NUZZLING UP WITH A GOOD BOOK
See what happens when kids read to horses.

A SOLUTION FOR HARD TIMES?
New law could provide much-needed revenue for horse racers.

34 YEARS OF GOOD TIMES
Saddle up for the Horse Expo at MSU.
**Betting on a new racing gambit**

**PAUL W. JACKSON**  
FARM NEWS MEDIA  

Farmers know all about the gamble, even if it's called a "calculated risk." It's at the core of what they do. They gamble with new seed varieties, new sire selection, new fertilizers and the weather. Imagine, then, knowing what farmers know about the gamble, that your farm business's economic livelihood depended on a more socially acceptable word for the same thing: gaming.

That nice little word for betting on a horse to win, show or place can't hide the stark reality that without people willing and able to gamble – legally – on a race, Michigan's horse racing industry is unlikely to recover from the devastation of Proposal 1 in 2004.

Largely considered today as the single punch that knocked out all Michigan's race tracks except for Northville Downs (harness racing) and Hazel Park (thoroughbreds), Proposal 1:

- Required voter approval of any new state lottery games utilizing "table games" or "player operated mechanical or electronic devices" introduced after Jan. 1, 2004.
- Provided that when voter approval is required, both statewide voter approval and voter approval in the city or township where gambling will take place must be obtained.
- Specifies that the voter approval requirement does not apply to Indian tribal gambling or gaming in up to three casinos located in the City of Detroit.

"Reading that language today, knowing what we know, it's easy to understand just how thorough a job Proposal 1 did in destroying horse racing in Michigan," said Ernie Birchmeier, livestock and dairy specialist with Michigan Farm Bureau. "The deck was definitely stacked against horse racing, but the law, passed by voters who were conned by special interest groups whose primary interest was to protect their own gambling monopoly, encouraged the legal gambling that has gained a lot of weight since 2004. The only gambling interest that was cut off from getting a piece of the pie was horse racing."

As part of the fallout from that ballot proposal, the office of racing commissioner was disbanded under Gov. Jennifer Granholm and racing oversight was put under the state gaming commission, where it currently rests.

The fallout continued with horse industry backlash. As part of the industry's tenacity in trying to keep equine alive in Michigan, Public Act 271 was signed into law just last year. It would, among other things, create a new office of racing commissioner and shift certain powers and duties to the department of agriculture and the director of the department of agriculture."

Cradled inside the bill was establishment of an advisory committee, which reports to the legislature.

"Our goal," said Dr. Don Ryker, an equine veterinarian and chairman of the advisory board, "is to uplift the whole industry and bring back racing, because there is potential here in racing."

While the commission and the law is finally bringing some optimism back to horse racing, the industry has a long way to go to restore what was here before. Many fine horse owners, breeders and racers have been economically forced out of state.

"I race in Indiana and am out of the politics of all this," said Aaron Bennett, a harness racer and horse breeder from Fremont. "Purses in Indiana are generally more than double what they are here. A top-stakes two- to three-year old in Indiana can earn $300,000 a year. In Michigan, that same colt might make $30,000."

The same problem afflicts thoroughbreds.

"In the last five years, we’ve taken a few hits," said Pat Dickinson, president of the Michigan Thoroughbred Owners and Breeders Association. "Indiana now has slots at racetracks, and so does Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. We have been hit by that and the downturn in the economy, and we need something to fight that. I’m a big advocate for Advance Deposit Wagering (ADW). Will that make a positive impact? I’m not sure. It’s so hard to fight dollars generated by casinos in other states."

"That’s not a battle than can be won. Proposal 1 of 2004 saw to that. But gambling isn’t at the heart of the issue, said Ryker. "Yet how many new scratch-off ticket games have you seen? All we want to do is level the playing field. We’ve lost the chance of having slot machines at tracks forever (because of Proposal 1 of 2004)."

Advance Deposit Wagering offers people who want to bet on a race the chance to do so without coming to the track. That’s an important distinction, Birchmeier said.

"We’ve seen the new technology of cell phones allowed to be used to make it easier for people to sit on their couches and gamble, either in state-sanctioned games of chance, in which the house can set the odds, or on out-of-state racing," he said. "Michigan’s horse racers have been denied that same opportunity."

Unfortunately, said Gary Tinkle, executive director of the Horsemens’ benevolent and protection association, Michigan residents are betting on out-of-state races via ADW.

"It’s going on to the tune of tens of millions of dollars," he said, "It’s illegal, and neither the state nor horsemen nor tracks are getting any benefit from it."

