

THE FRONT PAGE

News & Views You Can Use

Columbia Horse Center Herpes Update

At Columbia Horse Center in Howard County, riders, horse owners, volunteers and employees are still holding their collective breaths, hoping the dark shadow that equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) has cast on the center will soon pass them by.

Since late March, when the crisis began, a total of six horses—all owned by the center—have succumbed to the disease. The latest death occurred on May 23.

However, all is not lost at Columbia, and center officials are determined to return to some sense of normalcy. The horses have recently begun a modified turnout schedule and owners of horses in the unaffected barn are permitted to ride their horses in fields where they are turned out. All of this activity is taking place under strict safety guidelines to prevent the spread of the virus, with the now ominous presence of isolation gowns, rubber gloves and disinfectant.

Even with the increased activity at the center, the outbreak will not be considered over until all the horses remain symptom-free for several weeks. Barring any new developments, state veterinary officials expect to lift the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) "hold order" (which prohibits horses from moving on or off of the farm) on June 10. "We are hopeful that the virus has run its course and that the incident will be over soon," said acting State Veterinarian James I. Fearer in a May 20 press release.

Meanwhile, The Equiery is

happy to report that Radar, the subject of last month's update, is now on the road to recovery.

The center also hosted a Preakness Day party for all of its patrons. The day was topped off by a planting of a "Memory Tree" in honor of the horses that died as a result of the disease.

The racing community is also feeling the effects of the equine herpes virus. Kentucky's Churchill Downs recently experienced an outbreak that resulted in the deaths of two horses and the quarantine of three barns.

—Starr Crusenberry

The Search for the Maryland Horse Park

No, it is not a new reality show a la "Star Search," but it is potentially a reality for Maryland's equestrian community.

The Maryland Stadium Authority has been tasked by the governor's office to work with the Maryland Horse Industry Board on a feasibility study for a park that will be designed for use not only by Marylanders, but that will also serve as an attractive destination for out-of-state tourists.

A "Request For Nomination of Real Property (RFNRP)" for the proposed horse park has been issued to counties and municipalities throughout the state, but anyone can nominate a site.

The MSA is searching for not less than 500 contiguous acres but preferably 800-1200 acres (with easy access to a major highway) in order to accommodate all of Maryland's equestrian disciplines (including steeplechasing, eventing,

fox chasing, endurance riding, dressage, show jumping and similar show ring-oriented sports, polo, Western/rodeo, carriage driving, jousting, police horse training, trail riding and pony rides). The scope includes at least one enclosed 5000-seat arena; an outdoor amphitheater for equestrian competitions, festivals, fairs, trade shows and concerts; 6-12 outdoor show rings and 800-1200 stalls. The park will be intended to appeal to the large horse show market.

Also intended are concession areas, campgrounds, a visitors' center and business offices for veterinarian, farrier, breeder and equestrian organizations, a museum, and an equine retirement center. The proposed horse park also will be used for structured educational programs and conferences.

The site should be within 15-30 minutes of local amenities (restaurants and lodging) and provide an adequate amount of parking for recreational vehicles, horse trailers, and for the personal vehicles of the event patrons. Training and other private recreational facilities could be incorporated to expand the appeal of the horse park.

The feasibility studies will determine the best location for a horse park, a preliminary plan, initial schedule, budget and the economic benefits to Maryland resulting from the creation and operation of this facility.

If you would like to nominate a site, please contact Alison L. Asti, executive director of the Maryland Stadium Authority (and a horse person) at 410-333-1560.

The Ever-So-Timely Formation of a Maryland Equine Health Advisory Committee

The following is condensed from a memo written to the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture by Michael D Erskine, D.V.M., chairman of the Task Force for the Creation of the Equine Health Advisory Committee, vice president of the Maryland Horse Council, former president of the Maryland Association of Equine Practitioners, and a member of Damascus Equine Practitioners:

The equestrian community received a wonderful opportunity from the Maryland Department of Agriculture to be an active participant in the creation of a standing Maryland Equine Health Advisory Committee. Both the task force and the resulting committee are outstanding examples of the positive results of a partnership between private industry and interests and public officials and interests, and we hope that this will serve as a model for future such partnerships.

