

Wildcat Canter

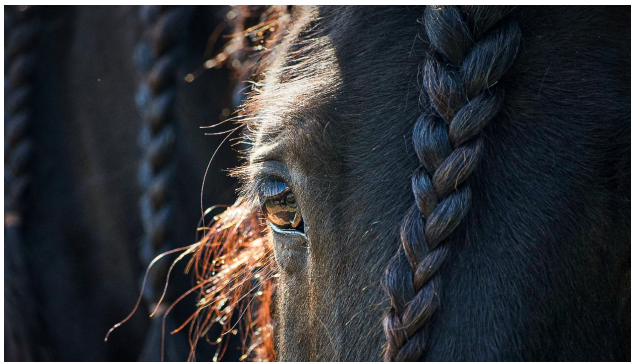
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY AG EQUINE PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER



**Congratulations to our photo
contest winners!**

**Pictured here: "People's
Choice" award. Photo by
Brooke Ketchum**

March 2021



Impressive submissions for first-ever UK Ag Equine Programs photography contest

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UK Ag Equine Programs hosted its first ever photography contest for students, youth and adults in February. Entrants had the opportunity to submit one photo for each of the following categories: horses and people, horses only, farm landscapes and artistic.



Welcome to the publication stable...the Graduate Gallop

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UK Ag Equine Programs is excited to announce our newest publication, The Graduate Gallop, curated for our equine alumni to stay connected and informed. This monthly e-newsletter will include event and program information, a career connections category including job postings, networking and volunteer opportunities and more.



Equine Industry Exploration Fair held virtually March 18

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A total of 115 students and alums attended UK Ag Equine Programs' first ever Equine Industry Exploration Fair, which was held virtually via Handshake March 18. Equine students from UK and other colleges attended the fair with close to 30 employers and organizations.



Spring into Service!

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Join us on Saturday, April 10 for a day of community service and learning about the deep heritage and impact of African Americans within the Kentucky horse industry. Jobs at the African America Cemetery No. 2 will include, but are not limited to picking up branches, redoing flower beds and other gardening maintenance.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- April 10 - Spring into Service with Ag Equine Programs
- May 10-13 - Final exam week
- May 14-16 - University of Kentucky Commencement Ceremonies

My name is Camille Camp, and I am a Senior in the Equine Program with an emphasis in business and a minor in Agricultural Economics. Reflecting on my time in the UK Ag Equine Programs, one of my most significant accomplishments was becoming a Wildcat Wrangler. For the past two-and-a-half years, I have had the privilege of serving the Equine Program as a student ambassador, referred to as a Wildcat Wrangler.



Photo by Sabrina Jacobs.

I feel honored to be a part of a groundbreaking team that has helped lay the foundation for emerging leaders in UK Ag Equine Programs. This year has been a challenging time for everyone; as a team, the Wildcat Wranglers made it a priority to help students engage in the program during such trying times. The Wildcat Wranglers adapted to virtual learning and created events and content that would make equine students feel connected to the UK Ag Equine Programs with online interactions.

Through the hardship of a pandemic, the 2020-2021 Wildcat Wrangler team achieved great things. The team rose to the occasion by creating interactive content for social media, networking trivia nights and even a fun socially distanced St. Patrick's Day scavenger hunt around the Ag campus. My favorite event of the year was the Equine Week of Service. It was truly inspiring to see students, faculty and alumni volunteer their time to help seven local equine organizations in need. The Equine Week of Service was such a success among our students, faculty and alumni that we are hosting Spring into Service with UK Ag Equine Programs on April 10 from 9 a.m.- 3 p.m. to benefit The African American Cemetery No. 2. We hope this will be just as successful!

As my time as a Wildcat Wrangler and a UK student is coming to an end, I feel grateful for all of the opportunities the UK Ag Equine Programs has given me over the past four years. I am eager to see the next generation of Wildcat Wranglers continue to create impactful content and events for years to come. I look forward to being a supportive alumnus for the University of Kentucky and the UK Ag Equine Programs.

