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ABOUT THE COVER

"Mike Major rode the 6666 Ranch bred gelding YELLOWHOUSE CANYON (Jesses Topaz x Last Call For Gin, by Bet Hesa Cat) to claim his first Road to the Horse World Championship of Colt Starting title in 2022. Mike purchased the gelding after the event, and 'YELLOWHOUSE' returned to assist Mike in the round pen as a saddle horse at Road to the Horse 2023, leading to back-to-back world championships titles," according to Tammy Sronce, Director of Operations.

Cover photo and photo below courtesy of Road To The Horse



Meet The Remuda (above)

Since 2003, Road to the Horse has prided itself on bringing the very best American Quarter Horses to the World Championship of Colt Starting. This year is no different, as they welcome Pitchfork Ranch from Guthrie, Texas, and the largest number of colts to date. Road To The Horse at the Kentucky Horse Park (March 20-24, 2024) will showcase these beautiful colts, along with the colt-starting abilities of three world-class competitors, plus a wild card pick.

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From the Publisher

Welcome to the 2024 issue of *Kentucky Equestrian Directory!*

Kentucky 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 are inspired by those whose vision is to always put the horse first. Road to the Horse is one such organization doing just that. Known as the "World Championship of Colt Starting", this event has showcased many different trainers and their diverse methods for starting horses over the last thirty years. With a common thread of relationship-based training and doing *right* by the horse, spectators can learn and gain valuable insights into the best practices of these internationally-esteemed horsemen and women. Be sure to check out our feature article, **All Roads Lead to the Horse**, in this issue for a bit of history and details about the upcoming event. We are excited to be a sponsor and a vendor this year! Hope to see everyone at the Kentucky Horse Park - Alltech Arena - March 21-24th.

Fast forward to May 4th, when the city of Louisville will be hosting the biggest gala event of the year as it rolls out the red carpet (and roses) to host the 150th Kentucky Derby. Our story, **Twinspired!** has the inside scoop on what to expect and how best to enjoy this milestone experience. Churchill Downs is set to unveil numerous renovations and major improvements, from enhanced seating to VIP experiences for spectators. The Derby Museum is a hub for many activities leading up to the big day in May, along with new Derby exhibits, and collectibles for sale in its gift shop. The new Derby City Gaming Downtown opened its doors in December, 2023, offering plenty of "rizz" along with fine bourbon and cigars for those wanting to test their luck. When in Louisville, you won't want to miss the city's latest Gallopalooza - the painted horse statues on display April - October, supporting local beautification projects citywide.

Speaking of horses and things of beauty, Kentucky resident, Ellen Skidmore, is not only a passionate advocate for off-track Thoroughbreds, but is also one of the world's most sought-after artists. Ellen's unique perspective and incredible natural talent has attracted fans and collectors from across the globe. Her favorite thing to paint is - you guessed it - horses! Her style is colorful and whimsical and sure to put a smile on your face. **Ellen Skidmore: How Equines, Art and Orchestra Helped Her Find Her Voice** shares Ellen's journey from her painfully shy childhood to her now, very public persona and art exhibits. You can visit Ellen's gallery located in historic Midway, Kentucky.

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 James Photography



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KENTUCKY EQUESTRIAN DIRECTORY

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Kentucky Equestrian Directory is published annually by ENSO Media Group, Inc.
PO Box 470603, Cleveland, OH 44147
440 668-2812

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The Hay OptiMizer with Sue Wilson

by **Lisa Kiley**

When it comes to hay feeders, there are many styles and concepts that people have tried over the years. The idea of using a hay feeder is simple - keep hay from spoiling and going to waste. Over the years, the health benefits of slow feeding forage to horses have encouraged us to use hay nets or other slow feeders. One would be hard-pressed to find an individual who has put more thought and research into their product than Sue Wilson, who has created the hay OptiMizer.

Wilson's background is in clinical research and product development, with most of her experience and time spent in the medical industry. When Wilson retired in 2019, her creative energy was channeled into looking at

how things were functioning around the barn. She started to notice how much hay was being wasted with traditional ground feeding methods. This spurred her on to help develop a feeder that would not only hold the hay, but a product that was well thought out and backed by research.

Wilson shared that, in nature, horses will graze continuously, chewing up to 60,000 times per day. Chewing creates saliva that buffers the acid in the stomach that a horse is continually producing. If a horse grazes or eats from a slow feeder they will get more chews in their day, creating adequate saliva to quell acid. A horse that gets fed in 'meals', like AM/PM feeding, is more likely to develop ulcers because



they aren't chewing enough through the day. Wilson advised, if continual grazing isn't an option, providing a product that mimics natural grazing is important for the gut health of the horse.

Wilson also studied the rate of chewing in horses. A horse that is meal-fed tends to bolt its forage and will chew at a rate that is 20% higher than a horse that is fed in a way that mimics grazing. This can be accounted for by the horse being hungry versus having a continual supply of hay. A horse that gets used to

eating from the OptiMizer and realizes that they will have a steady supply of hay available, will drop their chew rate by another 20% over time and increase the amount of 'chews' per day.

There is also a dramatic savings in the amount of hay that is saved from waste. Wilson used the analogy of a horse coming to their hay like we come to a buffet table, wanting to grab for the tastiest options first. Horses will do the same when it comes to selecting what they are eating from a flake of hay. When the hay is in an OptiMizer, it is not just going to fall to the ground. Her research has shown that there was less than 1% of hay waste when using the OptiMizer. In the most recent study, when compared to hay bags, it saved 17% more hay.

Wilson isn't done with her quest toward better horse management that has been backed up by research. She encourages horse owners to keep an open mind and *optimize* what they have for the betterment of horse management practices. ●

If you are interested in learning more about the OptiMizer, which comes in both a paddock version and the new InStall option, check out Cashmans.com for more information.





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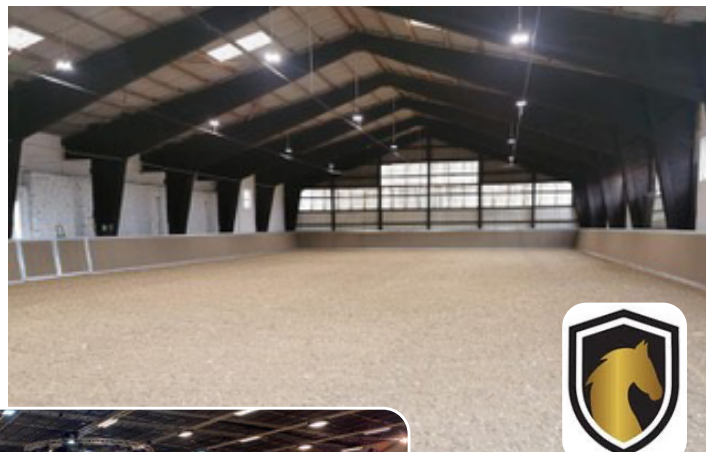
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training and competition and the right cushioning can help reduce the risk of injury and improve their comfort. Our footing additives provide optimal cushioning, reducing the impact on your horse's joints to help them recover more quickly from intense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

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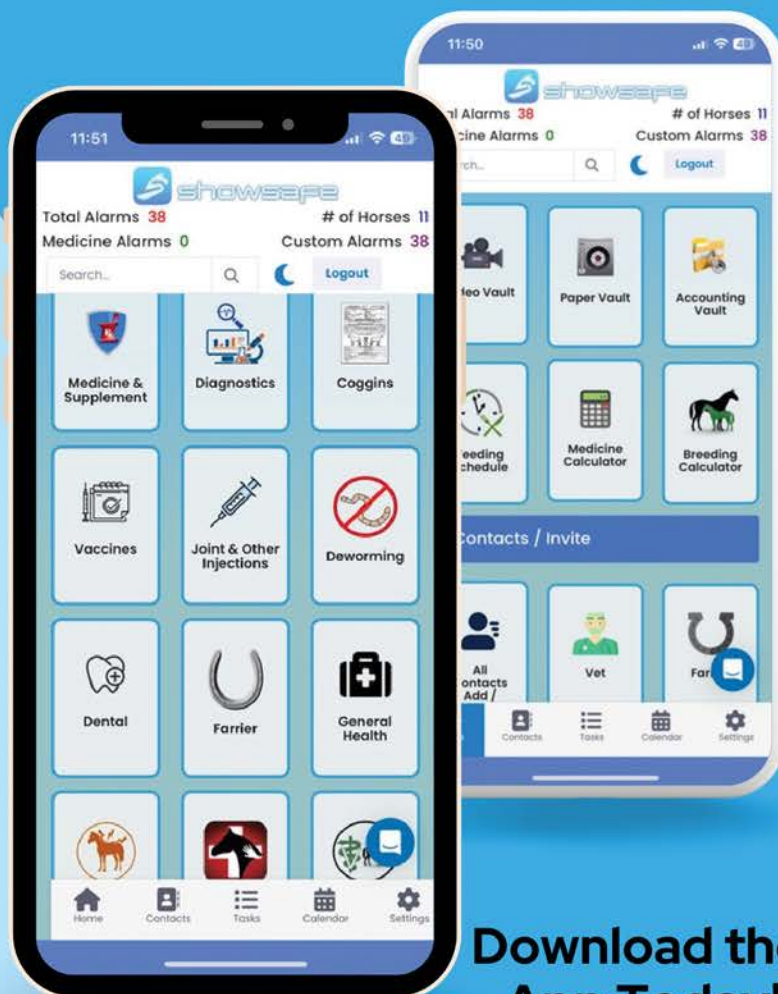
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Understanding Equine Skin Conditions

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.



Severe rain rot (back)

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



Severe rain rot (head)

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.



Severe scratches (pastern)

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.

For more information: www.drhansensapothecary.com



In 2023, Churchill Downs opened the First Turn grandstand with more than 5,000 stadium seats under partial cover from a cantilevered roof. Guests will enjoy a sweeping view of the historic track and its iconic spires, plus the best seat for the Kentucky Derby Walkover.

Twinspired!

Churchill Downs, Derby Museum Roll Out the Red Carpet Showcasing New Looks, Exhibits for a Milestone 150th Kentucky Derby

by **Kay Coyte**

The first week of December in Louisville, Ky., usually passes with little notice. But despite its chilly and overcast morning, December 6 in 2023 heralded a bright and festive day throughout the city. Why? Because it marked 150 days to the 150th running of the city's signature event: the Kentucky Derby.

At 9am, local dignitaries and Churchill Downs officials held a ribbon-cutting at its sparkling new Derby City Gaming Downtown facility. Famed Kentucky bugler, Steve Buttleman, sounded the "Call to the Post" and patrons rushed in to check out the bells and whistles of the casino-style operation.

Four miles south, the Kentucky Derby Museum opened its doors for an all-day Race to 150 free-admission community event. Many Derby fans carried mementos to include in a time capsule; others were sporting fancy hats for a fashion runway contest. Patrick Armstrong, the museum's president and CEO, greeted visitors before introducing VIPs that included Gov. Andy Beshear. "Today is all about lifting up Louisville together," Armstrong said. "And beginning the countdown to an incredible moment in history: the magic of 150 years of the Kentucky Derby."

Meanwhile, a shipment of 75 life-sized horse statues arrived in Louisville in preparation for the Gallopalooza, another round of a painted horse sidewalk derby that supports citywide beautification projects. The organizers bedded down the ghostly white horses, ears pricked with a look of eagles, in what they call the "horse barn," warehouse space within Louisville's quirky underground cave known as the Mega Cavern, awaiting their artists' brush.

These events elevated Derby Fever among local racing fans, but within a chain-link fence around a Churchill Downs construction site, more than 100 workers were feverishly building a \$200 million, multi-story saddling paddock renovation. It's the culmination of a years-long revamping of the historic track that will create a new grand entrance, focusing on the iconic Twin Spires while also more than doubling the size of the previous paddock and creating multiple levels of prime viewing, seating and dining. The new 12,000-square-foot paddock area also will sport two jumbotrons for 360-degree race viewing and will allow for better customer traffic flow from the paddock to the track side of the grandstands.

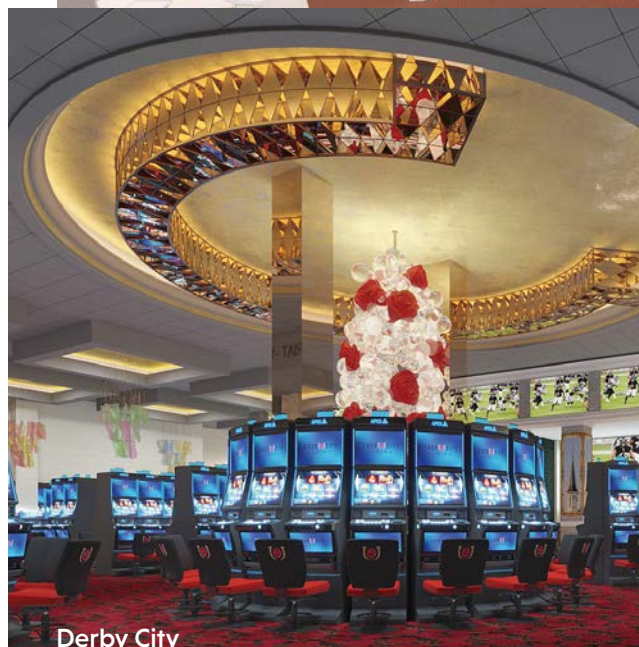
As some racing fans may have seen watching last year's Derby, the enlarged paddock is sunken, coliseum-style, with then-temporary saddling stalls flanking the widened horse tunnel entrance from under the grandstands. But the biggest change will involve the horseshoe-shaped tiers of seating that overlook the paddock. Among the additional 3,600 seats are a variety of options: private boxes with tables and shade roofs, bird's-eye seating, swank lounges. Some general admission paddock viewing still exists. The "Plaza Walkaround" will accommodate 3,200 standing-room-only patrons with no track access and a scattering of benches. Keep your spike heels at home, ladies!

But some jaw-dropping experiences await those with deep pockets. The Woodford Reserve Paddock Club and the 1895 Club (so named because the Twin Spires were built that year) hold the prime spots on either side of the horse tunnel. There you'll find fine dining, top-shelf bourbon,

Continued on page 18



Paddock Project - image courtesy of Churchill Downs



**Derby City
gaming floor -**
photo courtesy of
Churchill Downs



Photo by Kay Coyte

Twinspired! *Continued from page 17*

concierge service, betting parlors and a private human tunnel leading to within-the-paddock privileges. More halls lead to an exclusive plaza for outside track-level viewing.

The best seats in those clubs come with a glass-wall window into the saddling stalls and the horse tunnel. Yes, a fortunate few can sip their bourbon or savor their prime rib while the nation's best Thoroughbreds are steadied and saddled barely a yard in front of them. Go to <https://www.derby150.com> and click on the Overview and East/West tabs for video walk-throughs of each club.