Advance Deposit Wagering is widely viewed and interpreted as not being an expansion of gaming, said Tom Barrett, president of the Michigan Harness Horsemen’s Association. Still, it’s up to the legislature, ultimately, to approve changes that restore the fighting chance to make a living from horse racing in Michigan.

"We need the gaming control board to try to match its expectations on how ADW would operate and to understand the realities of how tracks such as Hazel Park and Northville accept a wager," he said. "Bettors are still placing the same bets they did 20 years ago. It’s just that now, they can place that bet with new technology, if ADW is allowed. It’s our best bet. It doesn’t create new race fans, it just redirects them through technology."

**Renewed unity?**

While it’s still not clear if the new approach to placing a bet will be the savior Michigan’s racing industry has been looking for, it’s clear that there is more optimism and unity in the equine industry than there’s been since 2004. Perhaps, Birchmeier said, it’s because people who have power over the rules are finally beginning to understand just how big horse racing is to the state’s economy.

It reaches way beyond race day to the farmers who grow the feed to the car dealers and trailer dealers who sell products; to the gas stations, restaurants and grocery stores who sell to travelers, Birchmeier said.

And it is that overall economic impact that Ryker hopes to use to educate the legislature when the commission he chairs reports to the House and Senate.

"Our goal is to flood the legislature with information about the racing industry," he said. "For the first time in my life, the Standardbred and Thoroughbred people and the tracks are all saying the same thing. That unity is the best thing that has come out of our first meeting."

"That doesn't mean that there is a sudden agreement among all players in Michigan’s horse industry. But it does show the resolve that has kept the industry breathing even when a ballot initiative, economic hard times and government apathy left it for dead."

"We are a resilient bunch here," Barrett said. "We hope we’re approaching a situation in which the government starts to value the contributions of the racing industry. We predate casinos, and all we need now to compete for a portion of the money they bring in is to be focused and keep moving forward."

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- Implementation of Drug Testing for Pulling and other - 2016
- Passed Equine Liability Act, PA87 of 2015
- Secured grant funds from the United States Department of Agriculture to conduct a feasibility study for an international equine center (horse park) in Michigan
- Provides members newsletters, updates and legislative alerts
- Provides member benefits
- Hosts MEP meetings and other networking opportunities.
- Participation in many equine expos, industry meetings and events.
- Initiated the coordination of the Michigan Equine Conference
- Assisted with the publishing of the Equine News supplement in the Michigan Farm News since 2007
- Secured finances & Partnerships to fund the Equine Survey

MEP will be promoting the following equine projects and policies in 2017:

- Secure Funding for the Michigan International Equine Facility
- Equine Check-off Program for Education and Research
- Re-vitalize Michigan Racing Industry
- Sales Tax Exemption on Equine Purchases

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Stall doors open when kids read to horses

Some horses think it’s the most exciting thing they’ve ever seen. Others take naps when the kids get there. But when first graders from Williamston’s Discovery Elementary open their books under horse nuzzles at MSU, stall doors open to a whole new world.

“It’s enriching for everyone,” agree Julie Monette and Shannon Coykendal, educators at Discovery. “Horses have always been part of the experience for this program, and it’s fun. It’s a good program.”

Discovery participates in the national Horse Tales Literacy project, in which “children discover the joys of reading and the excitement of learning through the wonders of live horses and the Black Stallion books by Walter Farley, as well as other classic horse literature.”

The kids begin, say Monette and Coykendal, with the first book in the series, The Black Stallion. When they’re done with that, Coykendall organizes a school visit with a pony.

“When they’re introduced to a pony that’s a little more their size, it’s not as daunting for them when they get to MSU and see the larger horses,” Monette said. “We’re very happy that they get that opportunity.”

MSU equine educator Karen Waite said she gets almost as excited as the kids when they arrive each spring, as they have for the last nine years.

“It really is exciting,” she said. “Many of these kids have never seen horses or been on a farm. “They only spend about 10 to 15 minutes actually reading to the horses, then they go off to another of the five or six stations where they learn what horses eat, what a farrier is, see a horse trailer and other things. It all seems to motivate them. I’ve been told that kids who’ve done this have siblings who get very excited when it comes to be their turn.”

Even without the carrot of visiting real horses, students obviously enjoy horse-themed books, Monette said.

“They don’t necessarily make the connection that if they learn to read the first book, they’ll get to see horses,” she said. “Some students really enjoy the books, and would engage with them without the visit. But some need a little bit of an exciting experience to motivate them to read the second book. All students in the first grade are able to participate though, no matter their reading level. Reading is enriching for everyone.”

So is the connection with animal agriculture, although it can come from other avenues besides the MSU equine horse alley.

