not only achieve their equestrian goals, but also improve their personal relationships with their horses.

Trial and Error... and Videos

Growing up in Plain City, Ohio, the Gingerich family enjoyed living the rural American lifestyle, close enough to town to run errands as needed, but far enough out in the country for his grandfather to make a living off of the family farm, and for the family to keep their horses in their backyard.

While that setup is what many horse lover’s dreams are made of, it did present its own set of challenges.

“I didn’t have the social

life of a boarding barn or access to 4-H or even a lot of access to lessons, so a lot of what I learned as a kid was through trial and error, seeing what works and what doesn’t,” said the now 29-year-old Gingerich. “I soon started watching training videos online from people like Stacy Westfall and James Cooler. I’d ask for them for Christmas and my birthday when I was in my teens. I’d watch, then go try it out with my own horse.”

Gingerich, who had several ponies and horses throughout his childhood, first had the chance to truly test and hone his talents with a horse named Rio, a sensitive and opinionated bay gelding that Gingerich acquired as a yearling in 2011. While today Rio is one of the top horses in Gingerich’s stable, it was not a fast nor linear process

to get there.

“With Rio, I needed to learn to communicate better. He wasn’t as forgiving as the horses I’d had before that. I spent hours in the pasture with him, playing little games and learning how his mind worked. You would start to get these little light bulb moments, then you would build on those,” said Gingerich. “He was, and is, very opinionated and quirky. [Under saddle] he would throw some bucks in there if he didn’t appreciate the way I did something. I had to learn to be more subtle, effective and clear.”

As with many things in life, sometimes the hardest things offer the biggest rewards. While Rio’s quirks and sensitivity may have presented challenges, over the years he and Gingerich have built a partnership and bond that has allowed

them to achieve greatness in a variety of disciplines. Together, the pair has been successful in reining, ranch versatility, extreme obstacle challenges, and have put on liberty and bridless demonstrations at venues throughout North America.

"I feel like Rio and I have accomplished all we set out to do in Ranch Horse and Reining. We are now working on Western Dressage," he said. "We've only shown a little bit, but I'm hoping to do that more with him."

A more recent addition to Gingerich's personal string is Tinseltowns Whizard (aka "Chloe"), a Palomino AQHA mare that he acquired as a yearling in 2019.

"While Rio was probably the most influential horse on my own growth as a trainer because he required me to up my game as a horseman and held me accountable, Chloe is probably the most talented horse I've ever worked with," said Gingerich.

"She is also the most complicated. Everything is a learning opportunity for her. She always tries very hard – sometimes too hard – but she can lose confidence easily and that is a delicate thing to navigate."

Training Horses, and People

Today, under the banner of his *Luke Gingerich Horsemanship*, Gingerich travels around the country as a highly sought-after clinician, teaching others how to achieve measurable success with their horses, whether it be personal milestones or competitive goals, through a foundation of trust and respect.

He also remains competitive on the national

stage. His recent list of competition-based credits includes being Reserve Champion in the 2022 Quarter Horse Congress Open Freestyle Reining and earning top honors

times. Then, at the other end of the spectrum is the extreme competitive side, asking as much as possible of the horse and focusing so much on the end goal, that the relationship may

and clinician. While many in his situation would be focused on developing as large a quantity of clients and customers as possible, Gingerich's focus is on quality.

Photo: Shane Rux



as the 2022 International Liberty Horse Association Invitational Freestyle Champion.

Gingerich's unique training approach marries high performance goals with liberty and connection-based training.

"Oftentimes, people either really value relationship-based training – liberty or otherwise – but they may not be achieving the results they desire with their horses, whether that is on a competitive or athletic level, or simply learning how to achieve mental and emotional fitness that helps their horses to be confident and relaxed and able to handle the stress that life, in general, can present at

not be a priority," he said. "Sometimes I think people think you need to choose one or the other, but you can't have both. I call what I do *performance liberty work*. To me, there are parallels between high level performance and relationship-based horsemanship. I strive to bring those two worlds together and help both horses and people learn how to bring a deeper understanding and connection to their relationship and goals."

With such a unique approach to training and an undeniable resume of results, it is no surprise that Gingerich is highly sought after as a coach

Gingerich typically offers one or two intensive training clinics each month at his Plain City, Ohio facility, lasting one or two weeks each. Attended by horse owners (and their horses) from all over North America, his clinics are typically limited to six participants, and involve small group training sessions with their horses, as well as the opportunity to watch and learn from Gingerich's training sessions with his own horses. Throughout the year, he also occasionally offers shorter clinics (usually three days) at various venues around the country.

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Life's Work

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"I keep the groups small so it's personalized. I want it to be relaxed, personal, intentional, with space for creativity. I want people to be able to be themselves here," he said. "Keeping the numbers low helps me to get to know each person and their horse and better understand their relationship together. As a clinician, getting to know each person and horse as an individual helps me to be more effective in my teaching."

With a following that is increasingly geographically diverse, he also offers online coaching in the form of one-hour lessons, in person at his facility, or via Zoom or live video. Customers can also choose to buy a membership on a monthly or annual basis, in which they gain access to Gingerich's large library of training videos and tutorials, as well as personalized coaching and support.

"We've all seen training videos where it's clear the horse knows exactly how to do what is being asked of them. The videos in my library are raw, unedited footage of me working through things with horses who are learning as we go – a real life look at training," said Gingerich. "You'll see everything from the beginning stages, working on basic foundational elements, and building from there, to working with my personal horses on higher level elements, as well as videos of me coaching other people and horses, which offers different perspectives on different types of horses."

Over the years, Gingerich

has also chosen to lend his name and brand to several pieces of training equipment. Some, such as horse feed, grooming products and a specialized rope halter, are made by other companies, while others, including his retractable target sticks, whips, and treat pouches, are designed and

produced precisely to his specifications.

"I am very particular about any product I put my name on, or brand I partner with. The biggest things for me are functionality and safety," he said. "I am a big believer in the 'if it isn't broke, don't fix it' approach. If a company makes a quality product

that I use and truly believe in, I am proud to partner with them. The items under my own brand are a result of me not being able to find exactly what I wanted on the market, so we created it, going through a lot of prototypes, refinement and testing."

Between coaching,

Photo courtesy of Weaver Leather



A New Challenge: Zara

While Luke Gingerich works with a wide variety of horses of different ages, breeds and experience levels, the greenest and possibly most challenging horse in his barn these days is Zara, a BLM Mustang he acquired in 2020 while teaching a clinic in Montana.

"A friend of mine who owned her, said she had more horses than she could focus on, and thought Zara would do well in my program," said Gingerich. "I did like her athleticism, and between my friend and the other students egging me on, I brought her home."

When Gingerich started working

with her, Zara was extremely tense and anxious, but exceptionally athletic.

"She had a bit of the 'cool girl' mentality when we first started working with her. She had a tough exterior that we had to work hard to get through," said Gingerich. "She takes life very seriously, which can be a good thing or can be very difficult. She is expressive and fiery. If she has an opinion, she'll let you know. Sometimes my job is simply to help her get out of her own head and learn that not everything needs to be done at 150%. She is featured on a number of my training videos and is really making a lot of progress. I'm very excited about the future with her." ■

competing, running his farm, training his own string of horses, managing his online offerings and more, Gingerich packs a lot into each day, but he somehow never loses sight of what it is all about: the horse.

"Whether it is one of my own horses or a client's horse, it is important to always look at the horse as an individual and be realistic and intentional about deciding what the reasonable expectations are that will set them up for success," said Gingerich. "Sometimes that means we have to pivot from how we were training or what our goals were. Sometimes it's a frank conversation with the horse's owner about what would be best for that horse, or for that person. *But, at the end of the day, if you listen to what the horse is telling you, they will not steer you wrong.*"

Things are Rarely as Simple as You Want Them to be

While Gingerich has always had a strong connection with horses and the ability to understand how to communicate with them effectively, being a coach and trainer of humans has not come as naturally.

"While I didn't always know I'd be a trainer and clinician, I always knew I wanted a career with horses," said Gingerich. "Honestly, most of the things I do today I didn't think I wanted to do, or didn't even know I was capable of doing."

Watching Gingerich put on clinics and demonstrations at events like Road to the Horse and Quarter Horse Congress, it is hard to imagine that

teaching and performing haven't always come naturally to him. But, as a child, and even early into adulthood, Gingerich was not one to seek the spotlight. He is candid about the internal struggles he has had in overcoming his natural tendency to

be somewhat shy and withdrawn.

"I was terrified of public speaking and any type of performing when I was younger. I've worked hard to overcome being an introvert, but it's still my natural inclination. While I've learned how to manage

and be more adjustable and adaptable, it does not come as naturally as it does for others."

Overcoming his own personal adversity has taught him how to help others – both horses and

Forever Learning

Photo courtesy of Luke Gingerich

There is a common thread among the best professionals, both in and out of the equestrian world; they never stop learning. Even those riding at the Olympic level, or on the national or international stage seek the advice and coaching of top trainers.

The same holds true for Luke Gingerich. Even though he has found success at the highest levels of his sport and is sought out by equestrians from throughout the country and around the world for his coaching and insight, he is still, and forever will be, a student.

"I feel it is important as horsemen, coaches and trainers, that we always continue to learn and further develop ourselves, and having our own mentors and coaches is a great way to do that," said Gingerich. "Jesse and Stacy Westfall are two of my biggest mentors."

Based in Mount Gilead, Ohio, the Westfalls are world-renowned professional trainers and clinicians who specialize in reining and liberty work. Gingerich looks to them not only for coaching as a competitor, but also for advice on how to develop as a clinician and horseman.

"I have an incredible amount of respect for their horsemanship and overall outlook in general, and I ride with them as often as I can," he said. "While sometimes that is a couple times a month, when our schedules align, other times we have to skip a month or



(L-R) Luke Gingerich, fiancée Kaylee Van Winkle, Stacy and Jesse Westfall.

two, but they're always there to offer encouragement, a listening ear, a word of advice, a different way to look at something or a better approach to my training."

Different people have different riding and coaching styles, and what might be the perfect approach for one student may not work for another. That is why it's important to find a coach or trainer that aligns with (and agrees with) your goals, teaches in a manner conducive to your learning style, and with whom you are comfortable communicating.

"The type of support the Westfalls have given to me has been invaluable, and I know I would not be the person or horseman I am today without it." ■

Continued on page 46

Life's Work

Continued from page 45

humans – do the same, and over the years he has learned to do so incredibly effectively.

“I have a lot of empathy and compassion for a horse when it’s struggling. I know what it’s like to be

uncomfortable and fearful,” he said. “I’ve worked really hard to overcome this discomfort and it’s led me to be more mindful about how I ask a horse to work through it.”

The result of this approach is a well-rounded, self-secure horse that is capable of dealing with both the expected

and unexpected. Like people, horses, especially performance horses, will often be asked to step outside of their comfort zone. Gingerich’s approach gives them the tools and training to do so with composure, which is likely why he has found great success with horses that were naturally reactive, sensitive or quirky.

As far as Gingerich has come in his career, and as much as he has helped others to achieve, he says the more he knows and accomplishes, the more he realizes he has to learn.

“Things are rarely as simple as you want them to be,” he said. “The more you get into any subject, the more nuances and variables you see. I follow a program with my horses and have methods and techniques

that I really believe in, but the farther I get as a trainer, the more I realize I have to learn.” ■

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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Does My Horse Need a Float?

by Gian P. Gargiulo, DVM

Equine dental abnormalities can manifest in a number of ways. Dental issues can be as subtle as a slight resistance to the bit, or escalate to a complete unwillingness to eat. Many times, your horse will show no signs of dental pain, but still have dental abnormalities present. No matter where your horse is on the spectrum, their dental issues may be worse than you think.