A couple of other premium sections have their own unique perks. The Paddock renovation opened space under the Twin Spires and created the Spires Terrace, an open-air lounge with racetrack viewing on one side and paddock viewing on the opposite. Claim the perfect spot and you can take in those sights without leaving your seat. The new Plaza Balcony dining area has access to similar dual views and is adjacent to the jockeys'

room. Now, you're in prime autograph-seeking position when riders do the walk to the paddock.

These improvements are under construction and projected to be ready by Derby day, May 4, according to the project manager. The Jockey Club Suites, one of the original luxury sections at the track, also got a \$14 million upgrade.

Fans drawn to the historic Run for the Roses will also see major changes instituted in recent years. In 2022, the apron bleachers along the rail were transformed into a \$45 million members-only Homestretch Club. Last year, Churchill Downs doubled that investment to build a first-turn grandstand with more than 5,000 stadium seats. Its cantilever roof even provides some cover. Below those seats is a 50,000-square-foot First Turn Club. It's designed for year-round use, such as hosting a benefit for backstretch workers' Backside Learning Center last fall. There's no homestretch view, but guests will enjoy a sweeping track-and-spires scene, plus the best seat for the mob of horses, horse handlers and hangers-on that

has become known as the Kentucky Derby Walkover.

Most reserved seats, dining spaces and suites now include concessions and drinks (beer, wine, spirits and non-alcoholic beverages). Of course, the menu of those concessions will depend on the cost of your experience. And how much will those seats set you back? Grandstand bleacher seats far from the finish line start at nearly \$1,000, with fees, according to Ticketmaster. Stadium seats, in the grandstand or first turn, start at about \$1,500. Seats at

can bring your own picnic food and bottled water, camp chairs, strollers and a blanket or small tarp. Make sure you check the track's detailed list of what and what not to bring.

Churchill Downs may be a beehive of construction activity, but the action on December 6, marking 150 days to the Derby, took place

Many were patrons of southern Indiana casinos or Churchill Downs' gaming facility in South Louisville. To show its commitment to the community, Garth Williams, Derby City Gaming Downtown's general manager, presented \$20,000 checks to local nonprofits and pledged more to come. Louisville,

"We are so happy to be a part of a vibrant, revitalized downtown Louisville," Williams said, just before the ribbon-cutting.

The 43,000-square-foot Derby City Gaming Downtown is across the street from the Kentucky International Convention Center and just blocks from



Photo by Kay Coyte

Derby 150, ticketing central:

www.kentuckyderby.com

Seating Experiences page with saddling paddock details:

www.kentuckyderby.com/seating-experiences

To check pricing, availability of specialty clubs or suites: contact Tricia Speiden, senior director, luxury sales and services, at 502-638-3918 or tricia.speiden@kyderby.com

Churchill Downs: www.churchilldowns.com

Kentucky Derby Museum:

www.derbymuseum.org

Kentucky Derby Festival:

(list of pre-Derby events, some virtual, "Festival at Home"): www.kdf.org

Gallopalooza:

brightsidefoundation.com/gallopalooza

Derby City Gaming Downtown:

downtown.derbycitygaming.com

dining tables begin at \$3,700. As for those prime-view options? It might be a case of, if you have to ask, you can't afford it.

Is all this out of your price range, but Derby 150 still on your bucket list? Infield general admission is about \$100, concessions not included, nor is frontside access. You do get a program (while supplies last) and you

at the Kentucky Derby Museum's all-day Race to 150 party and Derby City Gaming Downtown's grand opening.

Well before its official grand opening, a mix of media, community leaders and local curiosity seekers waited in the morning chill.

like many U.S. cities, hasn't fully recovered from the 2020 pandemic and protests over policing in the African-American community, though new hotel construction and an expanded Urban Bourbon trail signals an upswing.

Some jaw-dropping experiences await those with deep pockets. The Woodford Reserve Paddock Club and **its nearly twin** Club SI (a nod to a new partnership with Sports Illustrated, look for some iconic cover artwork) hold the prime spots on either side of the horse tunnel. There you'll find fine dining, top-shelf bourbon, concierge service, betting parlors and a private human tunnel leading to within-the-paddock privileges. More halls lead to an exclusive plaza for outside track-level viewing.

the Yum! Center sports/concert arena and Kentucky Performing Arts. Its footprint is smaller than the gaming and hotel complex that rose from the site of the former Louisville Downs harness track. The Downtown gaming center is a bit more ritzy, with fancy bourbon, wine and cigar bars, a sports book and live entertainment. Racehorse and roses themes run throughout the building.

The 500 whirring, jangling games inside look like slot machines, but by Kentucky law, they are "historical racing machines." It's a natural draw for tourists, who also can visit the Kentucky Derby Gift shop from a sidewalk entrance. Minutes before the ribbon cutting, shop staff were unboxing the just-released Derby 150 julep glass. (A limited-edition gold version of the roses-themed glass will be distributed at the track on Derby Day.)

"The corner of Fourth and Market will never be the

Continued on page 20

Twinspired!

Continued from page 19

same,” Williams said in his opening remarks. There, a giant 90-degree wraparound video board illuminates the intersection, scrolling images of racing and gaming attractions.

Meanwhile, the Kentucky Derby Museum, which is located at Churchill Downs but is a separate entity, opened its doors for a free Race to 150 community celebration. Early birds received a commemorative leather coaster and Derby Festival pin, and Louisville Folk School musicians serenaded with fiddle and banjo. VIPs gathered around a recreation of the Derby winner's circle with a life-sized replica of the roses-draped 2023 winner, Mage, and his jockey, Javier Castellano. And Buttleman (whose instrument is technically a herald trumpet, not a bugle), again sounded “Call to the Post” before museum officials, the governor and Louisville mayor gave their opening remarks.

For Gov. Beshear, whose mother showed horses and served on the Kentucky Horse Park Commission, Dec. 6 marked another milestone in his support of the state's racing industry. In March 2023, he signed into law the bill legalizing sports betting in Kentucky. And in September, he placed the first official sports bet at Churchill Downs.

“It has taken many years to get here, but sports wagering is finally a reality in Kentucky,” he said then. “This is a win-win for Kentuckians.”

After his Derby Museum remarks, Beshear dropped a program for his second-term inauguration into the Derby 150 Time Capsule, then worked the room, chatting with folks about his boyhood

riding days.

One couple catching his attention was Mike and Pat Sazy, of Louisville, holding a “Welcome” banner from the 1974 Derby. “The story was that it was hung outside the Brown Hotel for the 100th Derby, and it was given to us afterwards by a friend who was associated with the Brown,” said Pat Sazy. Museum staff took a photo of the Sazys holding the banner and added it to the Time Capsule. By the end of the day, hundreds more had added photos to the box and received



First Turn interior, Backside Learning Center

Photo by Kay Coyte

a photo-booth-style copy to take home.

The Race to 150 celebration included Derby 150 artist, Wylie Caudill, in action painting his signature roses on a photo-op wall and Derby winning jockey, Mike Manganello, (1970, aboard Dust Commander) talking about his newly released biography. Guests were treated to Derby-themed treats such as mint julep Nice Cream and Kern's Kitchen's trademarked Derby-Pie. Adults could taste-test bourbon and try a \$5 Old Fashioned. The Kentucky Derby Festival team displayed the just-released collector's item pin and sold tickets for a Golden Ticket raffle, a \$7,000 bundle that includes not only 2 Derby and Kentucky Oaks box seats, but VIP passes to the Festival's pre-Derby events such as Thunder Over Louisville (fireworks/air

show), the Fillies Derby Ball, Pegasus Parade and Great Steamboat Race.

Families discovered a new Derby Museum feature, Ari's Horseshoe Adventure, an interactive, clue-finding experience for kids named in honor of the museum's pony ambassador, Mighty Aristides. The hunt for Ari's missing shoe takes kids to clue stations at 12 key exhibits, from jockeys to Triple Crown to horse care. Coming in April will be an overhaul of the Riders Up simulated race that will have more realistic horses

(and one that's accessible for all), plus video game and virtual reality elements.

“We've seen previews of it, and it's stunning,” said Katrina Helmer, the museum's communications director. “You'll be able to race in different eras, and the track will change. So if you're in a race in the early 1900s, the colors and grandstand and crowds will look completely different from a modern race. So we're sprinkling in some history and education into a fun game.”

A milliner's row showcased Derby hats from local hatmakers. Colorado native Jenny Pfanenstiel, sporting one of her hand-made felt cloches with a satin scarf band, founded *Forme'* Millinery 2007. Now an official milliner for the Derby Museum and Churchill Downs, her *Forme'* custom hat shop caters to a boutique

crowd. But when a popular Louisville do-it-yourself hat outlet closed last year, Pfanenstiel responded by opening The Hat Shoppe in the same neighborhood.

“Dees was such an institution,” Pfanenstiel said. “We aim to fill that void but also give shoppers the choice of our personal design experience.” The Hat Shoppe's Hat Bar will stock a wide array of hat and fascinator bases, and all the embellishments – feathers, flowers, ribbon, pins.

That range of styles was on full display for the museum party finale: a Railbird Runway Contest. Anyone could take the stage, and they did, from Miss Kentucky to fashionistas to girls who just wanted to have fun.

Deborah Widmer, an emergency medicine physician and Kentucky Derby fan since she was a child, strutted the runway with a high-flying hat, scrubs and a stethoscope. “I used to keep a scrapbook of the winners. Now, I own three retired Thoroughbreds and two are in foal. It may be corny,” Widmer said, “but I bought the hat because my dream out to the universe/ God is that the pink and green will be my racing colors when my foals grow and race in the Derby.”

Jessica K. Whitehead, the Derby Museum's curator of collections, has been diving deep into Derby fashion for a “See and Be Seen: 150 Years of Derby Fashion” exhibit opening this summer. “The development of Derby fashion is not only tied to American fashion trends, but it morphed into its own mysterious beast,” said Whitehead, herself styling with a green and white feathered fascinator. “It's performative, and it's what we come to see. There's haute couture but also that humor –



Photo by Kay Coyte

camp – and creativity that you can't wear anywhere else."

Whitehead also has written a Derby Museum book, "The History of the Kentucky Derby in 75 Objects," that will be released in July. She pitched the idea nearly four years ago as part of "recalibrating the way we tell stories" about the Derby, including lesser-known history of black horsemen, Latino influence, and women jockeys fighting for the right to race. "The history of the Derby is much like America's story, an ongoing struggle for true democracy and true equality."

Efforts to include all communities in the Derby anniversary also extend to the city's latest Gallopaloosa, the display of fiberglass horses to support local beautification projects. "In a perfect world, all 26 Metro districts would display the horses," said Michelle Black White, executive director of Brightside Foundation. "But we are placing more horses in the West End, and this year we'll have 11 that represent the 11 black jockeys who won 15 of the first Derbies. We're hoping some will

have ties to West End sites." These statues also are set to highlight a Pegasus Parade float.

One horse will represent West End School, a scholarship academy for boys, with the students painting the horse they've named "Wes" (the school's acronym). Gallopaloosa, now in its 20th year, is funded through individual and corporate sponsorships; for this round, Churchill Downs is the main sponsor. The painted statues will be on display from April through October, and those not purchased by their sponsors will go up for auction, with the proceeds going to Brightside's beautification efforts as well as artist grants.

Getting an up-close view of actual horses might not be possible on Derby Day. But Churchill Downs opens its frontside for Dawn at the Downs several days before the Derby (last year, Dawn at the Downs concluded on the Wednesday before the Derby). Gates open at 7am and racing fans arrive soon after, toting coffee and doughnuts, some sporting their finest hats. The most

exciting hour starts at 7:30, after a track harrowing, when training is designated for contenders in the Derby (with their names on neon yellow saddle cloths) and Kentucky Oaks (pink saddle cloths). It's an equine royalty rush, with track experts and reporters adding commentary via infield jumbotrons. Even the parking is free, as long as you leave when training hours are over at 10 am. For a fee, the Derby Museum offers track tours, some with exclusive backstretch access. Because of race-going crowds, the museum is closed Thursday through Saturday of Derby weekend.

You can also enjoy Dawn at the Downs virtually with a free Churchill Downs app. In addition to helpful maps and ticketing, the site has news and video of the Derby/Oaks contenders, backside interviews, expert picks and fashion features. Workouts are streamed live. Speaking of apps, you can download TwinSpires, the track's official betting partner, for handicapping analysis, wagering and race simulcasts.

No matter how you take

in the 150th running of the Kentucky Derby – an infield picnic, a home Derby party, a Millionaires Row lounge, a sports bar TV – you can bet the host track and city will rise to the occasion. The momentum that started with a cold day in December will heat up to a thunderous roar on May 4 as more than 100,000 at Churchill Downs and millions around the world cheer on their favorites for this historic 150th Derby stretch run. May the force be with them and may the sun shine bright on everyone's Kentucky home that day. ●

Kay Coyte, a Louisville native, is a former editor at The Washington Post and editor/publisher of The Horsemen's Journal, the official magazine of racing's HBPA owners and trainers association. She is a judge for the Dr. Tony Ryan Book Award for excellence in Thoroughbred racing literature and the American Horse Publications' media awards. A rider since girlhood, she adopted a retired racehorse/broodmare in 2020 and is introducing her to trail riding. That "Birdie" is a daughter of Kentucky Derby winner Thunder Gulch would please her late father, a former Churchill Downs official.

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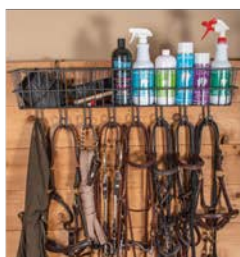
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Addressing the Shortage of Equine Veterinarians: Nationwide Practices Join Together

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."

