



Horse Council Courier

The Horsemen's Council of Illinois (HCI) newsletter dedicated to promoting a healthy horse industry statewide through information and education.

Chris Cox, Yvonne Barteau to Headline 25th Anniversary Illinois Horse Fair

Texas horseman Chris Cox – 3 time colt starting world champion, and Chicago horsewoman, Yvonne Barteau - FEI trainer, competitor and instructor, USDF Bronze, Silver, and Gold Medalist, will headline the *East Meets West* themed 2014 Illinois Horse Fair, March 7 – 9 at the Illinois State Fairgrounds in Springfield. The Illinois Horse Fair is sponsored by Purina Feed, Midway Trailer Sales, Illinois Farm Bureau, and Kubota USA, and produced by the Horsemen's Council of Illinois.

Chris Cox has had a lifetime of education with the greatest, most important teacher of all, the horse. Raised on a cattle ranch in the wilds of Australia, Chris had opportunities that most horsemen of this day and age never experience. With only horses for transportation, Chris learned at an early age how to appreciate and distinguish the abilities and traditions of the great men and horses around him. Influenced in his early years by both English and Western traditions, Chris has implemented a style and technique that can be applied universally between both horse worlds. A common sense, straightforward approach allows the average horseman, as well as the advanced rider, insight into horse behavior and leads them towards that ultimate goal...a versatile and useful partnership between human and horse.



Chris Cox

Yvonne Barteau has dedicated her life to understanding horses and preparing them for their careers whatever that might be. "I have been in the horse business all my life and have trained and competed horses in everything from Team Penning and barrels, to Standardbred racing, from 100 mile endurance rides, to Equine Theatre to Grand Prix Dressage." Yvonne has trained horses to the Grand Prix Level and has won numerous USDF Horse of the Year titles as well as winning CDI and FEI classes around the United States. The author of *Ride the Right Horse*, she is a sought-after instructor and clinician as well as an authority on recognizing equine personality types and targeted training strategies to communicate with particular temperaments.



Yvonne Barteau

Horse lovers of all stripes will enjoy diversity as never before at Illinois Horse Fair's Silver Anniversary celebration!

Illinois Horse Fair annually offers training and riding clinics by nationally and internationally known trainers, seminars by horse experts, great shopping with 140 vendors selling all things equestrian. Programming includes Breed and Sport Demos, Stallion Row and Parade, HorsesForSale Aisles, the All-Youth Judging Trials, Young Riders Area, and Queen/Princess Contests.

Information on clinicians, schedules, and tickets will be posted at www.HorsemensCouncil.org/HorseFair as it is finalized. Those interested in having information emailed to them may sign up for Horse Fair Updates on the same home page or can participate in the mounting excitement through our Facebook page www.facebook.com/IllinoisHorseFair.

For exhibitor information contact Karen Freese, Manager, at (217) 677-2267 or kfreese@horsemenscouncil.org.

A special thank you to our sponsors:



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President's Corner



Transitions

Even here in Southern Illinois where the seasons are slower to change, the transition from summer to autumn is underway. We have been blessed with some crisp nights and gorgeous days; that combined with a knocked-back bug population (well, except for the spiders, who are definitely getting ready for winter!) makes conditions perfect for getting out and enjoying your horses! This is the time for the big end-of-season shows, foxhunt season gets underway, and for horse lovers to gather at bonfires, barn dances and trail rides big and small.

At HCI, we are making transitions as well, designed to better serve you, our members, and the horse community in general. We have heard you and we want to hear more! For example, you should have been contacted about filling out our trails survey; if not, please go to the HCI website (<http://www.horsemenscouncil.org>) and let your voice be heard! We will be closing the survey soon so don't delay. Your input will help us when working with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and other agencies to keep horses on the trails and to open more Illinois' trails to horseback riding access. We are responding to your comments and suggestions from our Horse Fair survey, and have been working earlier than ever on the 2014 Illinois Horse Fair, March 7-9 (<http://www.horsemenscouncil.org/HorseFair/>). Bigger and better changes are afoot there. Our theme, "East Meets West" reflects our inclusive attitude. Watch for announcements asking for your volunteer efforts at the Fair, and please give of your time and energy. We want to draw a wider audience for our expanded program, so we need you to encourage your horse-loving friends near St. Louis and Chicago to spend a day or two at the Horse Fair next year!