Common signs of equine oral discomfort:

- Quidding, loss of feed from mouth
- Loss of body condition
- Undigested feed particles in manure
- Bit resistance
- Nasal discharge, facial swelling

As a rough guide, your horse's dental needs can be assessed by their age and the

amount of time since the last float:

From birth to 7 years of age, many horses will need to be examined/floated every six months.

From the ages of 8 years to 19 years, an annual float is usually adequate.

The geriatric horse - 20+ years, can usually go 18 months between floats.

These guidelines are estimates and can vary between horses. If any signs of oral discomfort are observed at any time, a veterinarian should be called out to examine your horse. The variation in time between the different age groups is due to the fact that the equine tooth erupts into the oral cavity faster in a young horse as opposed to an older horse.

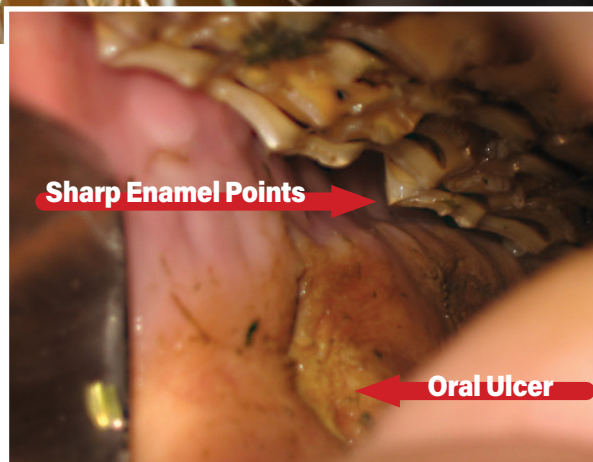
Unfortunately, many horse owners gauge the dental needs of their horse by how they are eating or

responding to the bit. These are very poor indicators of oral discomfort, and can lead to uncorrectable dental issues. Because the equine tooth erupts slowly, approximately 2-3 mm per year, oral pain comes on slowly. The horse adapts to the pain by changing its pattern of chewing. This results in an uneven distribution of chewing forces that allows some teeth to become severely overgrown, while others

experience excessive wear. These conditions, if left untreated, will result in tooth loss and decreased performance.

If you follow the age-based float intervals and have qualified veterinary dental care, you will give your horse the best chance of a life free of oral discomfort. •

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Understanding Equine Skin Conditions

Three Steps for Success from a Pharmacist

by **Kristen Hansen,**
PharmD

Among the numerous health concerns that can affect horses, equine skin conditions are particularly prevalent and can significantly impact quality of life. As a horse owner, it is important to understand the basics of equine dermatology in order to navigate common challenges effectively. This article can be used as a guide for horse owners to successfully manage common equine skin conditions and provides product selection recommendations from a Clinical Pharmacist.

Equine Dermatology Basics

The epidermis (skin) serves as a horse's first line of defense. It shields the body from harmful environmental elements, pathogens, and traumatic injuries. Any damage to this organ opens the door to potential infections and must be treated appropriately. Untreated infections may enter the bloodstream or lymphatic system and cause extensive internal damage or death. However, most common equine skin conditions are mild and can be treated by the horse owner.

Three Steps for Success

Common equine skin conditions develop due to the presence of 3 variables: a damaged skin barrier, the presence of a pathogen, and an environment that promotes growth of the

pathogen. Similarly, three steps must be followed by the horse owner when attempting to treat an infection involving the skin.



Step 1: Choose the proper first-line treatment

Understanding the type of pathogen most commonly associated with each type of equine skin condition will help guide the horse owner to the proper first-line treatment. Use the following guide to help identify pharmacist recommended first-line treatment options that are accessible to horse owners. It is important to note that this is not a complete guide and a Veterinarian should be consulted in moderate or resistant cases when first-line treatments fail. A skin culture or biopsy may be necessary to help determine appropriate antimicrobial therapy.

Step 2: Protect damaged skin

It is crucial to protect damaged skin with either an appropriate topical product



or physical barrier. When hair loss is present or when dealing with skin conditions on the legs, choose a product that will provide the best barrier protection such as an ointment or paste. Physical barriers such as bandaging or blanketing may also be warranted in severe cases. When treating sweet itch or summer sores, fly sheets can be used to reduce exposure to insect bites. For wounds where hair (a partial barrier) is present, a spray or powder may be the best product choice. Moisturizing products such as ointment or sprays will contribute to healthy

growth of new skin, whereas pastes and powders can help absorb moisture in undesired areas.

• A Pharmacist's Note:

- Creams and lotions
- do not provide barrier
- protection as they are
- formulated to be spread
- onto and absorbed into
- human (hairless) skin;
- therefore, they are not
- ideal for use on animals.



Step 3: Change the environment

This can be the most difficult step to implement

	Affected Area	Appearance	Cause	Common Pathogen	Recommended First Line of Treatment
Rain Rot	Back, Topline, Legs	Crusty/oozing scabs along back/rump. Can have large patches of hair loss/wet skin.	Bacteria	<i>Dermatophilus congolensis</i>	Antibacterial shampoo, topical antibacterial spray or ointment, Blanket to reduce exposure to moisture (temp. dependent).
Mud Fever/ Scratches/ Cannon Crud/ Dew Poisoning/ Greasy Heel	Legs	Red irritated/ swollen areas with scabs, pustules may be present.	Bacteria	<i>Various Staphylococcus species</i>	Antibacterial shampoo, topical antibacterial spray or ointment, wraps/boots may be needed to prevent re-occurrence.
Ringworm	Face, Body, Tail, Mane	Round itchy areas of hair loss may be red and "wet".	Fungus	<i>Trichophyton species</i>	Anti-fungal shampoo, topical anti-fungal spray/ointment.
Sweet Itch	Body, Mane, Tail	Irritated/itchy areas commonly on belly or tail, hair loss from rubbing, scabs/pustules.	Allergic Reactions	<i>Primary proteins in Midge saliva, secondary Staphylococcus</i>	Fly protection and management followed by treatment for secondary infections.
Mallenders	Feathered Legs	Crusty, greasy, oozing scabs	Multiple Causes	<i>Mites/ Staphylococcus</i>	Insecticide treatment for mites. Antibacterial shampoo, topical spray/paste/powder. Keep area clean and dry.
Summer Sores	Lips, Face, Genitalia	Ulcerative red, oozing skin; may have calcified look	Larvae of stomach worms deposited from flies	<i>Habronema species</i>	Fly protection/management and oral de-worming. Treatment for infections. Topical steroid ointments/Veterinary care may be needed to resolve ulcers.

when treating equine skin conditions. Start with keeping a clean, dry stall or sheltered paddock area available for your horse. Blanketing a susceptible horse during wet seasons may help. Mud and fly management will also help reduce breeding grounds for bacteria and parasites. In chronic cases, this may be the last step

that is often overlooked and is crucial to eradicate the pathogen from the environment. For boarders, this can be a difficult issue to address without moving the horse to a new property. When unable to drastically change the environment, steps 1 and 2 can keep skin conditions at bay, although it is likely

they will reoccur.

Following these 3 steps will allow horse owners to choose an appropriate first-line product, reduce time and money spent on ineffective products, and prevent future reinfections. •

Dr. Kristen Hansen is a Clinical Pharmacist with

11 years of experience in hospital, retail, and compounding pharmacies and 19 years of horse ownership. Dr. Hansen is the owner of Dr. Hansen's Equine Apothecary.

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Stall Project Tips from Yash Balasaria of American Stalls

by **Lisa Kiley**

American Stalls is one of the world's premiere stall manufacturers. If you have been in the industry long enough, chances are that you have been in a barn that utilizes some of their products, from gorgeous European-style stall fronts to safe portable stalls that line the aisles at your favorite event venue. American Stalls makes everything from the basic components to the finishing touches to make a barn safe and user-friendly for horse and human alike. Yash Balasaria is the CEO of American Stalls, and second generation in stall production, which started back in 2005.

Balasaria described some tips that he would recommend for someone starting out the planning process of a stall project. He advised that while no two barns are the same there are some things that everyone should consider when starting to make plans for their facility. First, it is important to think about the key functions of the barn and what the daily flow of work in the barn will be. Balasaria advised that when his team works on a project,

they ask the barn owners to take the time to really think through layout and flow in the barn. His team then provides resources that can be used to work through different options to make the facility uniquely that of the barn owners.

Balasaria stressed the importance of ventilation and sunlight in the barn which add to the overall health and safety of the barn. He suggested adding windows that can be opened, providing natural light and better air quality for the horses. Where appropriate, he encouraged using glass windows as a great option for barns. Grill work and mesh, on stall fronts and gates, can also allow for more ventilation with the added benefit of being able to see the whole horse when walking through the barn, which can make it easier to spot any issues that need to be addressed.

Dutch doors on the exterior of the stall are something else that Balasaria strongly recommends. The doors not only add light and air flow but provide additional options for egress. This is beneficial not only for easy pasture turnout, but also in the case of fire. In



critical times sliding doors can often be easier to manage than swinging doors. While traditionally Dutch doors often swing out, American Stalls offers a sliding Dutch door option, which can not only be easier to open, but is also a space saver. Balasaria added that having strong reliable latches and high-quality hardware in the barn can make a dramatic difference in the ease of moving through the barn space.

Safety in construction is also on the top of Balasaria's list when it comes to materials selection. He advised that when sizing up products for your facility, take the time to educate yourself about the differences in materials construction. He urges potential customers to ask about how the materials are fabricated. He explained

that interior welds and seamless welds provide additional strength and durability versus components that may be tack-welded and are prone to breakage over time or under stress. He also urged people to invest in items that have been welded versus components that are bolted together.

In closing, Balasaria stressed the importance of working with a company that you can trust. He shared that all the members of his team are horse people and have many years of horse experience in different facets of the industry. This experience can be invaluable when working through a project because they have the background to understand the specific needs of each customer and are able to offer thoughtful insights on every project, large or small. Having a good relationship with the company you are working with is key to creating the barn of your dreams. ●

For more information on American Stalls products, contact Cashmans Horse Equipment at Cashmans.com

Envirostall

Cutting Edge Technology That's Good for Your Horse and the Environment

by **Lisa Kiley**

The day-to-day chores of having horses can develop into a simple rhythm: feed, water, turnout, clean stalls, repeat. These tasks easily become part of our daily routine to a point that we don't really think about why we do things the way we do them. It can take a problem to arise before we look for a solution. The traditional nature of the equine industry sometimes means the newest innovations in horse care are overlooked. However, when we squash down our curiosity, we can begin to work against ourselves using outdated methods that can be costly. Maybe it is time to look at what innovation can do for you and your horses.

Ron Vrana is the CEO of Envirostall and the product he offers is changing how we look at horse keeping, stall cleaning, and stewardship to the environment. When Vrana began his journey with Envirostall, he had been involved in the horse industry for many years. His daughter fell in love with horses at a young age and became passionate about racing Thoroughbred horses. Over the last 20 years, the father-daughter duo has partnered in the acquisition and racing of several horses successfully in the Pennsylvania area. While he admitted it can be terrifying

to watch your child on a 1200 lb horse going 40 mph, she has become one of the best training riders in the region, and he is very proud of her accomplishments.

With an extensive background in business and education along with his interest in the equine industry, Vrana started working with the founder of Envirostall, a product that was envisioned back in 2015. The founder, Craig Roper, and his team started working on this project as a solution to industrial runoff. Roper's interest in horses led him to think about the ways this system could be applied in the horse world. It wasn't long before he created a system that was specifically targeted for horse and stable management. After Roper passed away, Vrana was chosen to take the helm as CEO of the Pennsylvania-based company.

