



March 2009

## **Stock Horse Clinic is big success**

On January 31, 2009 The LSU AgCenter conducted a Stock Horse Clinic at the Dewitt Livestock facility at the Dean Lee Research Center. The purpose of the clinic was to introduce and educate the participants in the different classes that take place at stock horse contests throughout the country. Demonstrations on reining, ranch trail, ranch pleasure, ranch cutting, and working cow horse were presented. After lunch, participants rotated from one class to the other for some one on one instruction. Over eighty adults and youth attended the clinic with sixty seven actively riding. The classes were taught by instructors from the LSU AgCenter: Dr. Clint DePew; Howard Cormier; and Cleve Weisgerber; and Louisiana Stock Horse Association members: Larry Rutledge; Johnny Boudreaux; and Shawn Holden. A special thanks goes out to these clinicians and also Rodney Johnson, agent from Rapides Parish, who facilitated the lunch for participants.

From the evaluations that were turned in, everyone had a good time and learned a lot. It was expressed that we need to conduct more of these types of clinics.

## **Louisiana Stock Horse Association begins its third full year**

For those of you that may not know, there is a ranch horse association in Louisiana. They hold clinics and competitions throughout the year and throughout the state. The association is known as LaSH.

LaSH was started by fellow Louisiana horsemen to offer affordable, fun, and standardized ranch horse riding clinics and

competitions. Rider knowledge and skills are taught to maximize horse trainability, performance and safety. The overall goal is to create better horses and horsemen or horsewomen. The association is open to all stock horse breeds, registered or grade, whether ridden on the ranch, in the ring, or down the road.

The five divisions are:

Open – any professionals or non professionals

Cowboy – anyone who has not received money within the last five years for training or showing horses

Novice – anyone who has never received money for riding, training, or showing

Jr. Horse – open to any horses under five years old

Youth – any youth that is 14 or under.

The classes held at the competitions

are:

Stock Horse Pleasure

Stock Horse Trail

Stock Horse Reining

Working Cow Horse

Ranch Cutting

## **2009 Schedule**

March 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> – Ike Hamilton Center, West Monroe

April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> – FARR, Baton Rouge

May 16<sup>th</sup> – Good Guys Farm, Folsom

June 6<sup>th</sup> – LSUA Dewitt Livestock Facility, Alexandria

July 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> – SugArena, New Iberia

August 8<sup>th</sup> – LSUA Dewitt Livestock Facility, Alexandria

August 29<sup>th</sup> – SugArena, New Iberia

September 12 – LSUA Dewitt Livestock Facility, Alexandria

October 3<sup>rd</sup> – West Cal Arena, Sulphur

November 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> – LaSH Finals - LSUA Dewitt Livestock Facility, Alexandria

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## **Equine Outlook**

### **Introduction**

The downturn of the economy has resulted in fewer disposable dollars which typically comprise a fair amount of income spent on horses. There are many indications of market saturation due to over production and the loss of the slaughter option for unwanted horses. Most horse shelters are reported to be full. University donations of horses are at an all time high and most horses are being turned away. Reports of abandoned horses continue to increase and the cost of production has increased. A result of these factors is that there are too many horses available and there is considerable negative pressure on horse prices and the entire horse industry.

### **National Situation**

There are approximately 9 million horses in the United States and almost 2 million horse owners. The total impact of the horse industry was estimated by the American Horse Council in 2005 as \$102 billion dollars. Approximately \$32 billion dollars is generated by recreational activities, \$28 billion from the horse show segment of the industry, and \$26 billion from the racing industry. There are 453,000 direct jobs and 1.4 million total jobs generated by the horse industry. Market saturation is decreasing horse prices and the anti-horse slaughter legislation is adding 100,000 horses to the market each year. Most breed associations report that the number of mares being bred is reducing and producers are breeding fewer mares. However, recent surveys indicate that single mare owners and recreational owners are still breeding at the same rate. Many of these foals are low quality horses which add little or no value to the industry. These horses will tend to maintain market saturation and decrease prices for all horses. The depressed economy, market

saturation and cost of production are expected to have a negative impact on the horse industry for the next few years.