“It’s an interesting program that can be a complement to our Accurate Agriculture books,” said Tonia Ritter, manager of Michigan Farm Bureau’s Promotion and Education department. “The American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture maintains a list of books that portray agriculture accurately, for the kids who are most interested in horses, there’s one entitled A Field full of Horses; Read and Wonder. That, and a wide variety of books.
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Reading

CONTINUED from page 4

for kids in kindergarten through sixth grade are matched with Agriculture in the Classroom lesson plans. In Michigan, the lessons are matched to Michigan Educational Standards. You will find lessons in all major subject areas which use agriculture as a vehicle for teaching key concepts.

Multiple goals of those resources, of course, includes not only getting kids real information about agriculture, but to stimulate learning even outside the classroom, something in line with the Horse Tales project, which includes:

• working to develop community programs in afterschool and summer camp programs; and has
• established partnerships with the YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and other youth organizations to introduce turnkey embedded literacy programs.

“Our goals are to spark the imagination of first-grade students so they will want to learn to read, and to motivate fourth and fifth graders so they will experience the joy of reading,” said the promotion for the project. “The program is based on classic horse books and the natural connection between children and horses.”

There should also be a connection between children and reading, and if books about horses and other farm topics help, it should continue, Ritter said.

“The Horse Tales project sounds like a great place to get the kids started,” she said. “Any connection between reading and real agriculture is something we would encourage. It would be nice if more schools could make the connection that Discovery in Williamston has made.”

There is nothing holding other schools back, Waite said. Funding, however, can be a challenge. At Williamston, the program operates on funding from retired educator Joan Wright, who has a connection with the Black Stallion and Little Pony books. And because of her generosity and the program’s benevolence, all kids in the program go home with two free books.

That, of course, will have beneficial effects long beyond the day the kids got to sit in a saddle (safely attached to a bale of hay at MSU’s horse facility) and read to horses. And so far, Coykendal said, about 900 kids have participated.

“We’re just happy to be able to offer the books and the opportunities to our students,” she said. “Because of Joan Wright’s generosity, there is no cost to our school or MSU besides busing them to the horse farm for a morning.”

And as for a benefit to the horses? Waite said one of the stations the kids visit allows them to groom a live horse.

“No one gets more excited about horses than kids, and some horses are excited, too. | Discover Elementary

“Some horses think it’s the best thing ever,” she said. “I don’t pretend to know what they really think, but some of them really pretend to listen.”

There’s another benefit from the program. As horses pretend to listen, first-graders cannot pretend to read. It’s all as real as the horses.
WHAT IS HORSE TALES LITERACY?

The Black Stallion Literacy Foundation (BSLF) began serving children in 2000. Since then, more than 400,000 children across the United States have participated in our reading programs.

Horse Tales Literacy is presently composed of both school-based and community programs, in which activities are developed around Walter Farley’s and other classic horse literature. School-based programs consist of curriculum-based literacy programs for 1st and 4th-5th grades. Community programs are similarly curriculum-based literacy programs, but are turnkey embedded programs for after-school and summer camp programs. All of the HTLP literacy programs are age-appropriate and aligned with both state and national standards in reading and other curriculum areas.

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

✓ Inspired 400,000 first and fourth-fifth grade children to read
✓ Grown from fewer than 5,000 students in 2000, to reaching over 66,720 students in ten states across the nation
✓ Received recognition as a “Daily Point of Light” by President George W. Bush and has been featured on the ABC Nightly News as the “best” motivational reading program for school-aged children.
✓ Been recognized by The Heart of Florida United Way as a major influence on Florida’s children and literacy
✓ Maintained a loyal volunteer base consisting of 200 people across the country
✓ Been recognized by Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, who proclaimed February as Black Stallion Literacy Month
✓ Established partnerships with many local and national companies including Wal-Mart, Ariat and Millcreek Manufacturing
✓ Established partnerships with equine associations and therapeutic riding centers including Vinceremos, Reno Rodeo Association, and Homestead Rodeo Association to help keep costs down.

DID YOU KNOW...

Pari-mutuel wagering on horse racing was approved in Michigan in 1933 as the state’s FIRST FORM OF GAMBLING.

Michigan’s race horse industry has traditionally produced some of the GREATEST RACE HORSES IN THE COUNTRY.

The economic impact of a single race horse can be as much as $90,000 PER YEAR.

Dollars wagered on horse racing employ nearly EIGHT TIMES AS MANY PEOPLE as the same dollars wagered at casinos.

