



September 2008

Farm Theft Alert

With the rising cost of everything in our economy, thieves are likely to become more numerous and bold. This scenario is hitting closer to home than most people realize. Within the last month and a half, one LA equine owner had three saddles and numerous other tack stolen out of his tack room in the broad daylight. This act will probably not be limited to tack but may also include horses and trailers. Theft is not limited to the size of the operation; it can affect both the small and large scale owner. Your valuables can be stolen from barns, farms, pastures, boarding and training facilities, competitive events, and even from your back yard. Tracking and identification of valuables (horses, tack, and trailers) can be difficult. Unlike most thefts, it will probably be your job to prove that the stolen property belongs to you.

According to Pete Gibbs and Leman Wall of the Texas Cooperative Extension Service, there are fifteen ways to curb these types of theft.

- 1) Permanently mark or identify your horse. This can be done by the use of branding (both freeze and hot iron), micro chipping, and lip tattooing. Brands may be more of a deterrent because they are more visible than microchips and tattoos.
- 2) Take photographs of your horses, saddles, tack (expensive headstalls), and trailers. Be sure you take the photos of your horse in both summer and winter and include close-ups of all permanent markings or scars. Take photos from all angles and close-ups of the head and rear.
- 3) Develop a file of all identification documents such as registration papers for your horse, trailers, and vehicles, photos, coggins test, license numbers, and bills of sale. This will go a long way in helping you prove ownership.
- 4) It is a good idea to record your brand with the LA Dept. of Agriculture. You should check with the dept. to make sure there are no other brands like the one you want registered in LA before you brand your horses. It is against LA. Law to brand an animal with a brand that is not registered in your name.
- 5) All pens, stalls, barns, tack rooms and perimeter fence gates should be locked if possible. This may not keep a thief out, but it may require the thief to stay on your property longer, thus giving more possibility of catching the thief in the act.
- 6) If you are in the process of building your facilities, try and locate barns and tack facilities in the rear so that a person must drive by the house in order to gain access to these areas.
- 7) Horses that are kept in pastures can be protected by locking pasture gates, don't leave halters on horses,

never feed horses next to the road or pasture gates, and by checking pastured horses regularly at different times of the day.

- 8) Keep halters and lead ropes in a locked tack room. Don't make it easy by leaving them on stall fronts or corral post.
- 9) Keep tack locked up and permanently identify it by stamping your name, driver's license number and or your registered brand on the underside of each item.
- 10) Lock up trailers and trucks and keep them out of easy view. Record the VIN number and license plate of each trailer and attach a full view picture to the information.
- 11) Where possible, use posted and security signs along the edge of the property.
- 12) Motion sensor or dusk to dawn lights placed in strategic locations around your place can be a deterrent.
- 13) Watch dogs may be helpful if you live in an area where they don't bother neighbors.
- 14) Keep action occurring on your premises, vary your routine, and don't advertise when you are going out of town.
- 15) If possible, establish a farm neighborhood watch program and advertize that it is in effect.

Never say: "that won't happen at my place".

Remember, the first step in reporting theft is to call your local authorities and then the LA. Dept. of Agriculture. You need to do this as soon as possible.

Purchasing Hay for your Horses

Limited supplies, rising cost of fertilizer and diesel, and the cost of grain make it essential that quality horse hay be purchased for the winter months. Horsemen are encouraged to buy early and buy adequate supplies of quality hay to avoid potential shortages and high winter cost. Drought in much of the country is reducing the hay available and costs are driving up the cost of hay. Since hay is essential to good horse health early purchases are necessary.

Horses need approximately 1% of their body weight in fiber to maintain a healthy gut and digestive system. Therefore, ten to fifteen pounds of hay per day is desirable. There are complete feeds that have 15% to 25% fiber in them. Although they have the fiber portion of a horse's requirement in the feed, most horses have a strong desire to chew and need something to occupy their time. Boredom often results in vices such as wood chewing and cribbing. Therefore, it is recommended that horsemen provide hay to horses at all times to meet their fiber requirements as well as provide something for the horse to chew.

Quality hay should be clean, free of all foreign materials, have a fresh green color, and smell fresh. Generally, in Louisiana we can produce grass hay that will test at ten to fourteen percent protein, have fiber levels below 30% and have adequate calcium and phosphorus to meet the mineral demands of the horse. Quality hay can meet 80-90% of the average horse's energy and nutrient requirements and 60 or 70% of a performance horses needs. Therefore, quality hay can greatly reduce feed grain cost.