Camille Camp

*Equine Science and Management senior
Wildcat Wrangler*

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Impressive submissions for first-ever UK Ag Equine Programs photography contest

By Sydney Carter

UK Ag Equine Programs hosted its first ever photography contest for students, youth and adults in February. Entrants had the opportunity to submit one photo for each of the following categories: horses and people, horses only, farm landscapes and artistic.

The diversity of images we received was amazing. The representation of disciplines and breeds within the entries was impressive. The majority of the entries were in the adult age division in the two categories of "horses only" and "horses and people."

Judging the contest entries occurred during the first week of March by a team of nine judges, consisting of Ag Equine Programs team members as well as several guest judges.

After the 12 category winners were announced on social media, an additional contest was held from March 9-12 to award the most-liked image on Facebook with the People's Choice Award.

With a total of 387 entries over the span of 28 days, the photography contest was a huge success. We look forward to hosting it again in the future. Congratulations to the winners!



People's Choice Winner, Youth Division Horses and People winning photo by Brooke Ketchum



Open Division Horses Only winning photo by Hannah Waroway



Open Division Farm Landscape winning photo by Aaron Mattice



Youth Division Farm Landscape winning photo by Grace Grider



Open Division Horses and People winning photo by Brittany Carter



Open Division Artistic winning photo by Laura Palazzolo



© 2019 Averie Levanti

UK Student Division Horses Only winning photo by Averie Levanti



UK Student Division Artistic winning photo by Marion Yingling



© 2019 Averie Levanti/PHRA

UK Student Division Horses and People winning photo by Averie Levanti



Youth Division Artistic winning photo by Audrey Cowan



Youth Division Horses Only winning photo by Sophia Schindler



UK Student Division Farm Landscape winning photo by Noel Kubat

Welcome to the publication stable...the Graduate Gallop

By Kristen Wilson

A promotional graphic for the 'The Graduate Gallop' newsletter. It features a blue background with white paw prints. On the left, the text reads 'Attention UK Equine Alumni' and 'Sign up now for our NEW monthly alumni newsletter!'. In the center, a smartphone displays the newsletter's content, including 'Coming in April: THE GRADUATE gallop' and a list of topics: 'Program News', 'Upcoming Events', 'Job Postings', 'Professional Tips', and 'And Much More!'. A circular badge at the bottom right of the phone says 'DON'T MISS OUT!'.

UK Ag Equine Programs is excited to announce our newest publication, The Graduate Gallop, curated for our equine alumni to stay connected and informed. This monthly e-newsletter will include event and program information, a career connections category including job postings, networking and volunteer opportunities, a highlighted professional tips topic each month, dates and deadlines and alumni features. It will also include a section for UK's Equine Alumni Affiliate Network (EQAAN).

Mackenzie Smith, a sophomore majoring in equine and a Wildcat Wrangler, came up with the name, which was chosen among dozens of submissions in a close naming contest by the program's faculty and staff.

The inaugural edition will be published at the beginning of April. To join our mailing list, please complete the [form](#) to subscribe. Once you subscribe, you will receive confirmation email you will need to click to finalize the subscription.



We're not horsin' around,

Happy April Foals' Day!

Join us today on our Instagram Story
for fun-filled, interactive posts.



Horse-related memes
Wacky equine trivia
Funny horse photos



UK University of
Kentucky

Ag Equine Programs
College of Agriculture, Food and Environment

Equine Industry Exploration Fair held virtually March 18

By Holly Wiemers

A total of 115 students and alums attended UK Ag Equine Programs' first ever Equine Industry Exploration Fair, which was held virtually via Handshake March 18. Equine students from UK and other colleges attended the fair with close to 30 employers and organizations.