FACTS FROM MHHA

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Saddle up for the 34th Horse Expo

The 34th Michigan Horse Expo will take place March 10-12 at the Michigan State University Pavilion. Promising hundreds of booths filled with quality vendors along with a full slate of clinicians, speakers and exhibitors from Michigan and across the country, the expo will never lack for something interesting for everyone interested in the equine industry.

“We’re excited to be one of the oldest horse expos in the country,” said Marilyn Graff, Expo administrator. “We have a very big draw, annually seeing between 29,000 and 30,000 people for the three days. People keep coming back, and we do have a surprising number of new people every year. For some reason, we still get people who, even though they’re from Michigan, have never heard of expo. That’s always interesting to me. We do so much advertising, and have been in existence for so long, sometimes we expect that people know about it.”

People from around the country are familiar with it, however. Graff said while the majority of attendees are from Michigan, people travel from all around the Midwest for the show.

“This event is always a great time for people in the industry to get together and celebrate the horse,” said Ernie Birchmeier, Michigan Farm Bureau’s livestock and dairy specialist. “It always amazes me the number of people who come and the miles they travel for this event. It’s because equine people are great people, and they can enjoy a good time. Saddle up and head on over.”

Events in the main arena include the Michigan High School Rodeo Association rodeo, the National Reining Horse Association open reining competition, visits from the Heritage Hills Farm Belgian Hitch, Combined Mounted Police, Custer’s Cowboys mounted shooting and the Mid-America Cowgirls.

Speakers include Chris Cox, Bill Thom- as, Heidi McLaughlin, Robert Eversole, Yvette Rollins, Karin Schmidt, David Silver and Les (Chip) Frick.

The headliner for the speakers is Chris Cox.

“As one of this country’s leading horsemen and clinicians, Chris Cox has spent a lifetime learning from the greatest teachers of all, the horse,” says the promotion for his presentations. “Raised on a cattle ranch in the wilds of Australia, Chris has had opportunities that most horsemen of this day and age will never experience. With only horses for transportation, and a cattle ranch as his life, Chris learned at an early age how to appreciate the abilities and tradition of the great men and horses around him.

“With his practical, straightforward approach, Chris teaches horse people how to get results. Influenced in his early years by both the English and Western traditions, he has implemented a proven style and technique that can be applied universally across all disciplines.

“Chris has been conducting clinics and demonstrations for over 28 years. While teaching the principles and methods behind his authentic horsemanship, Chris has also become a successful trainer/breeder and major competitor in the cutting horse world and also competes in Reined Cow Horse events and team roping when his schedule allows.

As a four-time undefeated Road to the Horse World Champion, he continues to travel the world spreading his message. In 2015, Chris was inducted into the Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame.

There also is a full slate of youth activities and events at the expo, which is the emphasis this year, Graff said.

“This year’s theme is ‘our youth, our future,’ she said.

Graff said she’s especially pleased this year to have both Michigan units of the Multi-Jurisdictional Mounted Police units which were at the Presidential inauguration. The Mid-American Cowgirls Drill Team from Southwest Michigan, she said.

For a full slate of events and activities, visit http://michiganhorseexpo.org.
Horse hoof health & nutrition: Balance is key

The need for balance seems to arise in every aspect of horse riding and ownership. Your trainer will push for a balanced ride. Your farrier will trim and shoe for a balanced hoof. And, perhaps most importantly, you aim to provide your horse the right balance of forage and feed. But how much do you know about the balance between nutrition and your horse’s hoof health?

“Hoof quality is determined by several factors including genetics, environment, and nutrition,” said Karen Davison, Ph.D., equine nutritionist at Purina Animal Nutrition. “Some horses inherit weak hooves, and that can’t be changed. But proper care and nutrition can help a horse develop and maintain the best hooves genetically possible.”

The reverse is true too: improper care and inadequate or unbalanced nutrition can lead to hoof problems in a horse with the genes for great hooves.

Elements of nutrition

Several nutrients can influence hoof growth and quality. A well-balanced diet will contain the nutritional elements needed for optimal hoof growth, but each horse is unique and different life stages, performance levels and lifestyles can affect hoof quality. Here are some key nutrients and their impacts on hoof health:

• Protein: The hoof structure is primarily made of keratin, a protein. Proteins are made of amino acids and are necessary for healthy hooves and growth. Methionine, an essential amino acid, is thought to be important for hoof quality. However, balance is key; if fed in excess, methionine is also believed to cause a depletion of iron, copper and zinc. This can lead to crumbling horn and white line disease.

• Fat: A diet with adequate levels of fat can be beneficial to the hoof. Fats create a permeability barrier helping to prevent bacteria and fungi from entering the hoof horn.