### **Price Outlook**

Prices for horses vary drastically, from million dollar horses at the top of the market to horses that have essentially no value at the bottom. Sale results indicate that the top horses are still bringing good prices in all areas of the industry, thoroughbreds, quarter horses, etc. However, because of the emphasis on quality, the average to below average horses are going down in price. Recent sale results indicate overall price decreases of 10%-30% with only the top 5% of the horses maintaining value or increasing in value. Horses in the bottom third of the market have little or no value, meaning these horses are selling below \$500 per head. Breeders must emphasize quality and breed for the top of the market in order to have a sustainable business. The cost of producing horses continues to increase as a result of increases in the price of feed, vet supplies, facilities, and labor. The basic cost of producing a two year old in a very efficient operation will average \$5,000-6,000 per horse. An extensive or intensive operation may average \$8,000-10,000 or more. Therefore, the average two year old needs to bring \$8,000-10,000 in order to produce a profit for their owners. In general, the horse should be worth twice the stud fee and most stud fees are \$2,000-3,000 and up. With the decrease in price of horses, an adjustment of stud fees is essential. Producers must watch the markets closely to make sure that they are breeding for the top end in order to produce the quality of horses sufficient to attract top buyers and production costs must be minimized.

### **Louisiana Situation**

The influx of casinos supporting purses for the racehorse industry has resulted in increases in the breeding and training for racing operations within the state. Quality horses are still needed to capture the money available in the racing industry. Large purses are attracting

owners and breeders from other states. In Louisiana, breeders must pay close attention to maintain a competitive advantage and capture the economic opportunity. Recent sales indicate that there is a softening of the market but quality horses are still bringing good prices. Relative small fields in most races indicate that there is still opportunity for race horses in Louisiana.

Competition horses continue to expand in areas of barrel racing, roping, and ranch horse competition. Horse shows in general have declined and there is more emphasis on a few big shows as opposed to a lot of smaller shows. Specialty areas such as calf roping and barrel racing have attracted large fields of competitors. A newly formed Ranch Horse Association has expanded opportunities for Louisiana competitors in the show arena.

Trail riding and recreational activities continue to expand in Louisiana. The trail riding associations scattered throughout the state represent one of the largest groups of horse owners in the state. Horsemen are traveling and spending a great deal of money in their recreational pursuits. Much of these expenditures are going out of state due to lack of trails and campsite opportunities. There is a tremendous opportunity to increasing the economic impact of these recreational riders by developing trails on the national forest and other state-owned lands. More campsites, housing, and dining facilities will be needed in order to keep these riders in Louisiana and to attract out of state riders. Opportunities for economic development of this group are readily available.

Dr. Clint Depew  
State Horse Specialist  
LSU AgCenter

## **CARE OF THE PREGNANT MARE BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DELIVERY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Problems can arise with the broodmare during pregnancy or in the immediate postpartum foaling. A full understanding and knowledge of pregnancy, parturition and the postpartum period in mares will help to prevent problems and to recognize them when they do develop. In order to fully understand the requirements of the broodmare and some of the potential problems that could be encountered, it is often helpful to divide the management of the pregnant broodmare into three phases: (1) care during gestation, (2) periparturient care, and (3) care during the immediate post-partum period.

### **CARE DURING GESTATION**

Nutrition and Housing – Pregnancy alone does not place any additional nutritional requirements on the mare until the last trimester, assuming that the mare is not in work (showing, racing, etc.) or does not have a concurrent medical condition. The National Research Council (NRC) recommendations for energy requirements during the 9th, 10th, and 11th months of pregnancy are increased 11%, 13%, and 20% above maintenance requirements of adult horses. It is extremely important to avoid weight loss during late pregnancy because of the detrimental consequences of negative energy balance on lactation and fertility after foaling. It is also important not to allow mares to become too obese. Nutritionists have suggested a relationship between obesity in the broodmare and developmental orthopedic disease in the foal. In addition, obese mares tend to have a less effective abdominal press during foaling, prolonging foaling and increasing the stress on the foal during delivery, which could lead to perinatal complications. Unless there are complicating factors (e.g. severe lameness, recent surgery, etc.) it is best to keep mares on pasture throughout gestation. The incidence and severity of colic, stocking up of the lower limbs, and ventral midline edema are reduced when mares are not confined to a stall. Whenever possible, pregnant mares should be isolated from the remainder of the horses on the farm and grouped by stage of pregnancy.