Participants were able to meet with multiple employers in group sessions as well as via a one-on-one format. Participating employers included:

- AAEVT (veterinary science)
- Airdrie Stud Inc. (Thoroughbred industry)
- Camp Wazyatah (summer camp riding and teaching)
- Coolmore America (Thoroughbred industry)
- Equine Analysis Systems (Thoroughbred industry management data programs)
- Frankie's Corner Little Thoroughbred Crusade (equine-assisted learning)
- Godolphin (Thoroughbred industry)
- Hagyard Equine Medical Institute (veterinary science)
- Hermitage Farm (Thoroughbred industry)
- Hooves of Hope Equestrian Center, Inc. (equine-assisted therapy and learning)
- Independent Lake Camp (summer camp riding and teaching opportunities)
- Justins' Place (equine-assisted therapy & learning)
- Kentucky Chamber of Commerce (equine workforce outlook and overview)
- Kentucky Equine Adoption Center (horse re-homing and equine adoption/rescue)
- Kentucky Equine Management Institute (Thoroughbred industry)
- Kentucky Horse Park (wide variety of internships and part-time opportunities)
- Lincoln Memorial University - College of Veterinary Medicine (veterinary science)
- Mackinac Island Carriage Tours (agri-equine tourism)
- Magic Moments Stable (Dressage barn)
- Maryland Horse Foundation (Thoroughbred industry)
- McMahon and Hill Bloodstock (Thoroughbred industry)
- Miller and Associates; Equine Ambulatory Veterinary Practice (veterinary science)
- Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital (veterinary science)
- University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service (extension, communications, and non-formal education)
- US Equestrian Federation (education, event management, supporting industry)
- Wingswept Farm LLC (Saddlebred industry)
- YMCA of Greater Cincinnati (summer camp riding and teaching opportunities)

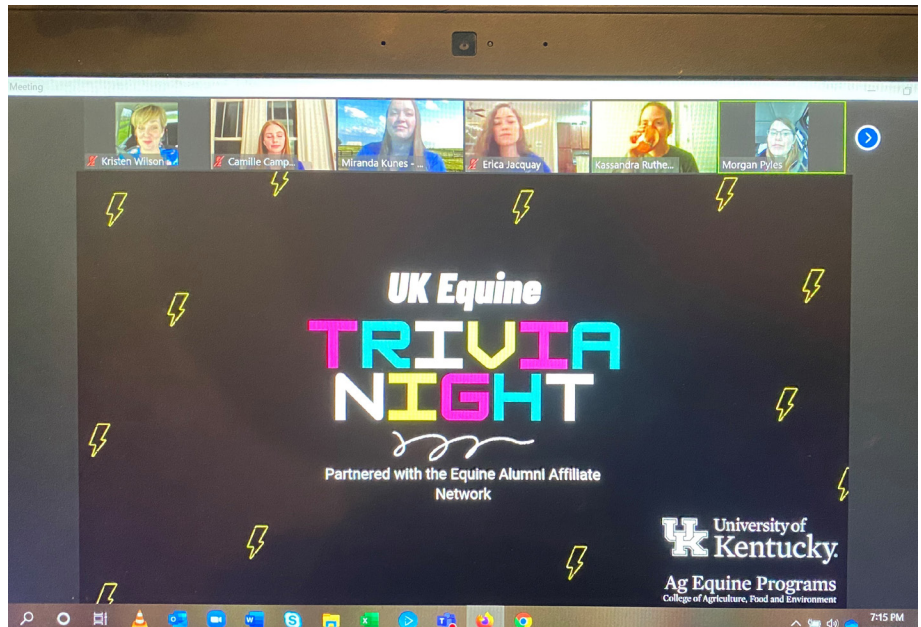


Virtual Equine Trivia recap

By Becca Geringer, Wildcat Wrangler and Equine Science and Management Senior

On February 24, our Wildcat Wrangler student ambassador team, hosted their first ever virtual Equine Trivia Night in partnership with the Equine Alumni Affiliate Network (EQAAN). Students and alumni had the opportunity to engage in some friendly competition and put their equine knowledge to the test.

