

Livestock Links

A Statewide Newsletter for Alabamians

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Auburn Students Prepared For Horse Industry Careers

Cindy McCall, Ph.D., Extension Horse Specialist

Auburn University's Department of Animal Sciences currently has 75 students enrolled in their equine sciences option. These students range from those who have been actively involved with horses before they started the program to those who have always been interested in horses but have not had much experience. In either case, students complete the basic discipline courses required of all animal sciences students (e.g., animal nutrition, biochemistry, reproduction), and then choose equine science elective courses (e.g., horse production, farm management, preveterinary) to fit their interests and needs. Two of Auburn's equine science students are featured.

Ashley Booth Fluke graduated in 2008 in the equine sciences option. She was raised on a beef cattle ranch in Florida where she rode a Florida Cracker horse to work the cattle. She participated in 4-H, the Florida High School Rodeo Association, and rode in a Quadrille team growing up. She says, "When I learned there was an equine science option at Auburn my excitement about education grew tremendously! The equine science option was my opportunity to learn so much more about the horse and use that knowledge and experience to obtain a career in the equine industry." Fluke currently manages 60



Margaret Salter (left) Ashley Booth (right)



horses at the Arabian Nights Dinner Show in Kissimmee, Fla. Her daily work revolves around the horses' nutritional and medical needs and barn maintenance. She also gives riding lessons at her home.

"Everyday that I go to work I use my degree. Managing nearly 60 horses was a bit intimidating at first. My degree gave me the confidence and knowledge to take on this position," she says. She definitely anticipates remaining in the equine field during the next 10 years. "My options are wide open." Her advice to students in the equine sciences option is to "do as many hands-on activities as possible and take a variety of courses to gain a wide span of knowledge. The more you can learn, the more you can do."

Margaret Salter is an equine sciences student set to graduate in December 2010. She also participated in 4-H, the American Quarter Horse Youth Association, the National Cutting Horse Association and other youth horse activities before college. She chose the equine sciences option because "horses were a passion," and the option was a "major way to open doors to different equine careers." Salter also attended an equine massage certification program and is a certified equine massage therapist. She received an 2010 Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowship that she is using to investigate the long-term effects of sports massage therapy on equine muscle temperatures. Her advice to students beginning the equine science option is to "take advantage of every opportunity — both equine and science based." She says, "Do the extracurriculars also. Have fun!"

Salter was active in the AU Horseman's Club while in college, serving as their chair for the annual St. Jude's Ride For Research and as their Ag Council representative. She thinks the equine sciences option "has qualified her for her next career choice". Her plans are to attend graduate school in the field of equine exercise physiology and eventually become a college professor.

These students are just two examples of the many outstanding students who enroll in the equine sciences option. The option combines scientific concepts critical to modern equine production and management with a large amount of hands-on horse

care opportunities for students. Some examples of career paths for equine science students are upper level farm management, animal research, education, corporate sales, medical fields and government. As these two students point out — the possibilities are endless.

For more information about the equine science option, go to www.ag.auburn.edu/ansc/faculty/welcome.html.

Alabama Horses a Booming Business

Cindy McCall, Ph.D., Extension Horse Specialist

Horses play a significant role in Alabama life. Horse riding activities increase the diversity of recreational opportunities in the state. Horse keeping helps maintain green spaces and scenic views in the state and stimulates economic activity in rural areas. The Alabama horse industry contributes approximately \$2.3 billion to the state's economy, which is about 1.7 percent of the state's gross domestic product. Approximately 4.9 percent of Alabama households own or lease at least one horse. These data indicate the Alabama horse industry is thriving.

Approximately 187,000 horses are in Alabama, and their owners spend an average of approximately \$8,700 annually on their horse if it is maintained in a thrifty manner. Owners of higher valued show horses may spend up to \$28,000 per year, and owners maintaining top level show or race horses may spend up to \$69,000 per year. The largest cost associated with horse keeping is for facilities (e.g., barns, fencing, tractors). Maintaining horse properties (e.g., taxes, labor, utilities) is the second largest expense category for most horse owners, and maintaining the horse itself is the third largest expense.

Along with the money spent for horse care, properties and facilities, Alabama hosts numerous large horse events throughout the state, which stimulate the economy of the area hosting the activity. For example, the Racking Horse World Celebration in Decatur had an estimated direct expenditure by the people attending the show as riders, trainers and spectators of about \$2.8 million in 2005. Other shows topping the million dollar expenditure mark are the circuit of local horse shows held throughout Alabama, the State 4-H Horse Show and the Alabama Open Horseman Association State Show (both held in Montgomery). Many other shows or rodeos in the state have more than 100 entries for multiple show days or 200 entries in a single day. Altogether, these larger shows and rodeos directly contribute more than \$10 million to the state's economy and draw tourists into Alabama from all over the country.