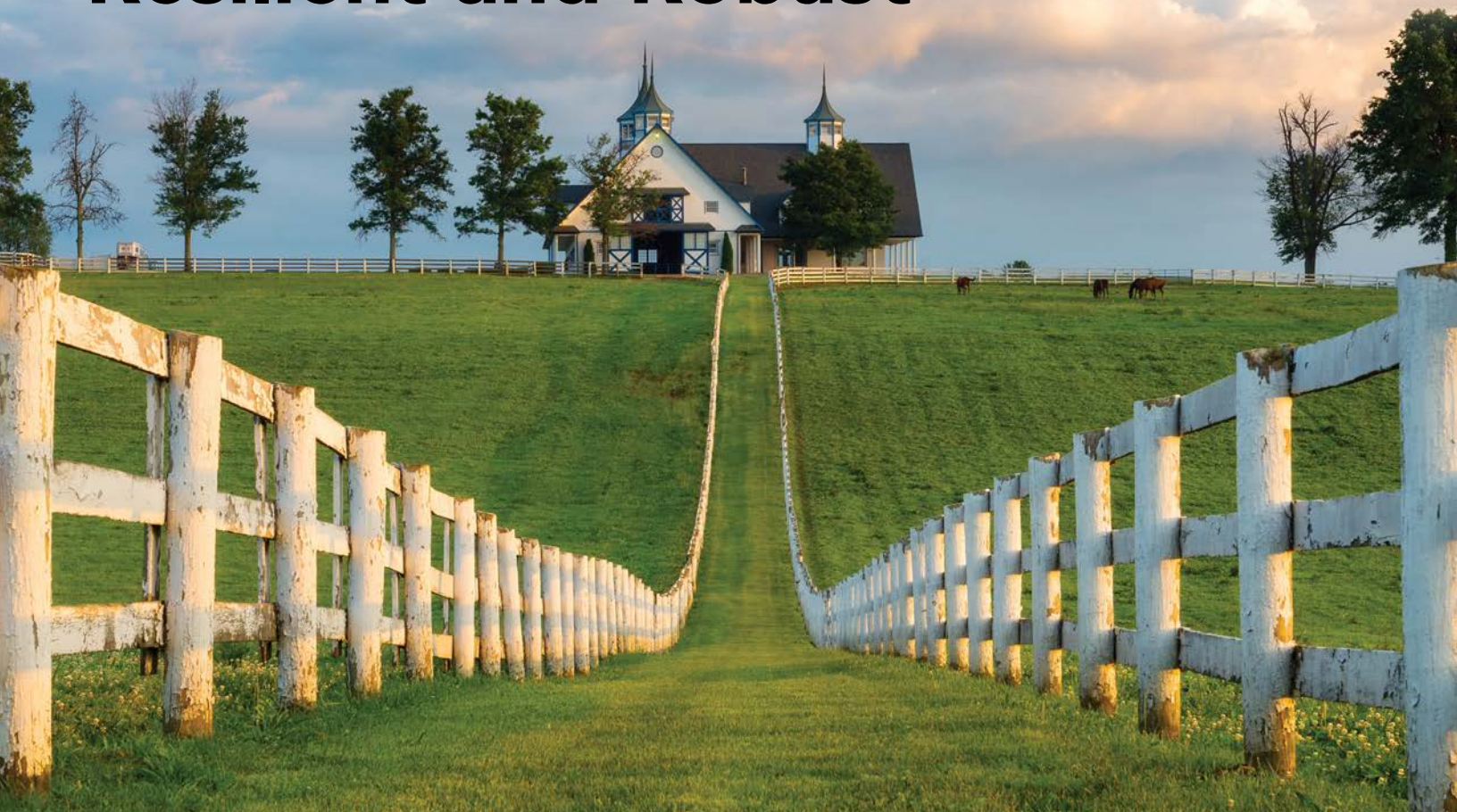
One question asked on the survey was: "Based on your knowledge of equine practice before (then after) attending OEPS, how likely will you choose equine practice as your career?" Before the conference, eighty percent of respondents thought they were 80% confident that they would enter equine practice;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



And the Survey Says: Kentucky Equine Industry Resilient and Robust



The *2022 Kentucky Equine Survey* revealed changes in the number of equines and equine operations, value of equine and equine-related assets, and income from sales and services in the state's signature industry.

by **Sarah E. Coleman**

In 2022, the University of Kentucky, a land grant institution, and the Kentucky Horse Council, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting equines and developing Kentucky's equine community, collaborated to conduct a comprehensive, statewide equine survey. Both entities are deeply dedicated to safeguarding and promoting the well-being

of equines and equine agriculture in the state, and understand the necessity of periodically assessing the health and vibrancy of the equine industry in the Commonwealth.

Routine surveys can help identify areas of potential job creation and income expansion, as well as lend context to how past changes and events have impacted the equine industry in Kentucky. These

benchmarks can also allow for forecasting how the equine industry may need to adapt to future changes in the economy, the regulatory environment, the business climate and the American lifestyle to ensure its sustainability.

Why Do We Need Another Survey?

Though equines are a signature industry of the state, prior to 2012, Kentucky had not done a

comprehensive, statewide survey of its equines or equine operations since 1977. In 2012, UK and the KHC partnered for the first time to determine how many horses, ponies, donkeys and mules resided in Kentucky.

The 2012 survey determined the diversity of equine operations across the state and obtained an inventory of all breeds of equine, including horses, ponies, donkeys and mules;

it looked at sales, income, expenses and operation assets. The 2012 survey also provided a comprehensive economic impact analysis of Kentucky's equine industry.

Though some questions on the 2022 survey were similar to those asked a decade ago, this survey sought to determine an accurate inventory estimate of equine operations and equines in the state, which were further designated by breed and use. This survey measured sales of equine, income and expenses from activities on equine operations, and the value of assets owned by those operations. In addition, it captured the primary function of those operations and how much acreage was devoted to equine-related activities.

Finally, the 2022 survey sought to determine the age distribution of Kentucky's equines and what equine health concerns owners felt were most pressing.

The 2022 survey defined "equine operation" as an address at which at least one horse, pony, mule or donkey resides. This definition encompasses commercial facilities, competition facilities, training facilities, nonprofit facilities and personal residences.

The inclusion of all of these facilities in the *2022 Kentucky Equine Survey* was imperative in getting an accurate head count of equines in the state. Another survey, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Census of Agriculture, which is completed every five years, defines a "farm" (and therefore counts the animals that reside on it) as a place that generates at least \$1,000 in cash receipts annually through the sale of products. While some equine

operations fit this definition, neither boarding facilities nor residences where equines are kept for personal use qualify to be counted under this description. It's estimated that the USDA Census of Agriculture estimates underestimate the

ponies, donkeys and mules called Kentucky home in 2022 compared to 242,400 in 2012.

There were approximately 31,000 equine operations in Kentucky in 2022, representing a decline of 11.4 percent since 2012. This

of operating expenses were spent in Kentucky.

Thoroughbreds are again the most populous breed in the state, followed by Quarter Horses, Walking Horses, Donkeys/Mules and Saddlebreds. In 2022, each breed showed a decline in

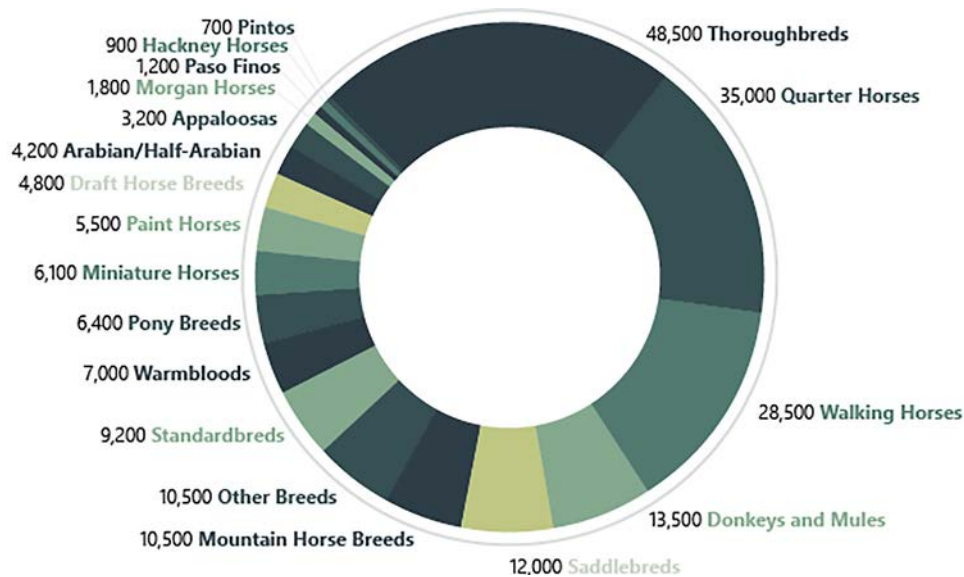


Image courtesy of Kentucky Horse Council

number of Kentucky horses by about 50 percent.

Key Findings

The *2022 Kentucky Equine Survey* revealed that Kentucky's equine industry experienced significant changes in the past decade, due in part to emerging from the Great Recession in 2008 and 2009, navigating a global pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and recovering from multiple natural disasters in 2021 and 2022.

Despite it all, the total value of equine and equine-related assets in Kentucky was \$27.7 billion in 2022, which is up more than 18 percent from 2012, when the value was \$23.4 billion. This is true even though there are currently almost 14 percent fewer equines living in the Commonwealth than were recorded in the 2012 study: 209,500 horses,

triggered corresponding declines in total operation acreage (18.6 percent) and equine-related activity acreage (15.9 percent).

Kentucky's decline in equine and equine operation numbers mirrors those found nationwide by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Census of Agriculture. The contraction in Kentucky's equine industry is similar to beef cattle production across the nation, which is at its lowest level since 1962.

Acreage devoted to equine use is 84.1 percent of that in 2012 (900,000 acres in 2022 compared with 1.1 million acres in 2012). Total equine-related income from sales and services for equine operations in 2022 was almost \$2.1 billion, up from \$1.1 billion in 2012, while expenses have increased from \$1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion. In 2022, 82 percent

population compared to the numbers reported in 2012, but the average value of equine increased, even after adjusting for inflation. This inflation-adjusted average value of equine increased for nearly all breeds, as well as in 82 of Kentucky's 120 counties.

An important trend for commercial equine operations in Kentucky is the marked increase in income and sales over the past 10 years. Expenses have increased, but at a lower rate than revenues. After adjusting for inflation, operating expenses, not including labor, were just marginally higher than in 2012 and capital expenditures were up 131 percent. Labor expenses (payroll and non-wage benefits) increased approximately 134 percent.

Continued on page 32

Survey

Continued from page 31

Additionally, commercial equine operations have seen a significant increase in income and sales over the past 10 years. After adjusting for inflation, equine operations with commercial activities have seen income from breeding services increase by 170 percent, while income from non-breeding services increased by 165 percent. Additionally, the value of equine sold also increased by 170 percent in the past 10 years after adjusting for inflation.

Digging In

The 10 most populous breeds in the commonwealth are:

- Thoroughbreds (48,500)
- Quarter Horses (35,000)
- Walking Horses (28,500)
- Donkeys and Mules (13,500)
- Saddlebreds (12,000)
- Mountain Horse breeds (10,500)
- Standardbreds (9,200)
- Warmbloods (7,000)
- Pony breeds (6,400)
- Miniature Horses (6,100)

The state's top-five primary uses for equines include:

- Trail/pleasure riding: 62,500
- Broodmare: 33,500
- Idle, retired or otherwise not working: 32,500
- Growing horse (foal/weanling/yearling): 22,000
- Competition/show: 20,000
- Kentucky equine inventory by age:
 - There are 21,500 horses between the ages of 0 and 12 months
 - There are 41,000 horses

between the ages of 1 and 4 years

- There are 95,000 horse between the ages of 5 and 15 years
- There are 52,000 horses over 15 years old

The value of all horses, ponies, mules and donkeys in Kentucky in 2022 was \$6.5 billion; this results in an average value of more than \$31,000 per equine.

donkeys. Survey participants were asked to select up to three equine issues (from a list of 12) that were most important to them. The top three equine health concerns were:

- Caring for the senior equine (27.1 percent)
- Musculoskeletal issues (22.4 percent)
- Digestive problems (17.4 percent)

fourth-highest number of equines with more than 5,900; 1,500 of these are American Saddlebreds

Jefferson County has 4,800 horses

The area just west of Louisville, including the six counties of Breckenridge, Grayson, Hardin, Hart, Larue and Mead, has a combined population of more than 12,700 horses

The seven counties just

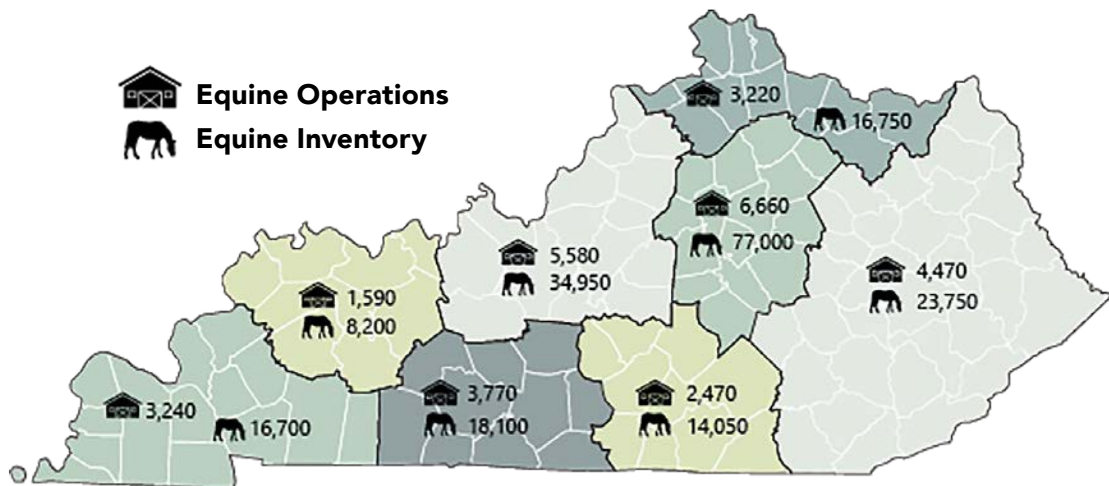


Image courtesy of Kentucky Horse Council

The top seven breeds, by value, in Kentucky are:

- Thoroughbreds: \$5.5 billion or \$113,814 per horse
- Standardbreds \$190 million or \$20,652 per horse
- Quarter Horses: \$180 million or \$5,143 per horse
- American Saddlebreds: \$170 million or \$14,167 per horse
- Warmbloods: \$136 million or \$19,429 per horse
- Walking Horses: \$106 million or \$3,719 per horse
- Mountain Horse breeds: \$42 million or \$4,000 per horse

A new objective to the 2022 survey was to understand which equine health issues are most important to owners of horses, ponies, mules and

Where do Kentucky Horses Live?

Just as in 2012, the 2022 *Kentucky Equine Survey* found a concentration of horses in the Bluegrass area of Central Kentucky, including Bourbon (13,000), Clark (2,100), Fayette (22,500), Jessamine (4,500), Madison (2,300), Scott (5,700) and Woodford (11,000) counties. These seven counties account for an estimated 61,100 horses, ponies, mules and donkeys, or 29.2 percent of the state's population.