Morgan Pyles, EQAAN Treasurer, shared her thoughts on the night. "One of the primary purposes of the Equine Alumni Affiliate Network (EQAAN) is to foster connections between UK Ag Equine Programs and the continuously growing group of alumni. What better way to support the program than by getting to know the current students and recent alumni? This event was such a joy to be a part of in such challenging times that we all have been facing," she said.



The night was full of all kinds of horse fun facts, professional connections and community building opportunities.

Wildcat Wrangler, Rachel Reed, also shared her experience. "This was a great opportunity to not only relax and have some fun, but connect with others and build community despite the obstacle of COVID-19," she said.

About 30 members of the University of Kentucky Ag Equine community joined us virtually to form teams and compete for prizes. American Saddlebred Horse Association, the UK Equine Alumni Affiliate Network (EQAAN), Kentucky Horse Council, Kentucky Horse Park and Spendthrift Farm all donated prizes.

The first-place team and winner of best name, "What the Furlong," consisted of Bennett Adkins, Autry Graham, Rylie Galbraith and Kassie Rutherford. Coming in second, was "Old Grey Mares" with Morgan Pyles, Erin DesNoyers, Erica Jacquay and Megan Douglas. Finishing off the top three was "Equestronats" with Luke Nanos, Lauren Underwood, Nick D'Amore and Alicia Bruder.

Nick D'Amore, Hannah Davis and Jen Zimmerman were also all winners of the raffle that consisted of Spendthrift Farms Authentic Items.

"I think I can speak for all of the EQAAN members that participated that it was a pleasure getting to know not only students in the program but also some recent alumni that we hadn't had the opportunity to connect with yet. We hope to continue collaborations with the Wildcat Wranglers for future events to help in expanding and developing networks for individuals that are in the program now, but will soon be joining the equine industry as graduates," Pyles said.

Spring into Service!

Join us on Saturday, April 10 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. for a day of community service and learning about the deep heritage and impact of African Americans within the Kentucky horse industry. Jobs at the African America Cemetery No. 2 will include, but are not limited to picking up branches, redoing flower beds and other gardening maintenance. We're excited to partner with UK MANRRS on this event.

More information about the African American Cemetery No. 2 can be found [here](#).

Sign-up soon to receive a FREE UK Equine t-shirt. You don't want to miss out! Sign up [here](#).

A promotional poster for a community service event. The poster has a light blue grid background. In the center, there is a white rectangular area with a blue border. Inside this area, the text "SPRING INTO SERVICE" is written in large, bold, blue, sans-serif capital letters. To the right of "SPRING INTO SERVICE" is the UK logo, consisting of the letters "U" and "K" in a stylized, blue, outlined font. Below "SPRING INTO SERVICE" is the text "WITH UK AG EQUINE PROGRAMS" in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font. Below that is the date "APRIL 10, 2021" in a blue, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner of the white area, there is a dark blue rectangular box with a white dashed border. Inside this box, the word "benefiting:" is written in a white, cursive font, followed by "African American Cemetery No. 2" in a white, sans-serif font. In the bottom right corner of the white area, the text "partnered with:" is written in a blue, cursive font, followed by "MANRRS" in a blue, sans-serif font. Below "MANRRS" is a black logo consisting of two raised fists holding a stylized letter "M".

**SPRING
INTO
SERVICE**

UK

WITH UK AG EQUINE PROGRAMS

APRIL 10, 2021

benefiting:
African American
Cemetery No. 2

partnered with:
MANRRS



March Equine Science Review recap

By Holly Wiemers

The Equine Science Review: highlighting research and outreach efforts at the University of Kentucky is a monthly newsletter from the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, Food and Environment that highlights the important equine work happening at the university. UK is home to world-class research and service excellence in equine health, safety, nutrition, pasture and forages, economics, engineering, environmental compliance and many others. Programs at UK offer the depth and breadth of scope fitting its location in the heart of horse country. Have updates delivered to your inbox each month by subscribing to the Review [here](#).

The March issue of the Equine Science Review is [online](#) or can be read in [Issuu](#) . Some highlights of this issue include helmet safety and connection of horseshoes to osteoarthritis issues as a focus for engineering seniors, Gluck equine researcher assists in FDA approvals for COVID-19 testing device, better pasture management and much more!