Horse care and horse shows contribute a direct economic impact of \$801.2 million to Alabama's economy. Economists then apply a multiplier to the direct expenditure, which indicates the number of times that the money changes hands in the economy. For example, you might pay your feed dealer for horse feed — a direct expense. He, in turn, may use the money to pay his rent. His landlord may in turn spend the money on food for his family. This exchange of money throughout various sectors of the economy is the income multiplier. With a conservative income multiplier of

1.9, the \$801.2 million that horse owners spend on their horses is exchanged through the economy to equal an indirect impact of \$1.52 billion. These impacts sum to the \$2.3 billion attributed to the horse industry in Alabama.

Horses make a significant contribution to the state's economy. Horse keeping and use supports a variety of businesses and services that provide jobs and stimulate rural economies, and many individuals have made investments in farms and businesses in expectation of a viable horse industry in Alabama. It is important that lawmakers, financiers and industry leaders take the needed steps to ensure the future of Alabama's horse industry and to realize the potential benefits of a thriving horse industry. Horse owners must also unite in efforts to inform lawmakers about their industry and their needs, and take advantage of every opportunity to promote the industry.

Information in this article was obtained from the 2006 AAES Bulletin #662, "Alabama Equine Industry: Inventory, Impacts, and Prospects." The full report can be found at www.aaes.auburn.edu/comm/pubs/bulletins/bull662.pdf.

Coggins Test

Gerry Thompson, Regional Extension Agent

Because horses often move about the country for various recreational purposes, horse owners often find themselves dealing with many issues that are different from other livestock owners. One issue that is unique to horse owners is the need to have a current Coggins test for any horses that will be attending horse shows, organized trail rides, riding clinics, rodeos, or other events. Most boarding stables and breeding farms also require proof of a negative Coggins test before allowing a horse to stay at the facility.

Although most horse owners are familiar with the term "Coggins test," few people are aware of what a Coggins test is for. A Coggins test, which was developed by Dr. Leroy Coggins in the 1970s, is used to test for equine infectious anemia (EIA). This disease, which occurs worldwide and is also known as swamp fever, is a blood disorder that is most commonly spread from horse to horse by biting flies. It can also be spread by use of contaminated surgical equipment and/or recycled syringes and needles. Improperly cleaned bits can also be another vector for the disease.

There is no cure for EIA, so prevention is key to controlling the disease. Typical clinical signs of EIA include high fever, labored breathing, pounding heartbeat, exhaustion and anemia. Although the death rate for EIA-affected horses is quite low, horses that recover from the disease usually remain carriers even though they appear normal. A Coggins test is a simple blood test that is widely accepted as a way of identifying carriers of EIA and should be updated yearly. A veterinarian may recommend testing for EIA every six months if a horse travels extensively.

Although EIA is not especially common in Alabama, it is a disease that requires monitoring to prevent its spread. While having a negative Coggins test is almost always one of the requirements for interstate shipment of horses, it is important to remember that a negative Coggins test is not the same as having a

valid interstate health certificate. Only a licensed veterinarian can conduct a Coggins test and/or write an interstate health certificate for you. Always work closely with your veterinarian to check the laws and rules for your destination to make sure you have the appropriate health documentation.

For more information about EIA and other common diseases, go to www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/A/ANR-0589/ for a copy of ANR-589, "Control of Common Infectious Horse Diseases."

Horse Trailer Check List

Ilana Stover, Regional Extension Agent

Proper trailer maintenance and use are essential to proper animal care. It is important to check your trailer before leaving the driveway. Whether you are moving your horse to another pasture or taking an overnight road trip, use this simple checklist to ensure your animals will be safe.

- Check and replenish engine fluid levels and wiper fluid.
- Make sure your vehicle is in top working order. Towing puts extra stress on the radiator, brakes and transmission.
- Make sure the ball on the tow vehicle is the correct size for the trailer.
- Check tire pressure in the tires of the tow vehicle and the trailer. Improper tire pressure is one of the most common reasons for trailer sway.
- Make sure all lights and the brakes are working properly before you load the horses.
- Check the trailer hitch before going anywhere.
- Double-check that the air vents are open.
- Check the inside of the trailer for bee and wasp nests.
- If you are only hauling one horse, put it on the driver's side. If you are hauling more than one horse, put the heavier one on the driver's side. Roads are usually crowned higher in the middle so putting the heavier load on this side will help balance the trailer.
- Make sure all doors are latched properly and horses are tied once the horses are loaded.
- Provide safe footing. Wood and metal floors can be slippery, especially when wet. Some metal floors are abrasive on hooves. Consider putting down nonslip rubber matting that provides some shock absorption.
- Secure loose items. Don't leave buckets, hay bales or other equipment loose in the front of the trailer where they could slide under the horses' feet.

Taking a little extra time to make sure your vehicles and trailers are safe and your animals are secure while traveling will save you from losing more time later in the event of an accident or travel delay. Using this checklist will help keep your animals safe and your equipment in good working order.