Your HCI Directors are taking a look at ways to present a fresh new image for HCI and to increase our reach into the horse community. This issue of the Courier is the first of half our issues that will be expanded and delivered in an electronic-only format. We hope you like the larger selection of articles and news. We would love to do our part to become more "green", so if you would like to receive all of your Courier editions in electronic format, please let us know by dropping us an email (hci@horsemenscouncil.org). We will be launching other changes with the New Year—which, by the way, is also the time for membership renewal. HCI cannot be effective without your help. That begins with your membership, but it continues with your engagement. Get involved, give us feedback (we post items and ask for your opinions on our Horsemen's Council of Illinois facebook page), join one of our committees (Trails; Health, Welfare, and Education; Legislation; Racing) ask for a HCI representative to present at one of your saddle club or other horse association meetings.

Fall reminds me of football, which makes a good analogy for HCI and our mission to protect and serve the Illinois horse industry. In football, the idea is to move the ball down the field toward the goal (which, sadly, is all I really understand about football). You can't move that ball with the players sitting on the sidelines. HCI exists for you, the horse-loving public. We exist to serve, but we can't do that effectively without your participation. This fall and throughout the rest of the year, please spare us some time. Roll up your sleeves and pitch in to help us be better stewards for the horses and the equestrian lifestyle that is our collective passion.



The Financial Importance of Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners to the State of Illinois' Revenue Stream

Written By: Gail Radke

Do you know how much it cost to raise a Thoroughbred foal from conception to their first start as a two year old? Have you ever thought of the far-reaching impact that this product has on the Agra Business for the State of Illinois?

Our horse operation is a prime example of living the 24/7, 365 days a year commitment to the business we love and work hard at. We live in Kansas, foal, train and race in Illinois and have supported numerous co-dependent industries in Illinois for over 40 years. If you compound this along with several hundred other out of state Breeders and Owners and then combine it with the in-State Breeders and Owners there is a pile of currency being exchanged for services. Whether an in state or an out of state, the Breeders and Owners are woven into the very fabric of the Agra Industry and provide an economic engine for all co-dependent industries. We infuse the revenue stream by taking the money earned at the racetracks and directly inject it back into the local and rural communities in the State of Illinois by supporting jobs, farms and mom and pop operations.

The 1975 Horse Racing Act identified the Breeders and Owners as the heart of the Illinois Racing Industry. Breeders and Owners were uppermost in the minds of the Acts crafters. They are listed in the very first paragraph and sited in numerous locations as being fundamental and a vital component within the Agricultural Business.

Horses in Illinois are entrenched in the Illinois agriculture. They consume approximately 500,000 tons of hay and grain worth nearly \$100 million each year. The Illinois horse industry produces goods and services valued at \$1.2 billion and is about 5th in the nation behind California, New York, Florida and Texas in contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The cost of raising a foal from conception through weanling, yearling

to training as a two year old for in-state Breeders and Owners is approximately \$25,000 and out of state Breeders and Owners is approximately \$36,000. Raising the Thoroughbred baby averages out to be about \$30,000 in that time frame. This does not include the stallion service fee.

To the average person this one statistic may sound hard to believe. It is true. I was just plain curious so I sat down a few years ago and calculated all our horse business bills related to a group of 9 babies during that time frame. Another reason I took on this task was to provide documentation to Illinois Legislators showing the genuine need to support an extremely important segment of the Agra Industry. What I found of interest was the service providers we used were located across the state. Another observation during this analysis was the very real and looming potential of a shift by Breeders and Owners to move their operations into the surrounding states that provide a friendlier and more lucrative atmosphere for horse racing, namely racinos. This possible shift could produce a revenue leakage into the Border States that would jeopardize the solvency of co-dependent industries.

Here is a partial list of those service providers we utilized during the time frame the stats were compiled. We continue to use these great folks.