Stories this month include:

- [Science Sleuths: the Science that Shapes Diagnostic Tests...Vaccines - Where Would we be Without Them?](#)
- [UK Gluck Center and Industry Leaders Respond to Uptick of Foal Diarrhea Cases](#)
- [UK Students Working to Develop Safety Standard for Equestrian Helmets](#)
- [Control Efforts for Poison Hemlock and Buttercups Begin in Late Winter](#)
- [Post-doc Student Spotlight: Caroline Loos](#)
- [Billions of Cicadas will Return to Kentucky in Late Spring](#)
- [Fertilizer Nitrogen Sources for Forage Production](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: Impacts of COVID-19 on Kentucky's Equine Markets](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: Biological Passport Overview](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: Maintenance Quality Systems Importance in Racetrack Safety](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: Researching MRNA Expression in Thoroughbreds with Catastrophic Racing Injuries](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: UK Launches Thoroughbred Genetic Diversity Project](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: small Strongyle Resistance to the Last Effective Class of Dewormer](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: New UK College of Public Health One Health Certificate](#)
- [UK Equine Research Showcase Recap: Update on 2020 Nocardioform Placentitis](#)
- [Suitable Spaces for Indoor Horse Activities: Fact Sheet](#)

HIGHLIGHTING RESEARCH
AND OUTREACH EFFORTS AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY

MARCH 2021
ISSUE #0012

EQUINE SCIENCE REVIEW

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College of Agriculture,
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Gus Koch, prominent horseman and patriarch of a very special UK family, passes



Gus Koch. Courtesy of the Koch Family.

Robert "Gus" Koch, died Saturday, March 20, 2021, at his beloved Mt. Carmel Farm, in Paris, Kentucky, after a 24-year battle with cancer. He was 74.

The retired longtime manager of Claiborne Farm, Koch was a Marine and a Vietnam veteran. He retired from Claiborne Farm in 2009.

Nine of his 10 children are University of Kentucky alums, with six of those graduating from the College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. The family's involvement with UK Ag Equine programs also runs deep. His son Gus was the first graduate of the Equine Science and Management

undergraduate degree program in 2009. Matt, now a Representative in the Kentucky legislature, was a long-time member of the Equine Advisory Board. Steve currently serves on the board and was instrumental in helping the program secure gifts for the college's racetrack surface testing research program. Anthony frequently serves as a guest lecturer in many of the program's undergraduate classes.

Koch was featured in the TDN and Keeneland's Life's Work Oral History Project in 2020: <https://look.thoroughbreddailynews.com/keeneland-lifes-work-oral-history-project-no-5-gus-koch/>.

A touching tribute was also published in the Blood-Horse, <https://www.bloodhorse.com/horse-racing/articles/246762/longtime-horseman-gus-koch-dies-at-74>.

Koch is survived by his wife of 50 years, Theresa, and 10 children: Charles (Katie) Koch, Jennifer (Drew) Alvarez, Becky (Mark) Mitchell, Stephen (Wendy) Koch, Matthew (Kristen) Koch, Anthony (Jill) Koch, Amy (Brian) Sellers, Cecilia (Drew) Adams, Gus (Shelley) Koch, and Mary (Bryan) Flachbart, 33 grandchildren and two foster grandchildren.

All five of Koch's sons work in the Thoroughbred industry; Charles, at Lake Horse Transportation; Stephen, Stronach Group; Matthew, Shawhan Place; Anthony, Hallway Feeds; Gus, Shawhan Place.

Donations may be made to The Horse Farm Workers' Educational Assistance Fund (www.horsefarm-workerseducationfund.com) or Church of the Annunciation Building Fund, 1007 Main St., Paris, KY, 40361

Former Equine Advisory Board chair Norm Luba elected to 2021 AQHA Executive Committee

The 2021-2022 AQHA Executive Committee was elected during the 2021 AQHA Convention in San Antonio.