Dead Horse Disposal

Jonathan B. Gladney, Regional Extension Agent

Do you own a horse? Are you prepared in the event that your horse dies? Do you know the laws in your area regarding disposal of your animal? Do you know who to contact for the necessary equipment and who will perform the services needed? Horse owners do not have the same resources available.

The 2007 Census taken by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service states 87,111 horses reside in Alabama. A large percentage of horses in the state were never buried or disposed of properly. Horses, once they reached a certain age or were no longer wanted, were sold to go into the food chain for other countries. Due to federal legislation, Americans can no longer implement the practice of culling aged or unwanted horses by selling them at local livestock auctions. Therefore, more people having to make preparations to dispose of these dead horses.

So how do you prepare for the disposal of a dead horse? The disposal of the animal falls under the jurisdiction of the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). Water source contamination is a primary concern for ADEM. If you decide that burial is your best option, you need to select a location that is not too close to streams, water wells or low areas with high water tables. It is recommended that you contact your local Natural Resource Conservation office and have a representative come help you choose a pre-selected site for burial. If you are within a city limits, you may have a city ordinance to follow in planning for burial. State law says the animal must be buried deep enough to have at least 2 feet of soil over the animal. Another option is an approved landfill. You will need to call and find out what is the closest approved landfill to your location.

Create a list of people who have the equipment (e.g., backhoes, tractors, trailers, trucks, ropes) to handle the animal no matter which option you choose.

The disposal process may be expensive. It can cost a lot of money for services. One option is to check in advance with your county commissioner about allowing county equipment with county labor to come on your property and help. Some counties provide these services, some don't.

From Horse Fairs to SETC: Alabama Equine Opportunities

Cindy McCall, Ph.D., Extension Horse Specialist

Recently I had the opportunity to spend 3 days at the World Equestrian Games with some horse-loving friends. As we were walking through the vendor and clinician tents in the Kentucky Horse Park, I realized that many of the faces would be familiar to anyone who regularly attends the Alabama Horse Fair in January. World-class equine clinicians, such as Lynn Palm, Stacey Westfall, Tommie Turvey and Richard Shrake, were at the games, and all previously have been headliners at the

Alabama Horse Fair. Craig Cameron, the clinician booked for the 2011 Alabama Horse Fair (Jan. 21–23 at the Garrett Coliseum in Montgomery), also was conducting lectures and demonstrations at the World Equestrian Games. A grounds pass to the games was \$25 (excluding the international competition), and parking was a minimum of \$20 daily with a half-mile walk to the grounds. We got a nice hotel room about 50 miles away in another town for \$160 per night and paid \$7.50 for a hotdog lunch and \$3.75 for a soda. You could not bring any food into the grounds, nor leave for lunch and return once you were inside. We Alabamians are lucky to have the opportunity to see these world class horsemen for a \$10 gate fee, free parking and the opportunity to come and go as desired. So, remember to visit the Alabama Horse Fair in January to see Craig Cameron, 2010 Road to the Horse winner; trainer Jason Wilds; World Champion trick roper, Rider Kiesner; and the ranch rodeos on Friday and Saturday nights.

Another great opportunity for Alabama horsemen in 2011 is the Southeastern Equestrian Trail Conference (SETC) scheduled on July 21–23 in Auburn, Ala. This annual, national conference rotates throughout the southeastern states. The theme for the 2011 conference is “Creating, Coordinating and Conserving a Trail Friendly Environment”. The conference will present new ideas in building, maintaining and enjoying equestrian trails and also will address timely topics such as tort claims, landowner incentives for trail development and public land policies. Trail riding is the most popular equine activity in Alabama, and trail use provides opportunities for further development of the equine industry as an economic stimulus for rural areas in Alabama. The conference serves as a way to develop

an organized coalition of informed trail users, managers and owners and to give them the skills to lead, promote and conserve equestrian and non-equestrian trail use in the coming years. A large number of diverse groups from trail riding clubs, horse industry corporations, government agencies and education institutions are working together to build and host this conference. Learn more about trail preservation and details for attending the conference at www.southeasternequestriantrails.com.

Alabama Horse Council Established in Coosa County

The Alabama Horse Council in cooperation with local Extension agents, horse owners and an area veterinarian and farrier held an organization meeting in September 2010. Stephanie Jackson, Coosa County’s Alabama Horse Council representative wanted to establish a horse organization for Coosa and surrounding counties. The push behind the Coosa County Horse Council is to bring together the horse enthusiasts of the community and surrounding areas to provide them with valuable resources. In fact, a horse clinic will be held in the spring of 2011.

To join this horse organization, contact Roger Vines at (256) 377-4713, e-mail vinesrc@aces.edu, or mail P.O. Box 247, Rockford, AL 35135. A downloadable flyer is on the Einahpets LLC website at www.einahpetsllc.com. Click on the Free Horse Clinic link.

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