The task force has created a solid blueprint for the creation of an effective MHIB Equine Health Advisory Committee. The purpose of the Equine Health Advisory Committee is to represent the concerns of the equestrian community as they relate to state oversight and regulation of equine health issues. Although the EHAC will report directly to the Maryland Horse Industry Board, it will also serve as an important advisor to the office of the state veterinarian and the Secretary of Agriculture on the issues of concern in the equine industry.

It is our hope that the eventually appointed members of the

committee will take their responsibilities very seriously and will be dedicated not only to effective crises management but will also be dedicated to the equally important, albeit more mundane business of routine regulatory issues that are essential for effective health management and industry commerce.

We urge MHIB to appoint committee members with vision and creativity -- with the vision to look beyond the immediate issues of today to foresee how an issue not a problem today could become a problem in the future, and the creativity to offer practical, implementable solutions that can help improve the future of equine health management in Maryland.

In order to foster a committee that is forward thinking, the task force has taken pains to construct a blueprint that, if followed, will help to ensure that productive dialogue.

This task force and subsequent Equine Health Advisory Committee was born out of an equine health crisis in Maryland. Although it is listed as part of the responsibilities of EHAC, it is vital that the committee immediately perform a thorough assessment of the current reportable diseases, and advise on how this list should be updated.

Although not specifically mentioned in the blueprint because of its precise nature, the task force also endeavors the EHAC to analyze and make recommendations on updating Maryland's Coggins test management system, including the possible implementation of electronic filing as well as exploring ways to give the Coggins test oversight system more credibility in the eyes of the general equestrian public.

Other topics too specific for the blueprint were the establishment of a fund to cope with catastrophic equine health events and a study of potential health issues associated with the wild pony population on Assateague Island.

In addition to Mike Erskine, The Task Force for the Creation of the Maryland Horse Industry Board's Health Advisory Committee included J.

Robert Burk (Maryland Horse Industry Board executive director); Willard Hawkins, D.V.M. (Animal Health Section, Maryland Department of Agriculture); William P. Higgins, D.V.M., Ph.D. (Animal Health Section, Maryland Department of Agriculture); Shari Kennedy, D.V.M. (Southern Maryland Equine Veterinary Service Inc., Maryland Horse Council); Crystal Brumme Kimball (The Equiery, Maryland Horse Council); John W. Lee Jr., D.V.M. (Unionville Equine Associates P.C., Maryland Horse Industry Board, Cecil County Equine Industry Task Force); Amy Polkes, D.V.M., D.A.C.V.I.M. (Damascus Equine Associates); and Eleanor M. Trueman (Trueman Communications Group Inc., Maryland Horse Council).

The purpose of the Maryland Equine Health Advisory Committee is to advise the Maryland Horse Industry Board and the Department of Agriculture on matters of equine health and disease in the state. The task force created a structure for the committee that balanced the need for representation of the varied and vast equine interests in the state with a workable size group that can be effective. Making up the final committee will be representation from each of the following groups or interests: the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association, the Maryland Association of Equine Practitioners, the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine Avrum Gudelsky Veterinary Center at College Park, the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center, the office of the Maryland state veterinarian, the University of Maryland School of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Maryland Cooperative Extension Services, the licensed veterinarian from the Maryland Horse Industry Board, an additional member from the Maryland Horse Industry Board, a licensed stable operator who is a member of the

Maryland Horse Council, and an additional member from the Maryland Horse Council. At least two members should be in private veterinary practice. Members will service staggered four-year terms.

