

# WILDCAT CANTER

UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY AG EQUINE PROGRAMS NEWSLETTER

Martin-Gatton CAFE to host Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair. The fair brings together stakeholders from the equine and spirits industries to educate students on post-graduation career options.

In May, 12 students and two faculty directors (Reese Koffler-Stanfield and Jill Stowe) traveled to Germany to complete the final requirement of the coursework for their spring-embedded study abroad course.

UK Ag Equine Programs held its annual Welcome Back BBQ Aug. 29. Approximately 130 students, alumni, faculty and staff ushered in a new academic year.



# HIGHLIGHTS



## MARTIN-GATTON CAFE TO HOST KENTUCKY SIGNATURE INDUSTRIES CAREER FAIR

PAGE 8

The Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair brings together stakeholders from the equine and spirits industries to educate students on post-graduation career options.

## EQUINE STUDY ABROAD TO GERMANY: NOT HORSIN' AROUND

PAGE 9

In May, 12 students and two faculty directors (Reese Koffler-Stanfield and Jill Stowe) traveled to Germany to complete the final requirement of the coursework for our spring-embedded study abroad course – and we didn't horse around!



## WELCOME BACK WILDCATS!

PAGE 12

UK Ag Equine Programs held its annual Welcome Back BBQ Aug. 29. Approximately 130 students, alumni, faculty and staff ushered in a new academic year with food, prizes, trivia, a photo booth, information from equine clubs and teams and an appearance by the UK Wildcat mascot Scratch.



## UPCOMING EVENTS AND IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- Sept. 5 - Farm and Facilities Expo
- Sept. 26 - Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair
- Oct. 16 & Nov. 6 - Experience Equine Day
- Nov. 2-3 - Weekend of Service

Full event listings and details can be found [here](#).

# WELCOME

That first crisp fall breeze is full of hope and excitement of things to come, from thundering hooves at Keeneland and feeling the electricity in the air cheering on the Wildcats, to beginning a new semester with gratitude and an open heart. As an undergraduate student at UK, all those things would motivate and inspire me, and they still do today. I am so excited to begin a new journey at the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment as an academic coordinator for Ag Equine Programs.



I grew up in Wake Forest, North Carolina, with a love for the horse. I began riding at 7. During my childhood, I competed in the hunter/jumper ring at county shows and the state fair through 4-H. As a sophomore in high school, I attended a conference with my parents in Louisville and fell in love with Kentucky and the robust presence of horses here. After returning home, we investigated college options, and the University of Kentucky was the clear choice for me. During my time at UK, I had the opportunity to ride on the IHSA Equestrian Hunt Seat Team and work at various barns.

I graduated with my bachelor's degree in Community and Leadership Development from UK in 2014 and my master's degree from Murray State University in Agricultural Sciences in 2020. Previously, I worked in Extension for nearly 10 years with 4-H, serving in roles progressing from program assistant, to agent, to associate. I currently live in Bourbon County on a farm with my husband where we raise beef cattle, soybeans, alfalfa, a couple of dogs, a goat and, most importantly, a horse-loving daughter who is in third grade.

In my new role, I will have the opportunity to teach class, plan and implement intentional and impactful programmatic events and experiences, provide insight to undergraduate students regarding career mentorship, engage alumni with outreach efforts, and help recruit prospective students, all while working collaboratively with a team of high-achieving individuals. I believe my background and past experiences have positioned me to excel in this new role. As an undergrad, I changed my major multiple times and took time off to gain life experience and figure out what my life purpose and goals were. I am enthusiastic about sharing my insight, past experiences and mistakes with students to help leverage them to a point of success and fulfillment within the Equine Science and Management degree program.

In my new role, I will have the opportunity to teach class, plan and implement intentional and impactful programmatic events and experiences, provide insight to undergraduate students regarding career mentorship, engage alumni with outreach efforts, and help recruit prospective students, all while working collaboratively with a team of high-achieving individuals. I believe my background and past experiences have positioned me to excel in this new role. As an undergrad, I changed my major multiple times and took time off to gain life experience and figure out what my life purpose and goals were. I am enthusiastic about sharing my insight, past experiences and mistakes with students to help leverage them to a point of success and fulfillment within the Equine Science and Management degree program.

A few points of advice to all those returning to the classroom next week:

- Take chances and put yourself out there to make new friends. These same people could very well be your colleagues and/or clients later in life!
- Don't take your situation for granted. It could always be worse, and it could always be better. Your mindset is what will determine your success.
- Utilize your resources! Our college and university have an abundance of resources at your fingertips to make the most of your time here. Connect with a university professional (like one of us from Ag Equine Programs) for additional information and help if needed. There is no shame in asking for help!

I wish all our students, faculty and staff a prosperous Fall semester and remainder of the 2024 year! Please stop by my office at N-212 Ag North Building to say hi and feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or would like to connect further. In the words of our new men's basketball coach, Mark Pope, "Let's go. Let's go! I love this place from the depths of my soul. It changed my entire life."

MARY JANE LITTLE  
ACADEMIC COORDINATOR



## MASTHEAD

### WILDCAT CANTER EDITORIAL STAFF

**Kiersten Larrson**, contributing writer  
**Heather MacKenzie**, contributing writer  
**Holly Wiemers**, MA, APR, senior editor, contributing writer, layout

### WILDCAT CANTER EDITORIAL BOARD

**Alicia Benben**, MEd, academic coordinator  
**Camie Heleski**, PhD, lecturer  
**Krista Lea**, MS, coordinator, UK Horse Pasture Evaluation Program  
**Mary Jane Little**, MS, academic coordinator  
**James MacLeod**, VMD, PhD, director  
**Annie Martin**, equine philanthropy director  
**Savannah Robin**, EdD, lecturer of career and professional development  
**Jill Stowe**, PhD, director of undergraduate studies  
**Megan Wulster-Radcliffe**, PhD, director of strategy of equine initiatives



Martin-Gatton  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment

## Equine Programs

N212 Ag Sciences Building North  
Lexington, KY 40546-0091  
Office: (859) 257-2226  
equine@uky.edu  
www.uky.edu/equine

Graphic design by Sabrina Jacobs  
Cover photo courtesy Jill Stowe

CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL ■ @UKEQUINEPROGRAMS

# CLUBS AND TEAMS DIRECTORY

## DRESSAGE TEAM

Advisor: Jill Stowe, [jill.stowe@uky.edu](mailto:jill.stowe@uky.edu)  
President: Elizabeth Alderson,  
[elizabeth.alderson@uky.edu](mailto:elizabeth.alderson@uky.edu)  
[OfficialUKDressageTeam@gmail.com](mailto:OfficialUKDressageTeam@gmail.com)  
Facebook: University of Kentucky Dressage Team

## EQUESTRIAN TEAM, IHSA

Advisor: Meghan Wulster-Radcliffe,  
[meghan.wulster-radcliffe@uky.edu](mailto:meghan.wulster-radcliffe@uky.edu)

## HUNT SEAT TEAM

President: Georgia Murray,  
[Uk.equestrianteam@gmail.com](mailto:Uk.equestrianteam@gmail.com)  
Facebook: UKY Equestrian Team

## WESTERN TEAM

President: Emily Carstens,  
[Ukwesternequestrian@gmail.com](mailto:Ukwesternequestrian@gmail.com)  
Facebook: UKY Western IHSA Team

## EVENTING TEAM

Advisor: Jill Stowe, [jill.stowe@uky.edu](mailto:jill.stowe@uky.edu)  
President: Kate McGown  
[ukeventing@gmail.com](mailto:ukeventing@gmail.com)  
Facebook: UK Eventing

## HORSE RACING CLUB

Advisor: Laurie Lawrence, [llawrenc@uky.edu](mailto:laurenc@uky.edu)  
Facebook: UKY Horse Racing Club

## POLO TEAM

Advisor: Roger Brown, [rogerbrown@uky.edu](mailto:rogerbrown@uky.edu)  
President: Taylor Nackers,  
[wildcatukpolo@gmail.com](mailto:wildcatukpolo@gmail.com)  
Facebook: U of Kentucky Polo

## RODEO TEAM

Advisor: Maggie Maynard,  
[maggie.maynard@uky.edu](mailto:maggie.maynard@uky.edu)  
President: Aubree McIntosh,  
[ukrodeoteam@gmail.com](mailto:ukrodeoteam@gmail.com)  
Facebook: UKY Rodeo Team

## RANCH HORSE TEAM

Advisor: Mary Jane Little,  
[maryjane.little@uky.edu](mailto:maryjane.little@uky.edu)  
President: Sam Grinnell-Spiller  
[spiller@uky.edu](mailto:spiller@uky.edu)

## SADDLE SEAT TEAM

Advisor: Mary Rossano, [mary.rossano@uky.edu](mailto:mary.rossano@uky.edu)  
President: Ella Hampton,  
[uksaddleseatteam@gmail.com](mailto:uksaddleseatteam@gmail.com)  
Facebook: UKY Saddleseat Team

*In addition to this publication, UK Ag Equine Programs has other reads in its publication stable. Check out the latest issues of the Equine Science Review or the Graduate Gallop or subscribe [here](#).*



# WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST TEAM MEMBERS: MARY JANE LITTLE, ELIZABETH GORDON AND KIERSTEN LARSSON

*photos by Holly Wiemers*

## **Mary Jane Little named academic coordinator for UK Ag Equine Programs**

*By Holly Wiemers*

Mary Jane Little has been named an academic coordinator with University of Kentucky's Ag Equine Programs. She began June 24.

In this role, Little will help provide career mentorship for students within the Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program. She will also work as part of the program's student recruiting efforts and provide outreach to program alums.

"I am excited to engage with the student body through the lens of career mentorship and to be a supportive role model for our future leaders," Little said. "I am looking forward to serving our student population in this role and empowering them to find their place within the equine industry upon graduation."

Prior to joining Ag Equine Programs, Little was an extension associate with youth equine programs where she helped provide leadership and assistance to the Kentucky 4-H Horse Program. In that role, she helped plan and implement state level events, including state horse contests, state judging contests, horse shows and clinics. She also helped lead Kentucky's national youth delegation through Southern Regional 4-H Horse Championships, All-American Quarter Horse Congress and Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup.

Other past professional roles include working as the 4-H youth development extension agent for Mason County, Kentucky, and working as the 4-H youth development program assistant for Fayette County, Kentucky.

