UK Ag Equine Programs

The horse is at the heart of everything we do.

University of Kentucky’s Ag Equine Programs, formerly the Equine Initiative, is a framework that encompasses everything equine in UK’s College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. The Equine Initiative was launched in 2005 when the College of Agriculture set out to radically change how it served Kentucky’s signature equine industry and provide a suite of services appropriate for a land-grant university. In a nod acknowledging the success of those efforts and a continued commitment to the state’s equine industry, the college adopted the name UK Ag Equine Programs in early 2012 to better position its equine programs for continued success. UK Ag Equine Programs serves as the front door to equine in the College, and represents the breadth of equine offerings at UK and the college’s long-term commitment to serving the state’s signature equine industry.

Mission: To discover, share and apply new knowledge on the health, performance and management of horses, enhancing the signature status of Kentucky’s equine industry.
Student opportunities
- Now in its seventh year, the Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program has almost 330 students enrolled. Approximately 65 percent of them come from out-of-state. There have been 119 official graduates of the program to date and more than 150 students have completed their required internship.
- Since its launch in 2007 and official implementation in 2009, the four-year, science-based degree program’s curriculum has featured two main tracks for students—science and management. Under the new curriculum structure, which was approved by the university in May and will go into effect fall 2014, students will be able to choose among four emphasis areas: science, business, community leadership and development and forages/pasture management.
- UK also offers targeted graduate school opportunities.
- Additionally, seven equine-focused clubs and teams include the Dressage and Eventing Team, Equestrian Team — with both hunt seat and western divisions, Horse Racing Club, Polo Team, Research in Equine and Agricultural Disciplines Club, Rodeo Team and Saddle Seat Team.

Ground-breaking equine research
UK is home to world-class research and service excellence in equine nutrition, pasture and forages, economics, environmental compliance and many others.
- The Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center has a long history of important equine health research and currently has a research focus in the areas of genetics and genomics, infectious diseases and immunology, musculoskeletal science, parasitology, pharmacology/toxicology and reproductive health.
- Equine researchers at UK have increased their efforts in understanding the role of nutrition and feeding management on the health, growth and longevity of horses in recent years. Many issues are being addressed by multidisciplinary teams that include nutritionists, plant scientists, agricultural engineers, microbiologists and veterinary scientists.
- The vast majority of horses raised in Kentucky utilize pasture as an important nutrient source. Researchers at UK are developing nutrition and pasture management practices that improve knowledge of optimal feeding programs and optimal production schemes for horses.
- Because horses have the potential to impact the land, environmental stewardship is also an area of interest.
- Researchers are also documenting the economic and cultural value of the horse industry to Kentucky. The 2012 Kentucky Equine Survey, a comprehensive statewide survey of all breeds of horses, ponies, donkeys and mules — the first such study since 1977 — was conducted between June and October 2012. Results were released in 2013. The survey found that Kentucky is home to 242,400 horses with a total economic impact of almost $3 billion.

Continued excellence in service, programs and educational materials
UK has a long history of exceptional equine service and outreach.
- The UKVDL, one of the busiest state diagnostic laboratories in North America with more than 53,000 case submissions each year, serves as sentinel for animal and human health and has the largest equine case load in the world.
- The Kentucky 4-H Horse Program in Kentucky is one of the largest 4-H horse programs in the nation and has an enrollment of more than 4,500 youth.
- Horse College is a statewide educational program for horse owners that covers basic horse care topics. To date, there have been events in more than 90 counties, impacting nearly 1,000 horse owners.
- The Horse Pasture Evaluation Program identifies the composition of Kentucky horse pastures, assesses tall fescue toxicity risks and encourages better pasture management practices. To date, the program has completed more than 120 evaluations on over 18,000 total farm acres.
- Education for horse owners also occurs through annual field days, Horse College, horse grazing program, HorseQuest and eXtension. Additionally, several publications by experts offer hands-on horse management information.
- The Department of Veterinary Science Diagnostic

Newsletters
- The award-winning Bluegrass Equine Digest is a free, monthly e-newsletter about UK’s equine research distributed in partnership with TheHorse.com. It has 25,000 monthly subscribers with readership in all 50 states and 101 countries. http://www2.ca.uky.edu/equine/bed.
- Another award-winning publication, the Wildcat Canter, focuses heavily on student activities and successes within the College’s equine programs. http://www2.ca.uky.edu/equine/wildcatcanter.
- Lloyds of London Equine Disease Quarterly is an equine health research-based publication produced by the Department of Veterinary Science. It provides timely, researched-based reports on some of the most important issues facing the equine industry and reaches more than 18,000 readers in 93 countries. http://www.ca.uky.edu/gluck/Q_issues.asp.

Events and partnerships
- Besides equine specific field days and workshops held each year, UK also has several notable and reoccurring events. One is the UK Equine Showcase and Kentucky Breeders’ Short Course each January. Each year, UK also holds a Distinguished Lecture Series, which has become a signature program designed to showcase important figures from the equine industry.
- UK HealthCare partnered with the UK colleges of Agriculture and Public Health and several community partners to launch Saddle Up Safely, a campaign to raise awareness of horseback rider safety.
- The Kentucky Equine Higher Education Consortium is a unique collaboration among nine Kentucky universities and colleges with equine programs.