Source: AQHA announcement

The 2021-2022 American Quarter Horse Association Executive Committee was elected at the 2021 AQHA Convention in San Antonio. Though AQHA operates primarily upon the decisions of its members through the board of directors, the five-person Executive Committee is responsible for implementing important decisions and governing AQHA between the annual meetings of the membership and the board. The Executive Committee convenes throughout the year to conduct and manage the business of AQHA.

The AQHA Executive Committee – consisting of a president, first vice president, second vice president and two additional members – is elected each year by the board at the convention. Each member serves a term of one year until the selection of his/her successor.

President Norman Luba

Norman K. Luba of Louisville, Kentucky, has been an AQHA life member since 1995 and an AQHA director since 2011. He has served on the AQHA Stud Book and Registration Committee, where he served as chairman; AQHA Public Policy Committee; and served as chairman of the AQHA Affiliate Advisory Board.



Luba graduated with a master's degree in reproductive physiology from the University of Maryland. The former executive director of the Kentucky Horse Council, Luba is currently the executive director of the North American Equine Ranching Information Council, president of the Equine Breeding Research and Development Council, and the treasurer of the Animal Welfare Council Inc. In addition, he served as chairman of the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture Dean's Equine Advisory Board. He served two terms as president of the Kentucky Quarter Horse Association and has served as chairman of the KyQHA Breeders' Incentive Fund since its inception in 2005. Luba currently serves as treasurer of the Kentucky Quarter Horse Racing Association.

Luba is the recipient of the Don Henneke Education Impact Award, the American Youth Horse Council Distinguished Service Award, the Presidential Award of the Kentucky Harness Horsemen's Association, the Friend of the Equine Initiative Award of the University of Kentucky and Outstanding Professor Awards during his tenure on the faculty of the University of Louisville's Equine Administration Program.

Luba is an avid competitor with championship wins at the All American Quarter Horse Congress and numerous qualifications in trail for the AQHA Select World Championship Show, presented by Adequan® (polysulfated glycosaminoglycan), and the AQHA World Championship Show, as well as a Superior trail horse achievement.

Read more [here](#).

Why Should You Care about the Public's Opinion on 2-Year-Old Horseracing?

By Mackenzie Rockefeller, Equine Science and Management undergraduate major

Note from editor: An important part of the mission of our program includes undergraduate education, specifically with our Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program. In a class taught by Camie Heleski, a faculty member and lecturer within the program – is one designed to present provocative, often controversial issues that are current to the equine industry. In EQM 305, "Equine Industry Issues," students are introduced to topics, heard from speakers, researched information and communicated about industry issues in written and oral formats. The course is designed to expose students to hot button issues in the industry and encourage them to research and formulate well-communicated opinions about those issues. One avenue made available to this course is publishing some of those stories here.

The mainstream media plays a huge role in the information the average person has about the Thoroughbred racing industry. Unless someone is directly involved in the industry itself, the nuances of the day-to-day training and handling of these horses unfortunately remains in the shadows.

Being on the outside of the realm of racing, 2-year-old racing can seem barbaric. Animal rights activists, like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Coalition for the Protection of Racehorses (CPR), amongst others, have taken this perspective and run with it.

Imagine having no experience in the industry, or even with horses.

In one ear CPR is saying, "The benefit of racing 2-year-olds is simply economic." ("2-year-old Racing," 2019). In the other ear are leading racing industry veterinarians like Percy Sykes saying, "There's a great incentive to race their horses too young, too immature" ("2-year-old Racing," 2019).

Most equestrians know that a horse is not fully skeletally developed until around 4 to 5 years old; add that knowledge with highly respected opinions speaking up about this issue and it looks as if there is only one morally correct answer. If that is the case, then why is it still acceptable to race 2-year-old horses?