As the name Envirostall implies, one of the most notable features about this system is the benefit to the environment. Vrana explained, "The system was created to mitigate contaminated runoff. One of the major goals of the product is to benefit the environment which in turn benefits all of us." He went on to talk about how watersheds in the Midwest, along with other agricultural



hubs in the country that are close to bodies of water, are susceptible to creating runoff that can pollute these waterways.

Vrana pointed to Lake Erie as an example of what can happen when pollutants invade fresh bodies of water. "A big problem is nitrogen and phosphates, along with organic waste, including antibiotics, chemicals, and pathogens, that enter the soil through untreated dissemination of horse urine. These contaminants then find their way into streams, rivers, and other bodies of water."

"Nitrates also react with the natural bacteria in the soil and create nitrous oxide, a greenhouse gas that is 265 times more potent than carbon dioxide and it stays in the atmosphere for over 100 years, contributing to global warming." But, he explained, there is a solution, "the proprietary microbes used in the Envirostall system work to specifically target horse urine and pull the moisture out of hard waste. It significantly reduces pollutants going into the ground, preventing hazardous runoff into water systems and remediating soil over time."

When it comes to stable management, Vrana advised, "Sometimes the maintenance aspect is done on an 'as needed' basis or the easiest and cheapest way instead of what is best for the horse and the environment." While these interventions require planning, Vrana continued, "they can make the difference when it comes to how your horse performs and their overall health." He explained, "because the wet matter in the stalls is drained and eliminated



through the floor of the stall, there is much less bedding waste because only dry waste needs to be taken out of the stalls, making cleaning much more efficient." The amount of waste will be significantly reduced, leading to less time and energy spent managing manure waste and a much cleaner and more sanitary environment for the horse.

Vrana shared that with proper installation of the Envirostall system, "the horses are on dry, level ground that helps prevent soreness and stiffness. When horses stand on damp uneven ground in stalls, they can develop issues of lameness over time." He also advised that "bacteria that thrives in wet, unsanitary conditions caused by the buildup of urine mixed with solid waste and bedding can have a negative impact on a horse's hooves and legs." Additionally, the ammonia smell from the urea (nitrogen-containing compound in urine) is eliminated, which will help prevent respiratory health issues for both humans and horses, especially young horses and foals in the barn. The benefits translate into savings by preventing costly

veterinary bills.

When asked how the system is set up to accomplish removing the wet material from the stalls, Vrana stressed that correct installation is imperative. First, you must start with stalls that have adequate drainage. While the system removes the moisture created from urine and solid waste from horses, it is not a water remediation system. "The system can be installed over almost any base, including concrete, using 4" of aggregate that is leveled and then sprayed with the proprietary solution. The microbes work to draw the moisture down through the aggregate while remediating it to create a by-product that won't pollute the environment."

Once the aggregate is appropriately installed and the solution is sprayed, it is then topped with Enviro pads, anti-fatigue mats, to provide comfort for the horse. "The mats link together and are additionally secured with industrial grade zip ties, creating one large piece across the stall. The system is topped by a layer of Envirofilter, a geotextile material that filters horse urine and other impurities out of the stall

and into the Envirostall system. The Envirofilter goes up the sides of the stall about 6" and is anchored to the wall," explained Vrana. Because the Envirofilter is cut to size, it can fit any stall size and can be installed in a new project or retrofitted into an existing barn.

Once anchored in place, the system is ready to use. When selecting a bedding, Vrana stated, "most beddings can be used. The only type of bedding that does not work with the system is pelleted bedding because the small particles will clog up the drainage." Of course, because all the moisture is being absorbed by the system, the bedding is going to last much longer as a dry, sanitary, and comfortable place for the horse to rest.

The system can be a helpful tool in keeping stalls safer and more sanitary as new horses come in and out, making it perfect for commercial facilities, but it can be easily implemented in smaller home barns as well. For more information about stall projects and testimonials check out www.envirostall.com. If you would like to hear more about how to make your stalls more environmentally friendly and healthier for you and your horses, contact Ron Vrana at rvrana@envirostall.com. He will be able to help guide your project from planning to installation. ■

Lisa Kiley is a lifelong horse lover who grew up in the Irish Hills of Michigan riding and showing in all around events. She is a freelance writer who has worked in many facets of the equine industry over the years. Currently, she lives in Ohio and continues to enjoy riding her 18-year-old AQHA gelding, 'Cotton'.



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Showsafe Aims to Securely Simplify Stable Management

by **Tim Bojarski**

The day-to-day challenges of managing the physical needs of competition horses is the number one priority of any owner or trainer. However, the clerical part of the business is equally important as it ensures unimpeded and successful performances. Unfortunately, these two functions do not normally take place simultaneously, resulting in extra time and work for the stable manager. That is, until now.

There is a new mobile app named Showsafe that has been developed by horse people, for horse people, that seamlessly combines daily tasks and the documentation that goes with them while automatically storing the information pertaining to each individual horse in your barn.

Showsafe was the vision of Tim Cable, a third-generation farrier that has been shoeing horses since he was 13 years old. Cable has worked with multi-disciplined horses and has shod champions in almost every field of competition. He deals with the top trainers in the business and has experienced their frustration when something that should have gone right went wrong, and that is what led to this new app.

"In 2014, one of my clients had to scratch out of a \$250,000 event for giving a medication too close to competition. Seeing the anger and frustration this cost his barn, I began to think about how this could be prevented, so no one would



"The core function of Showsafe is still to accurately monitor medications and instantly became the most powerful tool for doing just that."

ever have to scratch or get a positive again? And, I thought having an app on your phone could keep everyone in the barn on the same page," said Cable.

Cable's original idea was for a medication calculator with a timer and alarm for each horse in the barn. But, as the project evolved, it became a whole lot more than that.

Cable was shoeing for Gianluca Caron, who was immediately enamored with the idea and prompted Cable to pursue it. Caron became part of the project and found an app developer who had a shared vision of what it

should be.

Gianluca became a professional rider when he was eighteen years old. He spent about 25 years riding and working with some of the most important riders in the world. He first sat on the back of a horse as a small child, and soon after started working at local barns to gain riding time. Throughout his venture, he rode his way through opportunities that led him to horse shows all over Europe. In the midst of climbing his way to the top, his dream of spending every second in the saddle abruptly stopped. Unfortunately, an injury prevented him from

riding. But as we say, when one door closes a bigger one opens. In 2007, he started a career as an entrepreneur helping equestrian brands to grow in the US market.

"I also knew that the only way this company is going to work is if we bring Scott Sandstrom in to be the managing partner because of his expertise in finance and building companies," said Cable.

Scott Sandstrom was raised in a six-generation horse family and has shown horses extensively with his family around the world. He and his family have also been involved in Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing, giving him an extensive amount of knowledge of every aspect of the equine industry. Aside from horses, Sandstrom has built several successful businesses that included wholesaling through government networks and two wealth management practices, each with assets around \$2 billion.

"When Tim came to me with the idea for Showsafe, I saw it as a great way to give back and help our sport better manage itself. With my background in building networks for the U.S. military, I am well aware of how governing bodies do things. When they ask for one fact, they are actually looking for many more and Showsafe is designed to document, securely store and present all facets of one's equine operation in real time," Sandstrom said.

The core function of Showsafe is still to accurately monitor medications and

instantly became the most powerful tool for doing just that.

"Showsafe's medicine and therapeutic list contains over 3,700 medicines and supplements -- basically every single pharmaceutical manufactured for the equestrian industries -- broken down by type of administration. Showsafe's competition medicine lists and Medicine Calculators go by the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI) database which is the global governing body of the sport. It is also equipped with timers and alarms that allow you to enter

protected and viewable only by their permission.

"Rather than spending more time worrying about regulations that can add work, reduce efficacy, and take the focus away from caring for and training the animal, Showsafe will give you more time to be hands-on with your horses," said Cable.

Besides the medication aspect of the app, Showsafe also offers several other major functions.

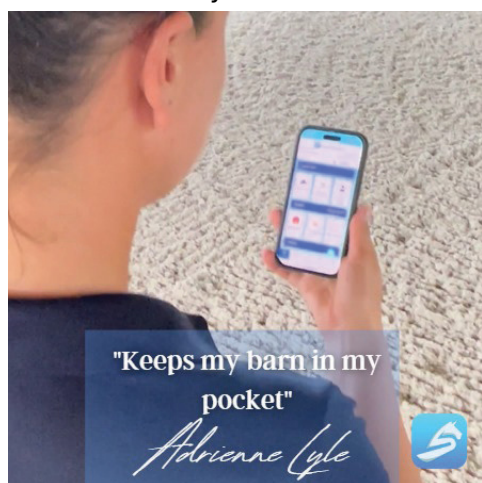
The app has a Video Vault that organizes any video or photo taken and saves them with a time and date stamp by each individual horse.

The Accounting Vault allows anyone from the barn to scan a receipt and enter it to the barn or individual horse in real time, so any bookkeeper can see all expenses by category and easily keep records up to date.

The Paper Vault organizes and stores all the Coggins and health papers, passports and other important documents in each horse's own file for easy retrieval.

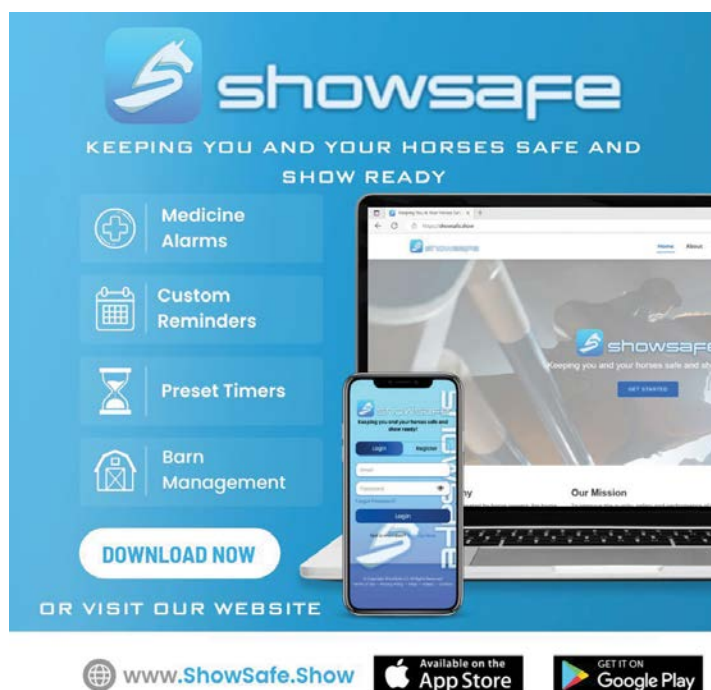
And in the task section, a trainer can assign daily work to any individual who has permission on the app. In turn, those individuals can click on those tasks when completed and they are automatically time and date stamped when they do.

Other features include all of the health records you would need, breeding calculator, feeding scheduler and temperature monitor. And all the tools are easily identified by colored icons on the menu.



when and how a horse was treated with something, and then counts down to when it is clear for that animal to go back into competition. It contains all the detection and withdrawal times and keeps accurate records of them all, taking an almost impossible task for a large stable and putting you in complete control from your smartphone," said Sandstrom.

As Showsafe was developed, both Sandstrom and Cable realized it could really help a lot of trainers, not only with barn organization, but also with ensuring their horses meet the standards of FEI, using their own database that's



Showsafe also allows you to invite multiple vets, farriers, trainers, grooms and riders to get access to whatever you want them to see. These contacts are then kept together for easy access from a running list.

Every part of the app has drop-down menus with pre-selected settings or names. But the user can also customize any menu with their own label by simply filling in a box and adding it to the menu.

Recently, Showsafe has partnered with The Dutta Corp., the largest equine air transportation company in the U.S., to run their customers through the app so all their documentation can be transferred easily to accurately track their horse.