"We are thrilled to welcome Mary Jane to the team," said James MacLeod, director of UK Ag Equine Programs. "Students in the Equine Science and Management major will benefit immediately from educational and mentoring contributions, while her extensive experience with youth programming through 4-H and grade school curricula will be valuable with exciting new initiatives to help prepare high school students for academic success in college."

Little earned her bachelor's degree in community and leadership development from UK and her master's degree in agricultural sciences from Murray State University. She is a longtime horse owner, beginning riding at 7 and acquiring her first horse, a palomino Quarter Horse mare, at 13. According to Little, that mare taught her more than she could ever have imagined and fed her passion to make a career in the equine industry.

As an undergrad at UK, Little held jobs at various hunter/jumper barns, a Thoroughbred breeding farm and exchanged rent for senior horse care at a farm in Midway. She also showed on the UK Equestrian Hunt Seat Team while in school.



## Elizabeth Gordon named business officer for UK Ag Equine Programs

By Holly Wiemers

Elizabeth Gordon joined the UK Ag Equine Programs team July 15 as a business officer. In this role, she will be responsible for the financial management of the inter-departmental program, human resources management connected to the program, office management and help with event planning.

Prior to joining UK, Gordon was director of education and outreach with the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Office of Ag Marketing. She has also worked in the role of policy/budget analyst with the Legislative Research Commission.

She graduated from Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment's Department of Agricultural Economics with a Bachelor of Science.

"I was interested in this role with Equine Programs because of my passion for agriculture and the ag community. I am excited to be a part of this team of the ever growing and wildly successful Equine Programs within the college," Gordon said. "I look forward to helping support the equine industry through this role and to have an impact on future generations to succeed."



## UK Ag Equine Programs welcomes intern Kiersten Larsson



Hello! My name is Kiersten Larsson, and I am excited to introduce myself as the new Ag Equine Programs intern. I am from Frederick, Maryland, and now in Lexington to learn the most I can about the equine industry.

I have always been interested in horses and have been riding English since I was 10 years old at a small barn called Silhouette Stables. At Silhouette, I learned not just about riding horses but about caring for horses and the other lessons in the horse world. One important lesson I learned was that horses are not always about work and sometimes you can just enjoy spending time with them. My horse, Pumpkin, and I moved here in the fall of 2022 and have started our adventure in growing together.

Pumpkin is at Bryan Station Farm. There I have made some amazing connections. The barn managers and I have become close friends and they are teaching me different techniques about riding, horse handling and horse care. I also made a friend who works for Gatsby, Tabela West and Oak Equestrian, all under Stateline Tack. I have worked with her on some projects, and she has taught me about taking pictures and videos for social media. She does an amazing job and loves her work, so I decided I wanted to do something similar.

Arts has always been an interest of mine. It started out as drawing and painting on my own. In high school, I took a photography class and multiple ceramics classes. I fell in love with art because I could be creative and express myself in multiple ways.

Here at the University of Kentucky, it is difficult for non-art majors to take photography courses. When I discovered being a communications intern and possibly being able to continue art and horses at the same time, I knew I had to try. I am looking forward to event planning, working booths, writing and using my art skills to keep everyone up to date on the important information from Ag Equine Programs.

# MARTIN-GATTON CAFE TO HOST KENTUCKY SIGNATURE INDUSTRIES CAREER FAIR

By Grace Sowards



The University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is set to host the Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair on Sept. 26.

At the fair, college students from UK and beyond, alumni and Lexington job-seekers can learn more about two of Kentucky's most vital industries: spirit distillation and equine. The James B. Beam Institute for Kentucky Spirits (JBBI) and UK Ag Equine Programs jointly present the fair, bringing in dozens of employers from each industry. Savannah Robin, lecturer of career and professional development for UK Ag Equine Programs, looks forward to the event each year.

"This event is an opportunity for our employers and students to come together to support our students and the community surrounding these two signature industries," Robin said. "For our students, this experience allows them to explore the worlds in both spaces and use their networking skills to build long-standing relationships." Last year's fair saw over 400 participants, with employers including Keeneland and Suntory Global Spirits, among others. Associate Director of JBBI Ilka Balk favors this event because of its contribution to the Commonwealth.

"The Beam Institute for Kentucky Spirits, with support from the Kentucky Distillers' Association, is excited to host the distillation, wine and brewing portion of the Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair," Balk said. "This fair demonstrates that the industry needs talent across many disciplines. The Distillation, Wine and Brewing Studies Certificate at UK prepares students well for careers in the area, but anyone with an interest in these industries is invited to meet employers in these and adjacent sectors."

The Kentucky Signature Industries Career Fair is Sept. 26 from 2 p.m. ET until 5 p.m. at the Gatton Student Center. Event registration is open for attendees and employers at <https://students.ca.uky.edu/kentucky-signature-industries-career-fair>.



# EQUINE STUDY ABROAD TO GERMANY: NOT HORSIN' AROUND

By Jill Stowe

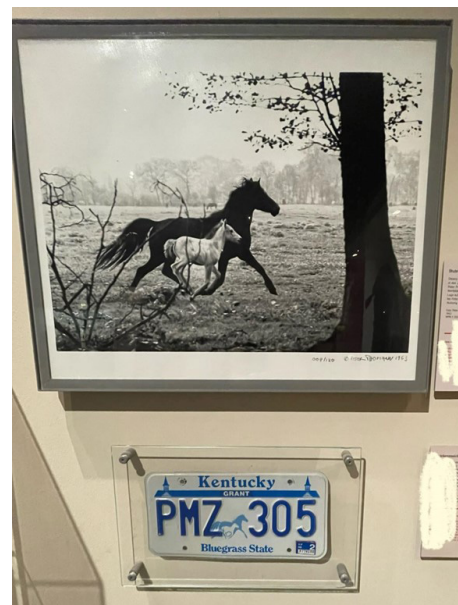
In May, 12 students and two faculty directors (Reese Koffler-Stanfield and Jill Stowe) traveled to Germany to complete the final requirement of the coursework for our spring-embedded study abroad course – and we didn't horse around! We hoofed it through both historical and equine-specific sites. I'll try to rein in the horse puns here – whoa.

After meeting on a weekly basis during the spring semester, the in-country portion of the course started in Berlin. Excellent guided tours provided significant amounts of the city's somber history during World War II, the Cold War and Reunification, which added a ton of depth to the program. It would be easy to spend a lot of words describing what we saw and learned, but I'll just say this – there is nothing like seeing it in person. In Berlin, and throughout our stay in Germany, the juxtaposition of centuries-old cities with buildings just a few decades old was readily apparent, as many city centers were almost entirely rebuilt following destruction during World War II.

From Berlin, we headed to the charming city of Bremen, which has ended up being the favorite city for most students. While there, we saw the famous statue of the Town Musicians of Bremen and learned about the tale behind the odd collection of farm animals. In addition to learning about the history of the city, which ended in Schnoor, we visited the Hanoverian Verband (breed registry) and saw the final stage of a stallion licensing event. Did you know that in addition to being responsible for the Hanoverian and Rheinland registrations, the Hanoverian Verband also oversees the Hanoverian Half-blood Racehorse registry? That's right – they race half-Hanoverians on an oval racetrack, just like we do our Thoroughbreds. We'll have to arrange a tour on our next visit!

Typically, while we are in the Bremen area, we would also visit the German Oldenburg Verband; we were unable to this time due to a national holiday. However, on the drive from Bremen to our next stop in Münster, we were treated to an unbelievable tour of the famed Paul Schockemöhle Stables by Brandi Roenick, a U.S. dressage rider who is now one of the top riders for Schockemöhle and the first American to have won a German Bundeschampionate title when she rode Escanto PS to the German 4-year-old stallion championship in 2023. Just down the road from the stables is the Schockemöhle Sports tack store, which we jokingly refer to as Neiman Marcus for sport horse people. Our group's "dollars spent per minute" was pretty impressive.

Münster was our longest stay (six nights), and in many ways it is similar to Lexington in terms of the size and presence of the horse industry. But of course there the predominant industry centers on the Olympic disciplines (dressage, eventing and show jumping), not Thoroughbreds. On our first weekend, we visited a moated castle, a zoo and the Westphalian Horse Museum. Fun fact: there is a Kentucky license plate in the museum in Münster!



PHOTOGRAPH BY PETER THOMANN OF NATIVE GERMAN HORSES AND THE UNAPPROVED USE OF THE IMAGE ON THE KENTUCKY LICENSE PLATES (WESTPHALIAN HORSE MUSEUM, MÜNSTER)



THROUGHOUT GERMANY (AND OTHER PARTS OF EUROPE), PLAQUES IN THE SIDEWALKS APPEAR OUTSIDE OF HOMES TO MEMORIALIZE JEWISH PEOPLE WHO WERE KILLED DURING THE HOLOCAUST (BERLIN)



ALTHOUGH NEARLY ALL OF THE BERLIN WALL HAS BEEN TORN DOWN, A DOUBLE ROW OF BRICKS IN THE GROUND MARKS WHERE THE BERLIN WALL USED TO STAND.



THE HANOVERIAN VERBAND (VERDEN)

Peter Thomann, the photographer of a picture which was used as inspiration for the logo on the Kentucky license plate – and the Kentucky Horse Park – took the state of Kentucky to court for unauthorized use of his work. He won, and starting in December 1998, a different horse logo was used on Kentucky license plates. However, Thomann allowed the Kentucky Horse Park to continue to use the image for its logo. We also spectated at the Holtkämper Dressage Show in Bielefeld, where Reese arranged a surprise visit by Rebecca Hart, five-time U.S. Paralympic dressage rider.



THE TOWN MUSICIANS OF BREMEN (BREMEN)

Our friends at Effol/Effax, which produces high quality horse care and leather care products, provided an in-depth tour of their manufacturing plant in addition to an educational presentation about the market. We visited the famous Riesenbeck International competition grounds and the Ludger Beerbaum Stables. Fabian Scholz provided our group with a very educational tour at Sportpferde Scholz, and we had the pleasure of visiting Michael Klimke’s training stable and observing his training approach for green and more experienced horses.

A novel concept to most Americans is the presence of the state stud system in Germany. Historically, each of the 16 states in Germany had their own state stud so that local farmers and horse breeders access had high quality stallions. The stallions’ stud fees are partially subsidized by the German government. We visited the Westphalian State Stud in Warendorf. In addition to sport horse stallions, the facility also stands heritage breed stallions – the German cart horses. These massive guys are some of the fan favorites!