Mares that are poor-keepers or rank low within the herd hierarchy may need to be fed separately from the herd and/or supplemented. Contact with weanlings and yearlings, transient individuals, and those active on the show or performance circuit increases the risk of exposure to infectious agents that may cause abortion.

**Herd Health Concerns** -Pregnant mares should be maintained on a regular anthelmintic (deworming) schedule. Farms with parasite resistance problems should pay special attention to anthelmintic rotation programs, fecal egg counts, and pasture management. Your veterinarian should be consulted to help develop the most appropriate anthelmintic program for your farm. The majority of equine anthelmintics available today are labeled as safe for the pregnant mare, but it is always wise to read the label before administering any drug to a pregnant mare. It is especially important to avoid anthelmintics containing organophosphates in mares during pregnancy. Pregnant mares should be vaccinated against herpes virus abortion (rhinopneumonitis) at the 5th, 7th, and 9th month's gestation. Farms with constant traffic on and off the farm or a sizeable population of young stock should begin vaccination at 3 months of gestation. At 10 months (approximately 30 days before the estimated due date), mares should receive their annual vaccinations: tetanus toxoid, eastern and western equine encephalitis (EEE/WEE), West Nile virus, herpes viruses I and IV, influenza, and rabies. In endemic areas or farms, vaccines for Potomac horse fever, botulism, and strangles should be considered and discussed with your veterinarian. Mares not previously vaccinated for botulism should have the initial series at the 8th, 9th, and 10th months. Vaccinations administered one month before foaling help increase the level of antibodies against these diseases in the mare's colostrums, which is essential to help decrease the morbidity and mortality during the foal's first few months of life.

Dental examinations should be performed on mares on an annual basis.

Although it would be preferable to avoid dental procedures during pregnancy, this is not always feasible due to the time constraints during the breeding season. If mares are identified that are extremely difficult to float their teeth, then it would be best to schedule these mares after foaling, but prior to re-breeding.

#### **PERIPARTURIENT CARE**

**Pre-Foaling Considerations** - A clean, well-kept grassy paddock is probably the ideal environment for foaling. Since it is difficult to adequately supervise mares for impending delivery when they are housed outside, most mares are housed in stalls at night when they are nearing their due date. The preferred bedding for foaling stalls is straw. Wood shavings or chips are more likely to lead to bacterial contamination of the uterus during parturition with an increased incidence of umbilical cord infections. If the mare has had a Caslick's procedure performed after breeding, the vulva needs to be surgically opened when she is close to foaling. This can be done in the last two weeks of gestation, preferably when the udder appears to be fully developed. Opening of the Caslick's suture helps to prevent tearing of the perineum.

Udder development, relaxation of the pelvic ligaments, lengthening of the vulva, and waxing of the teats are physical changes that signal a mare is close to foaling. The average gestation length of the mare is 340 days, but ranges from 320-360 days. The maturity of the fetus determines the overall length of gestation (e.g. 330 vs. 350 days), but the mare dictates the day of delivery (e.g. 338 vs. 340 days). She can delay labor until she feels the circumstances are safe. That usually means when no one is watching! This is believed to be a holdover from the non-domesticated equid. Wild horses and other equids leave the band at night to foal, deliver the foal and placenta, and then rejoin the band when the foal is able to keep up with the herd. Eighty-five percent of mares foal between 7 pm and 9 am; and the majority of these foal between 11 pm and 4 am.