"The horse industry as a whole is not digitally savvy, as many still use pen and paper in the horse show world. But with the help of people like Adrienne Lyle and John and Beezie Madden, who were very helpful in refining our app, Showsafe has been developed to a point where anyone can feel

comfortable using it," said Cable.

"We have gotten great feedback from our current users and that has helped to make the app better. If somebody has a suggestion that we feel can improve Showsafe, we immediately incorporate it into the software for the benefit of all users."

The developers of Showsafe are planning on giving back to the equine community once this project takes off, by sponsoring events in show jumping, as well as Thoroughbred and Standardbred racing. Showsafe is targeting 10% of profits to be directed back into the industry across all disciplines to help bolster the sport worldwide.

Showsafe comes in eleven languages and is available for download in the Apple Store and Google Play Store for free, and has several levels of subscription rates based on stable size. ●

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Ohio's First Permanent, Indoor-Outdoor Trail Park Welcomes All Breeds and Disciplines

Improve your relationship with your horse while building confidence using trail obstacles training

by **Laura Wiencek**

The journey begins with a little girl who had a dream of making her love of horses a career. My father always taught me if I was going to do it, I had to go all-in and I had to do it right!

After several years of working a day job, as well as pursuing my dream with horses, I decided to make a full-time commitment to my vision. At the time, I was working with transitioning off-track Thoroughbreds from the track to barrel racing without making them "hot". I wanted them to learn to pick up their feet, bend, and flex to occupy their brain. I recognized early on that mountain trail obstacles training offered the right approach by providing a low-key, relaxed environment that emphasizes developing a strong horse-rider partnership, leading to skill and relationship-building relevant to all riding disciplines.

To accomplish this, we built our first outdoor course in 2017. We had a clinician show us how to move over, around and through the obstacles and how to design our original course. For a couple of years, we worked with an association, then moved out on our own. After realizing we needed a better format, and

after meeting Jill Hanson-Wiese, founder of CHAPS (Competitive Horses and Partnerships), we found our format for judging our trail challenges.

Over time, we recognized that the lack of a permanent indoor course was limiting. So, in November 2022, we traveled to Oregon Horse Center to learn directly from the founders of Mountain Trail. Walking into the Silverado Arena, we were transfixed by the big stumps, large boulders, bridges, trenches, and the iconic waterfall. Realizing that OHC's (Oregon Horse Center) indoor park was only available certain times of the year, we were convinced we needed to build a permanent, indoor park with year-round availability. Following many hours of planning and working with the local Small Business Association, we held our grand opening of the first permanent, indoor course facility - Win-Seek Fallen Pines Equestrian Center, in August, 2023. Concurrent to building the indoor park, we relocated and enhanced the outdoor park, as well.

Our mission is to give everyone the opportunity to ride our trail courses, both indoor and outdoor, and help build the partnership



between the horse and rider. It doesn't matter if you're a beginner, have a young horse you are working in-hand or in the saddle, or an old pro at trail riding. There is a class and a level for you. When we are asked who our audience is, we answer, "everyone"! Any discipline or skill level can ride our trail parks. Both parks make it easy for someone to feel comfortable while working with their horse and building their partnership.

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and outdoor trail parks have something for everyone. We have livery stalls and highlines to keep your horse comfy while you're here. No living quarters? No problem. We have partnered with local venues to accommodate your stay.

As we continue to grow and expand, we invite everyone to WSFP to enjoy our indoor and outdoor trail parks. Check out our Facebook page: Win-Seek Fallen Pines Equestrian Center, or our website: win-seek.com for our updated clinics, open ride times, lessons, challenges and contact information. •

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Commemorating 30 Years of Equine Affaire

North America's premier equine exposition celebrates three decades in Ohio

by **Allison Armstrong Rehnborg**

If there's one thing horse lovers enjoy more than spending time with their horses, it's the opportunity to spend time with *other* horse people and their horses – and that's exactly the kind of experience that Equine Affaire offers to equestrians on a grand scale.

For the last three decades, Equine Affaire has established itself as the nation's premier equine exposition and equestrian

gathering. Equine Affaire, Inc. is headquartered in London, OH, and hosts two four-day horse expos each year – one in Columbus, OH, in April, and one in W. Springfield, MA, in November. Both events attract tens of thousands of horse lovers from across the country and the world.

"Equine Affaire presents endless opportunities for horse people," explains Coagi Long, the president and owner of Equine Affaire, Inc. "There are opportunities to

learn, to shop, to network, be entertained, make new friends, create lasting memories, find a new horse, and so much more. It's an event designed to welcome people from all disciplines who work with all breeds of horses. Bringing people together from a variety of backgrounds sparks new ideas and mutual respect."

Equine Affaire's educational programs and stellar lineups of clinicians have formed the cornerstones of its events since the first

expo was held in 1994. At each event, attendees enjoy attending a wealth of educational clinics, seminars, and demonstrations about all aspects of horsemanship. Past presenters include Olympians, World Equestrian Games and Pan Am Games Champions, World and National Champions, equestrian TV personalities, authors, judges, course designers, trainers, coaches, competitors, and equine professionals. Over the years, Equine Affaire has built its

reputation on featuring elite equestrian educators – and for taking part in launching the careers of many aspiring trainers and teachers who are now household names in the horse world, like instructor and trainer, Julie Goodnight.

“The whole evolution of my career has been on parallel tracks with Equine Affaire,” Julie says, who remembers presenting at one of the earliest events in Ohio. “I remember how eager I was to get past just lecturing from a stage and getting into the arena to teach, and it was the leadership at Equine Affaire who gave me that opportunity. Presenting at Equine Affaire became a significant part of my transition from giving lessons to public speaking, and it has also played a role in my ability to build a national brand over the years.”

The events are also home to sprawling trade shows where people can shop, connect with, and explore brands from all sectors of the equine industry, as well as a Breed Pavilion and Horse and Farm Exhibits where they can network and connect with other horse owners, equine business professionals, and organizations. People can ride their own horses in clinics, participate in mounted and unmounted competitions, and buy, sell, and exhibit horses. Horse rescue organizations and sanctuaries can also participate in an Adoption Affaire, bringing horses to the event in order to connect with potential adopters and inspire advocacy in new audiences.

Often, the events include a variety of hands-on activities where attendees can ride horses for the first time, learn to drive draft horses, and experience the benefits

of equine-assisted activities and therapies. Other special features include crafts for kids, college and career fairs, clinics and shows held in conjunction with the Interscholastic Equestrian Association and the Intercollegiate Horse Shows Association, youth horse judging contests, and much more.

And that’s not all. For the first three nights of every event, Equine Affaire also hosts its signature “musical celebration of the horse,” Fantasia, which is a two-hour musical and theatrical spectacular showcasing the nation’s best equine and equestrian performers. The lineups vary from event to event, ranging from liberty, reining, dressage freestyles, aerial, trick riding, and vaulting acts to trick roping, mounted shooting, costumed specialty acts, and even jousting. Beloved by audience members of all ages, attending Fantasia has become a family tradition for generations of equestrian families.

“There’s truly something for everyone at Equine Affaire, because it’s a place where we all can come together to celebrate the horse,” Coagi says.

Marking Milestones

This spring, Equine Affaire celebrates the 30th anniversary of its event in Ohio. On April 11-14, 2024, the Ohio Expo Center in Columbus will fill with horses and horse people as they enjoy a long weekend dedicated to elevating the equestrian experience. This event’s anniversary comes on the heels of the 25th anniversary of Equine Affaire in Massachusetts, which the company celebrated at the Eastern States Exposition in November 2023.

The key to the company’s longevity – yes, even through a global pandemic that effectively shuttered its doors for three event cycles – is that its events have been lovingly crafted, curated, and supported ‘by equestrians for equestrians’ since its inception. From its founder to its current owner to the corporate staff, volunteers, contracted event staff, and the hundreds of companies, associations, and individuals who work together each year to put on the event, everyone at Equine Affaire is passionate about horses and horse people.

According to Coagi, that’s what keeps the magic of the event alive year after year.

“Equine Affaire is an icon in the horse industry that

has set the bar high for horse expos,” Coagi says. “We’ve accomplished that because of our passion for horses, as well as the dedication and work ethic of the people who have been working to make this event a reality. In addition to our small team of full-time staff members who work year-round, we rely on an incredible network of volunteers and contract staff who come together with us at event time to execute, manage, and coordinate many facets of the event. Many of these individuals have been working faithfully with us for more than twenty years.”

One of those individuals is Kim Schneider, who began working as a contract staff

Continued on page 70



member at Equine Affaire's events in 2002. Like many of the other volunteers and event staff, Kim uses her vacation time from her full-time job to work the events. It's a sacrifice she loves to make, not just because of her passion for horses, but also because of the relationships she has developed with friends at the event through the years.

"I've gained a lot of relationships who feel like family from all the experiences I've had at the events," Kim says. "We may only see each other once or twice a year, but we just pick up from where we left off."

Ohio - Born and Bred

Like all great things, Equine Affaire began as an idea. The company and its events were conceived by Eugenia Snyder, a keen horsewoman with a varied background that included experience in marketing and event production. Her goal was to create a first-class, education-oriented horsemen's exposition, where horse people from all breeds and all disciplines could convene in a non-competitive environment and share their passion for horses with each other. She incorporated the company in 1993. The very next year, Eugenia and her staff produced the first Equine Affaire at the Hara Arena Complex in Dayton, OH.

Just three years later, the expo outgrew the Dayton facility and relocated to the Ohio Expo Center, where it has been produced on an annual basis ever since. In 1998, a second Equine Affaire debuted at the Eastern States Exposition in W. Springfield, MA. In

"It doesn't matter which event we're talking about – Mass, Ohio, or California – people attend Equine Affaire because they want to learn more about what they love."

–Cheryl McLeod

2001, the company expanded westward to the Fairplex in Pomona, CA, where it produced Equine Affaire in California for more than ten years. The fourth iteration of the event took place in Louisville, KY, in 2005.

When Eugenia decided to retire in 2018, Coagi purchased the company and became president, but her own history with Equine Affaire began when she was a high school student.

"I first attended Equine Affaire in 1998 in Columbus, and had a thoroughly wonderful time," Coagi remembers. "Later, I attended the University of Findlay, and as a junior, I participated in the event's Ride with a Pro clinic program with one of the university's young dressage horses. Then, as a senior, I found an employment ad on the job board at school for a marketing associate position with Equine Affaire."

That ad posting led to Coagi's first position with the company. More than twenty years later, after working her way through various roles, Coagi is proud to own and operate the very same expo she visited as a youth.

"I am humbled and honored to be carrying the company forward," Coagi says. "It's no small task and a huge responsibility, but I am thrilled to know that Equine Affaire has such a profound impact on so many people

who all come together for a common link: the horse."

Crafting Equine Affaire

Just like cultivating any venture in the equine industry, carrying Equine Affaire forward into the future means cherishing its traditions while also encouraging growth and development. Over the past thirty years, the team at Equine Affaire has introduced different features to reach different segments of the industry. For example, the Equine Affaire Versatile Horse and Rider Competition was first introduced in 2007 in Massachusetts; it's now a mainstay of both events, and a popular attraction for competitors and attendees alike. In 2016, the inclusion of "For Sale" stalls encouraged horse owners to start bringing their sale prospects to the Horse & Farm Exhibits. Geared toward youth and nontraditional students, the College and Career Fair debuted in 2017, and then, the following year, interactive activities were introduced, such as Ride a Morgan, which were designed to encourage novice horse lovers to take their passions up a notch.

For John Strayer, who began working with the company as a volunteer in 1999, and quickly became a contracted staff member, watching the evolution of

Equine Affaire has been a unique pleasure.