The Equine Health Advisory Committee is tasked with ensuring the establishment and implementation of effective industry and community communication vehicles, and with review and advising on state policies and protocols regarding reportable diseases (are current regulations adequate? Does the list of reportable diseases need to be added to or amended?), state statutes and regulations relating to equine health, interstate health requirements, the capabilities of Maryland State Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratories, and emergency preparedness protocols.

MAILBAG !

Heartfelt Community Appreciation from the Rutledges and Morris

On December 30, 2004, Colleen Morris Rutledge had an emergency C-section to deliver Connor Michael (5 pounds, 6 oz.) because of a rapid drop in his heart rate. Connor was not breathing when he arrived, but the great staff at Howard County Hospital Neonatal Intensive Care revived him. After nine days, he was stable enough to transfer to Johns Hopkins N.I.C.U., where the wonderful doctors and nurses are helping him take baby steps towards a complete recovery. Colleen and Brian visit him daily, usually spending six to eight hours with him. His sister Cassie spends that time with her grandparents, aunt or good friends. Our deepest thanks to all our friends who have helped Connor with their prayers and moral support. Special thanks to all our "Reiki" friends and their healing energy, and our acupuncture friends with their baby acupressure. The great

families of Potomac Pony Club supplied dinners for Colleen and Brian every Tuesday and Thursday during this period -- what a godsend! So many of our "horsey" friends have donated dinners and offered help with the horses and Cassie.

Our deepest gratitude goes out to all; your prayers have made a huge difference! Your healing energy has helped heal us all!

May God bless you all!

*Sallie E. Morris, grandmother
Mt. Airy*

Thanks for the Thanks!

Dear Publisher:

Thank you for putting us in your horse rescue section. We are still in start-up phase since November '04 but have had great success. We have been embraced by the community and feel blessed from this support. I have had several calls from people that read your excellent publication.

Our current priority project is to work closely with United Animal Nations to relocate horses being displaced by the closure of several PMU ranches due to the non-renewal of some of the pharmaceutical industry contracts.

Thank you again for your support and excellent publication, which is a cornerstone of the Maryland horse industry!

*Mel Parrish, president
Freedom Hill Horse Rescue
Owings*

Dear Equiery:

Thanks to my ad in The Equiery back in March, I have just started half-leasing a very nice low-level event horse in Sykesville. I got a number of good answers to my ad seeking a half-lease situation, and this horse is kind, fun to ride, and a good deal!

Thanks.

Lori K. Brown

Dear Equiery:

On behalf of the TROT board and membership, I wish to express our appreciation for the coverage provided to TROT in the May issue of The

Equiery. Our 25th Anniversary Committee worked hard for almost a year planning the annual dinner event, and we were pleased at the level of attendance and positive feedback that we received.

The wide readership enjoyed by The Equiery will help spread TROT's message of trail preservation and maintenance throughout the equestrian community, and the listing of county coordinators provides readers with a local contact.

Please thank Tracy McKenna again for attending our anniversary event. We appreciate the interest and support of *The Equiery*.

*Priscilla Huffman, president
Trail Riders of Today*

Dear Equiery:

Just wanted to drop Tracy [McKenna] and the staff a note of thanks for your help in designing our Grand Opening ad. The Grand Opening was a big success!

Many thanks,

*Gina Resch
The Right Lead Tack Shop*

Dear Equiery:

Thanks to whoever sent the eventing issue of *The Equiery* to me. Even though I am just a grassroots supporter of eventing, I'm going to express my opinion.

When the Germans and the Dutch were dominating dressage, no one mentioned lowering the standards. If you wanted to compete, you needed to breed or import horses suitable for getting the job done. Now the gap between the powerhouses and other nations is getting smaller, and the quality of the tests is rising.

I also don't buy the idea that the new format will be easier on the horses. What will probably happen is that the horses will seem to recover faster and so will be in more events. That means more big fences at high speed. Seems to me that would be more stressful, not less.