There is also a dense equine population along the corridor between Louisville and Lexington, with 17,800 equines in four counties (Franklin, Jefferson, Scott and Shelby). However, there are other areas of the state with significant concentrations of equines: Shelby County has the

south of the Bluegrass area (Anderson, Boyle, Garrard, Lincoln, Marion, Mercer and Washington) have a population of more than 13,600 horses

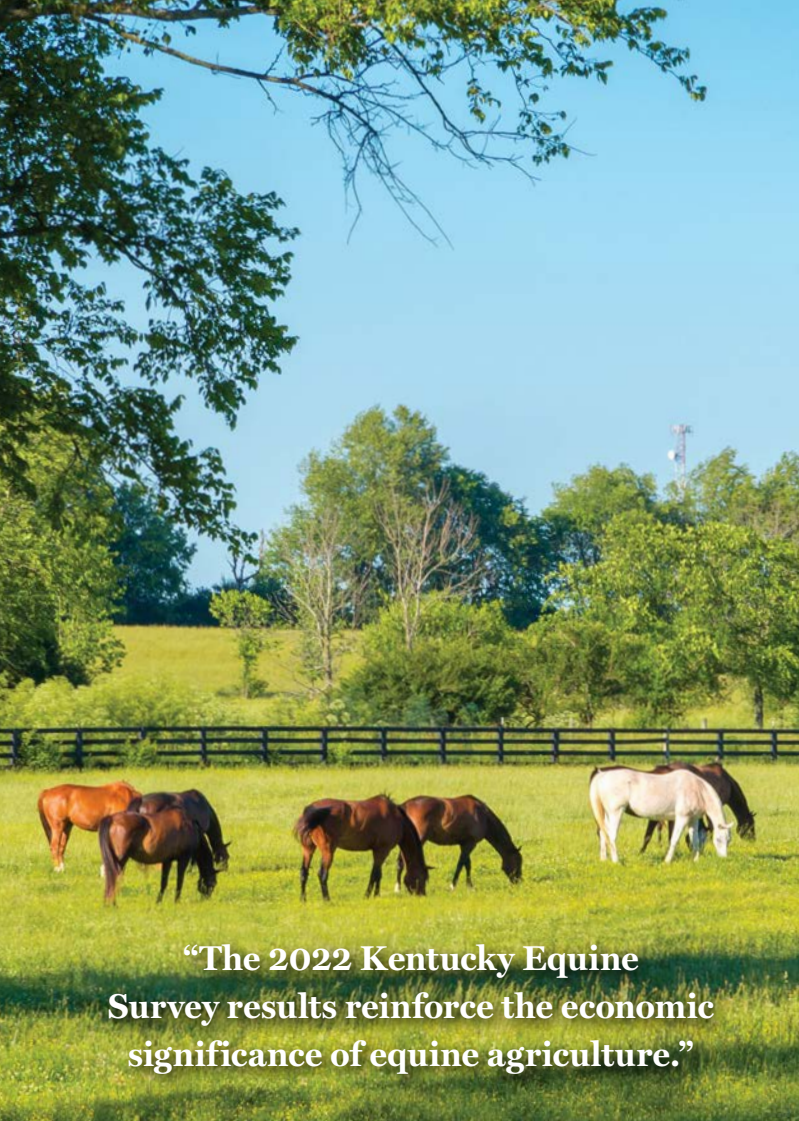
The South-Central Kentucky area near the Tennessee border has seven counties (Allen, Barren, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson and Warren) that have a combined population of more than 13,700 equines

The Northern Kentucky area (Boone, Bracken, Campbell, Grant, Kenton, Mason and Pendleton counties) represent more than 11,800 equines

Nearly 50 percent of the state's counties have 1,000 equines or more

Conclusion

Though the number of equine and equine operations in Kentucky



“The 2022 Kentucky Equine Survey results reinforce the economic significance of equine agriculture.”

declined slightly over the past decade, there are many reasons for optimism. These include an increase in the value of equine sold and an increase in income from sales and services, combined with the fact that revenues increased more than expenses.

A smaller supply of equine, coupled with the decline in nonpaid transfers, suggests that the potential for horses to become unwanted and at risk has lessened. Finally, and most importantly, the 2022 Kentucky Equine Survey results reinforce the economic significance of equine agriculture, which remains vibrant and strong as a signature industry in Kentucky, generating investment, tourism, recreation and positive

symbolism for the state.

This survey would not have been possible without the dedication and support from a variety of equine organizations and owners, specifically the Kentucky Agricultural Development Fund, which graciously provided a grant that funded much of the cost of this study, and the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association's major financial investment.

For the full report and access to all supplementary materials, including county fact sheets, please visit <https://kentuckyhorse.org/2022-Kentucky-Equine-Survey> •

Based in Lexington, KY, Sarah Coleman is the Executive Director of the Kentucky Horse Council and has a soft spot for chestnuts with chrome.



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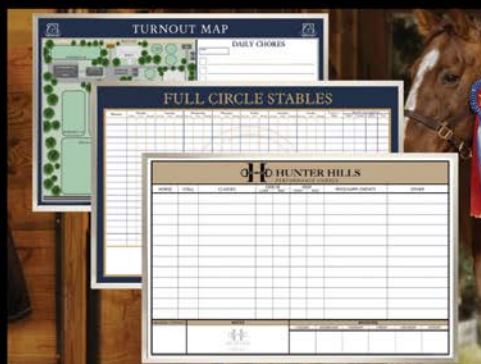
- Horse owners can also select an annual coverage limit of \$3,000, \$5,000, or \$7,000. The coverage limits for ASPCA Pet Health Insurance plans reset every year.

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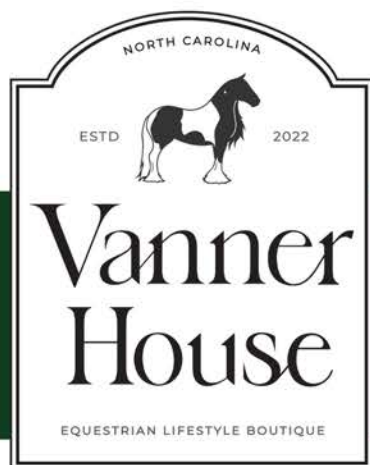
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Enhancing Equine Performance:

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

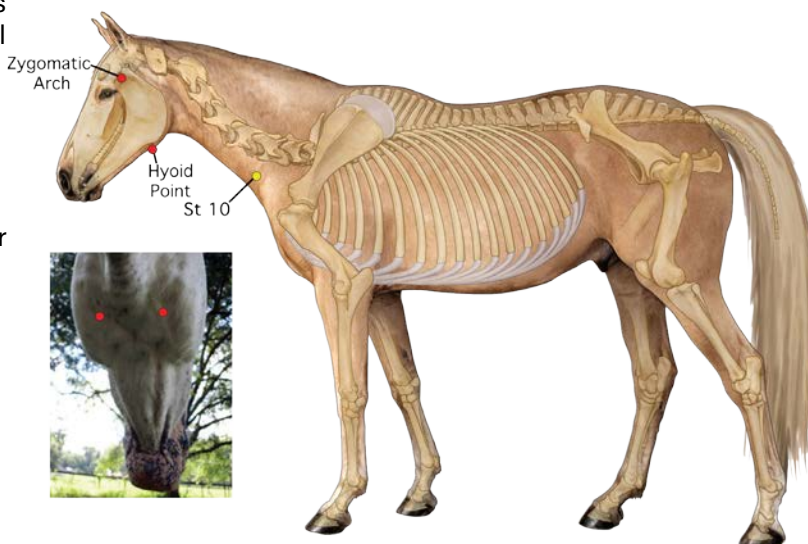
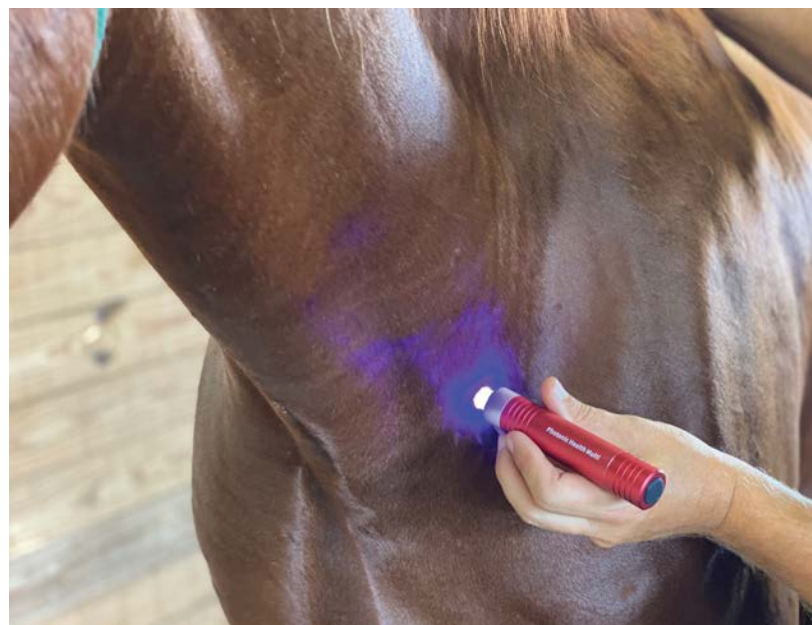
Since 2004, the author has diligently explored effective methods to address hyoid-related performance issues. The result? The Hyoid Release Technique™ using red light therapy. This revolutionary approach harnesses the power of red light therapy, also known as photobiomodulation, to reset and rebalance 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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Primetime Spy (16.1h 2013 OTTB Gelding) makes easy work of the Novice (2'11") oxer at Poplar Place Farms in Hamilton, GA. When they are produced correctly up the levels, these horses are fierce athletes in their second careers.

Go Pony To Show Pony: *Retraining the Thoroughbred*

by **Aubrey P. Graham**

In the last decade, the United States has seen a resurgence of the off-track Thoroughbred. With programs such as the Thoroughbred Incentive Program (TIP) and the Retired Racehorse Project (RRP), the popularity of the OTTB has escalated. This has been aided by burgeoning enterprises such as rehoming non-profits and professional rehoming. Overall, what this means is that each year, more and more Thoroughbreds are leaving the track and heading into second-career homes with professional trainers,

amateur riders, and juniors alike.

The awesome side of this means that each year there are more Thoroughbreds in all the disciplines – from eventing to hunters, barrel racing to show jumpers, and ranch work to equitation. The versatility of the breed is unmatched. I mean, who doesn't want the smarts, the work ethic, the athleticism, and the heart that comes with these talented speedsters?

Thoroughbreds, literally, can do it all – but – it can be a process to get them there. Transitioning these athletic toddlers from track to sport

is rarely a straight line. That said, if you as a rider and trainer know what you're getting into, the challenges that they present feel more like speed bumps and detours rather than frustrating dead ends.

When I brought my first Thoroughbred home from the track, I had done my research, read what was available, and chatted with a handful of experts. I thought I was ready. When Forrest (Don't Noc It) arrived after a long haul, all track fit and baby-brained, I embarked on a long, bumpy process of discovering just how much I did not know and

how much I had to learn.

Yes, I had ridden this talented breed for decades. Yes, I had worked with the ones who had quirks and challenges. Yes, I had put the early training in on a handful that had come to others directly from the track. That said, I had not gone start to finish on the whole process. Forrest and his process humbled me and has made me a better horseman in the long haul. Years later, this process of transitioning "go" ponies into "show" (mostly event) ponies is a good portion of what I do professionally. The rest of this article will provide

some snippets of advice on how to make that transition easier.

Selecting a Thoroughbred

I could write thousands of words on each of these sections, but I'll try to stick to the highlights here. There are a few common ways to acquire a Thoroughbred: either directly from the track, off video, with a trial ride from a reseller, or through other connections. If you're buying from the track, expect that it will be a fast-paced experience where you'll need to trust the trainer or your connections to get a quality, sound horse.

In such a case, you *might* be able to have someone pull the horse out of the stall, look at its conformation and watch it jog, but you probably won't have the wraps taken off for you to examine legs, and you definitely won't be able to hop on at the track. Depending on the people and the situation, you might be able to have the horse held for a pre-purchase exam. But on the track, speed and cash are king, so if you really want that horse, you'll need to decide quickly and be ready to send payment and arrange shipping *stat*!

If not targeting a particular horse on the track, the social media world of Facebook is actually one of the best ways to hunt through what is available. Rehomers and casual sellers alike routinely post conformation shots, free movement or jog videos and, if possible, ride videos and photos. My best advice here is to know your abilities and limitations. Rehomers try their best to list horses with descriptions so that they make it to the best, most appropriate home possible. If you're not sure what horse is appropriate for you on their site, reach out and ask. They may request that you send a recent riding video

or chat with you, but that is all a productive part of the matchmaking process. Just be ready to read the descriptions carefully, ask the questions that were not answered there, and again, move quickly if you're seriously interested.

Settling In

Once the horse is home, the next couple challenges are dealing with feet, letdown, and getting them going. When three-year-old Forrest hopped off the trailer, I was hoping to have a horse I could immediately hop on and get going – silly human! I realized quickly that my plans were comical when met with the hurdles he had to get over. His needed letdown time was drawn out by tender feet, a very sore body, and playful-gelding pasture injuries.

Since Forrest I have realized that, in fact, he was pretty average for a horse letting down. I have had horses come in who are fit and loose through their back and ready for a new job. Equally, I have had others

who come in tight, sore, and in need of time, maintenance, and body work. Both types of horses eventually make excellent mounts, but the timeline to riding varies greatly and might be a couple days, a couple months, or longer.

Often, they'll come off the track a bit tight through their back and potentially a tad sore in their legs. Time, turnout, boundaries, proper nutrition (enough calories from quality hay and grain) and body work help here a ton. And where they need more veterinary assistance – potentially dealing with joint maintenance or assessing and treating for ulcers – the biggest piece of advice is just to have a good team put together. With a quality trainer, vet, farrier, and body worker, most things

are possible!

Some track farriers do amazing things with these horses. Some... well... less so. They often come off the track with underrun heels and long toes and need help growing good supportive feet with correct angles. Without getting into the barefoot vs. shod debate, these horses can have good feet – it just takes some very intentional work! But often, they struggle with the old concept of “pull their shoes and stick them in a field for a couple months.” While they can weather it, it can be tough to resolve sore bodies as such. Forrest spent the first part of his letdown playfully raising hell in the field with typical TB feet – thin soled and small (size 0) with long toes. Six years later, he is now

Continued on page 44



Forrest (Don't Noc It), shows off the change in his body and his confidence as he heads towards fence two on cross country at the recent Big Cheese Eventing three-phase at Ashland Farms in Covington, GA.

Curlin Lane (16.1h 2018 OTTB Gelding) stands for his conformation photos at Kivu Sporthorses in McDonough, GA. Reading conformation photographs becomes a necessary skill if one is aiming to buy an Off-Track TB.



