

Horse Council Courier

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

The Illinois Horse Fair Celebrates 25th Anniversary with Multi-faceted East Meets West Event

The Horsemen's Council of Illinois celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Illinois Horse Fair March 7-9th along with more than 10,000 attendees! Spectators enjoyed clinics and demonstrations by Chris Cox, Yvonne Barteau, Terry Myers, Liz Graves, Scott McKinsey, Susan White, Steve Kutie, Jennifer Kotylo, Tim Boyer, Nikki Klein, Patrick Keane and many others as well as Breed/Sport Demonstrations, Stallion presentations, and HorsesForSale.



Chris Cox colt starting at the 2014 Illinois Horse Fair
 Photo by Bormida Photography

A first at the Illinois Horse Fair, Lyle East showed his world-class stock dogs working cattle immediately following the Scott McKinsey cutting horse demonstrations giving spectators the opportunity to see the intricacies of each sport. The weekend also included popular demonstrations by Land of Lincoln Farriers Association, University of Illinois Vet School, Midwest Horseshoeing School, Mid-Rivers Equine Centre and a highly diverse speaker program on nearly every equine topic from holistic horse keeping, to marketing using social media, to

nutrition and beyond.

For the second year many vendors were housed in the historic Exposition Building while many new vendors were added in the heated barns at the Livestock Center. A new tram service was enjoyed by many spectators to move around the expanded site. Additional heating was also added to improve the comfort of our spectators and exhibitors. Several vendors have reported that this was their "best year ever!" at the event.

The Illinois Horse Fair is proud to have Purina Equine Feed, Midway Trailer Sales, Illinois Farm Bureau, Kubota USA, and Green Dodge/Ram Trucks as presenting sponsors and Barrington Saddlery, Steak 'n Shake, and Ariat as evening show sponsors. Produced by the Horsemen's Council of Illinois with a largely volunteer workforce, the success of the Illinois Horse Fair allows HCI to advocate for equine related activities in Springfield and throughout the state for all horsemen regardless of breed or discipline.

Dates for the 2015 event have been set for March 6-8th at the Illinois State Fairgrounds, Springfield. For 2015 exhibitor information or to find out how to volunteer at the Illinois Horse Fair, contact Karen Freese, Manager, at (217) 677-2267 or kfreese@horsemenscouncil.org.

WANTED

Operations Facilitator

Horsemen's Council of Illinois

The Horsemen's Council of Illinois (HCI) is seeking a motivated, self-directed person to facilitate the daily operations of HCI. This is a full time, home-based position requiring extensive knowledge of the horse industry, public relations skills, around-the-clock telephone availability, broad computer skills, some night and weekend work and some travel expectations.

Candidate should have excellent interpersonal relations skills, be proficient with basic computer software such as MS Office, capable of basic website maintenance, maintain membership database and desktop publishing. Good writing and information research skills are required. Willingness to master template-driven software programs and create regular electronic news releases is expected. Experience with, or willingness to learn QuickBooks and basic accounting procedures. Basic financial management and preparation of monthly financial reports is expected. Experience with marketing through social networking is desirable. Ability to plan and execute meetings and conferences is required. Interaction with Board of Directors and coordination of travel and presentations by Directors is required.

Address questions to: sking@siu.edu

Applicants should submit a letter of application, detailed resume and salary requirements to:

Horsemen's Council of Illinois
 c/o Sheryl King, PhD, President
 66 Caretaker Rd
 Makanda, IL 62958



Lyle East and Scott McKinsey working cattle at the 2014 Illinois Horse Fair
 Photo courtesy of Bormida Photography



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President's Corner

Salute to Working Horses



An old English Proverb, certainly written by a rich Lord, says: "Only fools and horses work for a living". Well, call me a fool and call this a fool's errand, but I salute the world's workers - humans, horses and other creatures great and small. They built our human civilization and we owe them our deepest respect and gratitude. In my opinion, we also owe them the dignity and benefit of a job. Let me explain.