Gallagher Farms/foaling, Walnut Hill, IL

Boehm/farrier, New Douglas, IL
Coogan Farm/foaling, Mulkey, IL
EQ Shoeing/farrier, Reddick, IL
Carlos Sillva/training, Rolling Meadows, IL

Dr. Beasley/DVM, Eldorado, IL

Helman Racing/training,
Bolingbrook, IL

Douglas Vet Clinic, Salem, IL

Rick Lacey/training, Mt. Vernon, IL

Dr. Morgan/DVM, Millstadt, IL

Brandon Meier/jockey, Cicero, IL

Gilman & Assoc./DVM,
Barrington, IL

Ibendale Feed/Nashville, IL

Furlong Feed, Mundelein, IL

Holsapple/farrier, Rolling Meadows, IL

Prairie Town Feed, Dorsey, IL

Agri Pride/feed, Nashville, IL

McClasky Feed, Collinsville, IL

Fatherings Vet Supply, Odin, IL

Oros Brothers/tack, Cicero, IL

Horse & Farm, Springfield, IL

Sharon's Tack, Collinsville, IL

Brandenburg/farrier, Caseyville, IL

Baker's Turf/supplements,
Collinsville, IL

Q Secret Ranch/layups, Reddick, IL

The following graph shows a clear picture of the co-dependent industries utilized in raising a foal. The second attachment on Economic Impact shows 850 horses generating a revenue stream into the Illinois economy of \$25,500,000. This was the Illinois foal crop for 2008. The foal crop for 2012 was 429 a drop in the revenue stream down to \$12,870,000.

continued on page 4

Economic Impact & Revenue Stream

From conception through 2 year old, prior to racing.



There can be little doubt that the Horse Industry is clearly one of the economic engines of significant value to the State. It is the Breeders and Owners who shore up the economy by utilizing services from other industries and extend a financial benefit vital to the healthy growth of the Agra economy. Yet recent stats show a dramatic decrease in the number of foals being born in Illinois and in the number of residing stallions. Breeders that can't sustain his/her business because of a declining industry mean jobs lost and farms up for sale.

Horses are leaving Illinois for better purses and better breeder incentives in surrounding states. The health of the industry impacts many layered segments. Farms, breeding, owning, training, feed stores, veterinarians, farriers, etc. all have a stake in the success of the racing industry. We are facing a tough time unless we achieve a level playing field with surrounding states. To help revitalize our industry and remain fiscally sound, we need legislation that keeps the original intent of

the 1975 Horse Racing Act. Legislation that will benefit all of the Agra Industry is coming up for a vote again soon. Let us hope that this time around a positive vote will happen and the industry can once again be on a firm track.

Gail Radke serves on the Executive Board of the Illinois Thoroughbred Breeders and Owners Foundation. She and her husband Dr. Richard Radke, own and operate Asiel Stable, LLC. They have been honored five times as Breeder of the Year and have bred numerous Illinois Champions and bred the 2007 Illinois Horse of the Year.

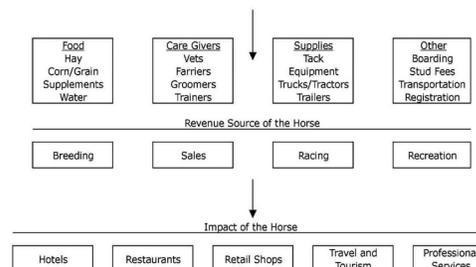
Committee involvement is what makes HCI effective. If you would like to serve on HCI's Racing Committee, send us an email at: hci@horsemencouncil.org

HCI members can comment on committee forums through our website at: <http://hci.wildapricot.org/CommitteeForums>



Asiel Stable Foals

Economics of Caring for the TB Race Horse



From Trailer to Trail

Ron Rhoades, HCI Vice President

The trails beckon as we are in what most of us feel is the primo trail riding season, some close to home, some many miles away.

We are not the only ones sharing the trails. In addition to the usual hikers (I have even run across people pushing baby strollers deep in the woods – now THAT is dedicated hiking!) and bikers, hunters get added into the mix.