Photo by Alanah Giltmier

Pony

Continued from page 43

properly stood up and happily sporting a size 3 and far better herd behavior.

First Rides

That said, on the ground or in the saddle, off-track horses

know so much more than one might expect. They have seen flags, grandstands, been around chaotic backsides, been in the race paddock and headed to the gate with a whole bunch of other horses. They have been ridden by both

exercise riders and jockeys and worked in groups. While they may still look for excuses and likely need good, clear boundaries, they generally have good heads on their shoulders and will be brave if ridden and managed by folks who give them the confidence to forefront that courage.

First post-track rides are some of my favorite things to do. But my biggest piece of advice here: don't expect perfection. A first post-track ride is about assessment – what does this horse know? How do they feel? Mounting at the block might be completely new to them (jockeys are tossed up while the horse is moving), so that is approached carefully and slowly, with a helper on the ground at their head to help provide confidence.

But beyond that, I look for movement, soundness, how they carry their bodies, how they go left as opposed to right, temperament, rhythm... you know, all the things.

While the internet is full of images of first rides with horses connecting well into the bridle and coming over their back, that does not have to be your first ride(s). I aim for quiet, steady rhythm at the walk, trot, and canter before I start to add more leg and contact to bring the horse onto the bit. For their first ride, some horses will have swinging gaits and beautiful movement from the get go. Some will not. Tight backs and tender feet will create choppy trots and unbalanced canters. The good movement will come as they free up and their muscles relax. But a quick point of advice is to not judge their movement too soon. It almost always gets better (often, impressively so) as they get stronger.

CJ's Empire (16.2h 2017 OTTB mare) trots around the arena working on figure eights and serpentines at Kivu during a training ride, working on her rhythm and balance.



Photo by Alanah Giltmier

Unstoppable Force (16.1h 2020 OTTB Gelding) trots with tension but a whole lot of talent down the longside at Kivu Sporthorses (McDonough, GA) during his first post-track ride while I assessed his movement, balance and temperament.



Photo by Alanah Giltmier

Getting Going: A Focus on Rhythm

And then from there it is usually an up and down road of teaching them to ride for sport as opposed to for speed. There is a ton of specific advice on this topic – and I'll get into a little of it here – but the biggest thing, as with their bodies, is to have good resources and a team. If you're new to this (and even if you're not) having a trainer you trust and who knows Thoroughbreds is key.

And with a good team on board, one gets to get going. Slowly at first, working on rhythm.

The great thing about aiming for rhythm first is that you can ignore 90-percent of the silly things that they try out with the front half of their bodies. They might toss their heads, pop around with their front legs, twist or tilt their necks, curl under or run above the bit. But, if you focus on their feet and ride

patiently from the hind end forward, all those front-end antics slowly work their way out of their toolbox.

I should note here that I have mentioned rhythm a lot, but have not encouraged a focus on pace. While no one wants to go run out of the arena at speed, many of these green Thoroughbreds will need to go more forward in their early rides than perhaps expected. With tight muscles and track training, slow is difficult. It is often simpler to establish a quality tempo and positive, in-front-of-your-leg, pushing-from-behind gait by kicking on with a bit more zip during the initial rides.

And to build said quality rhythm, I will leave you with a couple of extremely simple exercises when working with the green ones: circles and figure eights. These repeatable shapes allow them to (in the case of circles) hold one bend and turn and not need to adjust around

corners. Walk, trot, or canter the same big easy circle until they make a good effort to hold their shape and rhythm. Then walk and reward.

Figure eights or big looping serpentines help to keep focus while slowly changing direction and asking for a new bend. These are useful when a horse is a bit quicker than a rider would like, as the change in direction brings a half halt into play and asks for attention. Focusing on such basics sets the horse and rider up to build trust and, over time, work towards poles, small fences, grids and eventually courses.

At the end of the day, the goal is always to build a brave, capable, well-behaved horse who can succeed in the world of second careers. The process will rarely be a perfectly simple straight line from track to show, but with the right team of experts (trainers, vets,

farriers, bodyworkers, etc...), the challenges of the fresh off-track Thoroughbred will carry solutions and bring with it the joy and all the heart that these horses exude. ●

Aubrey Graham is an anthropologist and an eventer who focuses on bringing young, green, and challenging horses up the levels. She runs Kivu Sporthorses and Training, LLC out of a former Olympic barn in McDonough, GA, where she trains, coaches an avid eventing team, and runs a retraining-to-sales program. Aubrey is a coach for Ride IQ and teaches lessons focused on Thoroughbred retraining. She writes the Thoroughbred Logic article series for Horse Nation, and hosts the riding clinic series by the same name. This year she opened the Thoroughbred School to provide hands-on learning and riding opportunities for individuals interested in the breed.



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An advertisement for 'Guaranteed Fly Bye Plus' fly spray. The central image is a clear plastic spray bottle with a green label. The label features a horse head logo and the text 'GUARANTEED', 'Fly Bye plus', 'Specially formulated for', 'Flies • Mosquitos • Gnats • Ticks', and '32 fl. oz. (946 ml)'. To the left of the bottle is a stylized orange unicorn with a yellow horn and mane. The background is a soft pink with various floral and leaf illustrations in shades of red, purple, and orange. Small white stars and swirls are scattered throughout. At the bottom, a white banner contains the text 'Some say our fly spray is magical...'. Below this, another white banner contains the text 'shop the magic at guaranteedhorseproducts.com'.

GUARANTEED

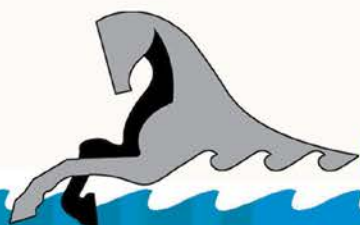
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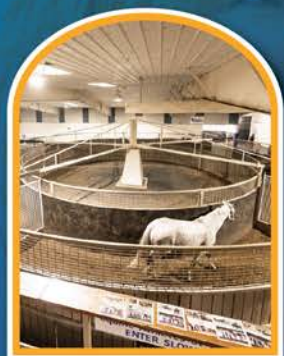
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Peace Pony Ambassadors

by **Susanna 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-

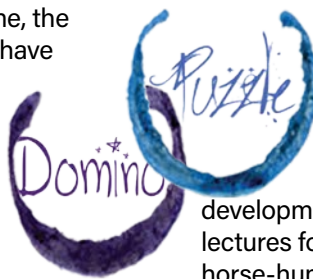
verbal - as every experienced horse person knows, they have a world of opinions and things to say about humans! While interacting with the herd, people often discover strengths they never knew they had and experience a lack of judgment about their weaknesses. As the mind quiets and stress diminishes,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

For more information:
pineknollfarm.com or
thepeaceponies.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.

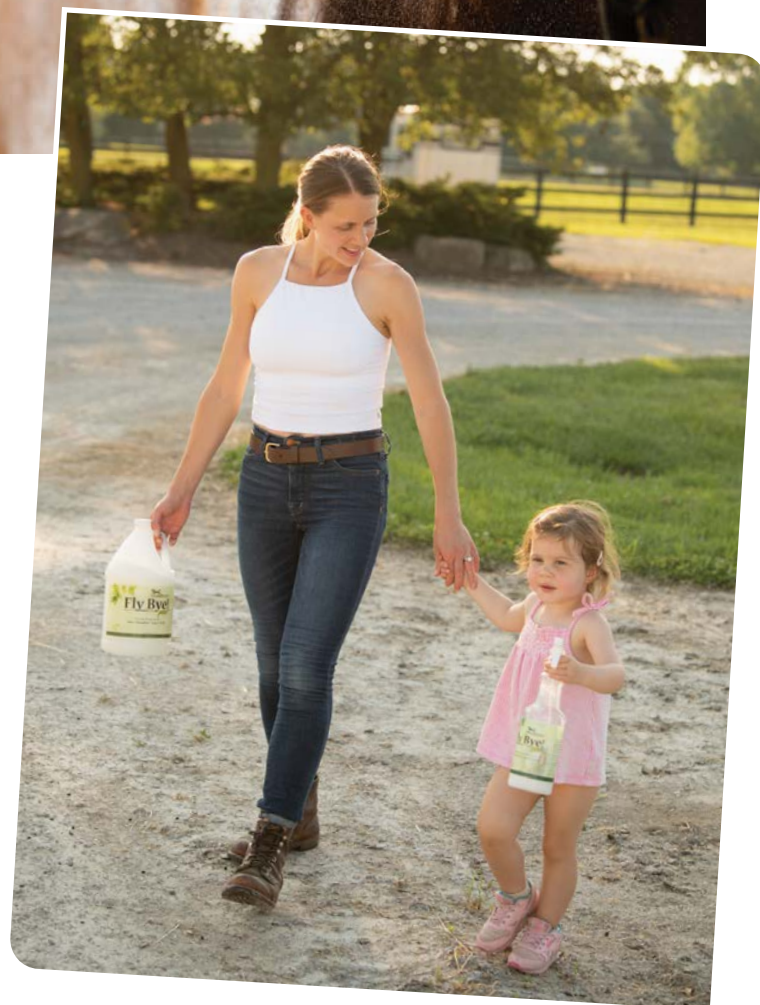
Driving Innovation

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

Although many things have changed since 2011, the core tenets remain the same. GHP is committed to providing effective, chemical-free products for equestrians.



GHP's motto is, "Love Your Horse, Love Your Planet." This is etched into each product they make, and will continue to drive innovation to support riders, horses, and

the planet moving forward. •

To learn more about Guaranteed Horse Products, check out their website: guaranteedhorseproducts.com.

A high-angle photograph of a rider on a brown horse in a dirt arena. The rider is wearing a grey long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, a black cowboy hat, and a tan saddle pad. The horse is a chestnut color with a white blaze on its face and is wearing a blue halter. The arena floor is reddish-brown dirt. In the upper left corner, there are several parallel metal poles. The title 'All Roads Lead to the Horse' is written in a large, white, sans-serif font, curving from the top left towards the right side of the image.

All Roads Lead to the Horse

Competition, education and
entertainment come together
at Road to the Horse

by **Jen Roytz**

There is something truly inspiring about the connection that can be forged between humans and horses. When a bond is built based on patience, respect and a deep understanding of animal behavior, a trusting partnership can be cultivated, and truly incredible feats can be accomplished.

At Road to the Horse, that process is on full display. Known as the “World Championship of Colt Starting,” each year a selection of the best colt starting specialists from around the world are invited to the Kentucky Horse Park to showcase their approach to starting young horses in front of a crowd of thousands, as well as an esteemed panel of judges, and compete for over \$100,000 in prize money.

Over the course of three days, competitors take their chosen horses – all three-year-olds with minimal handling – as well as the crowd, on a training journey that includes everything from introducing their horses to lunging, groundwork and tack to their first rides, tests and obstacles. Held in the Alltech Arena, a 135' x 300' indoor arena surrounded by stadium seating, competitors work with their horses simultaneously, each in their assigned round pen and eventually in the open arena. Emcees rotate between competitors to offer insights and commentary and periodically ask them questions about their approach or the feedback they are getting from their horses.

On the final day of the event, the competition culminates with each horse



Photos courtesy of Road to the Horse

and rider combination attempting to navigate a rigorously challenging competitive trail course, as well as traditional rail work around the arena to demonstrate the horse's adjustability and willingness at all three gaits. A true test of horsemanship, each competitor is judged not only on whether or not their horse completes each obstacle, but on the effectiveness of their horsemanship and ability to develop a trusting and confident partner in their horse over the entirety of the three-day competition.

How it all Began

The brainchild of Steven and Tootie Bland, the first iteration of the competition – then called the El Camino del Caballo Challenge – was held in Fort Worth, Texas in 2003 with a goal of celebrating the relationship that can be developed between horses and humans if mutual understanding and trust is kept in the forefront of the training process. Held as a two-day competition in front of hundreds of spectators in its inaugural year, lauded horsemen Clinton Anderson, Curt Pate

and Josh Lyons competed at the Cowtown Coliseum at the Fort Worth Stockyards with Anderson proving victorious.

Moved to the Tennessee Miller Coliseum in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in 2005, the event drew a sold-out crowd of 5,000 that watched as Anderson, competing against Craig Cameron and Van Hargis, proved victorious once again. The competition was held in Tennessee several more years before spectator demand and limited capacity forced a move to a larger venue, and in 2013, Road to the Horse made the move to its current location at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky. Several years later in 2018, Morris Communications Company, LLC, purchased the event from Tootie Bland and has continued to foster its growth and expansion.

As the competition has grown, so, too have the prizes awarded to the winners. While Anderson surely still covets the belt buckle he earned as the event's inaugural champion, winners in the years since have received everything from custom saddles and commemorative jackets to donations to the competitor's charity of choice, and cash. Today, Road to the Horse competitors vie for \$125,000 in cash, with partial distributions of prize money after each of the two preliminary days of competition (Friday and Saturday) and the bulk of the prize awarded on Sunday (Championship Day).

“Over the years the purse has increased dramatically, and the stage and venue are much bigger,” said Tammy Sronce, Director of

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All Roads Lead to the Horse

Continued from page 57

Operations for Road to the Horse. “The horsemanship has evolved as well. The things these colts are doing now is just mind blowing. The caliber of training has reached such a high level.”

Sronce is no stranger to horse training. A native of Australia, Sronce came to the U.S. in 2000 to train cutting horses and

eventually got involved with mounted shooting, where she became a multiple World and National Champion Cowgirl in the Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association, a mounted shooting World Record Holder and a Guinness World Record holder for coordinating the largest competitive trail challenge.

Sronce explained that as the competition and caliber of horsemanship have grown and evolved, so too have the

rules and the overall format of the event.

“Whenever we finish an event, we go back and analyze it. We ask ourselves questions like ‘What worked? What didn’t? What could we make better for the horses? Are we asking too much of our competitors or not enough?’” Sronce said. “Over the past five years we’ve become a lot more granular about what the judges are looking for. There is a lot of money

on the line and winning Road to the Horse is a huge accomplishment. It’s on us to ensure it is judged both fairly and credibly, and we take that very seriously.”

While Road to the Horse is an invitational competition, horse trainers can submit an application, along with links to videos of their training and any relevant websites or social media accounts, for consideration to the Road to the Horse competition.

A committee of seasoned



equine professionals, previous competitors and judges then go through the applications to select future competitors.

“We look at a lot of things, from how they communicate, how comfortable they are with public speaking, how well they portray and put into action the skills and philosophies they’re talking about,” she said. “There is no one right way to train a horse. We’ve had such an array of horsemen and women – both English and Western - with such vastly different approaches. What it really shows is that there are a lot of ways to correctly start a horse.”