Animals were originally domesticated in order to serve one or more human needs. Horses in particular were domesticated for their strength, athleticism and loyalty. Before the industrial revolution, horses were society's major source of power. An enduring testament to the essential contributions of the horse is our measurement of work units in horsepower. Horses worked at nearly every occupation, both menial and noble. Humans worked as their partners and together they built America. And horses were not just at work on America's farms; they were to be found in great numbers in every city in our nation. Even today the partnership of the working horse and human is not extinct - many of us see it often, some of us still depend on it.

Horses have a long history contributing to building and servicing the city of Chicago. They represent a proud tradition of workers that provided transport, delivered our mail and our groceries, put out our fires, transported doctors to the ailing, policed our streets, provided our power and planted, harvested, processed and delivered our food. The city of Chicago would not presently exist without the horse. Before the advent of the "horseless carriage", there were 80,000 horses to be found transporting humans, cargo and plying the trades on Chicago's streets. Before the electric cable car, before Chicago's L, there were horse drawn streetcars.

Although rare in numbers compared with 1910, horses still protect and serve in America's Windy City. The 31 horses of our Chicago Mounted Police unit help with our law enforcement in ways no human policeman can duplicate. And they can be found periodically on Chicago's main streets and in her quiet corners. Horses are always one of the most popular parts of parades, and

horses have been woven into the Chicago tourism industry.

Powerful Chicago alderman, Edward Burke has proposed an ordinance that would ban horse drawn carriages from their northern Michigan Avenue home. He cites "animal cruelty" as his concern. In reality, the reason may have more to do with expensive Chicago real estate than equine welfare. Alderman Burke has solicited no council from horse experts or scientists specializing in equine welfare to evaluate the horses or practices in Chicago. He is endorsing the extreme views animal rights believers- that all animals share the same rights as humans and which ultimately prohibit animal ownership of all kinds. Their credo is "a rat is a dog is a boy". (Of course, rats eat their own and if an animal equals a human, what does that say about the lifestyle of our rat friends?)

When humans domesticated animals, we took upon ourselves the sacred duty to see to their needs, treat them kindly and to respect them, each according to their type. Horse drawn carriages are some of the most regulated businesses in the city. Horses that serve the carriage trade in Chicago must adhere to a strict code of care and humane treatment - a level of care that a significant number of humans in the city of Chicago do not enjoy (read them for yourself at: www.cityofchicago.org/dam/city/depts/bacp/rulesandregs/rulesforhorsesdrawncarriages.pdf). Carriage horses are limited to certain parts of the city and can work no more than a 6-hour workday, with a 15-minute break every hour, and they cannot work during rush hour. They must be adequately fed, watered, housed and groomed daily. They cannot work under challenging environmental conditions. They must see a doctor every three months and have mandated farrier care. If we insist on equating animals to humans, what human wouldn't want those working conditions?

These horses are ambassadors for our lovely and vibrant city of Chicago. What sense would it make to mistreat them? Could it be that work is being confused with cruelty? Since when is working for a living akin to abuse? Does anyone else see a distinct double standard afoot here - if a horse equals a human, why do we raise and train our own children to appreciate the value of hard work, and then prevent our equine brethren from

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From Trailer to Trail - Stand Up and Be Counted!

Ronald J. Rhoades, HCI VP/Trails Committee chair

It's official. Horsemen aren't noticed enough. Not given enough credit for what we do. Nor how much we contribute to our neighborhood, our town, our state, our nation! It isn't all on horseback. It's where we live, what we eat, where we frequent. The type of phone we use. Or don't use. How often we need to wash our vehicle. Not just the outside, but the inside as well!

Just think about the last time you picked up a piece of trash laying on the ground and cursed the vagrant for throwing it there in the first place. Just because it was in your pasture and you didn't want your horse accidentally ingesting it doesn't make any difference – you still picked up someone else's trash! Or when was the last time a friend borrowed your truck (maybe even your truck AND horse trailer) to move his belongings, or your kid's youth group borrowed it to move props for a school play. If you didn't have a horse (or horseS!) would you have the truck in the first place? Let alone the horse TRAILER?