Be sure and check your destination for potential closures. Some happen the beginning of October, some at different periods over the next several months. The Trails Handbook sold by HCI <http://hci.wildapricot.org/TrailsHandbook> lists general guides for closures in most places, keeping in mind that these closures may change from year to year. You can also visit the various agency websites and/or call their offices to obtain last minute changes to schedules.

The aspect of riding with hunters in an area brings concern for one's safety.

A common method to help protect oneself from being the unwitting recipient of a projectile is to wear protective reflective attire. Some people with a higher level of paranoia elevate their precautions by wearing bells in an effort to scare wildlife from their path and warn hunters and bikers of their approach. I guess this is a viable solution if one doesn't mind antagonizing the delicate inter-user balance but it would seem that one of the goals of trail riding would be to see nature up-close and personal for ultimate enjoyment.

Don't bypass your local venues over the years. Park and trail character changes with mother nature's ongoing influence. I experienced such when recently revisiting a (to me) small local park for a morning's ride – the Clinton Lake Recreational Center. While it is now closed to equestrians for bow hunting season (admittedly a rare event for Illinois parks), the trees have

matured and rerouting has occurred over the years to transform the 2 or 3 hour open space ride into a pleasant pine forest trek with shimmering lake vistas and hilly terrain (at least hilly by flat corn-country standards) – my memory was jolted.

Of utmost importance is to just get out and ride and enjoy opportunities, weather, fall colors and, most importantly, a chance to be with our equine companion!

Remember, in the words of Winston Churchill, no time is wasted that is spent on the back of a horse! 🐾



Author Ron Rhoades and Blue on the trail.

The Final Goodbye

Written By: Lea Ann Koch, owner Koch Farm Quarter Horses

Just last month, I was forced to say The Final Goodbye to a very special horse. Letting go is hard enough when death comes naturally and peacefully at the end of a long life. When as caregivers to our horses, we have to make the decision to humanely end the life of a suffering horse, the process can be even more difficult.

My father was a huge influence on my life. He was a veterinarian, horseman and a very practical and wise man. He taught me about horses and so much more. Having to say goodbye to the loves of our life is never easy be they human or animal. Although Dad has passed on, his wisdom still helps me every day.

Growing up as the daughter of a veterinarian, you see a lot of trauma and you witness a lot of grief. I saw many people who, when faced with the decision of put their beloved horse down, would turn to my Dad for wisdom. They would ask him how to know when it was time. Dad always told them “you can see it in their eyes.”

Whether you call it putting down, putting to sleep, helping them cross the rainbow bridge, or some other euphemism, it all boil downs to the same thing - you are ending their life, plain and simple. This may seem a little blunt, but it is not uncaring. There is really no sugar coating it, in the final analysis death is death. Death is a natural part of life, and something that we will all experience one day. If you have a lot of animals, you will necessarily experience a lot of death. Familiarity with the inevitable, in this case, doesn't necessarily make it easier.

Unfortunately I have experienced death in many different forms through my years of owning horses. When I was 8 years old my first Saddlebred horse was killed in a barn fire. I knew something was up when Dad got an early morning call and as he rushed out, I was told I couldn't go. Later that day, I was called to Dad's office where he broke the news of the fire and that Doc hadn't made it - neither had any of the other horses in the barn. I was devastated. Although I had witnessed the death of animals before, this time it was personal. I reacted like any little girl who loved her horse – I cried for hours and thought that my broken heart would never mend. I remember seeing in a magazine a memorial to a famous Saddlebred who had died, so I

decided that was what I was going to do for Doc. Going through the process of making that memorial helped me deal with the pain of my loss. As they say, funerals are for the living – at eight years old, I began to understand that.