"Equine Affaire is a great organization that's doing great things," John says. "It's continuing to evolve as the market evolves, too, and that's super cool. Our industry is ever-changing. We're having to move and adapt in the Western riding world right now, and Equine Affaire is showing that it can move and adapt, too. Coagi understands that movement is critical to the life of the product. She listens, not just to the people in the crowds, but to the people that are working for her, and that's a great quality."

Cheryl McLeod has been working with Equine Affaire since 1997, when she started as a volunteer. She eventually became a contracted staff worker at the events and has worked at Equine Affaires in Massachusetts, Ohio, and California. Cheryl loves seeing how a passion for both horses and education brings people together at the events.

"It doesn't matter which event we're talking about – Mass, Ohio, or California – people attend Equine Affaire because they want to learn more about what they love," Cheryl says. "I love seeing the mix of cultures, too, like when our Amish audience members watch demonstrations about acupuncture or chiropractic work, and then they start incorporating those practices into their barns. I think gaining knowledge about horses transcends anything that might make people different from one another."

After Coagi took the reins in 2018, she set about making other changes, too, such as transitioning Equine Affaire and Fantasia tickets into an all-digital

format and introducing the Adoption Affaire in 2019. Then 2020 dawned, and with it, a change that had a particularly devastating effect on live, in-person productions.

"I never imagined we would have to cancel an event," Coagi says. "But as the days went by in early March, 2020 and the Equine Affaire in Ohio grew ever closer, we watched other events like ours close and cancel. And then we had to follow suit. After that first cancellation, I never dreamed we would have to cancel three events."

Because of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 Equine Affaire in Ohio, the 2020 Equine Affaire in Massachusetts, and the 2021 Equine Affaire in Ohio were all canceled. The staff rallied to hold virtual events in place of the 2020 Massachusetts and 2021 Ohio events, but it was still a lean time for the company and for the horse industry overall.

"I'd like to recognize the exhibitors who rolled their funds forward, and the attendees who rolled their tickets forward or became Equine Affaire champions by donating their ticket prices," Coagi says. "Without their support, Equine Affaire may not have survived those eighteen months without an event. I also extend my sincere gratitude to the amazing corporate staff who remained committed to Equine Affaire and our cause, despite pay cuts and temporary layoffs."

Coming Back Stronger Than Ever

As restrictions on live events eased in late 2021, Equine Affaire's staff began working cautiously towards



producing the 2021 Equine Affaire in Massachusetts – and that event was allowed to proceed, much to everyone's relief.

"It wasn't easy to come out on the other side of the pandemic, but with our team spirit, we were able to endure and survive," Coagi reflects. "When we were able to return to the fairgrounds, it was a little surreal, but at the same time, we all hit our stride as if we'd never left. Fast forward to now, and interest in participating in and supporting Equine Affaire is soaring. We are proud to continue serving the equine industry as the nation's premier equine exposition and equestrian gathering."

Post-pandemic, attendance at Equine Affaire has been bigger and better than ever – and that's something that no one is

taking for granted.

For Melanie Morrison, who has volunteered or worked every event in Massachusetts since 1998, nothing beats shopping the trade show.

"I'm like a little kid in a candy store," Melanie says with a laugh. "When you walk into the Better Living Center at the Eastern States Expo, all you can smell is leather. The trade shows have one-of-a-kind items that you can only find there. You're not going to get those items at other places. And it gives exposure to some of the smaller businesses and some of the new products. I love going down and looking at all the new products."

Even for Julie Goodnight, who has shopped at many trade shows across the nation, Equine Affaire's trade shows are especially noteworthy.

"It isn't easy to do, but I always make a point to walk down every aisle of the trade show every year, because I know there will always be new products to see," Julie says. "I always recommend that people go shopping at a place like Equine Affaire when they're looking for things like helmets or trailers or saddles, because you want to look at twenty different saddles or six different horse trailers when you're shopping. You want to see what each has to offer, and you might even find stuff you didn't even know about. That's what makes shopping in-person so much better than shopping online."

No matter what you enjoy about the horse industry, there's something waiting for you at Equine Affaire – and with the help and support of the industry, the staff and crew of Equine Affaire is looking forward to the next thirty years.

"We always say Equine Affaire is a little like Christmas," Coagi says. "We prepare all year, or several years, in advance, striving to make everything perfect. Then opening day comes, and the flood of eager attendees comes through the gates. The excitement and anticipation are exhilarating."

To learn more about Equine Affaire, including details about how to participate, volunteer, ride, exhibit, and more, visit equineaffaire.com today. ■

Born and raised in Tennessee, Allison Rehnborg 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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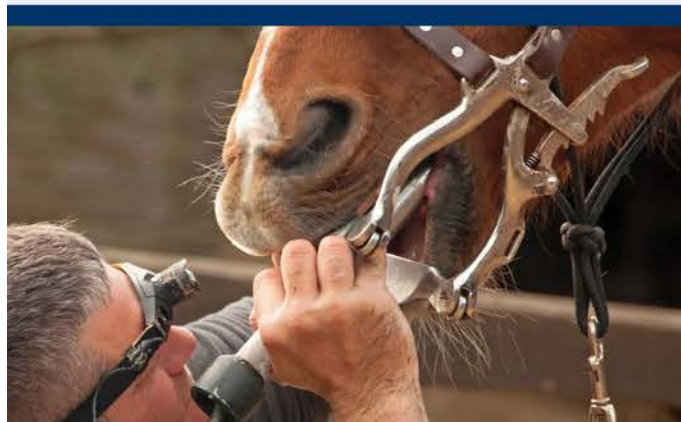
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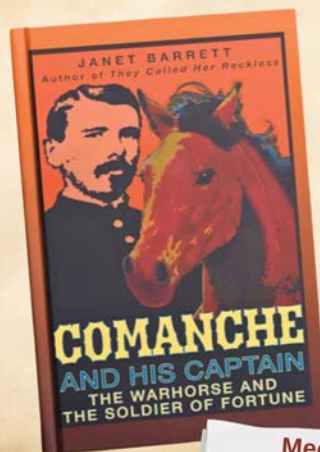
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Peace Pony Ambassadors

by **Susanna Massie Thomas**

In today's world, where discord, conflict and destruction are pervasive, the need for peace is greater than ever. And so, Gillian Vallis and Laurie LeDuc Glover, who know that just one pebble in a pond can create endless ripples, decided to do something.

Enter the Peace Ponies™, global ambassadors of peace based at Pine Knoll Farm in Kentucky. This world-class horse farm is located just a few miles from the renowned Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington!

These four wee equine beings - Domino, Puzzle, The Sheriff and Apollo have a mighty mission:

To inspire and empower humanity to embrace the practices of peace and love in order to design a new reality of harmony and health. Through collaboration, we can overcome perceived cultural differences and beliefs and commit to creating a kinder, more

compassionate world.

For many, this would seem too daunting a task. But Gillian and Laurie knew that every journey begins with a single step, and just as Eleanor Roosevelt said, "the way to begin is to begin." So, they took that first step with the Peace Ponies™, and trotted off!

Since that time, the Peace Ponies™ have been diligently spreading this vision at Pine Knoll Farm through equine-assisted workshops that focus on well-being, education and leadership. Visitors to the farm are welcomed by the Peace Pony ambassador herd. The calm presence of the horses exhibits a sense of serenity which can serve as a model for peaceful coexistence.

Visitors can directly experience the benefits of the herd's social structure, finding

strength and comfort, as well as experiencing joy and stress relief through relaxation and play. The grazing horses model for us the profound calm attained by resting in nature and embracing the fullness of the present moment.

The Peace Ponies™ and Pine Knoll Farm are dedicated

to supporting horse owners and riders with workshops, clinics, products, personal

development coaching and lectures focused on the horse-human connection and well-being for both horse and rider. From saddle fit and best nutritional practices, to riding techniques and energy sessions for horses and humans, the farm provides learning opportunities and tools to enrich the lives of horses and their people.

Adults and children of all ages delight in working with the Peace Ponies™. It's fun! Although horses are non-

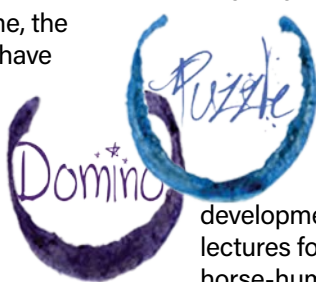
verbal - as every experienced horse person knows, they have a world of opinions and things to say about humans! While interacting with the herd, people often discover strengths they never knew they had and experience a lack of judgment about their weaknesses. As the mind quiets and stress diminishes, tranquility gracefully emerges.

Ideally, Pine Knoll hopes to ignite a deep desire in others to become part of the Peace Ponies™ mission. They can enroll in the Peace Pony Ambassadors Club and contribute a 'peace pebble' to a community project of their choice and wholeheartedly commit to making the Peace Ponies™ vision of a harmonious and sustainable world a tangible reality.

Join us in the Journey and let your Hoofprints leave a Trail of Peace! •

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What does it take to start an IEA Team?

- A Coach (21 and older)
- At least 3 riders in either middle school (grades 4-8) or upper school (grades 9-12)
- Access to horses and a facility to practice
- Insurance coverage

What does an IEA horse show look like?

- Teams are responsible for bringing horses (owned or borrowed) to each IEA show.
- Tack is provided for each rider.
- Riders compete in divisions from Beginner Walk-Trot through Varsity Open.
- Riders compete in 5 shows per season (6 for Western) in a maximum of 2 classes each show.
- IEA shows are held in a variety of facilities including outdoor arenas, private barns, and large show complexes.
- Riders draw the horses they compete on the day of the show with little to no warm-up (depending on discipline).
- Riders accumulate points for post-season qualification in Regional, Zone, and National competitions.

What does it cost to ride on an IEA Team?

- Membership in the IEA is \$70 for riders, coaches and Adult Members and \$200 per middle/upper school team.
- IEA Class fees are \$45 per class (in 2023). 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 December.
- Post season shows can begin as early as January and run through April (or June for Western).

Have a question
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Contact Membership
Coordinator:

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Luke's training facility is located in Plain City, Ohio, just 30 minutes Northwest of Columbus.



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Equestrian Performance Programming:

How Improving Rider Mechanics Can Enhance Excellence in the Sport for Both Horse and Rider



by **Amethyst Barto, PT, DPT**

Being an equestrian is an art that harmoniously melds the physical prowess of both rider and horse. We often focus on treating our horses for performance issues, but *what if the problem isn't solely the horse?*

Do you notice performance issues with your horse under saddle? Perhaps you've noticed that every horse you ride seems to struggle going the same direction. Does your horse exhibit signs of resistance, fatigue, or soreness during rides? Do you feel as though your stirrups are uneven, despite being on the same hole? Maybe your trainer repeatedly reminds you of the same position faults to correct. Despite seeking various forms of treatment for your horse, you still feel that something "isn't quite right" during rides.

To achieve peak riding performance and ensure the welfare of your horse, it is vital to address the rider's mechanics and posture out of the saddle. Collaborating with a doctor of physical therapy (DPT) who understands the intricacies of equestrian sports can help normalize rider mechanics and posture on the ground. This benefits not only the rider, but profoundly impacts

the horse's well-being and overall performance. Acclivity Integrated Physical Therapy has developed an Equestrian Performance Program to do just this.

As riders, our bodies are not only used to communicate with our horses but also to influence their balance and movement which in turn affects their overall performance and soundness. Optimal rider mechanics facilitate effective communication. This enables us to provide more subtle and precise cues, helping our horses understand and respond effectively during the training process. With a centered, stable, yet mobile position, we can better absorb the horse's movement rather than hinder it. Demonstrating balance and good mechanics distributes our weight evenly in the saddle, minimizing the physical strain on our horse. Unfavorable riding habits created by postural faults or reduced mobility can result in excessive pressure over areas, causing our horse to become unbalanced during rides, which can lead to reduced scores at competitions, resistance, physical discomfort and potential long-term injuries. Inefficient posture and mechanics also waste

energy. When we normalize our posture and mechanics, we can ride longer, with less fatigue and more effectively. This translates to enhanced training sessions, improved endurance, and better competitive performance. These concepts apply to all disciplines, English, Western and everything in between!

