

MHC UPDATE

mdhorsecouncil.org

Maryland's Horse Industry Board Needs Our Help

What is the Maryland Horse Industry Board?

Almost a decade ago, the Maryland equestrian community (in an effort spearheaded by the Maryland Horse Council) established the Maryland Horse Industry Board through legislation. The MHIB operates under the umbrella of the Maryland Department of Agriculture and is funded by the equestrian community through the "feed fund."

What is the mission of the MHIB?

The purpose of the MHIB is to promote the horse industry, fund education and research, and to oversee the Stable Inspection Review Board (to ensure that minimum standards of care are met at public stables). It is prohibited from lobbying.

How does the MHIB accomplish its mission?

Once the Maryland equestrian community created the feed fund, MHIB had the means it needed to meet its mission, and the equestrian community promptly presented the MHIB with a list of projects.

What has MHIB accomplished?

See sidebar.

Why does MHIB need help?

In order to continue to serve the Maryland equestrian community and the wide variety of projects, the community needs to be willing to increase the level being provided through the feed fund. MHC is asking its membership to support increasing the feed fund from its current level of \$2 per ton of feed to \$6 per ton of feed.

How much is this per bag of feed?

About ten cents more per bag of feed.

How much is this per horse per year?

About \$6 per horse per year.

Why do we need to increase the feed fund? How have they survived so far?

When the original fund was established, revenues were expected to be in the \$250,000 range. It took several years to get the kinks out of the reporting and collecting system, but once that was sorted out, revenues ended up being about \$90,000 per year and has declined ever since, reflecting the loss of race horses in the state. Revenues have leveled off to about \$75,000 per year. In prior years, MHIB was able to receive some "special funding" through the governor's office, but that was with the understanding that MHIB would eventually be fully funded through the industry.

By increasing the feed fund by \$4 per ton, how much more would this give the MHIB?

About \$150,000.

Why should horse people pay it? Why can't the government give them more money?

Because that is not fair to non-horse people. These funds help our horses be healthier and to promote our horse businesses. Legislators do not generally want to allocate funds to support special interest groups. If they were to give us a chunk of money, then they would have to do the same for skydivers and bear hunters. If we want more equine research at the University of Maryland, more monies for preserving trails and for worthy youth programs, we have to fund it ourselves.



What if I don't want to participate in the feed fund? What if I think this is unfair? What if I have a stable of 100 horses and the additional money will be burdensome?

This is not a mandatory tax. If you want your money back, you can get it back. You simply submit your feed receipts along with a refund request to MHIB.

So, what do I do now?

Tell the Maryland Horse Council whether or not you support the MHC's effort to increase the feed fund by \$4 per ton; e-mail secretary@mdhorsecouncil.org, write to P.O. Box 651, Lisbon, MD, 21765 or contact Steuart Pittman at dodonfarm@verizon.net or 410-798-0503.

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MHC Executive Committee

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MHC Elected Officers (start July 1, 2009)

President: Steuart Pittman
 Vice President: Amy Burk
 Secretary: Christine Bricker
 Treasurer: Royce Herman

Maryland Horse Council membership is open to all associations, farms, businesses and individuals.

To join, please visit mdhorsecouncil.org, contact secretary@mdhorsecouncil.org or call 410-489-7826 and request a membership form.

The Maryland Horse Council is sponsored by Naden/Lean, LLC, Southern States, Maryland Horse Breeders Association, B&D Builders, Mid Atlantic Farm Credit and The Equiry.



Maryland Equine Census

MHIB funded the first-ever Maryland equine census in 2002. The census, which was conducted by the Maryland Agricultural Statistics Service, reported that there are over 87,000 equine in Maryland, over 685,000 acres owned by equine-related businesses, and that equine operations account for over \$5.2 billion of equine related assets. The census received national media attention and helped solidify the status of the Maryland horse industry. The census is now published in the National Agricultural Library

and is available online at www.mdhorseindustry.org. The collected data was used to launch the marketing campaign in 2004 and beyond: "Making sense of the Maryland Equine Census...What the HORSE INDUSTRY means to MARYLAND."