• Zinc: Zinc is necessary for normal keratinization of the hoof. A study by Harrington, Walsh and White in 1973 showed horses with insufficient hoof horn strength had less zinc in the hoof horn than horses with healthy, undamaged horns.

• Calcium and phosphorous: Calcium is essential for proper cell attachment in the hoof horn and wall. The right ratio of calcium and phosphorous is required, though, because excess phosphorous can block the absorption of calcium, leading to weak and abnormal bones.

• Selenium & Vitamin E: Selenium and vitamin E are important antioxidants protecting cell membranes. However, the balance of intake is crucial because selenium toxicity can cause hair loss, cornitis and coronary band bleeding, as well as sloughing of the hoof and laminitis. Note: Selenium levels in forage and soil vary by region. Talk to your vet or nutritionist about the proper amount of selenium for your horse.

“For the majority of horses, a diet with naturally occurring biotin, a suitable amino acid and fatty acid balance, as well as proper vitamin and mineral fortification will support excellent hoof growth rates and quality,” Davison said.

Certified Journeyman Farrier Donnie Perkinson with the American Farriers Association agrees. “The foot reflects everything about the horse, and nutrition is a paramount aspect of the overall health of the horse.”

Keep learning

Every horse is different, and their nutritional and hoof requirements are significantly varied. Keep an open dialogue with your farrier, vet and nutritionist as well as seek opportunities to learn more about how feed affects your horse’s health and wellbeing.

Nutrition affects your horse’s hooves, but balance is essential for hoof health. | Purina

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Authorized Wick Builder
Get ready for spring riding season

KATIE YOUNG
PURINA HORSE DIVISION

When the weather begins warming up, horse owners start to spend more time with their horses, and are looking forward to even more enjoyable riding weather.

There are some nutritional concerns, however, during spring, and some management issues we should address to ensure the health and performance of our horses.

First, as we start working our horses more, we must increase the plane of nutrition to ensure that the horse’s increased requirements are met. Energy is possibly the most important nutrient to consider in the spring grazing caution.

As a horse works harder, its energy (calorie) requirement increases, and we must supply those additional calories in a form that will not compromise the horse’s digestive health. We can add more calories by increasing the amount of feed offered daily to the horse. However, in general, horses should not be fed meals larger than 0.5 pounds per 100 pounds of body weight, especially when feeding oats or a feed with high grain content.

Grains such as oats and corn are high in starch and sugars, and when fed in larger meals may increase the risk of digestive disturbances such as colic and/or laminitis. Alternate energy sources include fat and fermentable fibers.

Performance feeds contain all the essential amino acids, vitamins and minerals to support the increased demands of the performance horse. Keep in mind that all feeding changes must be made gradually, so it is important to slowly increase the amount of feed as the horse’s work load increases.

Next, we need to keep in mind that the forage portion of the horse’s diet may be changing, and we must be aware that these changes may be problematic for some horses.

Spring grazing caution

For many horses, the advent of spring means that the source of forage changes from hay to fresh grass. Most horse owners are well aware that an abrupt change in feed puts a horse at risk for laminitis.

However, they don’t always realize that a change from eating dry hay to grazing lush pasture is a very big change in the diet for the horse’s digestive system. This change from hay to pasture should be made gradually to minimize the risk of laminitis as horses are exposed to fresh pastures.

Why can fresh grass cause laminitis in horses? First, there is a big difference in the quality of fresh forage horses will graze in a green pasture compared with any forage harvested for hay.

Simply changing the diet abruptly can create problems for the horse’s digestive system.

In addition, the green grass horses graze is often higher in sugars than the hay. During the process of photosynthesis, plants manufacture sugars which the plant used to fuel growth of the plant or store as starch or fructans.

The storage form of the sugars depends on the plant species (cool season grasses tend to store sugars as fructans, while warm season grasses tend to store sugars as starch). These sugars can accumulate in the spring when there are sunny days and chilly nights because the plant produces the sugar during the sunny days but doesn’t grow in the colder temperatures at night. So, the sugars don’t get burned to fuel growth, they just begin to accumulate. This can cause problems for horses, especially when the sugars are stored as fructans, because fructans are mostly digested in the hindgut through microbial fermentation. Excessive fermentation of fructans in a horse’s hindgut may be a possible trigger for colic and/or laminitis, similar to a grain overload reaching the hindgut. The fermentation of fiber carbohydrates in the hindgut is normal, and does not increase the risk of digestive disorders in the horse.