Investing in our own anatomy and mobility out of the saddle can exponentially improve our horse's well-being and our performance as a team. Have you struggled with previous injuries that now cause daily aches or stiffness in/out of the saddle? Working with a DPT can alleviate these issues. It's also a preventive measure against future riding-related injuries. Proper rider mechanics and posture reduces the risk of rider falls, muscle strains and other riding-related injuries. It ensures that our bodies move *with* our horse rather than *against* it, reducing the chance of accidents.

When working with a DPT for an Equestrian Performance Assessment, your current issues in riding, any issues within your own body and your goals will first be discussed. Your posture

will then be assessed on the ground, in standing, sitting and lying down followed by an assessment in the saddle, on your horse. After that assessment, your mobility will be assessed off the horse. Finally, a plan to address your goals will be determined and discussed with you. Following the session, a written report including your plan and any stretching/exercises you need to perform will be sent to you.

Normalizing proper rider mechanics and posture is crucial for achieving excellence in equestrian sports. It enhances our performance and benefits our horse's soundness and well-being. The horse-rider partnership thrives on this foundation, leading to a fulfilling and successful equestrian journey. As equestrians increasingly recognize the importance of our mechanics and posture out of the saddle, we unlock the full potential of our horse and experience the true beauty of this sport. Equestrian Performance Programming can do just that! ●

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Rotational Grazing

Maximizing the Health of Your Pastures

by Bobby Williams

Equestrian management in the 21st century could look far different than at any other point in modern history. Climate change has brought a host of new challenges, including record heat waves, droughts, heavy rains and extended seasons for flies and other pests.

In addition to these relatively new impacts, equine managers will continue to grapple with a problem that began almost 100 years ago: How to do more with less acreage.

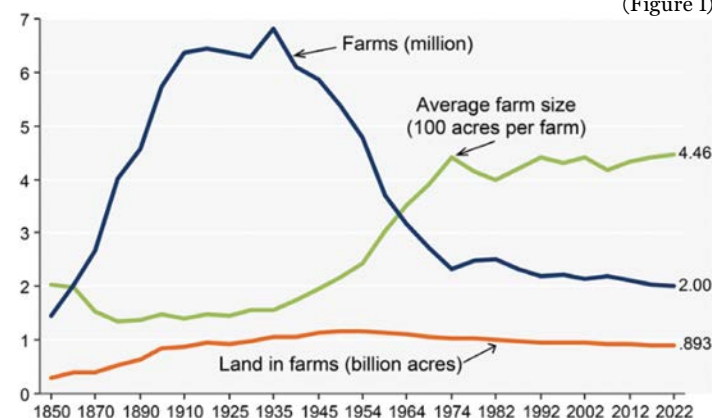
The amount of farmland in the United States began decreasing in 1935 and fell sharply in the 1970s. According to the USDA Economic Research Service's most recent survey, this downward trend continued over the past decade; there were 893 million acres of land in farms in 2022, down from 915 million in 2012

Figure 1

Interestingly, while the number of farms and farm acres are dropping, the average farm size keeps increasing. This is not surprising; consolidation in all sectors of agricultural ownership has resulted in fewer total farm owners with larger farms. These trends are not expected to change, which means

Farms, land in farms, & average acres per farm, 1850-2022
Million farms, billion acres, or acres per farm

(Figure 1)



Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, Census of Agriculture (through 2017) and Farms and Land in Farms: 2022 Summary (February 2023).

farmland will continue to be consolidated, developed, and partitioned off, restricting current and future access to pastureland.

Smaller pastures, bigger problems

How do declining farmland and farm ownership impact equine managers? Less land means smaller pastures for grazing, which can increase overhead costs, such as feed, hay, and pasture maintenance.

Traditionally, stocking rates per horse on permanent pastureland are as follows: 1 to 2 acres with an excellent, dense sod; 2 to 2.5 acres with an average permanent pasture (spring growth is decent, but summer forage is average); and 3-plus acres with a thin,

poor sod that is unmanaged (supplemental forage will likely be needed). Acreage requirements per horse depend on many factors, such as geographic location, pasture maintenance, the number of horses grazing the land, and weather conditions.

For example, eastern North Carolina has sandy soils, which require amendments because coastal plain soils do not retain nutrients as well. This is referred to as a low cation exchange rate. Conversely, pastures in Kentucky benefit from glacial formations with deep sod layers, which help produce lush pastures. Thus, the stocking rates per horse on a pasture in eastern North Carolina will be

lower and more pastureland will be required than in Kentucky.

The optimal turnout schedule for equine facilities is different for each manager or farm owner. The number of horses, along with how the pastures on a particular property are laid out, affect management decisions. For continuous grazing systems, a good rule of thumb is 2-4 acres per horse to limit overgrazing⁴. However, many facilities have more horses than pastureland available. In this situation, the chances for overgrazing and soil compaction increase substantially.

Continuous grazing through turnout schedules or leaving horses out consistently on limited acreage degrades the quality of the pasture. This has a direct impact on the horse and the environment. Degradation of grazeable grasses occurs when forbs are eaten down to the ground continuously and do not have adequate time to grow from the root collar. Over time, this will decrease growth and eventually kill the grass being grazed.

In addition, negative environmental impacts begin to emerge as pastureland degrades. Soil compaction could be

expedited during muddy or dry conditions through constant animal activity. Compaction leads to additional runoff into water sources as the land loses its ability to absorb water. Grasses that animals choose to not eat begin to spread throughout the landscape. Carbon sequestration diminishes as well, making it difficult for the land to absorb animals' manure.

When pastures reach a point of degradation that forces a barn manager to rest a particular area, it can further exacerbate management problems. Feed bills typically increase during these times to meet the needs of the horses, and turnout schedules may be limited.

Rotate to rejuvenate

To minimize the adverse impacts of an unbalanced ratio of horses to pastured acres, rotational grazing could be the answer for many farm owners and barn managers. In this system, animals graze one area for a short period, and are then moved to another pasture so the recently grazed pasture can regrow. The exact rotational grazing plan depends on the number of animals and acreage available, but typically pastures would be rotated within a week or less.

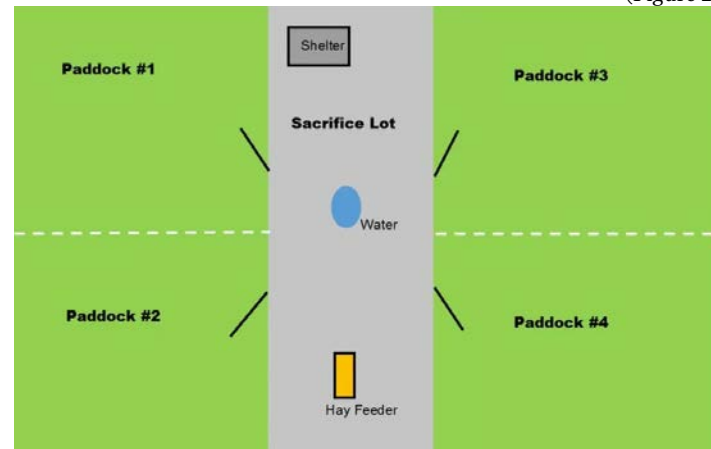
To fully integrate a rotational grazing system, a paddock is created in the middle with two or more pastures attached to the paddock, so rotations are easily achieved. The number of acres required for this system is flexible, making it an ideal candidate for many equestrian facilities.

Figure 2

Source: *Kenny, L. (2023, July 26). How to make rotational grazing work on*

your horse farm. Penn State Extension.

Figure 2 shows the layout of a standard rotational grazing system. The sacrifice lot, or dry lot, is critical for success. This paddock



An ideal rotational grazing system has several grazing paddocks attached to a sacrifice lot. *Illustration by Laura Kenny*

acts as a funnel for horses to move from one pasture to another. Additionally, it keeps horses off pastures during suboptimal conditions, such as after heavy rains. Fencing will divide each paddock evenly to ensure every pasture is grazed equally.

Rotations will depend on how many horses are grazing in a paddock, along with the size and health of the pasture. Typically, the forage period should be no longer than seven days, and grazing height of grasses should not be shorter than 3 inches. In a four-pasture rotational system, this would ensure that each paddock is rested for three weeks.

The height of grass will be the best indication of when to graze and when to remove animals from an area. A minimum of 6 to 8 inches of forage is suggested prior to grazing⁴. Once 50% of forage, or 3 to 4 inches, has been removed, animals are rotated to a new pasture

with the suggested forage height. This principle is often referred to as, "Take Half, Leave Half⁴." During warm summer months, rest periods for pastures could be longer if grasses are growing

(Figure 2)

slower⁴. It is suggested that at a minimum, four paddocks should be used for rotational grazing systems. However, for managers with limited acreage, splitting one large pasture into two or three paddocks promotes pasture health as well.

Installing a rotational grazing system can take time and resources. A farm's layout, number of horses, and pasture health will dictate the capital investment required to implement this system. Expect the largest expenditure to be fencing installation to separate pastures. Additionally, access to water can present a challenge if it is limited. Turnout and grazing schedules may require more planning and supervision as well. Carefully consider all facets of your farm's operations prior to implementing a change in operations to ensure a successful transition.

The health of your pasture directly correlates to the

health of the animals that graze on it, and the impact it has on the surrounding environment. When implemented correctly, rotational grazing provides an opportunity for equine managers to keep their pastures nourished, horses fit and happy, and the environment resilient. Positive results include the potential to reduce feed bills and overhead costs associated with the facility.

As farmland continues to be integrated with development, retaining grazeable acres will continue to be a challenge. Finding solutions to meet the needs of livestock, humans, and the environment is critical as we move forward.

Rotational grazing provides a flexible and effective strategy to encourage healthy pastures on farms with limited acreage. ■

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Bobby Williams is an equine enthusiast, and business owner with a love for the outdoors. He has a master's degrees in Sustainability and Forestry, along with an undergraduate degree in Business. Inspired by his upbringing and personal experiences, Bobby has coupled his passion for land management, with a love for horses and regenerative agricultural practices. Residing outside of Raleigh, NC with his three dogs, Bobby is an aspiring farmer, co-owner of Guaranteed Horse Products, and a registered Forester for the state of North Carolina.



Ohio State Equine Sports Medicine Offers Equine Athletes State-of-the Art Care

by **Lisa Lopez Snyder**

Whether it's examinations, diagnostics, or therapeutics, The Ohio State University Equine Surgery service within the Galbreath Equine Center offers owners state-of-the-art comprehensive diagnostics, surgical services, and rehabilitation to meet their individual horse's needs.

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Maureen Kelleher, DVM, associate professor of Equine Sports Medicine and Surgery, is the center's first board-certified clinician in equine surgery and sports medicine and rehabilitation, having years of experience treating

upper-level performance horses.

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"Advanced imaging services aid in diagnostic assessments," Dr. Kelleher adds. "Among the imaging technologies available is our 3 Tesla MRI, which provides highly detailed imaging of bone and soft tissue. The service also features CT, providing excellent bone detail."

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advanced diagnostic imaging choices, digital radiography and ultrasonography are available. The surgical team members have extensive experience with tenoscopy, arthroscopy, and other musculoskeletal surgical procedures.

Among the Galbreath Equine Center's most recent developments is the December opening of the new 12,000-square-foot Ralph Rogan Equine Performance Evaluation Arena. This all-weather and multi-surface space offers numerous features with opportunities for our equine veterinarians to conduct comprehensive evaluation, diagnostics, and treatments for performance horses.