And exercise! Not only do WE get the exercise carrying 50# bags of feed, 35# saddles, collections of bridles, girths, halters, blankets, buckets, etc. but we get to flex our muscles grooming our horse and even chasing them around in the pasture (slogging through Illinois snow and mud!) to get them INTO the barn so we can begin the whole process! And it's not only OUR exercise! Who hasn't seen the advertisements encouraging youth (and everyone for that matter) to get outdoors? And our avocation not only gives exercise to us, but to a multitude of others as well. Just think of how easy it is to get kids to come out and look at a horse – can't do that in a classroom or in front of a monitor! And that means adults have to accompany them. Someone has to

drive them... And it doesn't even happen in an expensive gymnasium or school building.

How many tax dollars and fees does our avocation create? Revisit the truck and trailer business. Not only do we purchase them in the first place (and we all know the price difference between an economy car and a TRUCK – and heaven knows we have to throw in the price of the trailer as well), but we have to license them EACH YEAR. No one time expenditure (read – impact to our wallet) here! Our avocation filters down to a large multiplying effect on everyone and everything around us.

HCI recently completed a TRAIL HORSE survey distributed ELECTRONICALLY to as many people as we could find via email and Facebook – hopefully it found its way to your "inbox" (and you didn't delete it!). So for starters, this means that (in general), the "younger" segment of our society found it (maybe I should just say younger thinking). It gives us all lots to think about and promote.

Basically, the number 1 is a powerful number! ONE horse brings \$150,000 to a community in annual GDP impact. GDP is Gross Domestic Product – or – the number of DOLLARS of spending that is created! ONE horse generates almost \$2,000,000 per county in annual GDP! Yep – that's a lot of 0's! \$2 MILLION! All together, these trail horses contribute almost \$200 MILLION to Illinois's economy – nothing to sneeze at!

This is generated by all the aspects involved in the care and keeping of a horse. From feed purchases to vehicle purchase, fuel and maintenance to land and building purchases. Statewide, there is an average of almost 1400 horses per county (there are 102 counties in Illinois) owned by



approximately 480 families.

There are approximately 140,000 (of the 200,000 total) horses used to ride trails in Illinois. And the vast majority of those (74%) are owned primarily to ride trails! So if we don't have trails, their portion of Illinois's economy would conceivably completely disappear! There are approximately 1900 miles of trails in Illinois (for the purposes of this study, IDNR contributes 250 miles, Rails to Trails 410 and the Shawnee area the balance). I know that this is not nearly enough but it can help our leaders realize just how much economic benefit each mile of trail brings to Illinois.

EACH ONE mile of trail therefore generates over \$100,000 of Illinois GDP and creates over 2300 exercise days (days in which more than 30 minutes of physical exertion associated with the care and use of equines)! So Stand Up and Be Counted! No one else will promote our value if we don't. And we will continue to loose riding ground and activity access! 



How Is 'The Snots' Related to Paralysis? EHV-1 Facts.

Sheryl King, PhD

In a little over a year we have heard of numerous outbreaks of Equine Herpes Virus type 1 (EHV-1), also known as rhinopneumonitis or simply 'the snots'; sadly, rare paralytic complications took the lives of several horses. When news of an EHV-1 positive horse hits the media, horsemen panic. Yet the truth of the matter is that EHV-1 is all around us. Snotty noses and coughs – evidence that undiagnosed EHV-1 may be making its rounds of the barn – are common. When a horse becomes stricken in a much more severe and life-threatening reaction, with signs of brain involvement and various degrees of paralysis, it makes the news. To go from head to cold paralytic death from the same virus seems nearly unbelievable. How, then, is the snots related to paralysis?

The two most common types of herpes viral diseases in horses EHV-1 and -4, both primarily result in respiratory disease similar to the common cold in humans. The vast majority (some experts estimate 80%) of horses, particularly those living in groups, will contract the EHV-1 virus in their lifetime, some several times. When a horse is ill, they most often show signs similar to a head cold – runny, snotty nose, weepy eyes, low to moderate fever, swollen glands, coughing and sometimes swollen lower legs. Like a cold in humans, the symptoms tend to be worse in the young. The horse recovers within about a week to 10 days, and viral shedding capable of transmitting the disease to others lasts two weeks and occasionally longer. But with EHV-1, getting over it is a relative term. Immunity following infection or vaccination lasts only 3-6 months – so horses can get this virus many times over their lifetime. Subsequent infections in older horses often show very mild to no symptoms, so an outbreak can go undetected. EHV-1 virus can also go dormant within a horse; some of the virus particles circulating in the blood can invade a horse's white blood cell or, less frequently, the trigeminal ganglia (a nerve bundle in the head) and hide from the immune system. This type of horse is called a latent carrier; the horse is not