Other environmental conditions such as drought, stress, duration and intensity of sunlight, salinity (salt content) of soil, and overall health of the plant can contribute to excess storage of sugars and/or fructans. How then do we manage pasture turnout and grazing to minimize the risk of laminitis? Horses that are kept on pasture year-round usually adjust to the new grass as it grows. Nature does a fairly good job of making the pasture changes gradually.

Problems are most likely to occur when horses have been confined and fed a hay and grain diet during the winter, and are then abruptly turned out on the lush green pasture in the spring. Further, horses that have been kept up through the winter may overeat when turned out because of the high palatability of lush green foliage. This sudden change in the diet, especially when it includes a rapid influx of unfamiliar fructans into the hindgut, may trigger digestive upset.

There are several ways to prevent or minimize problems when introducing horses to spring pastures. Feeding hay immediately before turn-out may help keep horses from overeating, since they are less likely to overeat on an already full stomach.

Restricting grazing time will also help minimize risks, and turning out in the early morning may help minimize the amount of sugars in the pasture at that time.

A suggested schedule is thirty minutes of grazing once or twice a day on the first day of grazing; then increase grazing time by 5-10 minutes per day until the horses are grazing 4-6 hours per day total. At this point, they have adapted to the green grass.

One final consideration when getting back into the saddle is the condition of the horse. On that first warm sunny day, it is very tempting to head out to the barn for a nice, long trail ride to enjoy the great weather. However, if you have not been riding your horse regularly through the winter, your horse is not conditioned for that type of physical activity (and possibly neither are you).

To prevent muscle soreness, and possibly “tying-up”, horses should be gradually reintroduced to work. Start with slow, easy work and short workouts, and gradually increase the intensity and duration of the workouts until your horse is adequately conditioned. This will help decrease the risk of problems and injuries in your horse.

It may take up to 90 days to get a horse properly conditioned for strenuous physical workouts. Once your horse’s nutritional and management considerations are addressed, and your horse is adequately conditioned for the desired workload, you are ready to head out and enjoy the warmer weather and sunshine.

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Day of the Horse: A call for unity

PAUL W. JACKSON
FARM NEWS MEDIA

For all the hard times Michigan’s horse industry has fallen upon, there was plenty of room for optimism late last year when the Michigan Horse Council held its first state “Day of the Horse” in Lansing.

Meant to be a complement to the National Day of the Horse, the event saw low attendance but high enthusiasm.

“We started this process in the spring because of the National Day of the Horse on Dec. 13,” said Colonel Don Packer, president of the Michigan Horse Council.

In 2016, the Michigan Horse Council sent a request to Governor Snyder requesting that he proclaim Dec. 13 as the Michigan Day of the horse. Governor Snyder signed the proclamation.

With that day now esteemed annually, it’s time for the state’s equine industry to finally pull in the same direction, Packer said.

“The Horse Council went through some rough times last year, and now we’re trying to focus on reuniting the horse industry in Michigan,” he said at the day’s celebration. “We’re trying to be sure that the council focuses on the industry and on horses and the future of equine in Michigan. We’ve been outgoing and pleasant to everyone we can think of, whether its draft horses, thoroughbreds, mini-horses, trail riders and all the others. But we have no agenda. We’re looking at the big picture and how to move forward.”

While moving forward sometimes means different things to different horse enthusiasts, there are some things in the works that may end up lending unity to Michigan’s sometimes fractured equine industry.

“The council has approved a $17,000 price to participate in a national impact study of the horse industry and what our share of that is,” Packer said.

The day was also meant to celebrate Michigan’s system of 25 equine trails, said Paul Youk, Michigan DNR state trail coordinator.

“By celebrating the Day of the Horse, it brings a recognition to the industry,” Youk said. “The benefits are key, since there are only so many public dollars to go around for infrastructure, land, utilities and trail maintenance. But the economic elements of equine are just one thing that needs to be recognized. Besides that, people who bring in trailers, spend money on a weekend, buy hay and equipment, all have a major impact. We need to focus on the future and focus on the positive.”

The day also featured the launch of a public service announcement on horse safety.
State boasts nearly 200 miles of equestrian trails

DNR
There are nearly 200 miles of trails open to equestrian riders within Michigan state parks, recreation areas and state forests and eight equestrian campgrounds.