A couple years later, my aging Hackney pony, who I rode every day, developed kidney problems. Dad knew he had to put my pony down. He thought he would spare me as much as possible and do it while I was at school, that way my pony's body would be hauled away by time I got home. Well, we got out of school early that day. I got off the bus and ran to the barn as usual ...and I saw my pony lying there. Would it have been easier to participate in his end? I don't know, probably not. But seeing him lying there dead was certainly a terrible shock. I was not ready to let my companion go, and I had never seen a dead animal's body hauled off by the renderer. In those days, and in some places still today, it was customary to put the money to pay the renderer in a jar and put it on the animal. Well I didn't want my pony hauled away, so I took the jar and hid it and I stood guard over my pony. When the man arrived to pick him up, my Dad had to be called to pull me away. I can't say if knowing what to expect would have changed my reaction or made the parting any easier; I do know that I still get the creeps when that rendering truck pulls up my drive.

Later in my life, when my beloved Quarter Horse gelding died, I thought my world had ended. We had been through so much together; he was someone I could share all of my problems with and he was always there for me. I had shown him all over the country and he had won world and national titles for me, and broken AQHA records. I had since retired him and he lived in the place of honor on our farm. Once, some reporters came to interview us and Dad told them that he didn't want to be around if anything ever happened to that horse, because he would most likely have to bury me with the horse. He wasn't far off the mark, as I had to be given tranquilizers to help with the emotional trauma when he died. You see, it was one of those totally unexpected things that you are unprepared for facing. I left him standing in his doorway one day when I went to town and I returned home to find him, dead, in the same place. Dad said he likely had a heart

attack and never knew what hit him. That should have been a comfort, and looking back on it later, I am grateful that he didn't suffer, but at the time I felt like I had been run over by a truck. A good friend put it in perspective for me; he said, “that horse loved you so much he did you a favor by going like he did. You never had to look in his eyes and make that decision - he did it for you.”

My most recent experience of having to say goodbye was especially rough. “Raquel” was my best producing broodmare. She gave me my first home-bred reserve world champion and national high point mare. Rachel was down in the pasture when we found her, unable to get up. We gave her medicine but she didn't rally, we called the vet who thought that she had a broken shoulder and internal injuries. When finally got her up and to the barn, we were hopeful, but she crashed during the night. When I entered the stall, she raised her head and nickered at me - I saw in her eyes that she was telling me she had fought the good fight, and she knew I had tried everything for her, but it was time to say goodbye. I grew up in the veterinary business, so you would think that I should have been able to be there as Raquel was put down, but I just couldn't. Losing her was like losing my father all over again. You see, my Dad bought Raquel when she was 4 weeks old. He said that he knew she would be great because she was born on his birthday. Raquel was raised by Dad's best friend, Bob, who came to work for me and kinda looked after me after Dad passed away. Despite my grief, and through the fight to save Raquel, I kept hearing my Dad say “the eyes will tell you when it's time” and they did. When that horrible day was over, I sat and cried with Bob. I told him that I heard Dad throughout the day, giving me advice. Dad had a saying that, although gruff, really sums up the nature of living on a farm and making animals a part of your life. He said, “if you're going to have livestock, you're going to have dead stock.” Dad was practical; he told it like it was. I guess I come by that trait naturally. That doesn't mean that either of us didn't care deeply for our animals. I still cry when anything dies, but thanks to Dad he helped me prepare for those days when The Final Goodbye has to be said. 

Eight Things That Might Surprise You About Trail Riding

Logan Park, Ph.D. and C.J. Jones
Department of Forestry, Southern Illinois University

1. Trail riding drives local economies

Funding for trail construction and maintenance is becoming more tightly managed over time. One major consequence is the raft of studies completed recently to figure out how much trail riding is worth to local economies. The typical answer: a lot. Direct impact--dollars flowing into the local economy from the horse owner--can range from hundreds to a thousand or more dollars per horse per month. Boarding, vet bills, and recently even hay start to add up quickly, right? You might feel like you're the proud owner of a "horse-shaped hole you keep throwing money at" but it makes a difference to local businesses.

Indirect impacts--dollars in horse-related businesses spent to employees, suppliers, etc.--get spent in your local economy numerous times before flowing elsewhere. So the indirect impact is often much larger than the direct impact. This helps to keep communities vibrant and economically active wherever you ride or board.