sick, it does not have circulating antibodies to EHV-1 (so EHV-1 cannot be detected in a common blood test), and as long as the virus stays hidden in the white blood cell or nerve, it cannot be transmitted to another horse. However, stress can cause the virus to break out of hiding to begin circulating and reproducing again. If this happens, the latent horse is capable of getting sick and/or transmitting the virus to others.

Most of the time, the virus stays in the respiratory tract. In rare cases, it can attack the inside lining of blood vessels. It is this ability that can cause the disease symptoms that are most troubling for horse owners - abortion in pregnant mares (by affecting the blood vessels in the placenta), and rare but serious paralytic complications (by affecting the blood vessels serving the central nervous system). It is when the EHV-1 virus erupts in its dreaded neurological form that we hear about an outbreak, and we as horse owners are urged to put protective measures into effect to limit the virus' spread.

A neuropathic EHV-1 horse will develop incoordination and limb weakness, typically of the hind limbs, muscles controlling the urethra can be affected, resulting in urine dribbling. The most seriously affected horses lose the ability to stand, and these seriously affected horses have a high mortality rate. Although neurologically affected horses can recover, many veterinarians report lingering permanent deficits.

Why are we hearing about more neuropathic outbreaks of EHV-1? Part of it may be media coverage, but scientists also consider neuropathic EHV-1 to be an 'emerging disease'; its incidence appears to be increasing. Scientists know that the EHV-1 virus has experienced some genetic mutation, and that one mutated form causes neuropathic symptoms more often. The N752 strain (often called the "N" or "non-neuropathic" form) does not contain the

neurologic mutation and is most often associated with respiratory symptoms. However, it is important to understand that if this form is identified during an outbreak, the "all clear" cannot be called – the 'N' strain can cause neurological symptoms, it just doesn't do it very frequently. This spring's EHV-1 outbreak in MN, WI

and IA is a case in point; neurologically affected horses tested with the N strain. On the other hand, the D752 (or simply the "D" or "neuropathic" form) also causes 'snots' but is associated with a much-increased incidence of neurological disease. To make matters worse, all viral strains, including the neuropathic strain, can

become latent in a horse and can be the source of subsequent infection under the right circumstances.

Luckily, neurologic involvement is rare; even with the 'neuropathic strain', >50-90% of horses will suffer only respiratory symptoms. If your horse develops the snots, it doesn't mean that it can't become neurologic. Neurologic symptoms generally emerge up to a week after the initial fever, and are generally without a fever once the paralysis starts to hit. If neurologic symptoms do appear, they progress rapidly – in 1 to 3 days.

How do you know if your horse will come down with neuropathic symptoms? You don't. One clue may be that horses that become neuropathic often have a higher fever (103.5° or above). Further, there is a reported pattern of risk; the middle-aged 'tall horse breeds', the Warmblood, Thoroughbred, Standardbred, Draft horse, are more likely to develop neurological symptoms following EHV-1 infection than pony breeds or yearling horses. Dr. Lutz Goehring of Colorado State University also writes "during 40 years of EHV-1 research, there has not been a single description of a confirmed EHM (neurological) outbreak on an Arabian stud farm in the



Photo Courtesy of Michael Porter, DVM

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scientific literature”. This means that the composition of horses at a farm during an EHV-1 outbreak (even with the “D” form) could influence the percentage of horses that become neurologic.

How can your horse become infected – assuming that (s)he does not already harbor a latent viral infection? The virus is spread through direct contact with nasal secretions, or aborted placenta, and under direct contact conditions it is very contagious. It does not travel as far in a sneeze or cough as does the flu virus, and it does not live outside the body on surfaces for a long time, but it can be carried from farm to farm through nasal secretions on hands, clothing, tools, etc. It can be killed with common disinfectants (a 1:10 dilution of bleach with water will easily kill it on surfaces, other common disinfectants will kill it in bedding). This means that separating exposed horses - ones that may be incubating the virus because they came in contact with a known sick horse - by the length of a football field, and using common hygiene procedures such as disinfectant foot baths, gloves or hand sanitation, changing clothes after attending a sick or exposed horse, will limit the

spread of the disease.