It can be deceptively easy to conclude any injury occurring in a horse under a human's care is due in some aspect to that human's actions. In reality, however, how much of a difference to the mortality rate in young horses does being domesticated and trained for the purpose of racing make? Horses are precocial animals, being relatively independent at birth, which means they depend on their legs from the moment they are born to survive. A truth for all horses, but especially so in feral populations, horses need to be able to sprint away from predators and travel long distances on uneven ground from a very young age.

A study compared the mortality rates between juvenile-aged feral horses (13%) and intensively-managed Thoroughbred foals (4.7-11%) (Rogers, Bolwell, & Gee, 2012). The mortality rates from the study shows the horses bred and managed for Thoroughbred racing are actually quite similar to, if not lower than, the feral horse populations included in the study. All this shows is how well cared for the horses in this industry are. No one hopes for a horse to break-down on the track, especially those who care for them every day.

Evolution has shaped the horse's anatomy in a way that the earlier a horse can exercise its legs, the stronger they will be. One study was done which looked at a group of Thoroughbred foals given

a 30% greater workload than normally raised foals, which resulted in “increased strength in the third metacarpal diaphysis, but also with significantly larger size of the third metacarpal distal epiphysis,” ultimately increasing the tolerance of the fetlock joint to the high spring loads involved in race training (Rogers, Bolwell, & Gee, 2012).

The earlier the introduction of exercise, the higher the ‘biochemical heterogeneity’ which stimulates growth of cartilage and other soft tissues in the horse’s lower leg. This claim is again supported by a separate study comparing a group of racehorses introduced to early exercise and another group that was not. The results showed a decreased risk of fetlock joint pain and loss of function of the fetlock joint compared to the control group (Rogers, Kidd & Firth, 2010).

Although there is not nearly enough research being done on this issue, the research that has been done clearly shows there is a benefit to the horse by starting training early.

So, there is a benefit to training early while the horse is still growing, but what effect does early training have on the rest of that horse’s racing career? Do horses that race at 2 have a shorter career than those started later? A study done on the 2001/2002 foal crop of Thoroughbred racehorses in New Zealand shows the opposite effect. When compared to horses that entered their first race at 3 years old or older, the 2-year-olds consistently had more race starts and a longer career length (Tanner, Rogers, & Firth, 2011).

The study also concluded that prolonged “high-speed exercise has a protective effect on the risk of fracture and has been shown to be positively associated with racing performance (2006, 2008, & 2009, as cited in Tanner, et. al., 2011).

The issue facing many in the equine community in this circumstance is not the moral need to protect these beloved animals, but instead the need to be well-informed on all sides of the subject.

Stronger growth plates, more developed cartilage, higher tolerance to joint load, decreased risk of fracture, better racing performance, more starts and a longer career are all benefits of early training shown by research done on 2-year-old racehorses. Yet, much of the public remains uneducated to these benefits.

The industry of horseracing at the end of the day is driven by its spectators, like most all other forms of sport. If the public is upset with the industry and stops watching and supporting it, then there will come a time that sport ceases to exist, along with the passion and livelihoods of so many. There is a burden of research on everyone involved in this issue, especially those with high credentials. The public, the spectators, are looking to those in the equine community to know how they should react to claims made by others.

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Equine Vibration Therapy for Lameness: Miracle or Myth?

By Emma Carroll, Equine Science and Management undergraduate major

Note from editor: An important part of the mission of our program includes undergraduate education, specifically with our Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program. In a class taught by Camie Heleski, a faculty member and lecturer within the program – is one designed to present provocative, often controversial issues that are current to the equine industry. In EQM 305, “Equine Industry Issues,” students are introduced to topics, heard from speakers, researched information and communicated about industry issues in written and oral formats. The course is designed to expose students to hot button issues in the industry and encourage them to research and formulate well-communicated opinions about those issues. One avenue made available to this course is publishing some of those stories here.

Lameness in a horse covers a large number of ailments or injuries. The simplest way to define lameness is a loss of movement because of pain. Almost every horse will experience some kind of lameness during its lifetime, according to My Horse University, an online equine education site (Heyboerg, 2017).