As horse-based recreation continues to rise, communities around the United States are investing in their economies by building trails and holding special events. One example is the equestrian adventure recreation events in Knott County, Kentucky. By analyzing the monetary impact of out-of-town visitors during a single trail riding event, researchers discovered that the equestrian tourism brought an estimated \$1.2M into the local economy, with an impact of more than \$350,000.00 on personal income.

2. Want to ride trails in national parks? So does everyone else.

A 2012 study by the US Forest Service forecasts that equestrian-based recreation will be one of the top five activities experiencing growth on park lands in the near future. Other researchers predict that by 2050, participation in horseback riding will grow throughout the entire United States, especially in the South.

3. Great trail rides heal your soul and body

Research studies around the world are finding that horse time is healing time. Therapeutic equestrian recreation is being trialed for developing coping skills in kids growing up in homes with

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Benefits of Membership in the Horsemen's Council of Illinois

As a member of the Horsemen's Council of Illinois, you may take advantage of a host of discount programs offered through the American Horse Council (AHC) and our insurance provider, Association Resource Group (ARG).

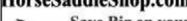
AHC Saving Plus will provide you discounts with John Deere, Sherwin-Williams, OfficeMax, and Prescription Drug Card. You can buy products directly from these companies at greatly reduced prices -- no minimums required!

Below is a sample of discounts available through ARG. For details on how these valuable Horsemen's Council of Illinois member benefits can help you save money, go to www.horsecouncil.org/ahc-advantage-plan and www.associationresource.net.

Automatic Member Benefits go to www.associationresource.net to click through on your benefits

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www.associationresource.net

Five Characteristics A Farm Teaches and Employer's Want

Betty Brennan, President, Taylor Studios

I grew up on a crop and cattle farm in Streator, IL as my dad's helper. We baled hay, fixed fences, walked beans, painted, cared for pastures, mowed, worked fields and more. In the winter we fed the cattle by hand. One thing we fed is silage, or smelly, rotting, chopped up corn. Climbing up the narrow ladder into a concrete silo, I would, pitchfork by pitchfork throw it down the chute. At the bottom of this ladder chute there was an elevator, which moved the scoops of silage into the back of the truck. Then, the truckloads were pitched into troughs. Often you would be sweating up in the silo and freezing when feeding the cattle. Regardless of how we felt, the animals need tending. The work on a farm is never ending

One benefit of growing up on a cattle farm is I could easily convince my parents that I needed a horse. After working my way through several ponies, I finally got a real horse, Charlotte, when I was in 7th grade. Charlotte had several foals. Normally, Charlotte lived in the pasture, except when she foaled. Then, I hauled straw from across the barnyard to her stall in an old barn. I was responsible for cleaning her stall, training her foals, and providing daily treatments when she was injured.

As an employer, I am disappointed more people don't grow up on old-fashioned farms or have the responsibility of taking care of horses. There is much concern from business owners that we will not have the traits that farm life often teaches in our up and coming work force. The younger generations seem to be more protected, coddled, and lack the independence earlier youth enjoyed. These are characteristics farm life teaches and employers crave:

Work Ethic - On the farm you have to make hay when the sun shines, animals need care 365 days a year and their needs come before your own. You learn a work ethic as a matter of course on a farm. My first paying job outside of the family farm was at a horse stable

cleaning stalls. I overheard my boss tell my friends, "Betty will be successful." She could see my willingness to work hard as a trait of potential future success.

Efficiency - The more you get done the better the farm produces. In my situation my parents gave me tasks and once they were done, then I could play. I learned to get things done fast. Today my goal is to spend time on a horse's back. I make the feeding and maintenance aspect of a horse farm as efficient as possible, and I carry this over to my business.

Problem Solving - I often had to mow very large fields of grass. One of these fields was about an hour tractor drive away. My mom often gave us a gallon jug of water with ice to carry with us. On one particular drive to this field my tractor stopped, overheated. I used the jug of water to correct the situation. It worked fine the rest of the day. It was a long, hot day of mowing. I knocked on a neighbor's door for more drinking water. Since they were not home, I helped myself to their hose. On the farm, you are often on your own to figure things out.

Independence - I am shocked by the lack of independence I see in today's youth. Maybe it is the structured play, parents scared to just let their kids roam or parents just not teaching it. We certainly learned to figure things out first before asking for help on the farm.