It’s About the Horse, of Course

Since 2011, the group of young horses – referred to as the “remuda” – that have been used at Road to the Horse have come from the Texas-based 6666 (“Four Sixes”) Ranch. In 2024, Road to the Horse will be sourcing the remuda from a new partner, the Pitchfork Ranch based in Guthrie, Texas.

Competitors are asked by the emcee during the evaluation period what their impressions of the horses are and which they hope to work with. Then, they each draw a chip (numbered one through 10) from a hat and the competitor who draws the lowest number gets to choose their horse first.

“Each competitor may look for different things [in their chosen horse]. Some competitors weigh heavily on bloodlines, whereas others place the most value in observed behavior of the horse within the herd,” said Sronce.

While the competition itself is referred to as the World Championship of Colt Starting, the herd is typically made up of three-year-old geldings that have never been ridden and that have been minimally handled.

“Just like as in years past, the main championship remuda will all be geldings, but this coming year we are also hosting a wild card challenge in 2024 and that group will select their horses from a remuda of fillies,” said Sronce.

Competitors often have the opportunity to purchase their horses after the competition. While some do, most of the horses, including the remainder of the remuda not selected for the competition, return to the ranch to be started under saddle and trained for a ranch horse or performance career.

While Road to the Horse offers attendees an insider’s perspective on colt starting and horse training, it often takes spectators on an emotional journey as well. In 2023, for example, J. R. Robles, who qualified to compete at Road to the Horse as a wild card competitor the previous year, brought his horse along expertly, receiving top scores on days one and two, along with a \$5,000 bonus for each preliminary round win. The crowd and judges were impressed, and he was going into round three with a legitimate chance of taking home top honors and the lion’s share of the \$125,000 in prize money.

During the championship finale, however, his horse became more and more overfaced by the obstacle course and nervous. In an incredible display of horsemanship and compassion, Robles put his horse’s best interest ahead of his dream of winning and retired from the competition early, receiving a standing ovation from the packed arena and heartfelt hat tips and handshakes from all of the judges.

“Every year something amazing happens, whether it’s

Continued on page 60

One handsome member of the 2024 remuda coming to KY in March



Photos courtesy of Road to the Horse

All Roads Lead to the Horse

Continued from page 59

based on courage or grit or compassion. I knew what that win and that prize money would mean for J. R. Robles and his team,” said Sronce. “He gave up his dream and that of his crew for the sake of his horse. He probably could have made it through the rest of the course, but it wouldn’t have been in the best interest of that horse, and he chose the horse over himself. That’s what Road to the Horse is all about; it’s always the horse first.”

So Much More than a Competition

While it is known as the World Championship of Colt Starting, Road to the Horse is much more than an equestrian competition.

Each year, organizers put together a robust schedule of clinics and demonstrations during the three-day event that includes various breeds, disciplines, training styles and topics.

“Since our fan base is so diverse, our clinics and demonstrations include everything from English disciplines, trail, miniature horses, police horse troops and more,” said Sronce. “Good horsemanship is good horsemanship, no matter what you’re doing.”

For those who want to do a little shopping for their horse, their pets or themselves while at the event, there is always a wide variety of vendors from which to choose, as well as informational booths where attendees can meet many of the weekend’s clinicians and featured horsemen and women.

Slated to compete at Road to the Horse in 2024 are

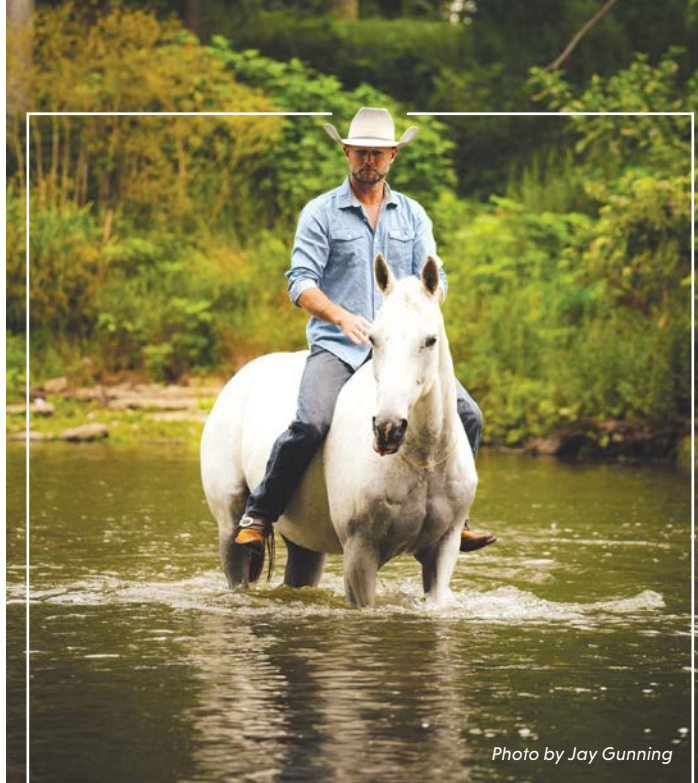


Photo by Jay Gunning

While many of the horses that have come through Road to the Horse remuda have gone on to successful careers in ranch work, barrel racing, roping, trail and liberty work, arguably one of the most famous and recognizable Road to the Horse graduates is Remember Sunset (a.k.a. “Swampy”), who was part of the remuda at Road to the Horse 2012, which featured an international team-style competition including colt starters from Australia, America and Canada.

Selected out of the remuda by Dan James of Team Australia, Swampy not only helped James and fellow Aussie, Guy McLean, secure victory that year, but also went home with James to continue his training. Since then, the pair has traveled throughout North America, putting on clinics and demonstrations at major venues, including coming back to perform both at liberty and under saddle at Road to the Horse on multiple occasions. Swampy has also appeared in both print campaigns and film productions, including *Vogue*, *Versace*, *Country Music Weekly* and *The Walking Dead*.

Donal Hancock (Australia), Tik Maynard (Canada), Ken McNabb (America) and one of three yet-to-be-determined Wildcard Competitors – John Baar, Lindsey Patterson and C. D. Wilcox. In addition, attendees at Road to the Horse 2024 can look forward to three well-known clinicians – Brandi Lyons, Mike Major and Pat Parelli – who will be assisting the Wild Card Competitors.

“Road to the Horse is very unique. We try to always maintain a multi-generational approach and continue to look for ways to continue to have a global perspective,” said Sronce. “Our goal is to educate and inspire people to develop a deeper connection with their horses.”

The 2024 installment of Road to the Horse will be held at the Kentucky Horse Park on March 21-24, 2024, with the Wildcard Challenge taking place on March 21-22 and the main competition slated for March 22-24. For a full schedule and list of competitors and vendors, visit roadtothehorse.com.

How to Pick a Winner

Road to the Horse has evolved significantly over the years in many ways, including how its winners are selected. In 2022, organizers debuted a new scoring rubric, which focuses on building a horse’s confidence and creating a solid foundation throughout the training process rather than simply completing required maneuvers.

Competitors are scored in 20 different categories on a scale of 0 (lowest) to 5 (highest) using half point increments. In Rounds one and two, competitors are judged on things such as; catching and haltering,



“Road to the Horse is very unique. We try to always maintain a multi-generational approach and continue to look for ways to continue to have a global perspective.”

—Tammy Sronce,
*Director of Operations
for Road to the Horse*



Photo courtesy of Road to the Horse

groundwork, timing of reward and release, a horse's willingness to guide and steer, the competitor's ability to adjust to the horse's needs and the colt's demeanor at the end of the session.

The third and final round, which includes work in the

round pen, rail work (walk/trot/canter, changes of pace and direction, etc.), the obstacle course and overall rideability of the horse and partnership with his rider, is also scored on the 0 through 5 system in categories reflective of the process.

Competitors accrue

points over each of the three days of competition. The competitor with the most points at the end of each round (day) earns a \$5,000 bonus. The remainder of the prize money is distributed to the competitors based on their total point accrual at the close of competition,

with \$75,000 and title of “Road to the Horse Colt Starting World Champion” going to the winner, and the remaining purse money getting distributed according to the number of competitors participating that year.

Continued on page 62



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All Roads Lead to the Horse

Continued from page 61

The Winners

Road to the Horse Champions

2023 – Mike Major
 2022 – Mike Major
 2021 – Wade Black
 2019 – Nick Dowers
 2018 – Vicki Wilson
 2017 – Vicki Wilson
 2016 – Nick Dowers
 2015 – Chris Cox
 2014 – Jim Anderson
 2013 – Guy McLean
 2012 – Team Australia (Guy McLean & Dan James)
 2011 – Chris Cox
 2010 – Craig Cameron
 2009 – Richard Winters
 2008 – Chris Cox
 2007 – Chris Cox
 2006 – Stacy Westfall
 2005 – Clinton Anderson
 2003 – Clinton Anderson

Jack Brainard Horsemanship Award

2023 – J. R. Robles
 2022 – Mike Major
 2021 – Wade Black
 2019 – Nick Dowers
 2018 – Dan James
 2017 – Kate Neubert
 2016 – Nick Dowers
 2015 – Chris Cox
 2014 – Jonathan Field
 2013 – Guy McLean

Road to the Horse 2024

March 21-24, 2024
 Kentucky Horse Park – Alltech Arena
 Lexington, Kentucky
 Roadtothehorse.com •

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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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
about joining IEA?

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Photos courtesy of Equine Saddlefit

PRICELESS!

Ergonomic Saddling Fitting with the Guenthers of Equine Saddlefit

by **Susanna Massie Thomas**

When Philip Guenther talks about what he and his wife, Kerstin, do, passion bubbles out of him in excited swirls of speech. You can see it in his eyes. You can feel it in his presence. He's earnest. Confident. Churning with purpose.

That's because he and Kerstin are on a mission to help horses. Riders, too, of course. But for them, horses come first. That's why, in 2017, the couple started Equine Saddlefit, a company

dedicated to "ergonomic" saddle fitting and educating horse lovers about the science, art, and necessity of proper saddle fit.

So, what does it mean to have an ergonomically fitted saddle? "Ergonomics" is the scientific discipline that focuses on making things easier and more efficient for people. What things? Products, systems, environments, procedures. It's all about synergistic fits that increase efficiency by overcoming limitations.

When it comes to saddlery this involves such considerations as: How well does the saddle fit the horse? Can the horse move with maximum freedom and comfort? If not, where and what are the causes of these limitations? Can adjustments be made to eliminate these issues? Will the horse need an entirely different saddle?

Keep in mind that saddle fit is a two-part equation. First, the saddle must fit the horse properly because, after all, he has the job of bearing

the rider's weight while simultaneously responding to the rider's requests. However, for these requests to be transmitted clearly with the proper timing, there are other questions that need to be addressed. Namely, how does the saddle accommodate the rider's seat and leg? Does the rider feel balanced? Secure? Comfortable enough to execute the aids with ideal efficiency?

If not, what would be a better option? How do you

find it? Can you try it on your horse to verify first? Will it be affordable?

Those are a lot of questions to answer.

Fortunately, the Guenthers have the experience, knowledge, and zeal to answer them.

Before the formation of Equine Saddlefitt, Philip, born in Hamburg, worked 20 years for Royal Dutch Shell as a business development manager.

Kerstin, a native of Dresden, had been an eldercare nurse prior to her university degree in business administration. She learned to ride as a child and is an accomplished Dressage rider.

When they started dating, Philip began following Kerstin to the barn, and shortly thereafter, he was learning how to ride under her tutelage. They found that they both loved animals and were drawn to help dogs, cats, and horses in particular. In 2015, they married. With a nurse's eye, and a dressage rider's experience, Kerstin realized that many horses under saddle were in pain and restricted in motion. Wanting to solve this problem, she enrolled in saddlery and saddle fitting courses and got certified as a saddle fitter during which, over the course of 1.5 years, she evaluated more than 500 horses, and adjusted and flocked over 800 saddles.

Hungry to expand his knowledge about horse health, Philip decided to get educated about saddle fit, as well, and in 2017, Equine Saddlefitt was born. At the present time, Kerstin and Philip service over 1,400 horses a year, and give saddle fitting demonstrations and clinics across the country.

"We are the only independent, trained and



certified ergonomic saddle fitters in the USA that have so much experience" Philip states. "We've had many years of training. We've studied the philosophy of saddle fit, the biomechanics of both horse and rider, along with the conformation and health systems of the horse. We work with vets, farriers, and trainers, in addition to the owners, because we approach saddle fit as a holistic process. Our goal is to have a comprehensive understanding of everything influencing the movements of the horse, including all the physical variables, as well as the variations of temperament and training that might affect movement, and to consider all of this in relation to the rider's needs. This is the only way, in our opinion, that you can fit the horse with a saddle that provides maximum efficiency of movement, as well as ideal comfort for horse and rider. That's what it means to be an ergonomic saddle fitter."

Prior to the advent of the automobile, when humans were dependent on horses for transportation, work, and war, saddle fit, reflocking and gullet plate adjustments used to be standard operating procedure. Just as we change the oil regularly on our cars today to keep them running at peak efficiency, people used to reflock the wool panels of their saddles to assure horse and rider "ran" better.

Not so anymore. Nor do we have the level of horsemanship we once had. We know less. We see less. We feel less. Saddles are expensive, and if they don't fit, we make them work with half pads, whole pads, riser pads, gel pads, shims and lollipops, foams, and sheepskins. We buy saddles because our trainer tells us to, or because they are on sale, or because a certain model is trendy. Sometimes we choose saddles that fit us, but may not fit our horses. Or, maybe we buy a new

horse but keep the same saddle because we like the way we ride in it. And how many of us have our saddles reflocked at least once a year? And when we do, are they reflocked with our horse standing nearby so the fit can be evaluated, and changes made as needed?

"I cannot tell you how many ill-fitting saddles we see!" Philip exclaims. "The percentages are huge! Almost 98%! And we are not alone in this opinion. Most saddle fitters agree. People, for the most part, just don't think about regular saddle fit checks, even though it's so important! They know their horses need to see a farrier, an equine dentist, have vaccinations, and be wormed. What they also need to know is that regular saddle fits are an integral part of horse care, as well. The saddle is the keystone for the comfort of the horse and the ease of the rider."

So, what if you'd like to

Continued on page 68

Priceless

Continued from page 67

find out if your old saddle will fit your new horse? Or, maybe you're wondering if your current saddle is bothering your horse? Maybe he's not moving forward the way you want him to. He's not lame. He's had a chiropractic adjustment, acupuncture, massage, a magnetic blanket, you name it, you've done it. But when was the last time you had your saddle reflocked? And where do you go to get that checked?

That's where the Guenthers come in. When they come to a barn to check a horse and saddle, expect a systematic methodology of inspection. First, they listen to what the rider has to say. Next, they examine the conformation of the horse standing still, untacked. They consider the shape of his withers, and the length and width of his back. They make note of the breed, age, gender, and what discipline he is being trained for. They like to see how the horse moves without tack.