Over \$135,000 in grants distributed to the Maryland equestrian community.

Projects funded by the board include 4-H youth educational programs, therapeutic riding programs, horse rescue programs, adult education through the Maryland Cooperative Extension projects, university research and teaching projects, and promotional campaigns for Maryland equestrian events. MHIB also co-funded an industry wide economic impact study.

Promotion of Licensed Stables

MHIB promotes licensed stables on the internet, helping to provide promotional value along with the regulatory value.

Hosted Maryland Horse Forum

The 2004 event, which was organized following a request from Governor Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., was an excellent step in demonstrating the overall unity of the Maryland horse industry. Through this event, all sectors of the industry were able to develop recommendations to address all of the issues currently affecting the Maryland horse industry. Plans have begun for a 2009 Forum.

Maryland State Horse Park

The recommendation for the Maryland State Horse Park came from the Horse Forum, which involved the commissioning of a feasibility study to be conducted by the Maryland Stadium Authority in cooperation with the Maryland Horse Industry Board. This study would outline the feasibility of a Maryland State Horse Park, and provide guidance on the best possible location for said venue. MHIB partnered with the Maryland Stadium Authority, MD Department of Business and Economic Development, MD Department of Natural Resources, the MD State Highway Administration, and the MD Department of Labor Licensing and Regulation to conduct the study. This park would be a new large scale market for Maryland equine goods and services as well as an attraction for increased business, media attention and marketability of Maryland's equine industry. If located in central Maryland, the establishment of a Maryland Horse Park would generate more than \$123 million dollars a year in economic impact on the local and state economy, over 1,900 new jobs, and millions of dollars in annual tax revenue from tourists. This project was one of the original missions of the MHIB and will remain as such until its completion.

The project was highlighted in the Governor's transition report as an important project for the future of the industry. While the MHIB elected not to pursue a long-term lease on the property in Gambrills, the Board intends to work on its establishment at another site to be determined. Currently, a number of counties including Harford, Howard and Wicomico have expressed interest publicly regarding the project. The MHIB has also been approached by interested parties located on the Eastern Shore, Central Maryland and in Southern Maryland regarding the potential for the project in those areas.

Public Quarantine Facilities – Import/Export Facility

In conjunction with the MDA, the MHIB obtained Federal and State funding for the feasibility study of an International Import and Export Facility for horses and other livestock. As international marketing efforts continue to attract foreign buyers to the Maryland market and the

increasing popularity of Maryland horse competitions, there is an increased need to improve the quarantine and transportation options in the Mid-Atlantic region. The installation of an animal export and import facility associated with the Baltimore-Washington International Airport (BWI) would enhance the potential of the equine industry, thereby preserving working lands by reducing transportation costs, enhancing the marketability of Maryland horses to foreign buyers and improving access to in-state events, all of which contribute to the viability of this industry. The study found that the project would be feasible if coupled with another operation such as a State laboratory, due to the seasonality of the importation of horses.

2006: Established Equine Health Advisory Committee.

This committee was established to advise the MHIB on matters of equine health and disease in the State; ensure the establishment and implementation of effective industry and community communication vehicles; and review and advise on Maryland policies and protocols regarding reportable diseases, Maryland statutes and regulations relating to equine health; interstate health requirements, capabilities of Maryland State Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratories; and emergency preparedness protocols.

Many of the efforts of the committee have resulted in positive results for the State including pushing for the establishment of PCR analysis of equine samples in Maryland. This enables the MDA-Animal Health Section to resolve a potential disease outbreak in a matter of days as opposed to weeks and to better protect the horses and the industry.

Helped Make Ag Preservation Programs More Equine Friendly

Over the previous two years the MHIB has worked with MALPF to better define what equine uses would be deemed as acceptable usage of preserved agricultural land. Funds are used to purchase the development rights from farms in order to allow those farms to remain on the land and slow development. Equine Boarding, Training, and Breeding Stables are now clearly acceptable uses of preserved properties. ■