Dr. Kelleher says one of the main benefits of the new arena is that the space will allow the rider or handler to recreate the issues they are having, "which will aid in diagnostic anesthesia or

localization of the area of discomfort in the horse."

"In many horse sports, an overt lameness or performance issue is not easily identified," she says. Subtle changes in performance are only felt by the rider or handler in certain circumstances or situations.

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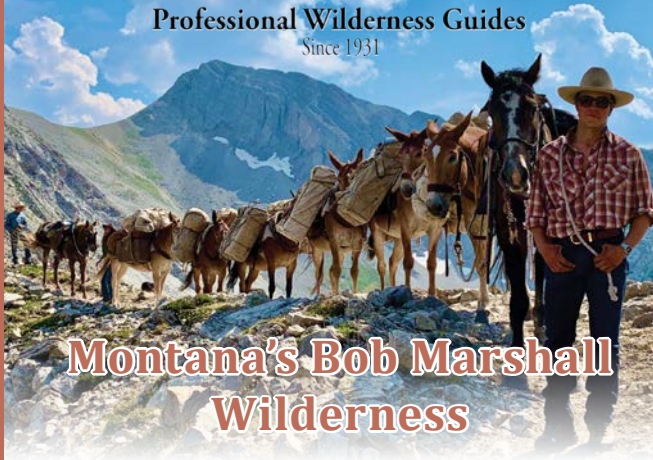


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Prepare Your Students to Fall

Instead of Avoiding Falls at All Costs

by **Justin M. Klein,**

Director of Operations,
Chagrin Valley Farms.

Center Administrator,
Chagrin Valley Pony Club
Riding Center.

There's a saying that "if you ride long enough, you'll end up on the ground eventually." Or, the more old-school version... "if you haven't fallen yet, you're not riding hard enough!" We all know that riding horses involves an inherent risk and possibility of falling and getting hurt, especially when you do anything more than walk in circles in a ring. And yet, more often than not, we seem to do surprisingly little to prepare riders to fall safely and be more dynamic, athletic riders. Riding instructors, have you ever taught your students how to fall? Did you ever learn it yourself? Or, like many, did you learn the hard way and get lucky, or get hurt? Riding students, have you ever learned or heard of such training? The purpose of this article is to introduce the idea of this training to

those who haven't heard of it, highlight the benefits, and provide some guidance to help anyone interested to get started.

When I was a young cadet at Culver Military Academy (Jimmy Wofford's high school alma mater) in the rough riding (cavalry term for vaulting) program, our training involved basic and intermediate vaulting techniques and learning how to fall properly so that when things didn't go as planned at the walk, trot, canter, or gallop, we wouldn't get hurt... at least not as badly. It also gave us greater confidence during general riding on the trails, riding and jumping cross country, playing polo, or dealing with an unruly horse.

I didn't fully appreciate at the time how much that training would help to prevent injuries from riding in the years between then and now, but looking back, I am deeply grateful that I did learn those techniques so that now I am able to pass that knowledge on to our students

and any other trainers who may be interested. Despite a fair number of falls over the years while fox hunting first flight in the mountains of Virginia, playing polo, riding challenging horses, riding horses on trails at fast speeds, playing mounted games, and of course, riding in arenas, I've yet to be injured "knock on wood" and I credit that to my training more than to my cat-like reflexes.

Why teach your students to fall?

Because they will, and it's better to prepare for the worst and hope for the best. And yet, many times, when riders have learned to fall properly, most falls are not "the worst," after all, and riders don't fear falling nearly as much from then on. It should go without saying that as riding instructors and program managers, safety is the top priority and we should not be reckless with our horses and riders. Unfortunately, safety means different things to different people. At times, differing philosophies on

preparing riders to be safe can be analogous to the difference between hover-parents who aim to protect their children from struggle or risk of any kind, and parents who will let their children face reasonable adversity and challenges to make them stronger and more resilient. Too much protection makes them weaker and less capable in the long run.

Our philosophy is to progressively challenge our riders and teach them the skills necessary to succeed, both in and out of the arena (on the trails or while riding cross country). Too many riders today grow up never riding "outside the box," so when they do, it is intimidating and fear or anxiety-inducing. Of course, that anxiety can be transferred from the rider to the horse and then back to the rider, in a vicious and self-perpetuating cycle of anxiety, that can cause problems and discourage riders from leaving the arena again for a long time or at all, causing them to miss out on some of the most amazing riding experiences

there are. We must teach riders techniques to use if they fall, and also teach them emergency dismounts and methods for controlling a runaway horse, for example, to alleviate some of that stress and anxiety in less controlled spaces. If we do not teach these techniques to give them confidence to ride in all environments, we are not truly developing well-rounded horsemen and horsewomen in accordance with classical ideals.

Why don't more programs teach their students to fall if it's so important?

The tyranny of time, of course. So much to do, and so little time to do it all. Further, so many riders today just want to jump, jump, jump the horse in all of their lessons and don't embrace the importance of lessons (mounted or unmounted) that will help them be better in the long run. Perhaps most of all, many instructors never learned themselves, so they don't even think to teach the techniques...and if they do, they don't know how. There have been a few decent articles written already on teaching riders to fall correctly, but I want to focus this one on the gaps I found in those... the more detailed "how."

Preparing your students to fall properly:

Progressive training built on a foundation of rider fitness.

First, it must be said that we have to teach our riders and students that individual physical fitness and strength are the foundation of success in preventing injuries. No matter how you land, being stronger and more flexible will serve you well. Being overweight and/or physically weak will increase chances

of injury. New inflatable vests certainly help when they're worn, but they can only do so much. The same applies to regular vests. They should be an extra layer of protection over a strong core.

Second, whenever there is a LandSafe™ clinic in your area, it is a great idea to let riders know about the opportunity and encourage them to go, or host a training clinic at your own farm. However, these clinics can be expensive and are not always offered locally or frequently. So, should we just not train riders to fall if we don't have a full LandSafe™ setup? Certainly not! Therefore, short of such a clinic, I suggest you follow the guidelines below to teach your riders to handle challenging situations and how to fall safely, and then make time to train the skill more than once:

What you'll need:

A whiteboard, a solid, not reactive ("bombproof") pony or horse of small to medium height appropriate for your group, two instructors, a lunge line, lunge whip, helmets, riding attire, regular English tack, and soft footing.

Steps:

1. Begin with a short, unmounted class that covers the importance of rider fitness, how to handle horse riding "emergencies" (bucking horses, rearing horses, runaway horses, and emergency dismounts). This is also a good time to review with students what to do if a rider is injured during lessons.

2. Select the right horse for the job. Just because you could teach these methods to students initially on a 17.3hh Warmblood does not mean you should. A small to medium-sized horse or larger pony gives you flexibility for children and adults.

3. Have a knowledgeable assistant instructor (one at least) to control the horse on the lunge line.

4. Demonstrate. If a picture is worth 1,000 words, a demonstration is worth 3,000! This means you should maintain your physical fitness as an instructor or find someone else to demonstrate if you're no longer physically able. And practice before your students are present.

5. Lunge the horse in a clockwise direction so that riders can first practice the dismount, and tuck and roll away from the horse without the possible interference of the lunge line. (Sequence: feet out of stirrups, hands on the pommel or low crest of the mane, lean forward and kick right leg over saddle, land feet together with knees bent slightly, roll out and away from the horse, which spreads the energy of the impact out across the whole body instead of a small point of impact).

6. Progress from emergency dismount stationary to emergency dismount at the walk with tuck and roll, to emergency dismount at the trot with tuck and roll away, and repeat at the canter. This will rarely all happen on day one except in rare cases with especially athletic riders.

Misc. Notes:

· Consider having an instructor teach a tumbling class to your students before bringing out the horse(s). If they can't tuck and roll, they will struggle with the overall sequence. If not someone else, you can teach them yourself, step-by-step.

· Consider hosting a basic vaulting clinic to educate and train your students on basic vaults and dynamic dismounts that will help them have fun while learning to be more confident. Once

the basic techniques are mastered, there are many other exercises you can do to continue the progression, or students can learn to apply the skills for mounted games, etc.

Conclusion. Of course, not all falls will follow this perfectly templated sequence. However, if students internalize that wherever they fall, tucking and rolling out and away from the horse is better than trying to catch themselves with locked arms and risking a broken collarbone, or getting in front of the horse—THAT is success. This is not a skill that can be learned and internalized automatically in one day, but it can be taught and the habits can be developed over time. Your students probably do not realize that they need training like this, but they will thank you one day. ●

*If you are interested in using these methods in your program but have questions on how best to start, please feel free to contact me at justin@chagrinvalleyfarms.com. I am also happy to share my instructor notes from this class to support.

**Another great article on this subject is "Sometimes Lesson Students Fall off their Horses" by Barbara Ellin Fox at www.theridinginstructor.net.

Please Note: This article is the sole opinion of the author, and although CVF employs these techniques to train its students, the information contained above is provided for educational and practical use by riding instructors using their own discretion. The author and Chagrin Valley Farms, LLC., do not accept liability for any injuries sustained during this type of training due to the number of variables involved.

Riding Through Time in Spain



Breaking Tradition and Barriers - An Ohio Equestrian and a Wild Horse Roundup

by **Anna Morton**

Horses offer us a common denominator. Horses have shaped history and given us much more than the wings we lack, to expand on the saying. Horses endear and enchant us. Since growing up in Ohio, the endearment of horses began and only amplified as I found myself living in Germany in my late twenties.

An interest in exploring new cultures and approaches to horsemanship led me to a town called El Rocío in the Andalusia region of Spain. Pulling on this thread of horses, I booked a trip to dive deeper into the curious equestrian culture it seemed to have.

Upon arriving, it was easy to believe a jump back in time had happened. Horses take precedence, roads are sand, and hitching posts stand at every building. The other interest in this area are the wild horses that roam, the Marismeño breed. The Marismeño horse is an old European breed of small, compact and strong stature. Studies of the Marismeño breed actually reveal these horses are genetically similar to the American Mustang, meaning that the Marismeño is most likely the origination breed to the American Mustang. The common thread and denominator of horses continues to impress and make itself known across borders and cultures. This

vibrancy of this southern town in Spain charmed me, and my understanding of how horses can establish enduring connections across cultures grew only brighter.

An annual event, called Saca de las Yeguas has been an unwavering event for the past 500 years in the area. For a tradition of this length, a depth of culture, and ethereal beauty, it is strangely widely unknown to the public. The event releases an untamed and archived feeling of the Old West through very prolific and real pounding hoofbeats, dust blowing, and riders howling.

Photos by Anna Morton

The “Saca de las Yeguas”, translated to “taking out the mares” is an annual event where the wild Marismeño horses are searched and shepherded by the last remaining Vaqueros, or Yegüerizo’s, that are native to the region. Yegüerizos are horsemen from the Almonte region in Spain. Las Yeguas is translated to the mares, and the Yegüerizos can be translated to the horsemen who own them.

This past year, in 2023, Saca de las Yeguas added one woman from Ohio to the list of riders, breaking tradition.

El Rocío and Doñana National Park

As the horse has shaped our history, the town of El Rocío has shaped itself around the horse. El Rocío is a striking white village, contrasting against the sand roads and marshy backdrops, it is also a central

point for Spain’s largest annual pilgrimage.

Following the sand roads, restaurant tables assume you stay on your horse - you are served with no need to leave the saddle, hitching posts stand at every house, and there are round pens in the parks. When you go out to dinner, you do so on horseback. The way to “show off” is not with a sports car or designer clothes, rather a well-kept and cared for horse with clean tack. The first time I rode through El Rocío, it was easy to forget that I was, in fact, in the 21st century and the world relied on cars and smartphones. The town undoubtedly lives with the horse first in thought; the streets are soft and the houses are built with stables on the first level, and living quarters on top for its people.