Warendorf is also home to the German National Equestrian Federation and the German Olympic Committee on Equestrianism, which facilitated an in-depth presentation and comprehensive tour of the grounds. During our free time in Warendorf, we encouraged students to follow the “Walk of Fame,” where granite plaques bearing the names of all horses and riders that have won Olympic medals have been laid into the sidewalk. It’s a LONG walk!



SPARGEL - WHITE ASPARAGUS – A SPRING DELICACY IN GERMANY!  
(SATURDAY FARMER’S MARKET IN MÜNSTER)

As the in-country portion of the tour was wrapping up, we headed to Frankfurt for the grand finale. We had a guided tour around the city center of Frankfurt, much of which was destroyed during World War II but was rebuilt with the appearance of looking old. Many times, the cathedral in these towns were spared; we learned this was likely because the cathedrals served as landmarks for pilots. Our tour passed the Jewish Holocaust Memorial Wall, where the name of Annelise Frank appears, and ended at the top of the Maintower, which sits about 200 meters above the ground and provided a 360-degree view of Frankfurt. We also had a delightful visit at the training stable of dressage legend Conrad Schumacher. Our group learned about his business strategy holding a portfolio of enterprises. In addition to the training stable, the farm property also included a golf course, a bakery and a restaurant. It was an unforgettable afternoon and evening, and the perfect way to put a bow on our experience.



A GERMAN CART HORSE STALLION – ONE OF THE HERITAGE BREEDS  
– AT THE WESTPHALIAN STATE STUD IN WARENDORF

Throughout our visit, our group discussed similarities and differences in the U.S. and German sport horse industries. The German government’s support of equestrian sport, starting with “pony clubs” in nearly every town, licensing requirements for riders, educational career paths for professionals and careful breeding programs developed over hundreds of years help explain

the success that German riders experience today in the sport horse disciplines.

Apart from the experience itself, there were growth opportunities for our group over the 12 days. A study abroad class becomes a family. Our honeymoon phase lasted about two days. At that point, those little traits that were initially considered endearing, like my sense of humor, became really irritating (as if!!!). We learned to compromise, give people grace and space, forgive and try new things. This group of students really looked out for each other... and they also taught their faculty directors many iPhone tricks (Reese and I learned how to "0.5 it!"). It was a really special group of students and an unforgettable experience!



CONRAD SCHUMACHER AND HOFGUT NEUHOF



ON TOP OF THE WORLD - OR AT LEAST THE MAINTOWER - IN FRANKFURT ON ONLY ONE OF TWO RAINY DAYS!

# WELCOME BACK WILDCATS!

Photos by Holly Wiemers and Wildcat Wrangler Ambassador Team

UK Ag Equine Programs held its annual Welcome Back BBQ Aug. 29. Approximately 130 students, alumni, faculty and staff ushered in a new academic year with food, prizes, trivia, a photo booth, information from equine clubs and teams and an appearance by the UK Wildcat mascot Scratch. The Wildcat Wranglers, the UK Ag Equine Programs' equine ambassadors were also on hand to welcome new and returning students.





# WELCOME BACK REFLECTION

*By Kiersten Larsson*

UK Ag Equine Programs invests a lot of time in planning welcome back events for students at the beginning of every school year. The main event is the Welcome Back BBQ, which is hosted on campus.

Students and alumni attend at the end of the first week of classes to network and learn more about program offerings. Additionally, UK equine clubs and teams are in attendance and provide a way for new and returning students to become involved. The event mostly caters to new students but is also a valuable way for returning students to catch up with their friends.

Last year, equine teams who were present at the event included UK's Dressage, Eventing, Rodeo and Saddle Seat teams. There was also a table where UK Ag Equine Programs shared ways the program is serving the equine industry.

The purpose of the BBQ was not only to promote equine clubs and teams but to also welcome back equine students for another exciting year. There were games like sack races, bouncy horse races and even some raffles to win prizes. Food and drinks were free and attendees were able to hang out with new and existing friends.

Coming to a large university can be intimidating for an out-of-state student. The Welcome Back BBQ showed me that the program is here for everyone's benefit. My questions were answered, I got to know people in my classes and even made some friends! The event is simple, but it gives students the opportunity to have fun and be introduced to the program at the same time. Even though returning students and alumni seemed to know everyone, the program faculty and staff were good about saying hello to those they had met at that point. Dr. Savannah Robin and Mrs. Kristen Wilson were the two that said hello to me and remembered who I was after less than a week of classes. UK Ag Equine Programs works to make everyone feel welcome, no matter if a student is new or returning.

# YOUNG ALUM MAKES A GIFT TO BENEFIT SCHOLARSHIP AND LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES FOR EQUINE STUDENTS

By Holly Wiemers

A recent graduate of UK's Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program determined the leadership and professional growth opportunities afforded to him were beneficial to his development as a student, so much so that he's given a monetary gift to UK Ag Equine Programs to help support scholarships and the Wildcat Wrangler student ambassador program.

The two-part gift from the young alum who has requested to remain anonymous include \$100,000 toward scholarship support for equine students and a \$15,000 gift to establish the Wildcat Wrangler Program Support Fund within UK's Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. The fund has been structured so that others can provide additional contributions if interested.



The Wildcat Wrangler equine ambassador program fund was established to support activities, including travel, participation in industry events, leadership development, speakers and activities supporting the program.

"We all have the very rewarding opportunity to 'pay it forward' with regard to impactful life experiences," said James MacLeod, director of UK Ag Equine Programs. "Whether through financial support, the investment of time or any of the multiple other ways to help current and future students, we are truly honored by alumni who stay engaged and make these special commitments."



UK's Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment hosted a College Welcome Aug. 22.



Approximately 110 of the 122 Equine Science and Management students attended, participating in getting to know UK and CAFE events and taking part in UK Ag Equine Programs' inaugural weeklong scavenger hunt.

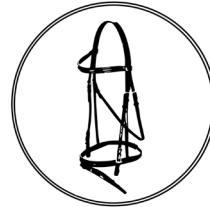
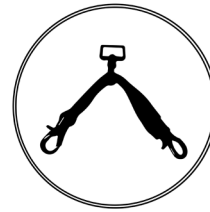


This year's 122 new students hail from 28 different U.S. states and two countries outside the U.S.



# UK AG EQUINE PROGRAMS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER GIFTS SADDLE RACKS FOR EQUINE CLASSES TO LEARN ABOUT TACK

David Waronker, member of the UK Ag Equine Programs Advisory Board, recently made a gift to purchase saddle racks for the program's EQM 101 class, introduction to the horse and the horse industry. The racks are used to hold a variety of tack and aid in instruction as students learn more about the industry.



## KEEP, RACE FOR EDUCATION AWARD \$58,000 IN SCHOLARSHIPS FOR 2024

*Source: Edited July 2 KEEP news release*

The Kentucky Equine Education Project (KEEP) Foundation and the Race for Education announce the awarding of \$58,000 in scholarships for 2024. This significant contribution underscores the organizations' ongoing commitment to supporting and empowering students through education and helping them achieve their academic and career goals.

The KEEP Foundation/Race for Education Scholarships, aimed at supporting students from an equine family and with a passion for learning and achieving a career in the equine industry, were awarded to a diverse group of recipients from various backgrounds and disciplines. Students awarded a KEEP Foundation/Race for Education Scholarship are Kentucky students either pursuing a field of study within the equine industry and/or whose family is employed in the equine industry.

Brittany Bell, who oversees the day-to-day operations of the KEEP Foundation, said, "We are proud to support these bright and dedicated students as they pursue their dreams. Education is a powerful tool for change, and, through these scholarships, we hope to make a lasting impact on the lives of our recipients, their communities and the future of the equine industry."

Elisabeth Jensen, Executive Director, The Race for Education, echoed these sentiments. "Our partnership with the KEEP Foundation has allowed us to extend our reach and support to even more students," she said. "We are grateful for the continued support of our industry which includes the Alex G. Campbell Foundation, the Gary Broad Foundation, the Mary K. Oxley Foundation, Thoroughbred Charities of America, Frankel Family Foundation, Mt. Brilliant Family Foundation and others. We are especially honored and thankful for the recent \$500,000 bequeath from the Robert Reeves Estate, which will allow us to continue to provide scholarship opportunities to the equine industry.

Recipients of the 2024 scholarships were selected based on academic excellence, community involvement and financial need. The KEEP Foundation and the Race for Education are honored to play a role in supporting these exceptional students and look forward to witnessing their continued success.

Congratulations to these UK ESMA students named as scholarship winners: Eli Morris, Ella O'Brien and Charlotte Odom

# THE 2024-25 OUTSTANDING TEACHING AWARDS: KRISTINE URSCHEL

By Jenny Wells-Hosley

Kristine Urschel, associate professor in the Department of Animal and Food Science and assistant dean for instruction in the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, is one of nine recipients of the University of Kentucky's 2024-25 Outstanding Teaching Awards.

These awards identify and recognize individuals who demonstrate special dedication to student achievement and who are successful in their teaching. Recipients were selected via nomination and reviewed by a selection committee based in the UK Provost's Office for Faculty Advancement and the Center for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching. Urschel is one of three Category 1 winners, which includes regular and special title series faculty members.



"Teaching and teaching related activities are the parts of my job that I am the most passionate about and so it is a huge honor to be recognized with a 2024 Outstanding Teaching Award," Urschel said. "I am very grateful for this recognition and it provides me with additional motivation to continue striving for excellence in teaching. Over the last many years, I have worked very hard to create a supportive and enriching environment for students to grow academically, and this award really is validation of my efforts to create meaningful learning experiences for my students."

Since joining UK in 2008, Urschel has been the primary instructor of four different undergraduate courses and one graduate course. Over the past six years, she has advised around 50 students annually, and mentored more than 40 students in independent studies and more than 20 student workers in her research lab. She has also been the primary advisor for nine graduate students and has served on the advisory committee of 18 others. Her graduate student trainees have been recognized with institutional, national and international awards related to their thesis/dissertation research and have published peer-reviewed manuscripts as the first authors. According to her nomination letter, all her trainees are currently employed in careers directly related to their graduate training, spanning academia, nutritional consulting and technical sales.

Urschel says working with students from a variety of different majors and with a diversity of career aspirations has been a privilege.

"One of the things that I am the most proud of with my teaching is my ability to make my course material relatable and then watching students make connections between classroom concepts and real-life relevance," she said. "As an instructor of animal physiology, I am able to cater to the diversity of interests of my students, many of whom aspire to careers in veterinary medicine or have an affinity for animals through personal experiences such as pet ownership, livestock management or being involved in the horse industry. Even for those students who are not directly pursuing an animal-related career, the concepts of animal physiology are fairly universal and largely extend to the human body and so there is always something that my students are able to relate to."