Measurement of milk electrolytes is frequently used to identify mares that are

nearing parturition. Milk calcium and potassium increase and sodium decreases when the fetus is mature. Most mares will foal within a day or two of when these changes occur, but occasionally a mare may delay foaling for a longer period of time. Usually there is no problem, but it is advisable to assess fetal viability. A common question is how frequently the mare should be observed when she appears close to foaling. Unfortunately, the answer is 100% of the time if the attendant plans on being present for the delivery. Delivery of the foal typically occurs extremely rapid (less than 30 minutes) once the water breaks and if a problem develops a favorable outcome (live foal and live mare) can only be achieved if assistance is there from the start of labor. Fortunately, the incidence of dystocia, premature placental separation, or other problems is low, so that we can get away with only looking at the mare every 1 to 2 hours. A variety of monitoring systems are available, but regardless of which system is used it is worthless if it is not combined with an attendant that can be at the mare's side within minutes.

### **NORMAL FOALING**

#### **3 Stages of Labor**

Stage I last between 1 and 4 hours and is characterized by the mare's restlessness, sweating, frequent urination and defecation, getting up and down, and kicking and looking at her flanks. Mares may show all or none of these signs. During this time, uterine contractions begin, and the fetus begins to make positional changes within the uterus in preparation for delivery. By the end of Stage I, the foal has changed its position from lying on its back with all limbs flexed to lying on its stomach with extended forelimbs, head and neck. The frustrating aspect of foaling mares is that she may appear to be in Stage I, and then fail to progress to Stage II. In other species this usually signals that a problem exists, but this is fairly typical for the mare. If possible, and only if it does not disturb the mare, the tail should be wrapped and the perineum cleansed prior to delivery.

Stage II begins with rupture of the placenta (chorioallantois) and release of allantoic fluid. The lay term is "break water" and is frequently missed or mistaken for urination. Allantoic fluid is amber-colored and odorless. From this point until the foal is delivered, strong abdominal contractions continue. Most mares will lie down, but a few may try to foal standing, especially if nervous or disturbed by observers. Usually within five minutes of chorioallantoic rupture the amnion bulges from the vulvar lips. It is whitish-gray, smooth, and glistening. Soon after the appearance of the amnion, a foot (still inside the amnion) will pass the vulva, followed by the other foot and finally a nose. The feet are normally passed in this staggered manner (approximately offset by 4 inches). This facilitates the shoulders to fit through the pelvic canal. If the amnion is still intact and the foal's head is out, the amnion should be cleared from the foal's nostrils. Care should be taken not to upset the mare and disrupt the progression of foaling. The strongest abdominal press is apparent while the foal's shoulders are being passed; once the shoulders are outside the pelvic canal, the foal tends to "squirt out" to the level of the hips. Most mares will take a rest at this point and lie quietly with the foal's hindquarters still inside the pelvic canal. The umbilical cord breaks on its own when either the foal or the mare struggles to stand. When premature placental separation occurs, the placenta fails to rupture ("red bag"), and a red velvety membrane is seen instead of the amnion, and no release of allantoic fluid occurs. The attendant should immediately verify that this is the chorioallantois, cut it, and assist delivery of the foal. There is no time to wait on a veterinarian to arrive. Any delay almost always results in a stillborn or extremely weak neonate that often succumbs in the early postnatal period.

Stage III occurs with the passage of all of the fetal membranes (chorioallantois and amnion) and involution of the uterus. The placenta should be expelled within 3 hours of parturition. The placenta should be removed

from the stall and saved for the attending veterinarian to inspect. This evaluation can yield much information regarding the environment in the uterus and future neonatal health. Some mares will act mildly colicky during this period, which is usually due to continued uterine contractions. A veterinarian should evaluate excessive signs of discomfort, especially if she becomes unconcerned about the foal. If the placenta has not been passed within 3 hours, oxytocin (10-20 units IM) should be given, with injections repeated at 1-2 hour intervals until the placenta is passed. The earlier the treatment with oxytocin is begun the better the response. Absolutely do not pull on the membranes because this can cause damage to the uterine lining. If the placenta has not been passed within 6 hours, then broad-spectrum antibiotics and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agents are recommended. Mares with retained placenta are often predisposed to metritis (uterine infection), toxemia and laminitis (founder).