State parks and recreation areas with equestrian trails and amenities:
- Bass River Recreation Area – 6 miles of trails are shared with mountain bikes and hikers
- Brighton Recreation Area – 18 miles of trails, riding rentals, a stable, equestrian camp and a staging area
- Fort Custer Recreation Area – 12 miles of trails are shared with hikers
- Highland Recreation Area – 12 miles of trails, riding rentals, a stable and equestrian camping
- Ionia State Recreation Area – 15 miles of trails and equestrian camping
- Lakelands Trail State Park – 13-mile linear trail shared with other users (equestrian riders use south side of the trail)
- Maybury State Park – 11 miles of bridle trails, riding rentals and a stable
- Ortonville Recreation Area – 8.5 miles of trails and equestrian camping
- Pinckney Recreation Area – 8 miles of trails, a staging area and a stable
- Pontiac Lake State Recreation Area – 17 miles of trails, equestrian camping, riding rentals and a stable
- Proud Lake Recreation Area – 9 miles of equestrian/mountain bike trail
- Sleepy Hollow State Park – 10.2 miles of trails
- Waterloo Recreation Area – 15 miles of trails, riding rentals and equestrian camping
- Yankee Springs Recreation Area – trails and equestrian camping

Equestrian-friendly campgrounds:
- 4 Mile Trail Camp
- Big Oaks State Forest Campground
- Black Lake Trail Camp
- Brighton-Equestrian
- Elk Hill Equestrian State Forest Campground and Trail Camp
- Garey Lake Trail Camp
- Goose Creek Trail Camp
- Highland-Rustic and Equestrian
- Hopkins Creek Equestrian State Forest Campground and Trail Camp
- Ionia Equestrian-Rustic
- Ortonville-Equestrian
- Pontiac-Equestrian
- Rapid River Trail Camp
- Scheck’s Place Trail Camp
- Stoney Creek Trail Camp
- Walsh Road Equestrian State Forest Campground and Trail Camp
- Waterloo-Equestrian

Riding stables with rentals
Riding stables that offer rentals are available at four southeastern Michigan state parks or recreation areas. These facilities are privately operated so prices, hours and regulations will vary by location. The stables include:
- Horse N Around Riding Stable at Waterloo
- Brighton Recreation Area Riding Stables
- Maybury Riding Stable

Volunteer efforts
Many dedicated volunteers help maintain equestrian trails, plan special events and organize clean-up efforts. Michigan state parks are self-supporting and rely on user fees and dedicated volunteers to help protect and preserve these scenic areas. Consider joining the efforts of these important partners:
- Brighton Trail Riders Association
- Fort Custer Horse Friends Association
- Highland Trail Riders Association
- Maybury Trail Riders Association
- Ortonville Recreation Equestrian Association

EQUINE SUPPLEMENT

What is the Michigan Horse Council and what does it do?
- Provides individuals and organizations with a central authority that will support, encourage, supplement, and coordinate the efforts of those presently engaged in the constructive conservation, development, and promotion of the horse industry and horse community in the state of Michigan.
- Educates and informs individuals and organizations through all available media, educational programs and cooperation.
- Advances the conservation and promotion of the horse industry and community.
- Michigan Horse Council is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization and an affiliate of the American Horse Council

To support the Michigan Horse Council’s goals, the MHC produces the Michigan Horse Expo annually. Each year the event is held during March at the MSU Pavilion, East Lansing, MI

34th Annual Michigan Horse Council’s
Michigan Horse Expo
March 10, 11 and 12, 2017
MSU Pavilion, East Lansing, MI

Featuring Chris Cox, Heidi McLaughlin, Robert Eversole, NRHA approved Reining Saturday evening, Mi High School Rodeo Friday evening, Ranch Rodeo Sunday afternoon, many other Clinicians and Demos, Stallion, Breed & Farm Area, Interactive Youth Area, Trails Area, Michigan’s largest Equine Trade Show!

Not only is the Michigan Horse Expo the major source of funding for the Michigan Horse Council, it is Michigan’s Premier Equine Event and the largest equine related trade show in the state.
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(* Inquire about three week and four week session combinations)

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When to wean a foal

If the weaning horse is one you have raised since birth, you have a lot of control over how well-prepared your baby is for weaning time. Foals will start to show interest in feeds very early on. Steady, consistent growth through weaning and to maturity can influence lifelong soundness. Periodically weigh your foal on a scale or properly use a weight tape to get an approximate weight, as well as a height stick to measure wither and hip height. As a general rule, foals should reach approximately 50 percent of their mature weight and 80 percent of their mature height by six months old. Plotting your weaning horse’s height and weight over time should show a smooth, steady growth curve with no obvious peaks or valleys.

Monitor and make adjustments

Prior to weaning, the foal is growing at a rapid rate of about 2-2.5 pounds per day. This growth gradually slows after the foal becomes a weaning horse — to about one pound per day as they approach 12 months of age.

The ability of the weaning horse’s digestive system to digest forages also increases post-weaning, as does their daily forage intake. Therefore, the proportion of the diet as feed may not continue to increase, and may actually decrease, if forage quality is excellent.