In his nomination letter for Urschel, Scott Radcliffe, chair of the department, said Urschel believes in every student's potential and aims to provide tools for success through relevant content, clear communication and empowering course delivery.

"Dr. Urschel is an outstanding teacher who has worked tirelessly to improve the educational experience of the students that she teaches and advises and has shown an incredible level of commitment to professional development and teaching-related service," he wrote. "She is a dedicated and passionate educator at UK committed to enhancing educational experiences of students at every phase of their academic journey for more than 15 years. Her influence on teaching has directly impacted over 1,500 students and has indirectly impacted the lives of thousands more."

This year's Outstanding Teaching Awards were given to six faculty and three graduate teaching assistants. Each winner received an award certificate, a commemorative engraved gift and a cash award in recognition of their teaching excellence at a campus ceremony on April 25. Read more [here](#).



# RECIPIENTS OF THE 2024 KEN FREEDMAN AWARDS ANNOUNCED

By Neale Benjamin



University of Kentucky Advising Network has recently announced the recipients of the 2024 Ken Freedman Awards during the Ken Freedman Day of Recognition awards ceremony.

Each year, the Ken Freedman Outstanding Advisor Award is presented by the UK Advising Network to one full-time professional advisor and one faculty advisor for outstanding service. Ken Freedman, the award's namesake, was one of the founders of the UK Advising Network in 1986 and served as a professional advisor at UK until his death in 2001.

The winners are selected by a committee steered by the UK Advising Network following nominations by students, faculty and staff members. These awards are made possible through the support of the Office of the Vice President for Student Success. Awardees in all categories are also nominated by the UK Advising Network for the Region 3 and national NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) awards.

This year's Faculty Advisor award winner is Mary Rossano, from the UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment. Rossano is an associate professor and a university research professor. She teaches undergraduate courses in equine management and animal science.

To see the full list of previous Ken Freedman awardees, click [here](#); to see the full list of University of Kentucky advisors recognized by NACADA, click [here](#).



## TEK FACULTY FELLOWS INCLUDE TWO EQUINE CONNECTIONS

Five faculty members from the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment were named by the UK Office of Transdisciplinary Educational approaches to advance Kentucky (TEK) as [TEK Faculty Fellows](#) for the 2024-25 academic year. Two teach within UK's Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program: Congratulations go out to Savannah Robin (pictured, left) lecturer of career and professional development within UK Ag Equine Programs, and Jackie Wahrmund (pictured, right), lecturer of animal science and equine science and management within the Department of Animal and Food Sciences.



# EQUINE FACILITY DESIGN FIELD DAY HELD JULY 29

By Olivia Lee

Approximately 80 people attended the Equine Facility Design Field Day at Lettleiki Icelandics Farm in Shelbyville, Kentucky, July 29.

The field day included several sessions informing horse farmers on the best practices to improve their facility and pasture management. The sessions covered pasture establishment and management, dry lots and shade for horses, matching hay to horse requirements, a self-guided tour of the facility and logistics on how the Lettleiki Icelandics facility and farm run.

Overall, this field day gave Kentucky horse farmers tools to improve the long-term economic efficiency of their operations by providing both information applicable to all farms and insight on how a specialized operation is successfully run.

Nearly 30 participants completed surveys following the program. Results from that survey showed that participants represented farms from six Kentucky counties.

Participants reported that, because of the field day, they plan to incorporate many of the tools and practices discussed at the field day, with 78% planning to improve their pasture management, 52% planning to improve pasture establishment and 52% planning to build or improve feed/high traffic pad requirements.



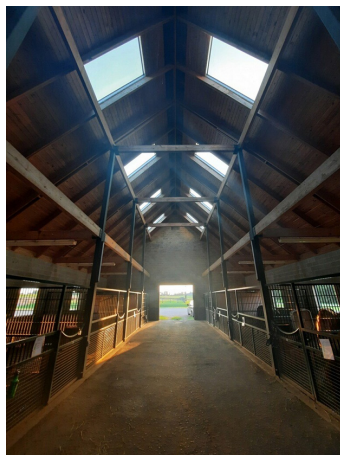
UK STUDENTS AND ATTENDEE DISCUSSING OVERGRAZING AND DRY LOTS.



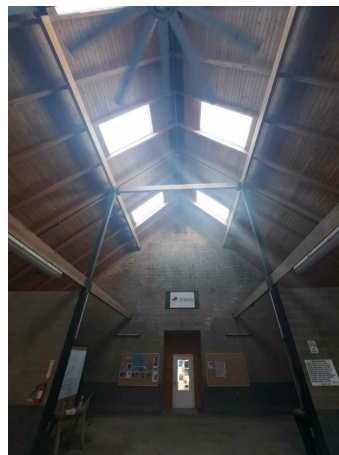
KRISTA LEA DISCUSSING IMPROVING PASTURE MANAGEMENT AND ESTABLISHMENT, INCLUDING WEED CONTROL, OVERSEEDING AND RE-ESTABLISHMENT USING NOVEL FESCUE.



RAY SMITH TALKS WITH PARTICIPANTS.



LETTLEIKI ICELANDICS BARN



LETTLEIKI ICELANDICS BARN



BOB COLEMAN DISCUSSING THE FORMATION PROCESS AND BENEFITS OF USING HIGH TRAFFIC PADS WITH GRAVEL AND PLASTIC GRIDS.



# 2024 Horses & Horsemen:

## Farm & Facilities Expo

Thursday, September 5  
at 5:00pm



RSVP to Woodford County Extension Office: 859-873-4601

### Schedule:

5:00: Registration and Trade Fair

6:00: Dinner by Woodford County Cattlemen's Association

6:15: Welcome & Overview

6:30 or 7:00:

Arena Footing — Dr. Staci McGill, UK Biosystems & Agricultural Engineering

Hay Feeding Economics— Dr. Bob Coleman, UK Equine Extension Specialist

\*Each of the presentations will be given twice.

### Location:

River Mountain Farm  
190 River Mountain Lane  
Versailles, KY  
40383



College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
Cooperative Extension Service



Martin-Gatton  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment  
Ag Equine Programs

Cooperative  
Extension Service

Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Family and Consumer Sciences  
4-H Youth Development  
Community and Economic Development

MARTIN-GATTON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND ENVIRONMENT

Educational programs of Kentucky Cooperative Extension serve all people regardless of economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, physical or mental disability or receipt or receipt for prior civil rights activity. Reasonable accommodation of disability may be available with prior notice. Program information may be made available in languages other than English.  
University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties Cooperating.  
Lexington, KY 40506



Disability  
accommodated  
with prior notification.

# UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY APPOINTS NEW VETERINARY SCIENCE CHAIR AND GLUCK EQUINE RESEARCH CENTER DIRECTOR

By Holly Wiemers

The University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment (CAFE) announces the appointment of Brett Sponseller as the new chair of the Department of Veterinary Science and director of the Maxwell H. Gluck Equine Research Center. Sponseller began Aug. 1.

"I am excited to join the UK Veterinary Science Department. They are the 'best of the best,' which makes leading this outstanding team such an honor," Sponseller said. "I look forward to collaborating with the world-class faculty, staff and students and to serving the equine community."

Sponseller's wife, Beatrice, also an equine veterinarian, will be joining the faculty to support the Equine Science and Management undergraduate degree program. She will also oversee the clinical care and welfare of UK's equine research and teaching herds.

The Sponsellers have been deeply rooted in the equine industry spanning several decades. The duo have been equine clinicians and researchers for nearly 30 years and Thoroughbred breeders for more than 20 years.

"We are thrilled to have the Sponsellers at UK. They appreciate the unique opportunities available in the horse capital of the world and we anticipate they will make many lasting contributions," said Nancy Cox, UK vice president for land-grant engagement and Martin-Gatton CAFE dean.

Sponseller earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Cornell University, completed an internship in private practice with Equine Medical Associates in Edmond, Oklahoma, and completed a residency in large animal internal medicine with an equine emphasis from the University of California, Davis. He earned his doctorate in molecular, cellular and developmental biology from Iowa State University.

Sponseller was an inaugural founder of the Equine Internal Medicine Service at ISU in 2003. Since, he has also maintained an extramurally funded research focus in equine infectious diseases, including those caused by *Rhodococcus equi*, equine infectious anemia virus, equine herpesvirus-1 and *Clostridioides difficile*.

His teaching portfolio includes didactic equine internal medicine, veterinary virology with graduate and professional students and equine internal medicine as a clinical rotation. Sponseller has mentored several residents that presently specialize in equine medicine in the Central Kentucky area.

"On behalf of our Gluck Equine Research Foundation, it is a great pleasure to welcome Dr. Brett Sponseller as the next Director of the Gluck Center. With his distinguished background in both clinical and research endeavors dedicated to equine veterinary medicine, he offers a unique perspective for leadership of this world class research facility and its faculty that will undoubtedly resonate with stakeholders from the equine industry whom we seek to serve," said Stuart Brown, Gluck Equine Research Foundation Board chair, vice president of equine safety with Keeneland and longtime Central Kentucky veterinarian.

"We look forward to his leadership and guidance of this program and future collaborations in service of our mission to advance the health and wellbeing of the horse."



DR. BRETT SPONSELLER. IMAGE PROVIDED BY IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE.

Sponseller plans to extend the legacy of excellence in equine research at the Gluck Center by interfacing directly with industry stakeholders including breeders, trainers, veterinarians and owners. Strong partnerships will help address the pressing health and welfare issues facing horses and the equine industry. By collaborating closely with these key groups, Sponseller wants the research conducted at the Gluck Center to be directly relevant and beneficial to the equine community.

Sponseller plans to leverage the state-of-the-art facilities and resources available at UK, including a world-class veterinary diagnostic laboratory and a team of renowned faculty specializing in critical research areas. He envisions a proactive approach to research that advances scientific knowledge, translates into practical solutions and improves care approaches for horses.

He is committed to enhancing educational programs and expanding outreach initiatives to disseminate and communicate new findings and best practices. Sponseller's goal is to equip veterinarians, breeders and trainers with the latest knowledge and techniques in equine health and management.

Sponseller also plans to advocate for increased funding and support for equine research, recognizing the importance of sustained investment in advancing the field. Attracting new talent to UK's Veterinary Science Department and fostering a vibrant academic environment where innovation and excellence can thrive will be top priorities for him.