#### **POST-PARTUM CARE**

Immediately after foaling the mare usually experiences a tranquil period, during which time bonding with the foal is believed to occur. External stimuli can disrupt this process and in severe cases may lead to the mare rejecting the foal. Therefore, caution and common sense should be exercised during the immediate post-partum period to facilitate bonding of the mare and foal.

Because the neonatal foal spends much of the time lying down, bedding that is soiled with fetal fluids should be removed. Routine care of the neonate includes dipping of the navel (3% iodine or chlorhexidine), careful administration of enemas as needed, and a veterinary neonatal exam, including a physical examination, antibody (IgG) determination, and a complete blood count should be performed. It has become popular to "imprint" the foal during the early postpartum period. If this procedure causes extreme upset of the mare, the value gained is not worth the risk of foal rejection. If the mare and foal are healthy, the foal has normal legs, and as soon as weather permits, it

is beneficial for the mare's uterine involution and gastrointestinal tract motility to turn the pair out into a clean grassy paddock. For the first 7-10 days after parturition, it is best to turn them out separate from other mares and foals, after which they can be turned out with other mare-foal pairs with foals of similar ages. If the foal has an immature musculoskeletal system (especially of the knees and hocks), then turnout should be delayed until bony ossification (mineralization) is complete.

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#### **Lactating Mares**

The nutritional requirement for mares almost doubles when they foal and start producing milk. The mare's energy requirement and need for water to produce milk is higher than any other horse.

If supplemental feed is not available the mare will lose weight, be harder to rebreed and the foal's growth will be reduced. This all occurs because the mare produces 30 to 40 pounds or up to 4 to 5 gallons of milk daily during the first 3 to 4 months of lactation. Typically milk production peaks between the 2<sup>nd</sup>

and 3<sup>rd</sup> month of lactation and declines slowly thereafter. At about 3 months the foal's nutrient needs is greater than the mare's production and therefore the foal should be eating grain and/or pasture to supplement their growth. As indicated previously if the mare is losing weight during the breeding season and becomes thin, she is less likely to rebreed. Thin mares typically take longer to become pregnant, are at a greater risk of losing a pregnancy and have smaller, weaker foals.

Typically a mare should be fed 2 to 5 pounds of grain a day leading up to the foaling. Immediately after foaling she should be on 8 to 10 pounds of grain per day and high quality hay and/or pasture. Protein requirements increase to around 14% and energy needs are drastically increased.

Foals should be provided access to feed as early as possible and fed as much as they will eat for the first 6 to 8 months of their lives. Typically a foal will eat about 1 pound for every month of age, which means a 3 month old foal should be eating about 3 pounds per day. By the 6th to 7th months they should be eating 6 to 7 pounds of feed per day and feed consumption should increase until a year of age. At that time they should be eating 8 to 10 pounds per day. Feed consumption for a foal will correspond to the reduction of milk production in the mare.

By providing adequate feed to the mare when she starts to lactate and providing access to feed to the young colt at an early age, optimal foal growth and mare rebreeding should occur.

Dr. Clint Depew  
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### **Third Annual Louisiana Equine Council Horse Expo 2009**

The Horse Expo 2009 is being held on March 13 – 15 at the Ike Hamilton Expo Center in West Monroe, Louisiana. The Expo is focused on providing education and entertainment for

all horse enthusiasts whether they are young, old, beginners, professionals or otherwise.

The Louisiana Equine Council (LEC) works as a unified voice for the horse industry, standing for all breeds and disciplines. From beginners to advanced experts, the LEC is working to grow and develop the Louisiana equine industry.

The 2009 Horse Expo is a perfect way to educate new and advanced horse owners and entertain horse lovers of all ages and skill. There will be clinicians, speakers, experts, youth riders, educational areas for both adults and children and many demonstrations and lectures. There will also be vendors present. The Education Alley will host the Pony Lane, which is an interactive area for children. The booths will be run by students from Louisiana Tech University's equine science program. An art contest for all ages will be held.