It takes from one day to two weeks between virus exposure and fever development. Add this incubation period to the two weeks that an affected horse will continue shedding the virus and you have the suggested 3-week quarantine period, after emergence of the last known case, which is recommended during an outbreak.

Practically, what does this mean? It means that if there is an EHV-1 outbreak in your area, commingling of strange horses and attending public functions where horses can rub noses should be curtailed. Since the virus doesn’t linger outside the body, if you want to enjoy a trail ride with your healthy horse that is not living on or exposed to horses from an affected farm – go with caution. Don’t tie your horse where it will come in contact with strange horses, and don’t let your horse drink from a common water tank or bucket.

Can you prevent EHV-1? Well, sort of. There are EHV-1 vaccines available. They do give some measure of protection against ‘the snots’ and viral abortion (although the data here is contradictory), but keep in mind that no vaccine is 100% effective. Plus, the immunity gained is

transient – 3-6 months in duration. Know your exposure risk -this is where paranoia can give rise to over-vaccination. And here is the sad fact – vaccination against EHV-1 does not appear to protect a horse from neurological symptoms. That said, some veterinary experts still recommend EHV-1 vaccination of horses near an affected farm, and possibly exposed but healthy horses during a known outbreak. The thinking here is that vaccination may decrease nasal viral shedding and help to control the spread of the disease.

What can you do when you hear of an EHV-1 outbreak? First and foremost – become an informed horseman. Knowing about this disease will not only limit your horses’ exposure, but it can prevent hysteria. Remember, news outlets will tend to sensationalize their news to sell their programming. Learn the facts, follow standard precautions of quarantine and diligent hygiene if you are in an outbreak area, and even if you have a horse in an affected barn during an outbreak, know that the odds are still in your favor - even if your horse becomes infected, it is more likely that you will be dealing with the common cold. 🐾

Salute to Working Horses continued from page 2

earning their own keep?

Moreover, these horses are a part of our culture. Perhaps the real cruelty here can be found in the ironic twist called “progress”; that after building them and servicing them, horses are fast disappearing from our cityscapes. By eliminating horses from our cities, we are depriving our children and their children from one of life’s visceral joys – the touch, the smell, the pure emotional power of knowing a horse. Horses on our city streets are the last connection to our agrarian roots, and the last way that most people can appreciate the realities of human survival. In a time when most city dwellers fail to understand where their food comes from, or the essential interconnectedness of nature to the health of our planet and the ultimate survival of our species, do we really want to eliminate their last link?

Alderman Burke – if you want to insure the welfare of the city’s few remaining working horses, appoint a panel of true equine experts to evaluate the humane treatment of your city’s horses. I will even volunteer. Include all the city’s working horses in this review, including our police horses and our therapeutic riding horses and our parade horses. Find out the real truth behind the care and treatment of these animals and propose tighter regulations on them if necessary. Adopt this progressive and courageous stance to provide future generations with the chance to appreciate our equine heritage

while ensuring a decent working life for our city’s horses. Don’t eliminate our equine ambassadors from our streets.

I urge those who know horses and who see the sense in this proposal to contact Chicago Alderman Edward Burke and express your views in support of preserving the horse drawn carriages in Chicago. Alderman Edward M. Burke, Email: eburke@cityofchicago.org; Phone: (773) 471-1414. Office: 2650 W 51st Street, Chicago, IL 60602. City Hall: 121 N. LaSalle, Room 302, Chicago, IL 60602 Phone: (312) 744-3380 or -3381 🐾



*Modern Horse Drawn Carriage in Chicago
Source: City of Chicago Business Affairs & Consumer Protection*

Jud Carter Wins Inaugural Heartland Horseman's Challenge at the 25th Annual Illinois Horse Fair

The 2014 Illinois Horse Fair featured the first Heartland Horseman's Challenge where Illinois based horsemen Jud Carter (DeWitt), Gigi Iacovelli (Barrington Hills), Jason Forby (Goreville), and Laurie Treber (Carlock) had three sessions to train their chosen rescue horse, culminating in a freestyle ride and challenge course. All sessions were judged and at the end of the weekend, Jud Carter was named the winner of the competition and received a beautiful Dale Chavez belt buckle.