"I anticipate a fruitful and exciting future characterized by groundbreaking research, strengthened industry ties at home and abroad. I look forward to continuing our shared commitment to improving the health and welfare of horses," Sponseller said.

Beatrice Sponseller earned her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. Her pursuit of knowledge then led her to the Gluck Equine Research Center, where she conducted research for her German doctoral degree in the laboratory of John Timoney, emeritus professor world renowned for his equine infectious disease research.

Following this foundational research, Beatrice Sponseller expanded her expertise through a post-doctoral research fellowship at UC Davis, focusing on large animal infectious diseases. She complemented her research with practical clinical training in equine and large animal medicine at UC Davis, broadening her understanding of veterinary practice.

In 2001, she achieved certification from the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, specializing in equine veterinary medicine, after completing a rigorous residency program at ISU. Her residency provided advanced skills and knowledge in equine internal medicine and emergency care, setting a solid foundation for her career.

With more than 25 years of experience in equine internal and emergency medicine at the ISU Lloyd Veterinary Medical Center, Beatrice Sponseller has made significant contributions to the field, including collaborative clinical research and discovery. For the past decade, she also engaged in routine equine ambulatory work at the ISU College of Veterinary Medicine.

Teaching has been a cornerstone of her professional journey, with a strong emphasis on clinical teaching and the development of clinical courses for veterinary students in their senior year. For Beatrice Sponseller, this dedication to education has been pivotal in shaping future generations of veterinarians. She looks forward to applying her expertise in clinical practice and teaching.

To learn more about the Gluck Equine Research Center and Veterinary Diagnostic Lab at Martin-Gatton CAFE, visit <https://gluck.ca.uky.edu> and <https://ruminant.ca.uky.edu>.



# TOM STOUT NAMED ALBERT G. CLAY ENDOWED CHAIR IN EQUINE REPRODUCTION AT UK'S GLUCK EQUINE RESEARCH CENTER

By Holly Wiemers



The University of Kentucky Gluck Equine Research Center at the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is pleased to announce the appointment of Tom Stout as Albert G. Clay Endowed Chair in Equine Reproduction. He will officially assume his new role this fall.

"I am excited about coming to work with the vibrant and forward-thinking horse breeding community in and around Lexington," Stout said. "The combination of great facilities and scientists at the UK with top-of-the-bill breeding farms and veterinary practices means that Lexington presents unique opportunities to drive excellence in equine reproductive management."

The endowed chair position was established in 1986 through an agreement with Albert G. Clay of Fairway Farm. Since that time, it has become recognized as a conduit for excellence in equine reproduction research at UK.

"As many of our equine stakeholders know, this is an extremely high priority position for this region, as our reproductive success drives the industry," said Nancy Cox, UK vice president for land-grant engagement and Martin-Gatton CAFE dean. "We are honored that Dr. Tom Stout will join us to lead this all-important program."

An internationally prominent expert in equine reproduction, Stout is currently chair of section in equine sciences and professor in equine medicine and reproduction at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.

"Dr. Stout's reputation in the field of equine reproduction precedes him as an impactful clinician-scientist and opinion leader. His expertise is broad and deep, and we look forward to his contributions to the profession and industry," said Brett Sponseller, incoming chair of the Department of Veterinary Science and incoming Gluck Center Director.

Stout earned his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from the University of Cambridge and doctorate from the Equine Fertility Unit in Newmarket under the supervision of legendary equine reproduction expert and professor W.R. "Twink" Allen.

Stout was a lecturer in animal reproduction at Cambridge University before joining Utrecht University, where he became a Diplomate of the European College of Animal Reproduction (ECAR) and a Royal Dutch Veterinary Association specialist in equine reproduction.

Stout is currently active within a busy clinical program that addresses all aspects of equine reproduction. Currently, he focuses on assisted reproductive technologies, including oocyte and embryo recovery and transfer. His research also concentrates on the biology of fertilization, early embryonic development and embryo-maternal communication, with particular reference to their relevance to early pregnancy loss.

"Dr. Stout represents the unique combination of hands-on clinician and expert researcher in equine reproduction. His extensive clinical and research experiences are perfect for the needs of our stakeholders as well as of those who look for the latest research and best practices in equine reproduction," said Surendranath Suman, interim chair of the Department of Veterinary Science and interim director of the Gluck Center.

Stout is author or co-author of more than 150 peer-reviewed articles, an invited speaker at numerous international conferences and has supervised 19 completed PhDs and ECAR diplomas. Stout also serves as deputy editor of the Equine Veterinary Journal, deputy chair of the Horserace Betting Levy Board's Veterinary Advisory Committee, chair of the International Equine Reproduction Trust and is an extraordinary (honorary) professor at the University of Pretoria in South Africa.

"On behalf of the Gluck Equine Research Foundation, we are extremely enthusiastic about the announcement of Dr. Tom Stout's appointment to the distinguished Albert G. Clay Endowed Chair in Equine Reproduction, furthering the commitment in this established area of excellence and focus which is vital to many of our stakeholders," said Stuart Brown, Gluck Equine Research Foundation Board chair, vice president of equine safety with Keeneland and longtime Central Kentucky veterinarian. "Dr. Stout represents a world class clinical scientist in the realm of equine reproduction, noted and highly sought after by many of his colleagues in the areas of discovery that have advanced our understanding of equine fertility. With his guidance and expertise, the Gluck Center will be well positioned with its investment in this area of interest to build upon new and novel discovery to further benefit the health and wellbeing of the horse."

To learn more about the Gluck Equine Research Center, visit <https://gluck.ca.uky.edu>.

## IN THE NEWS: AG IS ANYONE'S GAME IN BOURBON COUNTY

*By: Megan Mannering, Source: Lex18 News, Jul 27 story*

***Savannah Robin, lecturer of career and professional development, was recently featured with news station Lex18. See the story below.***

Like bread and butter, farming and Bourbon County go hand in hand.

The county boasts of around 950 farms and a younger average of farmers than the state average.

If you take a scenic drive down Stringtown Road, you'll find one of those Bourbon County farms thriving with a young family of farmers.

"We both knew that agriculture was going to be an important and pinnacle part of our lives and our family," said Savannah Robin, co-owner of Robin Ridge Farms.

In 2016, Ben and Savannah Robin purchased a blank slate of land with dreams of growing a farm and a family. "We started with a small calf herd, raised mommas and babies and sold them with the eventual goal to get directly to the consumer," said Savannah.

The herd grew, a business abounded, then came the sheep and the flowers. Before they knew it, their empty parcel produced Robin Ridge Farms.

While farming has long seemed like an inherited way of life, the Robins advocate that ag is anyone's game.

"Across the nation and Kentucky, the average age of the farmer is continuing to increase, so one of the things we do, and Ben works in the lending side of things, is to help provide farmers access to land, and I work on the education side to try and help bring people to the farm and understand ag," said Savannah.

Bringing that average age down isn't only Ben and Savannah, but their kids, each of whom have found a unique way of embracing agriculture.

Lexie makes dryer balls with sheeps' wool, Finleigh sells benedictine dip, and Andie offers her signature pimento cheese.

"Savannah has the mentality where she sees no limits, and that's what the girls see every day, so they jump in with the goats and cattle and they're there wanting to learn, and I just love it," said Ben.

If there's something in the water keeping the average age of the farmer down, it's merely a mindset that farming is for everyone.

"As the consumers become more aware and supportive of the agriculture industry, more people are being drawn to that space and that field, and I think it's really important and we need to keep empowering people to be a part of that," said Savannah.

See the story here: <https://www.lex18.com/news/covering-kentucky/ag-is-anyones-game-in-bourbon-county>

## MAY EQUINE FORUM RECAP

*By Heather MacKenzie*

Jamie Haydon, president, and Johnny Mac Smith, Gary Lavin Research Chair, both from the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation, were featured presenters at the May UK Equine Forum.

The foundation has been around since 1940 and focuses on scientific research for all breeds and all ages of equines. Every year the foundation receives a large number of applications from across the county and even around the world for research funding and is tasked with making the tough decisions of which proposals are most worthy of financial support.

To help in decision making, members of the foundation are guided by a Research Advisory Committee made up of veterinarians, academic faculty and industry professionals. This year, the foundation awarded \$2.4 million in funding for 11 new projects and 13 continuing projects across 14 universities and three career development awards.

Exciting and impactful research was supported in various areas, including reproduction health, laminitis, colic, infectious disease, respiratory and musculoskeletal sciences. The University of Kentucky was awarded funding for a new project to be led by Bruno Menarim, researcher in the Department of Veterinary Science, that will investigate the safety and efficacy of a novel equine joint therapy.

Additionally, thanks to the generosity of a private donation from John Ballantyne and the Fargo-Moorhead Area Foundation, there is a large, dedicated research program involving UK faculty that aims to improve the protection of horses from diseases caused by equine herpes virus (EHV-1, EHV-4 and EHM) through the development of new vaccines.

Since its inception, the foundation has awarded a total of more than \$423 million in funding for 437 projects across 47 universities, both national and international. From the research conducted, 373 peer reviewed papers have been produced. Haydon shared that UK has received the most amount of funding of any one institution, totaling over \$4 million from the foundation since its inception.

Highlights from the research include the first equine influenza vaccine, control of Shaker Foal Syndrome, gene therapy for equine arthritis, Equine Viral Arteritis vaccine, PET scan projects and developing "physiological trim" promoting healthy hooves and many more important equine health topics.



*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 Use of Acepromazine Maleate in Foxhunting Horses

By Lily Tynan

Drug usage in horses has been a long-standing issue with the furthering of modern medicine and continues to be on the frontline of many regulatory and safety issues in the horse world (EquiMed Staff). There is a dichotomy between whether drugs are necessary in some of these horse settings to assist in overall health, or if drugs should be completely outlawed because of their extensive overuse and threat to horse welfare. As stated, drug usage is widespread, but focusing on foxhunting, the usage of the sedative acepromazine maleate must be discussed. The issue we face is whether the normalized usage of ace is justifiable for our horses' health and welfare.



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE.

Foxhunting is a traditional sport that first began with its roots in England in the 19th century. Foxhunting consists of masters who lead a field of riders and horses on a chase through natural landscapes consisting of obstacles while following scent hounds. Originally, foxhunting chased and hunted down foxes, who were a big vermin problem for farmers (Tikkanen). This sport quickly established its American roots in Maryland in the 1700s and is still practiced in sport today (Master of Foxhounds Association of America).