#### **A tentative schedule for all three days is below:**

The expo kicks off on Friday at 8:00 A.M. when the gates and vendors open up. The gaited horse show also starts at that time. At 9:00 A.M. clinician Joe Wolter will begin the Ride with Joe Part I segment. This lasts until noon. The second segment with Joe will begin at 2:00 P.M. The Pony Lane in the Education Alley opens at 3:00 P.M. The Greenwell Springs Youth Riders will ride at 5:30 P.M. and the Parade of Breeds begins at 6:00 P.M. At 7:00 P.M. David Carter will put on a show with his Extreme Mustang Makeover Horses.

Saturday will begin at 8:00 A.M. with the gates and vendors opening. At 9:00 A.M. the Pony Lane opens, including pony rides, Joe Wolter will begin a colt starting clinic, and a lecture on feed/feeding begins followed by lectures on saddle selection and hoof care. Noon begins the Parade of Breeds and the LaSH Ranch Horse Show. At 1:00 P.M. the Greenwell Springs Youth Riders and Peruvian Pasobilities begin a demonstration. There will also be a veterinary medicine lecture at this time. 2:00 P.M. brings a Reining Demonstration by Mark Wilcher and a lecture on bits followed by a lecture with an equine chiropractor. At 4:00

P.M. David Carter will again show off his extreme Mustang Makeover Horses. A therapeutic riding demonstration will begin around 5:30 P.M. and Joe Wolter will continue with colt starting.

Sunday follows with gates and vendors opening and the LaSH Ranch Horse Competition, which lasts all day. 9:00 brings Joe Wolter starting more colts and 11:00 A.M. has another lecture on feeds. At noon the Pony Lane opens along with the Parade of Breeds. Paul Daily brings Wild Horse Ministries at 1:00 P.M. and a demonstration on Knot Tying begins, followed by a lecture about Trail Riding across Louisiana. A demonstration using therapeutic riding begins at 3:00 P.M. along with a lecture/demonstration of Master Horseman.

A schedule full of fun, education and entertainment for all three days of the 2009 Horse Expo is what LEC has planned for each visitor. For scheduling and motel rate information, please visit <http://www.laequinecouncil.com/>.

Traci Benoit,  
"Hoofbeat News" Editor

## **DRESSAGE CLINIC**

WHEN: March 22, 2009

WHERE: Highlands Riding Center, Folsom, LA.

WHO: 4-H Club members who would like to learn more about dressage

WHY: To educate and assist club members that would like to participate in the dressage class at state horse show.

The clinic will be free to participants. Highlands 4-H club members will conduct a workshop. Topics include: rules, what to wear, appropriate tack, resources, etc. Highlands owner and trainer, former Georgia 4-H club member and champion, Elizabeth Cummins will conduct group dressage lessons. Numbers are limited so please sign up early. Participants will be chosen on a first come/first serve basis. Auditors will be welcome.

English tack will be required; however, if you currently do not own an english saddle

and would like to participate just let us know and we will make arrangements to borrow one. For more information, please contact: Kelley Varisco, 985-892-1997 or cell 985-807-5500

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## **Horse Tips**

- **The snaffle bit is the most widely used of all types of bits. It was developed by the early Greek horseman. It is widely used as a training bit. It provides direct communication between the rider's hands and the mouth of the horse.**
- **Feeds should be changed gradually. When changing feeds, a person should try and make the change from four days to a one week period. The new feed should be gradually mixed in with the previous ration. For example: the first day mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  new ration and  $\frac{3}{4}$  old ration, second day mix  $\frac{1}{3}$  new ration and  $\frac{2}{3}$  old ration, third day mix  $\frac{1}{2}$  new ration and  $\frac{1}{2}$  old ration, fourth day mix  $\frac{3}{4}$  new ration and  $\frac{1}{4}$  old ration, fifth day all new ration. This should be done to prevent digestive disorders and to prevent horses from going off feed. Care should also be taken when turning horses on lush pastures such as ryegrass. This should also be done gradually.**

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