The stage of maturity is one of the most critical factors in determining the quality of hay. It is important that hay be fertilized adequately but the stage of maturity is more important than fertilization.

Table 1: Stage of Maturity and Quality and Consumption of Bermuda grass Hay

Cutting Time	Total Protein	TDN (energy)	Fiber	Consumption
4-weeks	16.9	55	29.5	17.8
8-weeks	10.4	51	34.8	15.0
12-weeks	7.7	44	38.0	12.3
16-weeks	3.4	36	42.5	7.4

Table 1 shows that hay cut at 4 weeks of growth will have a protein level around 16%, TDN or energy value of 55%, Fiber less than 30% and the horses will consume up to 18 pounds. As the hay gets more mature (Table 1) the total protein goes down, the energy or TDN level goes down, fiber increases dramatically and the consumption by the horse decreases radically. Therefore, horsemen need to know the stage of maturity of the hay they purchase. So ask your supplier when was the grass cut last and how long had it grown prior to being cut for hay. It is possible to purchase hay that looks good, smells good and is not stemmy and yet is not adequate to meet the horse's needs and reduce the amount of grain needed.

Additionally, it is always good to know what cutting you are purchasing. The first cutting in the spring or early summer tends to have more weeds. Therefore it is normally desirable to purchase from the second or third cutting. In Louisiana,

cuttings may go all the way into September and October so a fourth or fifth cutting may be desirable also.

The moisture level in hay should normally be below 15% to avoid mold and dustiness. Unusually heavy bales tend to be higher in moisture and more susceptible to mold growth and need to be avoided. If bales seem heavy, put your hand down into the bale to detect heat and/or moisture.

In selecting hay for horses, the ultimate determination is the analysis of the hay. The LSU AgCenter and other laboratories will analyze hay for a minimum fee. Protein, energy, fiber, and mineral content can be determined. These values will help balance the ration and allow you to feed minimal levels of grain and achieve maximum performance from your horse.

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Leading

Does your horse lead? This simple maneuver tells a great deal about the relationship you have with your horse. Most people say, "of course my horse leads". Let me ask a different way. Does your horse lead willingly, at a walk or a trot, with a halter or a bridle, without resisting? Getting a bit challenging now, huh?

A horse that leads willingly is "with" the rider or handler. A horse that resists and is sluggish gives the impression that it does not respect the handler, much less show any eagerness to be on his/her team. Most horses are lazy, and would rather not have to walk, or trot, behind or beside a handler. That's just the nature of the horse. And we can't blame them for being natural. They might need that energy to run from a predator, which is being natural.

But if we are to teach our horses to be our partner, our friend, our buddy, we also must teach it to respect our request to follow us, at whatever speed we set. We are the leader. We set the pace.

So how can we teach Ole' Sorrely, or Young Whippersnapper, to follow us with enthusiasm? Here are a few simple steps:

- 1- Use a rope halter, instead of a web halter. A rope halter makes the horse uncomfortable when it is pulled on. It is hard to resist the pull on a stiff, narrow rope halter. The narrower the rope, the better to teach the horse not to lean back on it.
- 2- Use a motivator, such as a long lead rope, or a stick and string, to pop the trailing end of the horse if it does not move out. (You know that begging or pulling will not work. You must drive the horse forward.) Motivating the horse with the threat of a spank will make it respond. Simply swing the rope behind you with your left hand (holding the lead in your right), without looking back.
- 3- Timing is everything. You must apply the spank as soon as the horse resists. If you ask and nothing happens, make something happen immediately.
- 4- Use a fence to block the horse from leaning out sideways away from you, as it probably will do at first. Practice next to the fence for a few days, until the horse learns that you want it to follow beside you.
- 5- Expect the horse to jump ahead of you. This is the only way it can respond at first. Don't jerk it backwards when it does what you asked it to do. It will soon learn that you only want it to move up next to

your side. Give it a few days to get over the "overreaction time".

- 6- Give a pre-cue. Lift your hand and cluck before you pull forward on the lead. The pull is the cue. The lifting of the hand is the pre-cue. Pretty soon, you won't have to pull at all, but simply lift your hand, and the horse will follow willingly.
- 7- Practice. Do this every day for a couple of minutes. Lead it at a trot every few days, just to keep it aware. Teach it to trot while you walk fast, like leading from the pasture, or to the horse trailer.