Then they will look at the saddle, measure the tree, palpate the padding, and study the leather. If the tree fits, they want to see how the saddle looks on the horse. They examine how it looks on the horse's back at a standstill and how the horse looks when he's moving.

If they spot areas of concern, they take the saddle off the horse, slit the seams, and start reflocking, right on the spot, using a synthetic flocking that doesn't react to heat and moisture the way wool does and has more loft and longevity.

"This is the only way that we can be sure that we are making changes that benefit

the horse - is to have the horse right beside us. That way, as we add material, we can constantly be checking if we need more or less," they explain.

If the tree doesn't fit the horse, however, they'll stop right there and see if there is a way to modify it. If so, they will do that. If not, they

barrage of questions, for they are as thorough in this pursuit as they are in their initial saddle fitting process.

Once again, they will review with you - your discipline of choice, your riding goals, your preference of saddle, your experience, your desires, and your budget.

Finally, what if you think there is something not *quite right* with your saddle fit, but you're not sure what?

That's when the Guenthers pull out their ace card: the Medilogic® pressure pad. Equipped with 400 sensors, this pad is put directly on the horse's back, under the saddle pad, to measure

Kerstin checks the tree and flocking on a saddle



Photos courtesy of Equine Saddleftit

will look for a better option in the lines of saddles they carry (Bates, Kieffer, DP, and a special line of their own, aptly named, ES or Equine Saddleftit) that will be appropriate not only for the equestrian discipline of choice, but will also accommodate the anatomy, weight, and age of the rider. "Every brand has its strengths and weaknesses," says Philip. "A saddle that fits every horse is a lie. Our goal is to help you find the saddle that provides maximum comfort and balance for your horse *and you* so you can best do the job you want to do together."

If you decide to let the Guenthers help you find a new saddle, expect another

Next, comes the new saddle fitting process for the horse.

Finally, once a properly fitted saddle has been selected for the horse, you mount.

Here comes the next volley of questions:

"How secure in the saddle do you feel?"

"How balanced?"

"How fluid is the horse's movement? Does it feel impeded or uneven?"

"Is the horse raising his back?"

"Is the horse relaxed and through?"

"Does your leg feel in the right place?"

"Are you comfortable?"

"How is it different from your saddle?"

where pressure is exerted on the horse's back while he is being ridden. This image is instantaneously transmitted to a screen, where the data is displayed in real time, showing how and where, at every gait and speed, the saddle padding is affecting the horse adversely.

"We don't need to do this for every client," Philip explains. "That's because it is so easy to see without it where the horse is restricted or in pain. But, sometimes it is very helpful to pinpoint exactly where the discomfort is. Additionally, it's a wonderful tool for clients who need to be convinced that what you are saying is true. 'Your horse is being hurt by this saddle,' you might say.

“That’s your opinion,’ they might respond. That’s where the pressure pad allows you to turn that ‘opinion’ into a fact.”

Seeing the relief when a horse has a properly fitted saddle is what she loves best about Equine Saddlefit. “It’s so rewarding!!!” exclaims Kerstin. They describe a recent incident of a German Riding Pony, whose rider was extremely accomplished but knew somehow that something was not quite right with her mount. So, the Guenthers fitted him with the pressure pad, got a wealth of information as to where he was in discomfort and made the necessary

adjustments.

“After three rounds of trot, he started to stretch and to have fun,” Philip recalls. “Everyone was astounded to see him move in a way that he had never done before. He was so relieved and happy. It was a truly magical moment!”

It’s moments like those that keep the Guenthers putting in the long hours, whether they are at home or on the road, fitting saddles, adjusting them, finding new saddles for clients, as well as giving clinics to correct the steep learning curve surrounding saddle fit.

“I just want people to know that we are 100%

honest,” says Kerstin. “We mean what we say and we love what we do. Seeing a horse’s relief after it is ridden with a properly fitted saddle is priceless to us!”

So, what would this “priceless” response cost you? Surprisingly, the Guenthers’ services, saddle fit assessments, adjustments, and even their new saddles are very reasonable.

On the other hand, what would feeling safe and at ease in your saddle be worth?

A lot. Right?

And riding a relieved, happy free-moving horse?

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Susanna Massie Thomas, CPC-E.L.I. MP is an iPEC certified leadership and personal development coach who helps passion driven leaders, teams, groups and individuals discover, hone, and apply their leadership skills to create the teams and life they dream about using horses as partners both literally and figuratively. She is a lifelong horsewoman and former Executive Director of the Secretariat Center at the Kentucky Horse Park where she received the title of Kentucky Colonel for her creation and application of The Horse Centered Reschooling Program™, a national exemplar in Thoroughbred aftercare practices. www.theheardleader.com



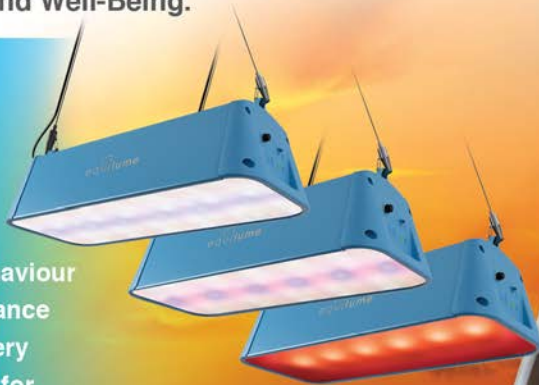
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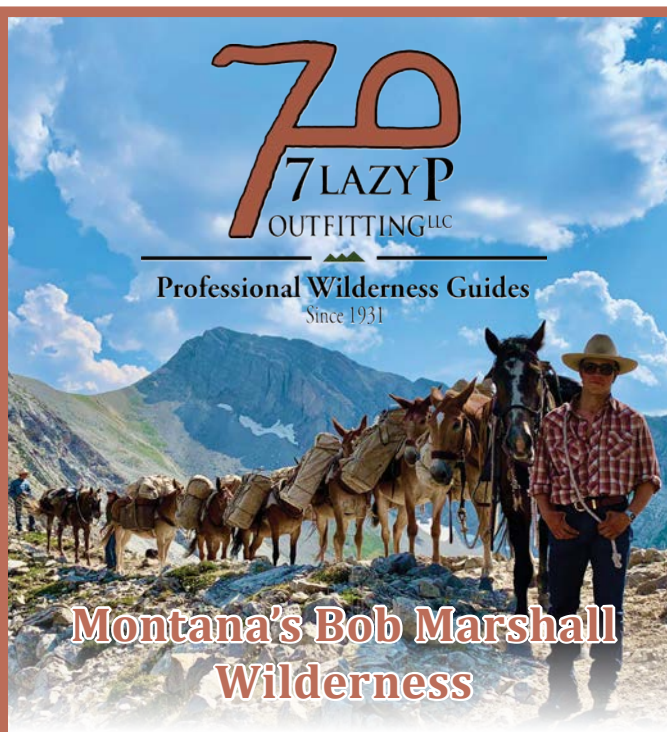
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Showsafe Aims to Securely Simplify Stable Management

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.

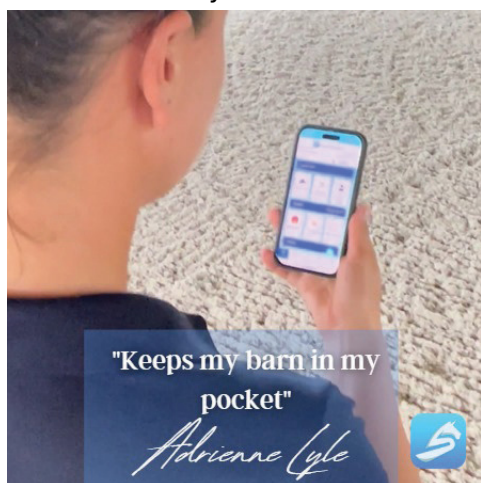
The app has a Video Vault that organizes any video or photo taken and saves them with a time and date stamp by each individual horse.

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.

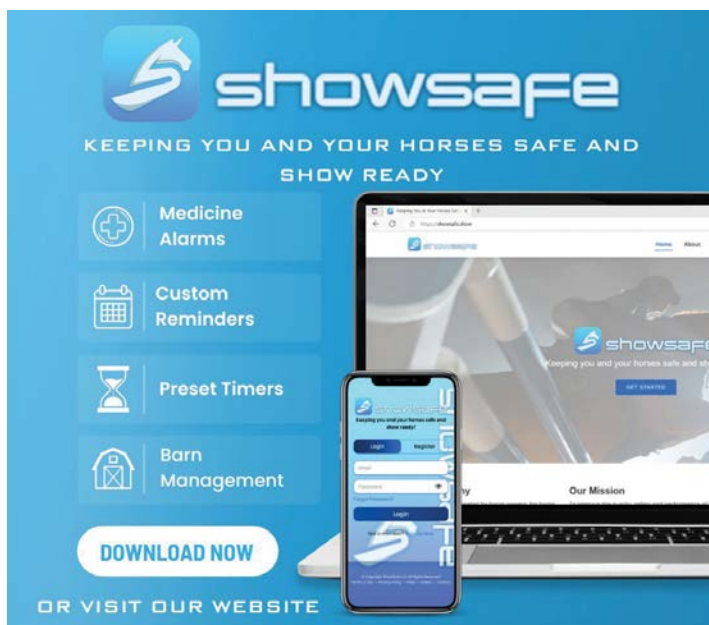
And in the task section, a trainer can assign daily work to any individual who has permission on the app. In turn, those individuals can click on those tasks when completed and they are automatically time and date stamped when they do.

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



www.ShowSafe.Show

Available on the App Store

GET IT ON Google Play

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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VANNER HOUSE

Swoon-Worthy Equestrian Lifestyle Products

by **Matthew Sagliocco**

They say that in order to be successful and truly fulfilled in your career, you should follow your passions and do things you love. Kristan Cicero, entrepreneur and founder of Vanner House, an upscale equestrian lifestyle boutique, has lived by this motto her entire life; and laughs as she acknowledges that sometimes success in her businesses came along just by doing what she was good at, *sans passion*... and that sometimes when she followed her "bliss", she found herself following it right off a proverbial cliff. "It's never a guarantee that by doing what you love that you'll be successful. However, it's a lot more fun *trying* to be successful if you follow your passions!"

Kristan lives her life always listening to what her heart

and soul truly crave. However, there was one thing that her heart always wanted that she thought was not attainable. It was not until her 50th birthday that she finally allowed herself to fulfill her childhood dream of owning a horse. This decision and doing things that she loves, has led to a new business that she adores. "My love of horses, creating experiences, gift giving, and entrepreneurial spirit all culminated in what

is now Vanner House."

"Hindsight being 20/20, I can look back and see how every trail led me straight to this moment. Everything I've learned, good and bad, every win, loss, every 'mistake', every misstep was a lesson preparing me for a time when I would eventually be ready to get back on the horse, so to speak, to start another business." She did get back on a horse, and she named that horse Dreamer. She describes Dreamer as "an almost irresponsibly gorgeous beast of a Gypsy Vanner. "Ironically, I met him the same way I met my husband: online." When Kristan saw Dreamer in a Facebook post she knew immediately that he was meant to be her horse. "The fact that I was 50 years old and had not ridden so much as a trail horse in years, let alone ever owned a horse, didn't deter me for a single moment. I did not jump into this adventure expecting that owning a horse would be easy. I expected that he would bring me endless laughs and deep eye crinkles from smiling until it was physically painful. I expected the feelings of love, silliness, and a sense of freedom and peace in his presence. What I did not expect was that owning Dreamer would lead me to start a retail business!" Since getting Dreamer, who went on to

become a National Champion gelding, her life has changed. She moved with her husband from Los Angeles to Wake Forest, North Carolina in May of 2022 in order to build a barn and have her horses in the front yard. Dreamer is now Vanner House's mascot. His silhouette is the company logo, and he is the love and passion behind the boutique. "Horses were always my love, and it was always my dream to have a horse. When I was 13, I started taking riding lessons at a local farm, but boys, life, and school got in the way; my dream of owning my own horse was put on hold. It just did not ever seem realistic or attainable. She jokes, "When I turned 50 and had a slight midlife crisis, I figured rather than having an affair, having plastic surgery, or buying a fancy sports car, I would make the slightly more rational decision to buy a very high-maintenance, very green, Gypsy Vanner horse!" Kristan now has two beautiful Gypsy Vanner horses, Dreamer and Daisy.

Kristan, a born horse lover and entrepreneur, attained a Master's Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and opened her own medical and vocational rehabilitation counseling business, an expert witness company, and a utilization review company. In addition



Photos courtesy of Vanner House



to running those businesses and being a mom for the last 23 years, she has worn several other entrepreneurial hats, including working as a private counselor, a business and life coach, and even owned a bed & breakfast outside of Charleston, South Carolina.

In 2022, while exploring her new town of Wake Forest and antique shopping with her husband, she walked into a boutique that had different vendor booths. She said that the words, “is this booth available” came out of her mouth without her even knowing why she was asking. The owner asked what she wanted to sell. As if the words were coming from someone else, she heard herself say, “equestrian lifestyle products— it’s going to be fabulous!” It was then that she began to curate an equestrian lifestyle boutique with all

of the brands that she loved, and in September of 2022, Kristan officially founded Vanner House. She has since expanded her business to an online store and pop-up stores at large horse shows throughout the country. She had her first pop-up store in Raleigh at Duke’s Jump for the Children Horse Show in November of 2022, and it was there that she realized that Vanner House was special, and that people loved the boutique. “I loved seeing their joy when they found their special treasures. I especially love bringing a pop of whimsy to the store by allowing everyone, including myself and staff, to ride our Pony Cycles. We have had everyone from Olympic champions to judges turn into five-year-olds when they hop on one of the ponies.” Vanner House’s first out-of-state show was in Wellington, Florida for the Adequan Global Dressage Festival in January of 2023, and since then, they have expanded their team to Kentucky, Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York, and Virginia, with more shows being put on the calendar daily. Vanner House hopes to be a sponsor once again at the Hampton Classic in 2024, and they are currently on the hunt for their first brick and mortar flagship retail location.

Kristan does all of the buying for Vanner House with the goal of providing “heart palpitations...the good

kind,” to her customers. If an item makes her heart race, she knows others will feel the same. Kristan has always been a hostess at heart, and loves to create experiences. Her goal with Vanner House is to be the answer to every equestrian’s dream. “When our customers come into the store, we are legitimately excited to see them, to learn about them, and their love of horses. “It sounds cliché, I know, but we really do treat everyone as our new friends, and we want them to feel as if they are in our living room chatting, laughing, perhaps sipping champagne, looking at pretty equestrian things, and never wanting the night to end.”