Be sure to always feed at least the minimum recommended amount of the foal feed you choose in order to provide adequate amino acids, vitamins and minerals. Routine evaluation of body fat cover, especially the amount of fat covering the rib area, will help determine when adjustments in feeding rates should be considered.

Weaning horses are growing to their genetic potential when they are being fed a well-balanced diet in amounts to maintain slight cover so ribs aren’t seen but are easily felt.

Orphan foal feeding suggestions

KAREN E. DAVISON
PURINA HORSE DIVISION

A mare’s death is a tragedy that is complicated if her foal isn’t quickly placed on an effective feeding and care program. However, with proper nutrition and veterinary support, orphaned foals can be managed and successfully developed into healthy adults. To help orphans through the tough early stages of life, an emergency feeding program was developed at the Purina Animal Nutrition Center.

Starting at birth, here are the steps in an orphan foal feeding program:

• Day 1: The first and most important step is getting colostrum into newborn foals within the first 2 hours of life. This “first milk” gives foals the antibodies they need to temporarily build up their immune systems to fight disease; however, after 18 to 24 hours, they can no longer absorb these antibodies. Check with your veterinarian right away to see if foals should receive medication of any kind and if they have achieved proper immunoglobulin levels.

• Days 2 to 7: After foals have consumed adequate colostrum, the next step is to encourage them to accept milk replacer, and then gradually increase daily intake. Mix Land O’Lakes Mare’s Match® Foal Milk Replacer according to directions. It is very important to mix exactly as instructed. If it is too diluted, it will not deliver the proper level of nutrients, and if it is too concentrated, it could lead to digestive upset and scouring. The dry matter delivered per unit of volume of the Mare’s Match® solution is designed to mimic mare’s milk. Start foals at 4 to 8 pints per day, and progressively increase intake up to 4 to 8 quarts a day. Feed four to six times daily with bottle feedings, or teach them to drink from a bucket.

• Days 7 to 28: Continue feeding milk replacer in four to six feedings daily. Foals this age will nibble dry feed, so provide horse feed in small meals throughout the day. They should be eating a minimum of 1 pound of dry feed per month of age per day, and nibbling small amounts of grass or hay in addition to milk replacer.

• Days 28 to 42: When foals reach 1 month of age, gradually reduce the intake of milk replacer and feeding frequency while increasing the amount of dry feed. Offer dry feed in several small meals throughout the day.

• Days 42 to 90: During this period, foals can gradually be weaned off milk replacer and fed horse feed according to directions. Foals well-adapted to dry feed at 1 pound per month of age per day can be successfully weaned off liquid milk replacer at 3 months of age. Ideally, foals at this age should be fed a minimum of 3 meals per day. If available hay or pasture quality is poor, at 90 days of age, you may transition to Purina® Equine Junior® horse feed, which provides both grain and excellent-quality fiber in a complete feed. If hay or pasture quality is good, then continue increasing the amount of hay up to 1 to 1.5 pounds per 100 pounds of body weight.

Seek out a surrogate mare

Another option may be to put the orphaned foal with a nurse mare. If there is a gentle mare nursing a foal relatively close to the age of the orphan, she may be willing to raise the orphan foal. Introducing the orphan to the new mare requires careful attention, because even gentle mares may not accept another foal, and some may object rather strongly.

Tying the mare next to her foal and hay while both foals have an opportunity to nurse may help get the mare accustomed to the extra foal. Again, caution must be taken to make sure the orphan foal doesn’t get hurt during this introductory period. But if successful, this can be a very good option for the foal and a much easier option for the horse owner.

A well-fed lactating mare can support two nursing foals, as long as the foals are offered horse feed at 1 pound per month of age per foal on a daily basis. The feed will help nutritionally support good, steady growth and also get them accustomed to eating dry feed so that they may be weaned at 3 to 4 months of age to relieve the demand of lactation on the mare.

Be watchful

Throughout the first three months, keep a sharp eye out for health problems in orphan foals and follow your veterinarian’s recommendation for a health and immunization program. Keep in mind this program was developed under the assumption that mares are lost very early. Foals can be switched to this program at any time, but the switch will require considerably more effort, and foals may be more stressed the longer they are with their dams.

An orphan foal feeding program cannot exactly mimic the feeding behavior and nutrition of a suckling foal nursing its mom, and some orphans may go through awkward growing periods. But a well-implemented feeding program can minimize any long-term growth problems. Many orphaned foals have been raised successfully on this feeding program, growing up to have excellent competitive careers.

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