Never let your horse lag behind. Remember, it learns what it lives. You will get what you expect from your horse, so expect respect, and use the leading steps above to get it. Good luck!

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10 Tips for Parasite Control in Horses

1. The major intestinal parasites in adult horses are small strongyles (or cyathostomes), tapeworms, and large strongyles.
 - a. Small strongyles account for 80% of the total worm burden and are capable of encysting (or encasing) in the intestinal wall. They are capable of causing a clinical disease called larval cyathostomosis.
 - b. Tapeworms tend to congregate around the ileocecal valve in the

intestine and are thought to cause certain types of colic. To help eliminate tapeworms horses should be treated with either praziquantel or a double dose of pyrantel pamoate.

- c. Although large strongyles are capable of causing severe damage to the vascular system and other organs through their migration, this parasite has declined dramatically in the last 20 years due to the highly effective dewormer, ivermectin.
2. Stomach bots (*Gastrophilus*) are parasites that attach to the stomach and small intestine. The adult parasite is a large fly that resembles a honeybee which deposits the parasite eggs on the forelegs, lips and shoulders. Stomach bots are usually harmless unless the worm burden is exceedingly heavy. This parasite can be treated by removing the small yellow eggs from the hair coat and by administering either ivermectin or moxidectin after fly activity stops (winter) and again after peak egg-laying (late spring).
3. Pinworms are a common parasite that is not associated with major disease. This parasite does not migrate through tissues and therefore have a very efficient lifecycle. While pinworms do not damage to the intestines of the horse, their eggs create irritation around the rectum of the horse resulting in tail head scratching.

Pinworms are effectively treated by most anthelmintics (dewormers).

4. The intestinal parasites of major concern in weanling foals are roundworms (also known as ascarids). Roundworms are capable of causing an intestinal impaction as well as pneumonia. Prevention of roundworm infection is difficult because the eggs are very durable and can live in the soil for up to 10 years. To reduce the infection, foals should be dewormed at 6 weeks of age and then every 6-8 weeks until they are 6 month old. Dewormers that cause rapid killing of roundworms, such as piperazine or organophosphates, should be avoided since they can lead to impaction in heavily parasitized foals. Dewormers with slower kill such as fenbendazole, oxbendazole, pyrantel and ivermectin are safer options.
5. A fecal flotation provides valuable information on the parasite burden of both individual horses and the herd. This test may be used to examine the effectiveness of an anthelmintic program by determining the fecal egg count prior to and after the administration of a dewormer. In targeted treatment programs, fecal egg counts can be used to determine which animals harbor the highest parasite burden. One exception is the equine tapeworm, which can be missed on a routine fecal flotation.
6. Parasite resistance is a continual concern and may have arisen with

the inappropriate or excessive use of anthelmintics. To reduce the emergence of resistance, dewormers must be used appropriately and combined with strategies to reduce the parasite contamination in the environment.

7. Some pasture management tools that may help reduce parasites include :
 - a. Reduce the stocking density to one horse per two acres of pasture
 - b. Cross-fence and then rotate the horses biweekly between pastures
 - c. Pick up the manure piles from the pasture twice weekly
 - d. Separate the horses based on age groups (mare/foal, weanlings, yearlings, adults)
8. In the northern U.S., horses become infected with intestinal parasites during spring through summer. In the southeastern U.S., the situation is reversed and horses become parasitized during the cooler season (fall through late spring). Therefore, deworming programs in the south target parasites from November to late June.
9. Underdosing a dewormer may increase the risk for the development of parasite resistance. Overdosing can also be harmful to the horse. For more accurate dosing, use a girth tape measure to estimate the body weight of horse prior to administering a dewormer.

10. Parasite control programs should be tailored to individual herds. A veterinarian can help decide the best deworming schedule based on the stocking density, age of the horse and use. A cookbook approach may result in either ineffective parasite control or anthelmintic overuse.

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Horse Tips

- **When saddling your horse, always connect and tighten the front girth first, followed by the back girth, and then the breast collar. The procedure should be reversed when unsaddling. This is very important because a loose saddle could wind up under your horse and cause a big wreck.**
- **The normal horse has the following vitals:
Pulse -----36 to 40 beats per minute
Respiration -----10 – 20 breaths per minute
Temperature ----100 – 101 degrees Fahrenheit**

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