The rescue horses came from the Hooved Animal Humane Society (HAHS) of Woodstock Illinois and were varying ages, breeds, and backgrounds making this quite different from typical colt-starting competitions. HAHS brought eight horses for the Challenge competitors to choose from and all of the horses were available for adoption throughout the weekend. Two of the horses went home with their Challenge trainers, while two others have pending adoptions at last report from HAHS.

The Challenge judges were all respected Illinois based horsemen including Tim Boyer of Cantrell, Jodi Funk of Woodstock, Mark Schwarm of Marion, and Jody Wilkin of Cisco. They were instrumental in developing the judging criteria as well as the format of the event – placing a high degree of emphasis on the well-being of the horses involved.

Although a winner was chosen from the competing horsemen, according to one spectator, there were only winners in this competition as all four horsemen showed great skill, patience and fortitude with their chosen horse, and all four horses made great progress throughout the event.

The Heartland Horseman's Challenge was sponsored by The State House Inn, West Meadow Ranch, and Springfield Tractor Supply.



Heartland Horseman's Challenge winner Jud Carter with rescue horse Sweet Brown - Photo courtesy of Bormida Photography



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.

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 <p>20% discount on orders over \$150 www.officedepot.com</p>	 <p>Members can save up to 25% off a yearly subscription. Click through on the ARG website.</p>
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www.associationresource.net

Illinois Horse Fair Queen and Princess Crowned in Springfield

A new Queen and Princess were crowned at the 25th annual Illinois Horse Fair. Crowned as Queen was Kaylyn Hall of Monmouth IL along with Princess Olivia Reed of Waterloo IL. The popular Queen and Princess Pageant drew an increasing number of participants for 2014 at 16 entries. In true Horse Fair style the candidates and their horses represented 9 different breeds of horses and 11 different riding disciplines.

Sponsored by the Warren County Saddle Club, 16-year-old Kaylyn is the daughter of Mark and Tracey Hall and attends United High School in Monmouth where she is on the honor roll and her favorite subject is biology. Kaylyn is active in 4-H, FFA, APHA, and AjPHA and competes in horse, soil, & seed judging, Horse Bowl, and Hippology. She participated in the pageant with her Paint horse Button Made of Money.

Olivia Reed, 15, the daughter of Brett and Kelly Schipkowski, enjoys showing western pleasure, hunter under saddle, reining, and training horses. She is a sophomore at Waterloo High School and plans a career as a large animal veterinarian. Active in 4-H, FFA and at Briarstone Riding Academy, she rode her Paint horse, Zippos Scotch Bonanza in the pageant.

The Illinois Horse Fair Queen Pageant offers each contestant the opportunity to shine in the horse community, to experience new friends, to grow in



2014 Illinois Horse Fair Princess Olivia Reed and Queen Kaylyn Hall
Photo courtesy of Bormida Photography

horsemanship and to be an inspiration to others wanting to become better equestrians. The contest utilizes public speaking, horsemanship, and interviewing skills to determine who will be the Illinois Horse Fair Queen and Princess.

In addition to crowning a Queen and Princess, awards were given for excelling in horsemanship to Rachel Webber of Waterloo (Queen division) and Rene Ellegood of Millstadt (Princess division). The Essay award was given to Lexi Kelly of Waterloo, the Littlest Rider award went to Maya Baker of Mapleton, and Miss Congeniality was awarded to Corrin Hunt of Ramsey.

In its third year, pageant coordinator Pam Sigler of Chatham reports that the contestants were more prepared, poised, and confident than ever.

The pageant helps to give the contestants life-long skills, both personal and horse related. The Illinois Horse Fair Queen and Princess act as ambassadors of the spirit of horse husbandry as epitomized at the Illinois Horse Fair and by the Horsemen's Council of Illinois. 