Creativity - I don't think anyone ever taught me how to saddle a horse. I believe my first attempt at saddling Buck, my little Shetland pony, was when I was five. After I saddled him, I tied him up and went in the house for lunch. When I came out again the saddle was hanging under his belly. Eventually, I figured it out; thank you for your patience, Buck. Creative problem solving is essential on the farm and in business.

I believe kids that own horses will have more of these traits and soft skills going into adulthood, and these will translate to the kind of work ethic employers crave.

"A version of this first appeared in www.taylorstudios.com/blog."

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How many horses do you own? _____
_____ at home _____ boarding stable

Individual Membership Dues (includes \$1,000,000 insurance coverage) **\$49/yr**
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Organization _____
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Organization Membership Dues: \$50/yr.

Make check payable and mail to:



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www.HorsemensCouncil.org

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Permit 500

Eight Things That Might Surprise You About Trail Riding *continued from page 6*

domestic violence, nonverbal communication skills in kids with autism, anger management skills in teens, even posture and muscle symmetry in children with cerebral palsy. Besides, in some places this is referred to as "hippotherapy," and what kid could say no to that? Consult with your medical professional before proceeding.

4. The earliest civilizations rose along riding trails.

Rome wasn't built in a day, right? As it turns out, villages in the Eurasian steppes had a five thousand year head start on the Romans. Smithsonian archaeologists have begun to paint a picture of the first large-scale interconnection of far-flung villages between the Carpathian mountains and Mongolia. By looking at the proportion of female horse bones to male horse bones found in the remains of these ancient settlements, they believe that the Botai people began domesticating, riding, and even eating horses as a matter of survival against the 9-month long winters. Horses' high mobility triggered trading and information relay across previously impossible distances. Today, the Kazakh people still put huge cultural value on riding. (More info: links.logan-park.org/index.php/?i=10)

5. Exploding trails are bad.

The glue holding trails together is a cocktail of gravity, decomposed organic matter, and--believe it or not--a natural kind

of static electricity around clay particles. Wile. E. Coyote can testify that gravity is mighty powerful (anvils, anyone?), but even gravity must bow to the explosive force of the hoof wall's bearing edge. Every hoof placement chisels away at the compacted surface of constructed trails, making proper trail construction and regular maintenance a must. Your alternative is to ride cross-country, where the effects of each horse are spread thinly and evenly across the terrain, and sod can resiliently rebound. The trick is avoiding where others have ridden recently. Easy on paper, challenging in the field.

6. Safe-riding trails constantly factor the horse's needs in.

Bends in the trail are key design features used to drain water quickly without the use of ditches (a tripping hazard). The curve, however, must be gentle enough that your mount can always see at least a hundred feet fore and aft. Surprises stoke your horse's occasional desire to see if you can achieve low orbit.

Along the same lines, a great riding trail avoids windy gaps. These spots tend to have more moving shadows and rocky overhangs that look like a great lounge spot for predators that make horses antsy.

7. Great water crossings are tough.

On one hand, splashing through a ford is pretty much the point of hot and sticky summertime rides. On the other, that sediment getting churned up under the merry hoof does two things. First, it can shut down

decent downstream fishing--filling in the nooks and crannies needed by grubs and larvae that fish snack on. Second, the germs horses push out with the remains of last night's dinner live on in that sediment for up to a decade. Here in the U.S.A., we know better than to let water-borne disease happen on our watch. Solution: bridges with opaque decking.

8. Epic ride opportunities are all around you.

The Pacific Crest Trail (PCT) is one of many long-distance trails available to serious trail riders (and hikers too). It winds a 2650-mile nonstop Mexico-to-Canada parade of every kind of scenery from barren desert to snow-capped Sierra alpine peaks and cerulean crater lakes. Looking for a rewarding, life-changing challenge? Thousands of volunteers work with the National Park Service and the Pacific Crest Trail Association to build and maintain the PCT, update maps and guidebooks, and monitor road-crossings so that the trail is accessible to you and your equine companion. 