Typically, in modern-day foxhunting, we see drag hunting more than live bait, where a scent is laid out before a hunt begins and foxhounds follow the scent with riders in lieu of chasing a live animal. Foxhunts usually span long stretches of time and involve high-intensity galloping, tough footing and tricky obstacles to maneuver (Gupta). It is also common in foxhunting for horses to be close to one another and for a high-stress environment to ensue (Tikkanen). Because of these conditions, it is recommended for participants to have athletically able and willing mounts that can keep up with the intensity.

A drug commonly used in foxhunting and other sectors of the horse industry is acepromazine maleate. Acepromazine is a sedative that blocks dopamine receptors in the central nervous system (Aarnes et al.). It also depresses the sympathetic nervous system of the body which is responsible for things like elevation of heart rate under stressful conditions (EquiMed Staff). The way ace works in the horse is that it enters the bloodstream and can increase blood flow and widen blood vessels, causing a lowering in blood pressure (Wallsten, et al.). Usually, this sedative is given as a feed-in pill with food, or as an intravenous injection (Forney).

In the horse industry, ace is given to horses for stressful procedures like shoeing and trailering to maintain safety for both horses and handlers (HorseJournal). Ace also has known usages in show rings and during training rides to reduce the appearance of spookiness or discrepancies when riding (HorseJournal). One of the side

effects of ace is that it causes musculoskeletal systems to slow, so it is very effective in reducing the “spook” factor and gives riders peace of mind. Before many of the United States Equestrian Federation regulations were put into action in 1970, it was normal for participants to show on small doses of ace to present a calm and put-together pair to judges (Klemm). Still today, it is common to see many trainers defending the benefits of ace in show rings, such as reducing the possibility of injuries, safety of rider and, of course, to win and produce a well-put-together round (Klemm) (Greenwood).

Foxhunting typically does not imply this same “winning mentality,” as it is more an enjoyable activity for riders to participate in the “thrill” of old English-style horseback riding. So why, one might ask, is ace at the forefront of this sport? As previously mentioned, ace is seen to have effects in lowering heart rate and it is known that any type of intensive sporting is cause for elevated heart rate in horses (Wallsten, et al.). Because of this, ace is seen as superiorly beneficial in maintaining foxhunting horses’ heart rates. There is little regulation of this drug in the foxhunting discipline because of the lack of an overarching governing body for the sport. When ace is used at rated competitions in different disciplines, extensive testing takes place, and USEF has an entire drug restrictions list which is followed by show ground veterinarians that regularly perform drug tests on competing horses (United States Equestrian Federation). But with the lack of a leader like USEF in foxhunting, it can be difficult to tackle issues such as drug usage. Most foxhunts are run through smaller clubs and organizations and are overseen by the Master of Foxhounds Association (Master of Foxhounds Association of America). Upon reading the Master of Foxhounds Safety and Guidelines Regulation book, there is no explicit statement that prohibits drug use of any kind. This limited amount of information covering the use of drugs in foxhunting horses is alarming within itself and is an area where horse welfare committees are severely lacking.

Acepromazine can have grave effects if used improperly, it can severely heighten the chance of seizures occurring. (Aarnes, et al.) This drug can also lead to loss of muscle function, which could be a significant safety issue when sharpness of motor abilities is needed in high-intensity sports (Forney). Finally, ace has also been seen to lower hematocrit levels in horses. Hematocrit allows oxygen to travel through the bloodstream (Forney). With all the side effects presented, is it appropriate to distribute this drug to our horses? Or should we even have to drug our partners to keep them safe? Acepromazine is very normalized in the horse industry, and it is up to the future generations of horsemen and women to decide if it is a useful tool or if the overuse of this sedative is endangering the welfare of our trusted companions.

### Works Cited

- AAEP. Use and Abuse of Medications at Horse Shows, [aaep.org/sites/default/files/issues/proceedings-10proceedings-z9100110000360.pdf](http://aaep.org/sites/default/files/issues/proceedings-10proceedings-z9100110000360.pdf). Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.
- Aarnes, Turi, et al. “Acepromazine.” *Acepromazine - an Overview* | ScienceDirect Topics, 2011, [www.sciencedirect.com/topics/pharmacology-toxicology-and-pharmaceutical-science/acepromazine#:~:text=Acepromazine%20is%20a%20phenothiazine%20tranquilizer,drugs%2C%20most%20notably%2C%20opioids](http://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/pharmacology-toxicology-and-pharmaceutical-science/acepromazine#:~:text=Acepromazine%20is%20a%20phenothiazine%20tranquilizer,drugs%2C%20most%20notably%2C%20opioids). Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.
- EquiMed Staff. “Acepromazine: Equimed - Horse Health Matters.” EquiMed, [equimed.com/drugs-and-medications/reference/acepromazine](http://equimed.com/drugs-and-medications/reference/acepromazine). Accessed 3 Mar. 2024.
- Forney, Barbara. “Acepromazine Maleate for Dogs, Cats, and Horses.” *Acepromazine Maleate for Dogs and Cats: Uses, Dosage & Side Effects*, [www.wedgewoodpharmacy.com/medications/acepromazine-maleate/](http://www.wedgewoodpharmacy.com/medications/acepromazine-maleate/). Accessed 11 Feb. 2024.
- Greenwood, Robin, et al. “Are Drug Rules Putting Our Horses At Great Danger?” *Are Drug Rules Putting Our Horses at Greater Danger? - The Chronicle of the Horse*, 13 Mar. 2012, [www.chronofhorse.com/article/are-drug-rules-putting-our-horses-greater-danger/](http://www.chronofhorse.com/article/are-drug-rules-putting-our-horses-greater-danger/).
- Gupta, Anthea Fraser. “Foxes, Hounds, and Horses: Who or Which?”. *Society & Animals* 14.1 (2006): 107-128. <https://doi.org/10.1163/156853006776137113> Web.
- HorseJournal. “Ace Is Not Valium.” EquiSearch, 1 Feb. 2001, [equestrian.com/horsejournal/ace-is-not-valium/](http://equestrian.com/horsejournal/ace-is-not-valium/).
- Wallsten, K, et al. “Temperature Regulation in Horses during Exercise and Recovery in a Cool Environment.” *Acta Veterinaria Scandinavica*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, [pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22805591/](http://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22805591/). Accessed 11 Feb. 2024.
- Klemm, Piper. “On Hunters and Horsemen.” *The Plaid Horse Magazine*, 2 Jan. 2022, [www.theplaidhorse.com/2017/01/24/on-hunters-and-horsemen/](http://www.theplaidhorse.com/2017/01/24/on-hunters-and-horsemen/).
- Master of Foxhounds Association of America. *Guidebook & Rules 2015*, [mfha.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/guidebook2015.pdf](http://mfha.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/guidebook2015.pdf). Accessed 11 Feb. 2024.
- Pequito, Manuel, et al. “Evaluation of Acepromazine-Induced Hemodynamic Alterations and Reversal with Norepinephrine Infusion in Standing Horses.” *The Canadian Veterinary Journal = La Revue Veterinaire Canadienne*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, Feb. 2013, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3552591/](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3552591/).
- Staff, Kentucky Equine Research. “Foxhunting: A Traditional Equestrian Sport.” *Kentucky Equine Research*, 27 Dec. 2017, [ker.com/equinews/foxhunting-traditional-equestrian-sport/](http://ker.com/equinews/foxhunting-traditional-equestrian-sport/).
- Tikkanen, Amy. “Foxhunting.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., [www.britannica.com/sports/foxhunting](http://www.britannica.com/sports/foxhunting). Accessed 11 Feb. 2024.
- United States Equestrian Federation. *Drugs and Medications*, [www.usef.org/forms-pubs/2Zp2C\\_YKs4s/2022-equine-drugs-medications](http://www.usef.org/forms-pubs/2Zp2C_YKs4s/2022-equine-drugs-medications). Accessed 11 Feb. 2024.

## How Dangerous is too Dangerous?

By Sydney Borne

The equestrian sport of eventing is an exhilarating sport combining multiple English disciplines like dressage and showjumping, with an addition of cross country. The sport is for the adrenaline junkies who enjoy long stretches of gallop, big solid obstacles and testy questions for both horse and rider. However, with all of eventings fun and glory, it is an extremely dangerous sport especially as athletes move up the levels.

The highest of these levels is the 5\* FEI level, where the best of the best compete against the best of the best. Even with their skill, the 5\* level is incredibly dangerous and results in many falls, injuries and even deaths. The 5\* level has continually increased in difficulty through the years and possibly reached a point where it is too dangerous.



ADOBE STOCK IMAGE.

To determine this, it is important to explore the safety concerns surrounding the 5\* level of eventing and its impact on both horses and riders.

The sport of eventing consists of three individual events (What is Eventing?, Discover Eventing.) The first phase is dressage, where horse and rider compete in a set pattern to display consistency, harmony and accuracy. This phase contains no jumping questions, being strictly flatwork-based and is the base score leading into the other two events.

The next phase, and the most dangerous, is cross country. In this event, the horse and rider combination tackle a set course out in a field where they will tackle solid obstacles, water and ditch combinations and varying terrain. In this phase, when a horse is unable to complete an obstacle on the first attempt, they risk adding more points to their score, and can even face elimination.

The last phase is showing jumping, which tests the pair's ability to ride a technical course with knockable objects, recovery from the previous phase and fineness and carefulness over fences. Penalties are added for this phase though not being able to complete a jump or knocking over a rail.

As cross country is the most dangerous of the three phases, it is the phase that receives the most backlash from the equestrian community. There are a set number of requirements that make it the top of the sport. The maximum height for a jump on cross country is 1.45 meters with a maximum jump width of 1.60 meters (FEI Cross Country Course Design Guidelines, 2014). To put these dimensions into perspective, that is about the size of a small to medium car.

The pair is expected to tackle 40-45 of these jumps over a distance of 6,270-6,840 meters. On top of this, there is an optimum time, the amount of time the pair has to complete the course without penalties. This time constraint often results in flat-out gallops at these fences, requiring both horse and rider to be extremely fit and accurate. The consequences of not properly preparing for this phase could result in penalties, elimination, injury and even death.

The 5\* level is the top of the sport, and while extremely dangerous, has many safety regulations in place. In 2016, a type of collapsible cross-country fence called a frangible device was added to the course. The device acts to limit rotational falls out on the course, which is the top cause of horse and rider deaths in this phase (FRANGIBLE TECHNOLOGY, USEA).