In addition to the joy of curating swoon-worthy equestrian lifestyle brands for the boutique, and bringing joy to her customers of all ages, Kristan is ecstatic to work with her best friend and Vice President of Vanner House, Sophia Garceau. The two became instant friends when they met in Los Angeles and were heartbroken when they moved away from California to different states and were no longer able to see each other daily. “As soon as I realized the business was going to be a success, I knew who I wanted by my side. I immediately called Sophia and asked her if she would like to be my Vice President and ‘Queen of Everything’, as I call her.” Kristan believes that the

Vanner House “secret recipe” is really the energy, love, and fun that she and Sophia bring to the company. In addition to Sophia, Kristan acknowledges that although she is the founder of Vanner House, the company can only grow and be successful because of the people that make up the company. She feels overwhelmingly blessed to have such a strong team who see the vision and want to be part of the company for the long haul.

Kristan is a giver by nature, and that has not changed with the creation of Vanner House. “I have always adored picking out the perfect gift for someone. Now, I get to curate the perfect items for our customers, and I take it very seriously. I also love having personal relationships with my vendors, knowing their story and the ‘why’ behind their brand. My joy is helping other small businesses by representing their brand and sharing their creations.” She also loves to give back to the community by offering private shopping experiences, and donating 10% of sales to the host’s nonprofit of choice. “Vanner House is all about giving back and helping nonprofits, because every little ‘bit’ helps!”

Vanner House will be offering their own brand of specialty items, gifts and apparel starting in 2024. “The entire process of dreaming up designs, collaborating with our design team and manufacturers, and rolling out our Vanner House brand is beyond a dream come true.

Our show schedule is packed, our team is amazing, I’m doing what I love with people I love... and I have horses. I’m happy. I’d call that success!” •

For more information please visit: www.VannerHouse.com. Instagram: @Vanner_House



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How Equines, Art and Orchestra Helped Her Find Her Voice



Ellen and her "heart" horse, "Baltimore Bud" - the inspiration for many of her paintings.

Artist Ellen Skidmore's work is focused on receiving the "whole package" of life — the good as well as the bad — and she's dedicated to embracing all of it.

by **Sarah E. Coleman**

Born in Baltimore, Maryland, in the early 1960s, artist Ellen Skidmore was blessed to have parents who nurtured creativity in their children, encouraging her to paint and sister Julie to take ballet lessons. The family lived close to the city, where they could easily visit art museums, watch the ballet or hear the symphony.

Ellen's interest in art was also nourished by her great-aunt, proprietor of a jewelry store near Ellen's home; she would pay the budding young artist a quarter for each bag she decorated with a small painting. Customer purchases were placed in the painted bags for a bit of extra beauty.

Ellen's art teachers, as well, encouraged her to use

her own distinct perspective of the world instead of asking her to make art that fit inside that proverbial box (and may have ticked all the lesson plan requirements). From a young age, Ellen sensed that her art was different, but it would be years before she appreciated it for what it truly was: real and honest and unapologetically unique.

This ability to be herself was critically important to shaping the trajectory of Ellen's life. Born with a stutter, Ellen often struggled to express herself with words. Her artwork, however, spoke volumes.

Self-Discovery

As a child, Ellen discovered another passion that didn't require words: horses.

She begged for riding lessons at an early age and started going to a summer camp on Maryland's Eastern Shore, where she learned how to ride. As soon as she could drive, she got a job at a local barn working off lessons. Eventually, she spent summers at the same camp and she began to oversee both the horses and the riding lessons.

When Ellen was 18, her family moved to her paternal grandfather's farm in Powell County, Kentucky, and Ellen's passion for horses intensified with the purchase of her first horse. She spent the summer after her senior year of high school galloping race horses at Keeneland Race Course in Lexington and exercising fox hunters.

Ellen briefly attended Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky, before transferring to the University of Kentucky, where she discovered yet another passion: music. Required to take music as a prerequisite to graduation, Ellen picked up her violin and began taking classes with Daniel Mason, Professor of Violin and concertmaster of the Lexington Philharmonic. Mason gave her tickets to the Lexington Philharmonic and Ellen attended every chance she got. At the same time, Ellen was immersed in her studio art classes and the exposure to such powerful, emotional music



Painting of Bud



Photo by ENSO Media Group

greatly influenced her early formative work.

From then on, music became a source of great inspiration to Ellen: She began painting to music, finding a language that

flowed from her brushes and allowed her to communicate with others. This combination of music and art has led Ellen to create incredible pieces that are unequivocally "her" – they're chock full of bright colors, movement and things that are going on in Ellen's life (think walking the dog, weeding the garden, reading or spending time with friends). Ellen's loves are often the focus of her paintings: It's not unusual to see a horse with piano keys in his tail or a girl raising a violin to a vast expanse of sky.

A Passion Pendulum

After graduation, Ellen circled back to the horses, riding polo ponies and foxhunters and working as a groom on the track. She began to take on horses that were retiring from racing and training them for second careers: She would show them a bit at the lower

levels and then sell them.

During this time, Ellen had a significant fall that resulted in a head injury that caused a loss of balance and double vision that lasted for months. The thought of being unable to paint again refocused Ellen's priorities back to painting and put horses, somewhat, on the back burner. She married and moved with her husband to Sedona, Arizona, where their daughter, Coco, was born.

Motherhood, like music, had a profound influence on her work. Out West, she found the huge expanses of land, the wide, open skies and the mysterious mountains incredibly inspiring. However, Ellen soon began to miss horses after a three-year hiatus and she began taking lessons at a local barn. She took it slowly, remembering her concussion, but her

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Painting of Bud

Ellen Skidmore

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passion for riding overcame her fears. Horses were a grounding force that she needed to navigate in the world.

Six years later, the family relocated to Bend, Oregon, where they purchased a small farm that allowed Ellen to buy a little POA for Coco to bring along and show. In central Oregon, Thoroughbreds were rare. Warmbloods were the main attraction, so she bought a finished Warmblood to compete in the hunter and jumper rings. Her dedication to painting continued and paid off as her work became successfully received by galleries, and their collectors, in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky and Washington.

In 2008, Kentucky called Ellen home and she moved back to the Bluegrass with Coco, two horses and a

pony in tow. Being a single mother, she hung up her show coat and got her horsey fix by pleasure riding her two then-older horses. She began to immerse herself in the equine scene in Central Kentucky and reveled in being back around her favorite breed: Thoroughbreds.

A Dedicated Equine Advocate

In 2015, Ellen volunteered to be a scribe at the New Vocations All-Thoroughbred Charity Horse Show that was held at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington. Watching a nice hunter round by a classy Thoroughbred (rather than a Warmblood) was such a beautiful thing, she thought. She became a staunch advocate for racehorses in second careers and became dedicated to the Thoroughbred Aftercare Alliance (TAA), a nonprofit umbrella organization that

“accredits, inspects and awards grants to approved aftercare organizations” that rehab, retrain, rehome and retire Thoroughbreds (as per TAA website).

Ellen is so dedicated to espousing the value of Thoroughbreds once their racing careers have ended that she donates a portion of the proceeds of items sold under her Throw Me a Carrot banner to the TAA.

Her exposure to aftercare reignited Ellen’s dream of owning her own horse – but this one would have

to be a Thoroughbred. However, her two horses she brought from Oregon were retired and she was turning 59. Ellen thought she had no business getting an off-track Thoroughbred and she couldn’t help but wonder what would happen if she had another bad fall. Despite her misgivings, she ignored the niggling doubts and followed her heart, vowing to be very careful with whatever horse she got next.

Once Ellen manifested the desire for a horse, everything happened in a hurry. Having been born and raised in Baltimore with such fond memories of her childhood, Ellen wanted a Maryland-bred Thoroughbred – if she could get one. While scrolling through equine ads online, she came across a horse at Pimlico Race Course who was ready to retire from racing. His name? Baltimore Bud.

When Ellen reached out to inquire about him, the contacts regretfully said he had already been sold. Ellen tried to put the massive (17+ hh!) dark bay gelding out of her mind, but a week later, he became available yet again.

Ellen asked TAA Operations Consultant and dear friend, Stacie Clark, to go peek at him since she knew Stacie was at Pimlico for TAA’s Canter for a Cause event. Stacie called Ellen at 6 a.m. and said two words: “He’s lovely.” And with that, Ellen knew her “heart horse” was coming home. Within just a year, Bud had inspired many of Ellen’s paintings. Retired and sound at 5 1/2 years

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old, Ellen says Bud “has seen a lot and is a sweet, steady Eddie. He fills my heart all the way up.”

On the Move in Midway

Ellen boards Bud in Midway, just a few miles from her charming home in one of the most picturesque, small towns in Kentucky. In the Fall of 2023, she relocated her gallery from her home to a sun-drenched, historic storefront in downtown Midway.

Ellen's shop should not be missed: It's a go-to spot

for everything from baby showers to housewarming gifts. Filled to the ceiling with bright, bold colors and with an eclectic mix of music playing in the background, it's easy to see what things make Ellen love this “whole package” of life: Each painting is her heart, on a canvas. Horses, music and friends included. ●

Based in Lexington, KY, Sarah Coleman is the Executive Director of the Kentucky Horse Council and has a soft spot for chestnuts with chrome.

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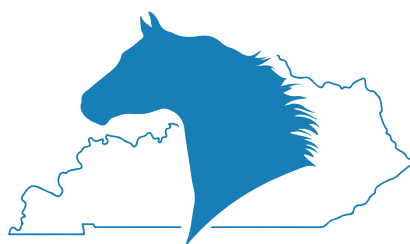
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by **Lisa Lopez Snyder**

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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.

"We collaborate with the other services on the more difficult cases — such as Internal Medicine, Imaging and Cardiology," Dr. Kelleher says. "For example, with Internal Medicine, we can consult to evaluate for gastric ulcers using gastroscopy or perform neurologic assessments," she says. "We can also consult with Theriogenology for reproductive-based performance issues and consult with Ophthalmology for vision-related performance issues."

"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."

The center also offers nuclear scintigraphy (bone scans). "It gives us the ability to localize singular or multiple sources of injury in more difficult musculoskeletal cases," she says.

In addition to these more



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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Georgetown, KY 40324
859.559.6220
PineKnollFarm.com

Rowdy Cowgirl Confidence Coaching

270.747.6939
RowdyCowgirl.us

Spirit of Leadership

9796 Cedar Road
Novelty, OH 44072
440.338.1752
Spirit-Of-Leadership.com

True North

Veteran Support

7575 State Route 521
Sunbury, OH 43074
740.272.0612
TrueNorthVeteranSupport.org

EQUINE ENTERTAINMENT

Equus Television

800.358.2179
EquusTelevision.com
Whispery Pines Percherons

Carriage Rides & Logging

Sam & Kellie Rettinger
Kingsville, OH
440.858.5285
440.413.3033
Facebook.com/
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FARM EQUIPMENT

Ag-Pro Company

2699 Morehead Road
Flemingsburg, KY 41041
606.845.7311
AgProCompanies.com

Cashmans

Horse Equipment
1646 US HWY 42 North
Delaware, OH 43015
740.363.6073
Cashmans.com

Reveal 4-N-1

Mt. Orab, OH 45154
937.444.2609
Reveal4-N-1.com

Willandale Golf Cart Sales

111 N. Wooster Avenue
Strasburg, OH 44680
330.663.3824
WillandaleGolfCartSales.com

FEED/HORSE CARE SUPPLIES

Caliber Feed & Supply

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Windsor, OH 44099
440.272.1900

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Delaware, OH 43015
740.363.6073
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Country Stores:

CenterraCoop.com

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440.285.3143

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Grafton Country Store

717 Erie Street
440.926.2281

Jefferson Country Store

161 East Jefferson Street
440.576.3010

Medina Country Store

6701 Wooster Pike (SR 3)
330.721.0852

Ravenna Country Store

467 Cleveland Road
330.296.3424

West Salem

Country Store

40 Equity Street
419.853.4027

Wooster Country Store

1009 Old Lincoln Way West
330.264.9925

Farmers Exchange:

FeedForLess.com

OHIO Locations:

Berea Farmers Exchange

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Berea, OH 44017
440.243.6505

Medina Warehouse

650 W. Smith Road
Medina, OH 44256
330.618.6854

Geauga Feed & Grain

11030 Kinsman Road
Newbury Township, OH
44065

440.564.5000

GeaugaFeed.com

SmartPak

800.461.8898
SmartPakEquine.com

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3121 Winklepleck Road
Sugarcreek, OH 44681
330.852.3538
SugarcreekShavings.com

Reiterman Feed & Supply

103 N. London Street
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740.869.3817 /
866.869.3817
ReitermanFeed.com

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330 E. Schultz Avenue
Dalton, OH 44618
800.417.6460
BuckeyeNutrition.com

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800.921.9121
FeedDac.com

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800.222.8635
859.873.3333
McCauleysFeeds.com

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440.543.7233
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Facebook.com/
NursemaresOfKentucky

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GoldHorseMedia.com

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MaryVedda.KWRealty.com

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AngelsHavenHorseRescue.org

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312.513.1259
CanterUSA.org/Kentucky

Copper Horse Crusade

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CopperHorseCrusade.com

Happy Trails Farm Animal Sanctuary

5623 New Milford Road
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330.296.5914
HappyTrailsFarm.org

Kentucky Equine Adoption Center

1713 Catnip Hill Road
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859.881.5849
KYEAC.org

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MiracleFarmRescue.org

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OH, KY, PA, NY Facilities
937.947.4020
NewVocations.org

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1841 Paynes Depot Road
Georgetown, KY 40324
502.863.1775
OldFriendsEquine.org

Retired Racehorse Project

2976 Solomon's Island Rd
Edgewater, MD 21037
410.798.5140
RetiredRacehorseProject.org

Thoroughbred

Aftercare Alliance

859.224.2756
ThoroughbredAftercare.org

Thoroughbred Charities of America

2365 Harrodsburg Road,
#A200
Lexington, KY 40504
TCA.org
859.276.4989

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Barnes Tack Room

Robert Barnes
808.557.1371
BarnesTackRoom.com

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859.846.9674
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Portersville, PA 16051
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WagnersPharmacy.com

Big Dee's Tack & Vet Supply

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330.626.5000
BigDWeb.com

Boot Barn

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Suite 110
Lexington, KY 40509
859.264.7388
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CentralKentuckyTack
andLeather.com

Chagrin Saddlery

8574 Washington Street
Chagrin Falls, OH 44023
440.708.0674
ChagrinSaddlery.com

Chagrin Saddlery

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Wilmington, OH 45177
937.382.0985
ChagrinSaddlery.com/
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440.526.2965
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8740 Montgomery Road
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Rods.com

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740.965.8111
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