2014 Illinois Horse Fair Queen/Princess Pageant Candidates
Photo courtesy of Bormida Photography

Join Us Today!

Individual Membership Application

Name _____

Street _____

City _____

County _____

State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone () _____

Work Phone () _____

Fax () _____

Email _____

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 Membership Application

Organization _____

Contact Name _____

Street _____

City _____

County _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

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of Illinois Members in Organization _____

Check appropriate category
 Business/Professional Association Charity

Organization Membership Dues: \$50/yr.

Make check payable and mail to:



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The Voice of the Illinois Horse Industry
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Once Bitten, Twice Shy: What is the Duty to Prevent a Horse Bite in Light of CT Case?

By: Jennifer R. Friedman, Esq. and Yvonne C. Ocrant, Esq.

The horse community is buzzing about the Connecticut Supreme Court's recent decision in *Vendrella v. Astriab Family Limited Partnership* and questioning their duty to prevent injuries caused by their horse even if their horse has no known dangerous proclivities. In the *Vendrella* case, the Astriab family ran a farm in Milford, Connecticut selling plants and seasonal items as well as providing horse boarding services. The *Vendrella* family went to the farm to purchase plants. The *Vendrellas* walked over to a horse paddock and stood approximately one foot outside the fence to admire a brown horse named "Scuppy". Mr. *Vendrella* petted Scuppy while his two year old son watched. Mr. *Vendrella* stopped petting Scuppy when his son noticed another horse in the paddock. Suddenly, and without warning, Scuppy lowered his head and bit the child on his right cheek. The injury required surgery and resulted in a permanent scar on the child's face.

Vendrellas sued Mr. *Astriab* and his company that owned the farm ("Astriab"). In response, *Astriab* asked the court for judgment in their favor, arguing that they did not have any notice of Scuppy's dangerous propensities. The trial court agreed, dismissed the case, and *Vendrellas* appealed. The Appellate Court reversed the dismissal finding that *Vendrellas* were not required to show that Scuppy had a known propensity to bite people. They only have to show that the injury was reasonably foreseeable because Scuppy belonged to a class of animals having naturally dangerous propensities. Therefore, a jury must decide whether horses as a class possess a natural propensity to bite and whether it was foreseeable that Scuppy would bite. *Astriab* appealed to the Connecticut Supreme Court.

Since *Astriab* had admitted that horses belong to a class of animals having naturally mischievous tendencies, the Court did not decide this issue and instead analyzed whether an owner of an animal, with no known dangerous propensities, had a duty to prevent injuries caused by the animal. The Court concluded that *Astriab* had a duty to take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable injuries because horses belong to a class of animals that is naturally inclined to cause such injuries, regardless of whether Scuppy had previously caused an injury. The

Court did not conclude that *Astriab* was liable for *Vendrella's* child's injuries. Rather, it concluded that *Vendrellas* presented enough evidence for a jury to decide whether *Astriab* had fulfilled its duty to *Vendrellas* to guard against the injury. *Astriab* can still present evidence to the jury that it took all reasonable precautions to protect the child from harm and that *Vendrellas* were at least partly responsible for the child's injuries. Importantly, the Supreme Court did not decide that horses may be presumed dangerous. Rather, a jury must decide, on a case by case basis, considering all facts and circumstances, whether horses have a natural inclination to bite and, if so, whether the owner was negligent in preventing the injury.

So, what does this mean for horse owners and facilities? Take reasonable precautions to prevent harm from their horses. What are "reasonable precautions"? In this case, Mr. *Astriab* admitted that: (1) he could have erected a barrier between the customers and his horses, but chose not to do so; and (2) he could warn families to stay away from the horses because he did not want them to be bitten. Horse owners and facilities should be sure to understand each horse's temperament and proclivities, and those of horses in general, so they can guard against known behaviors. If horses roam about property that is open to the public, erect fencing between the horses and business patrons. Place signage near the horses' stalls and paddocks warning the public of biting, kicking, and/or other behaviors and cautioning them not to feed or pet the horses. If Mr. *Astriab* had taken these steps, he may have met his duty. Future cases will demonstrate other protective measures meeting horse owners' and facilities' duty to guard against injury. We will continue to monitor those cases and share the results with our readers.

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