No matter how it is presented, the reality is that the endurance phase (endurance, not cross-country) has been shortened by 8 to 12 miles in a three-star, more in a four-star. That, to me, is a lowering of the standards. Thanks for letting me vent.

Sincerely,

*Sharon McGuiness
Shippensburg, PA*

Dear Sharon:

In The Equiery's opinion, there are no "just grassroots supporters." Grassroots supporters are the most important supporters of any sport! No root, no tree, no fruit.

-Ed.

May Cover Photo - More On Helmets

Dear Equiery:

Just a short note to express my disturbing surprise of the rider on your May issue cover not wearing a hunt cap; especially with the new helmet rule coming into effect this December. I understand that rule does not pertain to trail riders, but I think common sense alone should have all mounted riders donning safety headgear and having this photo on the cover almost condones the opposite.

*Patricia Gowd
Jarrettsville*

Dear Equiery:

Thank you for your Trails issue. I especially liked your coverage of TROT's 25th anniversary celebration.

One problem. The pretty young lady on the cover seems to be mounted bareback -- without an approved helmet -- somewhere near a lot of fences. Next year, how about a view of horses and riders enjoying one of the lovely trails in Maryland? I am sure some of TROT's members will be able to supply a suitable photo. I hope you will consider this suggestion.

Sincerely,

*Marilynn Miller
Woodsboro*

To all our readers:

The cover of The Equiery is available for purchase (for dedications and congratulations only). We require that the image features a horse and that it meets certain technical specifications for print and graphical uses.

While we appreciate the United States Equestrian Federation's rules regarding helmet use, not every sport adheres to USEF standards, and it is our obligation to serve all of our readers by providing images that reflect as many horse sports in our state as possible. We cannot be biased against the non-USEF horse sports.

We do appreciate any and all current photographic submissions by our readers or their sport or hobby. While we cannot promise that we will use them all, nor promise when we will use them, we do appreciate having them on file.

We also have our 'spotlight' feature for up-to-date photos of winners of recent competitions. Readers are welcome to submit those photos to editor@equiery.com.

In the meantime, the USEF helmet rule is causing some controversy in the hunter/jumper community -- and you can read more about this subject on pages 16 & 17 of this issue!

-Publisher

More on Internet Scams

In April, we thanked reader Abby Laughlin for alerting us to internet scams resulting from on-line classifieds. This month, attorney, Equiery reader and Maryland horsewoman Sandra W. McShea (Indian Summer Farm, Woodsboro) provides these helpful tips

SPOTTING INTERNET SCAMS

-- Punctuation, spelling, and grammar indicate that the respondent is a child or foreign individual for whom English is not the primary language.
-- The respondent is acting as an agent for another party.
-- No messing around with

vetting or visits; your scam buyer wants to buy your property immediately, and he or she wants to offer your best price!

-- A certified check is offered in an amount greater than the sale price.

That is as far as I've allowed my communications go with any scam buyer. Looking into this problem, I've been advised that, if carried to fruition, the scammer pays the seller with a fraudulent certified check in an amount in excess of the purchase price, the seller refunds the overpayment from his or her personal checking account, which is then allegedly accessed through the encoding information on the check. (As to whether or not this works, I have not inquired; there is a world of banking law that the author is not prepared to address in this little article!)

So, if you receive scam responses to your pony sales advertisements, there are a few things you can do. You can delete and not respond to the e-mail. In my experience, the scam buyer is persistent with his or her communications only if you respond to their first inquiry (and this is easy to do if you think you are responding to a child). Another thing you can do is report the scam. Here are a number of internet sites through which you can report the scams or get more general scam information:

The National Fraud Information Center: www.fraud.org
See also: www.fraud.org/info/links.htm

The National Consumers League: www.natlconsumers-league.org

The National Consumer Complaint Center (sponsored by The Alexander Law Firm): <http://www.alexanderlaw.com/nccc/cb-ffc.html>

The Better Business Bureau: www.bbb.org/complaint.asp ■