El Rocío is nestled up to

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Doñana National Park which houses four ecosystems: sand dunes, marshes, Mediterranean forests, and Spain's largest virgin beach spanning more than 30 km. It is in this park where the Marismeño horses roam; they are native to Doñana and are considered marsh horses. The park itself is closely monitored and extremely protected to preserve the environment and its horses. The horses live in the Doñana National Park beside other animals such as lynx and flamingos. The Saca de las Yeguas is a

well-kept tradition which grants very special access to the park and horses during the event.

My typical destination in El Rocío is Doñana Dressage, which is also unique, similar to the town it is in. This farm and its trainer, José Manuel, opened my eyes to more meanings and styles of riding. One being Doma Vaquera, which loosely translates to mean a Spanish version of Western dressage, in which classical maneuvers are performed with more speed and impulsion. I also learned many other different styles, all with similar concepts rooted in dressage. By default, you will also

discover the sanctuary of just riding in El Rocío, due to the nature of the town that can not go missed and must be experienced on horseback.

The Marismeño Horse and Saca de las Yeguas

Marismeño horses originated from where most of them are today, in Doñana National Park in the marshes near the Guadalquivir River. Throughout time, there have been crosses with other breeds but they remain to be marsh horses and suited for the environment. I was told that the horses evolved to graze under water, fully immersing their heads in the water past their ears to grab the grass underneath. If you visit El Rocío, there is a large

overlook of a lagoon and you regularly see the mares and foals roaming and grazing, alongside the flamingos.

Once a year, at the end of June, hundreds of Marismeño mares, foals, and stallions are gathered by Yegüerizos and taken on a journey through El Rocío, eventually going to Almonte, following the same milestones the route traveled 500 years ago. The event celebrates the horses and the way of life in this area, it was officially ordained in 1504 to honor livestock and the patron saint of the town, San Pedro. The town and its people cherish the horses, and a highlight for spectators of the Saca de las

Yeguas is the gathering in El Rocío at the church, where the horses are blessed by the priest before they continue on their journey to Almonte.

Throughout this multi-day event, once in Almonte, the horses are vaccinated, mane and tails are clipped and some horses are sold. From an observer's understanding, there are families who, year after year, purchase the horses and put them directly back into the park. To be able to return them back to the park is a privilege and a tradition of the local families. To be allowed to do

this, you must be local to the area. The Marismeño horses are rare and the breeding association wishes to preserve their local heritage and breeding. Those that are not sold are herded back to the park.

Lengthening the Thread of Horse Experiences

The Marismeño breed and preserved elements of El Rocío have captivated me since I first visited. Through an American veil, riding in the event gave me a striking reminder of being a mortal being and now sharing a thread of an immortal

tradition, because of the love of the horse.

Unique elements are a common theme in the area. An invitation of attendance on horseback in Saca de las Yeguas was unmatched and unique. Throughout visiting and riding over the past years in El Rocío, when I received an invitation, I knew it was rare; a goal of mine has been to preserve this tradition and be an observer and amplifier of experiences.

The morning of the event, I sat on the picnic table outside and watched the

Spanish sun come up over the paddocks. One hour later, horse in hand and saddle swinging over its back, the day was starting.

My horse today was a tall bay with a local Spanish breeder's brand on its left hind leg. We had a small group of riders which were recognizable by green saddle covers and bags, a thoughtful touch considering the amount of riders and dust kicked up can potentially blind you and cause you to lose your group. The saddles ridden

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Riding Through Time in Spain

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in were traditional Vaquera saddles that have a large contact area over the horses back, and I can say are very comfortable for riders. They were made for long days in the saddle for the traditional vaqueros. We mounted, and began.

Making our way into the park, the images began to build of surreal substance with the dust swarming and sun beaming from the east. Soon, we were among a pack of riders and had a herd of Marismeño mares and foals. It seemed sudden, and powerful. In Southern Spain in June, the temperatures rise. It was a blissful balance between 100 and 100+ degrees Fahrenheit when I checked the temperature. The horses were hot, but accustomed to the heat, and

felt steady going.

Riders herded horses in packs, forming multiple groups spaced out to create smaller, more controllable herds. The foals clung to their mothers, and the mothers seemed to possess a wisdom for preventing accidents or excitement. At a central point, we rode upon other groups at a standstill and had a rest with drinks, mainly cervezas - refreshing Spanish lagers. Some riders carried their guitars and began to play music. The break happened before riding into the town of El Rocío, which was bustling with observers and Spanish media.

After a stop and a few broken-Spanish conversations, the herds pressed on one at a time, with a pause to allow the groups to space out. We rode on with our herd and entered the town, making

our way to the milestone destination - the church. Here, the horses surprised me even more, following as if they were a school of fish, all without incident or splash. We rode down the sand streets, with observers filling up each side of the road all the way to the church. At the church, there were bleachers of spectators, media, and a loudspeaker where the priest blessed each herd. Every single herd received a blessing and recognition before continuing their passage.

Continuing on the path to Almonte, a traditional stop in pine forests took place. Families and friends set up camp, prepared food, drinks, and large round pens with water for the horses. Again, riders and horses seamlessly glided to areas of intention with ease.

The energy of the experience is one that

deepens your appreciation for communication with horses, without ever having to say a word. Body language, empathy, and connection are the forces to cultivate a meaningful environment for the horse being ridden and the wild horses being guided. This is an art and a practice of passion shaped over hundreds of years.

Following the pine forests, the trip continues on, and the horses are guided to a large pasture in Almonte, a final destination of the trip, you could say. Standing on the fence line overlooking the mares and foals, you hear only neighs and hooves bouncing off the landscape. The following days, this is where the mares and foals are guided into paddocks, vaccinated, and their manes and tails are trimmed. Here, you can see the families who own the horses checking for



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“The energy of the experience is one that deepens your appreciation for communication with horses, without ever having to say a word.”



one on each side of the herd, and two in front were the positions for the ride. At times, changing positions was necessary, and was done so through a quiet understanding, not through spoken language. The sense of understanding what needs to be done, even without prior experience, is a connection with horses that continually draws me back. An untapped knowledge, inherently within, is the one I felt when herding wild horses with riders I do not share the same language with.

Horses are a common thread among those who love them, and this was felt even more so during my ride this day. As I rode, there was a rhythm with the land, the horse, and the other riders; I could think of no matter the location, when a common thread is the horse, we are given an opportunity to tap into and create moments that will not fade over time.

The essence of the Saca de las Yeguas is the common passion and love the horse offers. No matter where we live, come from, or go, the bond with the horse has the ability to connect people through many years of history. Through honoring, acknowledging, and creating relationships with horses, we become a part of something eternal.

I am forever grateful for learning, feeling, and experiencing this tradition. A tradition that keeps on going as those around it continue to honor and keep it alive. ▪

Anna Morton is a horse-lover and entrepreneur who is back and forth between Ohio and Germany. She is the creator of Horsewrite, an equestrian journal and brand with a mission to support the discovery of each equestrian's potential through providing actionable resources. You can reach out to her at anna@horsewrite.com

their brands, and buying new foals to simply return them back to the park. Following health checks and sales, the horses are prepared to be herded back to the park, which takes place at the end of the week.

Herding the horses back to the park is a ride with less hustle and bustle of spectators and media. For this day, I rode a large gray gelding that was as solid as a rock. There were seven riders to one herd of horses. The horses were let free

from each paddock, group by group; we stood sidelined waiting to be called out for our group of horses. One by one, mares and foals galloped out of the fence, and the riders morphed their positions to accompany the horses and guide them the right way. Our group came, we started at a canter and headed straight through the streets of Almonte, and then into the fields, eventually finding our way back to the pine forests.

Three riders in the back,



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IHSA

Intercollegiate Horse
Shows Association
844.307.4472
IHSAInc.com

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International Liberty Horse
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LibertyHorseAssociation.com

KHC

Kentucky Horse Council
859.367.0509
KentuckyHorse.org

LUCK

Leg Up for Cleveland's Kids
Luck4Kids.org

MODA

Mid-Ohio Dressage
Association
MidOhioDressage.com

NODA

Northern Ohio Dressage
Association
NodaRider.org

OHC

Ohio Horseman's Council
614.600.1972
OHConline.com

OPHA

Ohio Professional
Horsemen's Association
OPHA.org

YEDA

Youth Equestrian
Development Association
ShowYEDA.com

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Rood & Riddle Equine Hospital

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2150 Georgetown Road
Lexington, KY 40511
859.233.0371
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440.273.8100
WarrensSpiritedKitchen.com

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4095 OH 730
Wilmington, OH 45177
937.382.0985
WorldEquestrianCenter.com

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859.858.3511
Asbury.edu

Georgetown College

400 E. College Street
Georgetown, KY 40324
502.863.8000
GeorgetownCollege.edu/
equinescholars/

Lake Erie College

391 West Washington St.
Painesville, OH 44077
855.467.8676
Lec.edu

Midway University

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Midway, KY 40347
800.952.4122
Midway.Edu/Equine

Ohio State University

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Columbus, OH 43210
614.292.6446
Osu.edu

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Westerville, OH 43081
614.890.3000
Otterbein.edu

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440.338.1752
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Findlay, OH 45850
419.422.8313
Findlay.edu

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410 Administration Drive
Lexington, KY 40506
859.257.9000
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Louisville, KY 40292
800.334.8635
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859.231.7066
CKRH.org

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PO Box 31862
Independence, OH 44131
216.232.3656
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PineKnollFarm.com

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440.338.1752
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740.272.0612
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740.363.6073
Cashmans.com

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937.444.2609
Reveal4-N-1.com

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330.721.0852

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330.296.3424

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Wooster Country Store

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Medina, OH 44256
330.618.6854

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44065
440.564.5000
GeaugaFeed.com

SmartPak

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SmartPakEquine.com

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SugarcreekShavings.com

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866.869.3817
ReitermanFeed.com

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BuckeyeNutrition.com

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800.921.9121
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440.564.5000
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OneTouchFlySpray.com

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YellowBarnMedia.com

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CCMT, CEMT
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Massage.com

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Middlefield, OH 44062
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MiracleFarmRescue.org

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Grafton, OH 44044
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312.513.1259
CanterUSA.org/Kentucky

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CopperHorseCrusade.com

Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary

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330.296.5914
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Kentucky Equine Adoption Center

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859.881.5849
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ThoroughbredAftercare.org

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TCA.org
859.276.4989

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440.708.0674
ChagrinSaddlery.com

Chagrin Saddlery

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937.382.0985
ChagrinSaddlery.com/
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BellaVistaEquineVet.com

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BuckeyeVet.org

Cleveland Equine Clinic
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330.422.0040
ClevelandEquine.com

**Countryside
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Laurie Gallatin, DVM, DACVIM
2232 State Route 61
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DrHansensApothecary.com

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EquineSpecialtyHospital.com

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Hagyard.com

Hagyard Pharmacy
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Lexington, KY 45011
859.281.9511
HagyardPharmacy.com

**Hawthorne
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Holly Helbig, DVM
Kaylin Van Dorn, DVM
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614.359.9020
RideWithHawthorneHill.com

Ohio State University Large Animal Services at Marysville

16410 County Home Road
Marysville, OH 43040
937.642.2936
Vet.OSU.edu/Marysville

Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center Galbreath Equine Center

601 Vernon L. Tharp Street
Columbus, OH 43210
614.292.6661
Vet.OSU.edu/VCM/equine

Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital

2150 Georgetown Road
Lexington, KY 40511
859.233.0371
RoodandRiddle.com

The Apothecary HB A Boutique Mobile Pharmacy

Holly Helbig, DVM
614.706.8935
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937.504.1534
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