Another safety measure was added that requires horse and rider to qualify for any event above training level. To qualify for the next level, the pair must have a set number of minimum eligibility requirements, or MER, at the level below the desired move-up. A MER is the completion of the cross-country phase with zero jumping penalties, meaning no runouts, stops or frangible device triggers (DeLisle, 2023).

A more recent safety measure is the addition of MIPS, or Multi-Directional Impact Protection System, helmets and inflatable air vests. MIPS helmets allow for movement within the structure of the helmet, resulting in higher shock absorption and less direct impact on the head (Nehr, 2022). The use of this type of helmet can be seen in multiple top-level riders as it is believed to provide more safety and protection when it comes to falls. An air vest is a safety vest that is attached to the saddle and connects to an air canister, which inflates when the rider falls from the horse (Potter, 2022). When inflated, these vests add protection to the neck, collarbone and ribs, reducing impaction fractures.

While there are many safety measures put in place in upper-level eventing, these do not completely prevent catastrophic injuries and death from occurring.

To put into perspective the risk these riders take every time they compete on course, it is key to look at completion levels from previous years. In 2020, due to travel restrictions, Tokyo decided to move the 5\* level cross-country level down to mimic a 4\* since many international riders were unable to travel to receive a qualifying score at that level. Out of 63 riders to enter the cross-country phase, 45 completed the event (EQUESTRIAN EVENTING INDIVIDUAL RESULTS, 2020).

At the 4\* level, there was a 71% rate of completion. It is important to compare it to the qualifying run at the Kentucky 5\* the year prior, in 2019. That year, 42 riders entered the cross-country phase, but only 24 riders completed the course, a 57% completion rate (Start Box Scoring, 2019). That is a 14% completion difference between a qualifying 5\* and the Olympic 4\*, which included many riders who ran in the Kentucky 5\*.

There is also a public perspective to observe. After the 2012 Olympics, many advocates spoke up and proposed that eventing should be removed from the Olympics as it was deemed too dangerous (Cooke, 2012). This debate followed after the death of a 12-year-old girl in 2007 and multiple other rider fatalities which continued up until the opening day of dressage in the 2012 Olympics.

While dangerous, the 5\* level is the pinnacle of the sport of eventing and is the ultimate goal of riders around the world. Even with all its cache, the 5\* level of eventing has resulted in hundreds of deaths even with extensive safety regulations. These regulations are not doing enough to keep pairs safe at these levels, and with these continued risks should the level continue to exist?

Would there be harm in continuing to run the Olympics at the 4\* level, limiting the amount of casualties and pressure at the 5\* level? More research needs to be done with regard to safety and dialog needs to continue about the dangers to keep our horse and rider athlete pairs safe.

## References

- Cooke, S. van G. (2012, July 28). Equestrian eventing: The olympics' most dangerous sport? Time. <https://olympics.time.com/2012/07/28/equestrian-eventing-the-olympics-most-dangerous-sport/>
- DeLisle, M. (2023, February 4). Rule refresher: What minimum eligibility requirements (MER) do I need to meet?. USEA : United States Eventing Association Inc. <https://useventing.com/news-media/news/rule-refresher-what-minimum-eligibility-requirements-mer-do-i-need-to-meet>
- FEI Cross Country Course Design Guidelines. (n.d.-a). [https://inside.fei.org/system/files/2014-02-11\\_FEI\\_Cross\\_Country\\_Course\\_Design\\_Guidelines\\_-\\_version\\_1\\_7.pdf](https://inside.fei.org/system/files/2014-02-11_FEI_Cross_Country_Course_Design_Guidelines_-_version_1_7.pdf)
- Frangible technology. USEA Foundation. (n.d.). <https://useafoundation.org/frangible-technology>
- Jennifer Weber, S. W. S. (n.d.). StartBox online scoring, LLC. Results for Land Rover Kentucky Three-Day Event - Equestrian Event Scores. [https://eventing.startboxscoring.com/eventsr/k3de/ht0419/final\\_select.php?division=1&order=place](https://eventing.startboxscoring.com/eventsr/k3de/ht0419/final_select.php?division=1&order=place)
- Nehr, Z. (2022, February 2). What is a MIPS helmet? often touted as safer, what does MIPS mean and how does it work?. cyclingnews.com. <https://www.cyclingnews.com/features/what-are-mips-helmets/>
- Porter, L. (2020, May 8). Equestrian air vests: What you need to know. US Equestrian. <https://www.usef.org/media/equestrian-weekly/equestrian-air-vests-what-you-need-to-know#:~:text=Currently%2C%20traditional%20body%20protectors%20are%20required%20for%20eventers,a%20traditional%20body%20protector%20underneath%20the%20air%20vest.>
- Tokyo 2020 eventing individual results - olympic equestrian. (n.d.-b). <https://olympics.com/en/olympic-games/tokyo-2020/results/equestrian/eventing-individual>
- What is eventing. Discover Eventing. (n.d.). <https://www.discovereventing.com/what-is-eventing>

# The War on Xylazine and Its Future in Our Industry

By Emily Slugantz

I have been around horses all my life, from the early years of going out to do vet work with my dad, to the times I would go to foalings, to my time as a yearling groom and now at my current place of employment at Hagyard Equine Medical Institute in Lexington.

With my considerable background in central Kentucky's Thoroughbred breeding industry, it is safe to say that I have seen my fair share of good times and bad times with the horses. From watching a newborn foal stand for the first time and go to nurse from its mother on those cold winter nights to participating in the yearling prep in the summer or watching patients leave the clinic healthy again, nothing is more rewarding. Of course, with all the good, there will be some bad, and with horses, there will always be problems.

One of the most common issues I see in the clinic is colic.

Colic, which many of you are probably familiar with, indicates pain in a horse's abdomen. Its unpredictability and reputation of being nearly unprecedented strike fear into concerned horse owners or operations. So, what would you do if your horse started to violently colic? Perhaps walk them through increasing gut motility? Maybe take vitals on your horse to assess their condition? But what if your horse is in pain and needs to be sedated right away for the safety of both of you? And what if you didn't have access to that specific sedative to calm your horse and relieve their pain? Perhaps you just need sedation with a short effect to sedate your animal for a quick procedure. That way, your animal won't be muzzled for hours for their safety.

Xylazine with its short-term effect and analgesic properties is a perfect choice in both scenarios. Xylazine, commonly branded as AnaSed, Rompun or Sedazine, is a widely used animal sedative regulated only for use in veterinary medicine and belongs to a class of drugs known as alpha-2 adrenergic agonists, which work by depressing the central nervous system, resulting in sedation and pain relief.

However, in recent years, it has consistently fallen into the hands of the wrong people and is being used and marketed as an opioid and street drug. Xylazine, however, is not an opioid, so it doesn't respond to Naloxone, which is the commonly used overdose antidote, making it potentially deadly to those who use it. Currently, common street drugs like fentanyl are being "chased" by xylazine because xylazine is said to lengthen and increase the effects of the high. It is also known to be used with heroin or in combination with heroin and cocaine, referred to as a "speedball." (Sibbesen et al. 309). When xylazine is mixed with opioids, it may increase the risk of overdose or death. Xylazine, when injected into a person, has been reported to cause conditions such as bradycardia and hypotension, and this is why it is no longer used in human medicine. The DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) reported finding traces of the drug in opioids in at least 48 states, and a new Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study found that tranq was present in 11% of the nation's opioid overdoses in June. (Maucione). Because of these recent developments, the DEA is pushing for regulation so that only licensed veterinarians can access it in some states. With the number of cases rising, many states in the U.S. are starting to crack down on xylazine. Three states have already classified xylazine as a controlled substance: Florida, West Virginia and Ohio. Florida was the first to take this step and classified it as a Schedule I drug in 2016. West Virginia followed that same year in March, classifying it as Schedule IV. Around the same time, Ohio's governor, by executive order, immediately classified it as Schedule III. It is assumed that many states will soon follow.

So, how is xylazine falling into the hands of the wrong people? The answer is relatively simple. Many animal clinics nationwide are severely understaffed, and many cannot keep thorough, complete inventory records, including checking out the bottle, writing down how much is being taken and for what patient, the employee's signature, etc. It has also been reported in some cases that some veterinarians have stolen controlled drugs and used them for their intended purpose.

However, according to the DEA, xylazine on the street is rarely coming from vets. Instead, it's easily bought in bulk powder form from overseas distributors in China for less than \$20. (Maucione)

According to the Ophelia Team, a group of individuals that specialize in addiction treatment plans, "Proper storage practices with controlled substances should deter and thwart most such incidents, but they can still happen. Re-examining inventory stocking and security practices to meet the high standards set by the DEA is essential."

Basically by locking up that bottle of Xylazine or keeping complete records, you're taking a step in the right direction to keep people safe.

Cracking down on xylazine has also led rise to concerns such as quick access by horse owners in time of need, and many veterinarians have begun to express their concerns.

One veterinarian, Dr. Eric Gordon, a large animal vet in Ohio, expressed his concern with the drug being under such strict DEA guidelines.

"Traditionally, xylazine is one of those injectable products that I've kept right at the front of the drawer that's within the easiest reach because in some cases, you need that sedation effect very, very quickly," he said.

Gordon added that in some circumstances, animals may need to be sedated right away, and being faced with the time-consuming, legally required two-lock system to get to his xylazine supply is not ideal.

Also, many livestock and equine farm owners may need xylazine immediately to sedate their animals on-site before calling a field vet or trailering them to a clinic. It is not uncommon or unheard of for a veterinarian to leave small amounts of xylazine on site for the animal owner to keep and use for emergencies and just routine procedures that may not necessarily require a veterinarian present. If xylazine became regulated in veterinary medicine, this would no longer be an option.

Another concern many veterinarians have is inflation in the cost of xylazine because it is heavily regulated.

Dr. Jim Zelliff, founder of Allegheny Equine, said restricting the drug could add costs for vets and animal owners (Maucione).

Increasing costs could make it unavailable to some owners and breeders and be a concern for animal well-being. This decline in sales will directly affect the production of xylazine, and many legal producers may face bankruptcy.

It is commonly misinterpreted that the xylazine being used on the streets is the same stuff that the veterinarians are using to sedate large animals. This is just not the case. Typically, veterinary grade xylazine comes as a liquid in a vial, whereas the substance on the street comes in what is called "bulk xylazine." It is usually shipped in large quantities, possibly imported from another country and is in powder form, and the DEA has reported finding bottles with evidence of mixing (Hoffman).

Also, it is perceived by the public that veterinarians are the ones putting xylazine on the streets; however, according to the DEA, xylazine on the street is rarely coming from vets, (Maucione).