With almost every horse affected, owners, trainers and equine veterinarians are always looking for new and effective treatments. One of the treatments becoming popular is equine vibration therapy.

Equine vibration therapy is exactly what it sounds like. A horse stands on a large platform that vibrates. A number of companies make and sell vibration platforms, including TheraPlate, VitaFloor and EquiVibe, and the cost of vibration platforms is thousands of dollars.

It's important for people who are considering this kind of investment to know if vibration therapy really works to treat lameness. It is important to say that vibration platform makers claim the therapy is good for conditions besides lameness, so there might be reasons to invest in vibration platforms for other reasons. However, this article focuses on equine vibration therapy for curing, alleviating or preventing lameness, including whether it works and whether it is worth the investment.

One of the difficulties for horse owners and trainers thinking about an investment in equine vibration therapy for lameness is that the therapy is so new and there have not been many studies on it. In fact, that is one of the biggest arguments against equine vibration therapy for lameness. A lot of the information available is anecdotal, appearing in blogs or on the testimonial pages of manufacturers' websites.

The horse owners, trainers and equine veterinarians who invested early in equine vibration therapy are true believers in the benefits. They share their stories and testimonials online, offering real-life examples of the therapy working for lameness.

A TheraPlate user in Massachusetts writes, “My World Cup horse Maksymilian has been lame for a year and eight months. We have done surgery, stem cell and finally before I lost hope and put him to sleep, TheraPlate...Now he is trotting and cantering again!” (SW Theraplate Solutions).

Another TheraPlate user writes, “The TheraPlate has really helped – he (horse named Glen) hasn't taken a lame step since using it” (SW Theraplate Solutions).

The people using the therapy to treat lameness use words like “miracle,” “life-saver,” “marvel,” and “phenomenal.” The manufacturers also promise remarkable results of “decreased lameness” (TheraPlate) and “notable improvement” (VitaFloor). In addition, the U.S. Equestrian seems to endorse vibration therapy by naming TheraPlate the “Official Therapy Plate of the U.S. Equestrian.”

With stories like these, claims by manufacturers and an endorsement from a trusted organization, why wouldn't owners, trainers and veterinarians invest in equine vibration therapy to treat horses

that are lame?

The answer to that comes from doubters on the other side. Critics say there is not enough research to back up the stories. Author Sushil Dulai Wenzholz writes in *The Practical Horseman* that “while its (vibration therapy) use in humans has been documented, very little research has been published on its effect on horses.”

Some of the studies that have been done conflict with users’ testimonials, and say that equine vibration therapy for lameness offers, at best, temporary results. A veterinarian at Peninsula Equine Medical Center in California studied eight horses with existing chronic or recurring lameness. The horses received vibration therapy five days a week, two times a day, for 30 minutes at a time. They were assessed at the start of the study, after 30 days of treatment and after 60 days of treatment. The study found that “results showed no statistically significant change in lameness after 30 or 60 days of... treatment.”

Another study in the *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science* found that “horses receiving vibration therapy (VT) did not experience improvements in lameness.”

An author on Paperchases & Petticoats website shared her story of her horse who responded well at first, but his “lameness returned a few weeks after we ended treatment.”

TheraPlate sells its vibration platform for \$6,000. EquiVibe offers one for \$4,295.

Is it worth it? National Champion Hope Glynn says it is. She writes on the TheraPlate website, “We love this machine and so do our horses!”

But veterinarian David Ramey says the value isn’t there. He would not advise owners, trainers or other veterinarians to invest in vibration therapy because, “between the unsupported, bombastic and, in some cases, a bit silly claims, the lack of any supporting evidence in horses, and the weakness and irrelevance to horses of the studies provided on the manufacturer’s website, I’d have a hard time advising anyone to throw 6K at this thing” (Ramey, 2017).

For now, owners, trainers and veterinarians have to make decisions on their own about investing thousands of dollars, either believing the testimonials from users or the opinions of critics and findings of early research studies. As more people use vibration therapy for lameness and more studies are conducted, the answers to whether it works and is worth the money may become clearer.

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