The future of xylazine's use in the equine veterinary medical industry remains uncertain. Many veterinarians fear inflation in prices, resulting in unfair access to the drug, resulting in accidental animal neglect and perhaps leading to the bankruptcy of their suppliers. Also, many fear that the drug not being readily available to owners and breeders for emergencies and even routine procedures may cause animal neglect or unnecessary runs to and from farms to sedate a horse. Additionally, keeping the bottles locked up tight and needing them quickly isn't the best combination.

Understandably, the safety of the public is a top concern. However, the control of xylazine in the veterinary medical industry is unfair to its members, clients, and, of course, to the horses who need it.

#### Work Cited

- The Growing Threat of Xylazine and Its Mixture with Illicit [www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/The Growing Threat of Xylazine and its Mixture with Illicit Drugs.pdf](http://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/The_Growing_Threat_of_Xylazine_and_its_Mixture_with_Illicit_Drugs.pdf). Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.
- Hoffman, Jan. "The Fight over a Drug That Is Great for Horses but Horrific for Humans." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 20

- Apr. 2023, [www.nytimes.com/2023/04/20/health/xylazine-tranq-animals.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/20/health/xylazine-tranq-animals.html).
- Maucione, Scott. "Animal Vets Fear Crackdown on Xylazine Could Have Unintended Consequences." WYPR - 88.1 FM Baltimore, 12 July 2023, [www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2023-07-12/animal-vets-fear-crackdown-on-xylazine-could-have-unintended-consequences](http://www.wypr.org/wypr-news/2023-07-12/animal-vets-fear-crackdown-on-xylazine-could-have-unintended-consequences).
- Options for Managing Colic Pain, [www.hagyard.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Colic-Pain-Management.pdf](http://www.hagyard.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Colic-Pain-Management.pdf). Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.
- "Our Staff." Allegheny Equine, [alleghenyequine.net/veterinarians/](http://alleghenyequine.net/veterinarians/). Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.
- Sibbesen, Julie, et al. "Characteristics of xylazine-related deaths in West Virginia—xylazine-related deaths." *The American Journal on Addictions*, vol. 32, no. 3, 12 Dec. 2022, pp. 309–313, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajad.13365>. Accessed 6 Mar. 2024
- Xylazine, [www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug\\_chem\\_info/Xylazine.pdf](http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_chem_info/Xylazine.pdf). Accessed 6 Mar. 2024.

## **The Hunter/Jumper Community Confronts Social License to Operate Issues: US Equestrian Horsemastership Clinic Controversy**

*By Matthew Tracy*

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then a video is worth a million people (MacFarland, 2014). The hunter/jumper industry recently came face to face with that reality when a 2.5-minute video was posted online containing a compilation of clips taken from an hour and a half training session conducted by Katie Prudent in connection with the US Equestrian Federation (USEF) Horsemastership Training Series. The clips included inflammatory statements made by Prudent, which were then alleged to constitute bullying toward the riders and advocating for the abuse of horses (Wright, 2024).

It wasn't long before that video was reposted and discussed in various forms on social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok. There was no shortage of people willing to provide their analysis and opinions on the actions of Prudent, including allegations that US Equestrian was condoning the abusive training methods.

In response to the public outcry, US Equestrian made the decision to remove the video from its archives and issued a statement condemning the language used by Prudent (Wright, 2024). The statement further noted that no complaints had been received from the clinic participants, their families or the other trainers present during that session (Wright, 2024).

The USEF Horsemastership Training Series was held Jan. 4-7. Eleven riders between the ages of 16 and 21 participated in the clinic, which provided both mounted and unmounted training sessions conducted by well-respected and highly successful trainers, including Anne Kursinski, Prudent and Bezie Madden (US Equestrian [USEF], 2023).

The highly skilled riders participating in this clinic were selected based on their advanced competition record, and many aspire to participate as US Jumping Team athletes (USEF, 2023). Each session was livestreamed and later put on the US Equestrian website for the benefit of its membership. The video in question was taken during the first of two riding sessions conducted by Prudent, which focused on gymnastics.

Gymnastics for horses involves closely spaced lower jumps used to improve strength and agility. Based on a summary of the clinic provided by *The Chronicle of the Horse*, some of the riders struggled with the skills that were being worked on during the clinic, including failing to properly leg yield during the warmup, shorten their stirrups safely and follow directions to halt in a straight line (Mandraccia, 2024).

The compilation video contains edited clips edited that often remove the context of the statement being made. Among the statements identified by the commentators as bullying toward the riders, Prudent said, "I don't want to look over and see you being jerked forward like you're a little weakling."

However, the clip fails to include the remainder of the sentence, which was, "...because you're not. Stretch up, carry your hands; don't let him tug you out of the saddle." (Wright, 2024).

There were also clips that were not necessarily taken out of context and show the frustration of the clinician, such as, "Was he supposed to turn left? You guys know what? Either you don't listen or you're bird brains. Start again. I want a left turn there." (E 113, 2023).

At one point during the session, Prudent acknowledged the demanding nature of her Training and said, "I'm hard on my riders because it's dangerous if you do not have control." (Mandraccia, 2024).

The compilation clip also includes controversial statements made directed toward the training of the horse, including, "[R]ight, don't you dare turn that corner. You crash him into that fence rather than letting him turn." and "I personally would be flipping him over backwards. He wouldn't dare go around that corner with me." (E 113, 2024).

While these statements appear to advocate for harsh training methods, it is clear from the other instruction provided by Prudent throughout the entirety of the session that the correct development of each horse was an important consideration (Mandracchia, 2024).

Supporters of Prudent have argued that the inflammatory statements included in the compilation video were more an expression of hyperbole rather than an example of harmful or dangerous training methods (Jaffer, 2024).

To educate its members on the importance of the concept of Social License to Operate (SLO) to the equestrian community, US Equestrian posted a video in the Learning Center section of its website by Chief of Sport, David O'Connor (O'Connor, 2023).

In this video O'Connor stresses the importance of communicating that equestrians have the best interests of horses in mind (O'Connor, 2023).

He further develops a test for managing these communications and said, "If you can't explain what you're doing in the middle of Central Park, you actually can't do it." (O'Connor, 2023).

While US Equestrian acknowledged the importance of SLO, this most recent controversy indicates that important people within the hunter/jumper community have not accepted this position. The blatant disregard for the concept of SLO is reflected in the following statement by Prudent. "I have this thing with my stick, and I call it 'smack and back,' she said. When a horse does a disobedience, the reason we have the stick is to use it correctly, and horses need it; they need it. All this all this, you know, animal rights activists who know nothing about training horses, they need a good licking sometimes." (E 113, 2024).

Rather than embrace the platform that Prudent was provided as a clinician in the prestigious US Equestrian Horsemastership clinic and take the opportunity to educate the public about the correct use of the crop, Prudent instead chose to publicly disparage the animal rights activists and use language which reinforces the stereotypes of the show jumping community as horse abusers.

The controversy involving Prudent appears to have forced discussions regarding the importance of Social License to Operate within the hunter/jumper community and has been the focus of several United States Hunter Jumper Association (USHJA) town hall meetings (Bailey, 2024).

### Works Cited

- Bailey, Mollie. "Welfare, Coaching, Sportsmanship: The Many Aspects of Social License to Operate."
- The Chronicle of the Horse. 2 February 2024, [https://www.chronofhorse.com/article/welfarecoaching-sportsmanship-the-many-aspects-of-social-license-to-operate/E 113 \[emd.777\]. "Live Love USEF #usef #showjumping #equestrian #equestrianfyp #fyp #equestriansoftiktok #hunterjumper #hunterjumpersoftiktok #horshow #horsemanshipclinic."](https://www.chronofhorse.com/article/welfarecoaching-sportsmanship-the-many-aspects-of-social-license-to-operate/E%20113%20[emd.777].%20%22Live%20Love%20USEF%20#usef%20#showjumping%20#equestrian%20#equestrianfyp%20#fyp%20#equestriansoftiktok%20#hunterjumper%20#hunterjumpersoftiktok%20#horshow%20#horsemanshipclinic.%22)
- TikTok, 2024, <https://www.tiktok.com/@emd.777/video/7323613521650945326>
- Jaffer, Nancy. "There's more than one viewpoint on a controversial clinic." NancyJaffer, 14 January 2024, <https://nancyjaffer.com/theres-more-than-one-viewpoint-on-a-controversial-clinic/>
- MacFarland, Scott. "If a Picture Is Worth a Thousand Words, What Is a Video Worth?" HuffPost, 19 May 2014, [www.huffpost.com/entry/if-a-picture-video-production\\_b\\_4996655](http://www.huffpost.com/entry/if-a-picture-video-production_b_4996655).
- Mandracchia, Nicole. "2024 Horsemastership Clinic: Katie Prudent Uses Gymnastics to Build Thinking Riders." The Chronicle of the Horse. 9 January 2024, <https://www.chronofhorse.com/article/2024-horsemastership-clinic-katie-prudent-usesgymnastics-to-build-thinking-riders/>
- O'Connor, David. Social License, US Equestrian, Sept. 2023, [www.usef.org/learningcenter/videos/sociallicense#:~:text=Olympic%20equestrian%20David%20O'Connor,interests%20of%20horses%20in%20mind.](http://www.usef.org/learningcenter/videos/sociallicense#:~:text=Olympic%20equestrian%20David%20O'Connor,interests%20of%20horses%20in%20mind.)
- US Equestrian [USEF]. "US Equestrian Announces Jumping Athletes for 2024 USEF Horsemastership Training Series." 7 Dec. 2023, [www.usef.org/media/press-releases/us-equestrian-announcesjumping-athletes-for-2024](http://www.usef.org/media/press-releases/us-equestrian-announcesjumping-athletes-for-2024).
- Wright, Melissa. "USEF Responds to Katie Prudent Clinic Controversy." The Chronicle of the Horse.
- 19 January 2024, <https://www.chronofhorse.com/article/usef-responds-to-katie-prudent-cliniccontroversy/#:~:text=The%20U.S.%20Equestrian%20Federation%20has,the%20federation%20said%20this%20week>





Martin-Gatton  
College of Agriculture,  
Food and Environment

## **Ag Equine Programs**

N212 Ag Sciences Building North  
Lexington, KY 40546-0091  
Office: (859) 257-2226  
[equine@uky.edu](mailto:equine@uky.edu)  
[www.uky.edu/equine](http://www.uky.edu/equine)