

Who and What

- **Stereotypies are repetitive behaviors such as weaving or cribbing.** They are common in horses kept in stalls the majority of the time, but are not unknown in pastured horses. Some research has shown a **link between stereotypic behaviors and atypically low hindgut pH levels.** Because the antibiotic virginiamycin has been shown to increase hindgut pH in horses, it was theorized that administering **virginiamycin** might ease discomfort and allow horses to reduce stereotypies. However, the theory was not supported by results of a study at the University of Sydney. When virginiamycin was given to six weavers, five cribbers, and six control horses, **no significant effects were seen on cribbing, weaving,** heart rate, digestibility of feed, blood glucose peak response, or a number of other behaviors and physiological parameters. The only measurable change was that treated cribbers drank more water, treated weavers drank less, and control horses showed no change in water consumption.
- Researchers at Colorado State University have received a grant to study a **gene therapy** approach to help **heal cartilage and prevent osteoarthritis** in horses. The study will investigate the success of treating joint injuries with **insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1)** injected into injured joints within a virus-like agent. It is hoped that the technique will increase the supply of IGF-1 by delivering DNA that will support production of this protein that promotes healing of cartilage.
- **Distillers' grains,** also known as DDGS, **should not make up a large percentage of a horse's ration,** according to nutritionists from Kansas State University. This byproduct of ethanol production tends to be **high in phosphorus,** requiring that the mineral content of the diet be balanced to include sufficient calcium, especially for broodmares and young growing horses. In addition, DDGS may contain fumonisin, a mycotoxin to which horses are quite sensitive. If DDGS is included in equine rations, it should come from a source that has been carefully tested for molds and mycotoxins.
- **Downturns in the U.S. economy** are being felt in the horse industry. Two indications are the drop of more than a billion dollars in **wagering on Thoroughbred racing** in 2008 and the 45% slump in **breeding stock** sale totals at the Keeneland November sale from the previous year. Some farms in the Bluegrass are choosing to **breed fewer mares** in 2009 and selecting only the most promising young horses to enter training. **Stud fees** have been reduced for many top stallions, and breedings are being booked more slowly than in other years.
- **Equine cerebellar abiotrophy** is a condition found in some Arabian horses. This genetic abnormality results in neuron death in the cerebellum. Affected horses show **head tremors and deficits in balance,** and are often euthanized early in their lives. Researchers at the University of California, Davis have developed an **indirect DNA test** to identify breeding horses that carry the defective gene.
- **Barn fires** numbered well over **1000 in each year** from 2002 to 2005, according to the National Fire Protection Agency. Some tips to prevent fire damage:
 - **Electrical appliances are the leading cause of barn fires.** Heating lamps, bucket heaters, and space heaters should be monitored when in use, and should be unplugged when no one is in the barn.

- In a study of 250 horses killed by lightning, almost half were killed not by a direct strike but by a **barn fire caused by lightning**. Contact local fire protection officials to find out whether properly installed lightning rods would protect your buildings.
 - **Fire extinguishers** should be installed at both ends of the barn, and should be inspected and serviced regularly.
 - **Fire drills** should be planned and carried out. Walking through a fire drill will point out any gaps in the plan. Are halters and lead shanks hanging by each stall? Is there more than one way out of the barn? Is there a safe, secure paddock where horses can be turned out?
- **Hardening of the arteries** occurs in racehorses, although not from the same factors that cause human circulatory problems. Fibrous collagen in pulmonary artery walls reduced **blood vessel elasticity** in up to 85% of racing Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds, according to research at the University of Guelph. Although the cause is unknown, it is possible that the effect may contribute to some unexplained racehorse deaths.
 - **Barbaro's full brother Nicanor** was less than stellar in his racing debut in early February. In spite of going off as the second favorite in early wagering, the colt stumbled coming out of the starting gate and injured a hoof. Nicanor finished in tenth place after being eased. In a second start in March, the colt improved his record by placing second in a seven-furlong race.

Wins and Wows

- The American Saddlebred Horse Association has awarded its **Lifetime Achievement honor** to Don Harris, a Kentucky horseman who trained a number of World's Champion five-gaited and three-gaited horses. Honors also went to South Carolina resident C. Thomas Galbreath for the **Breeder's Hall of Fame** and to Callaway Hills Stable for **Breeder of the Year**. Professional horseman Mike Spencer and show driver Misdee Wrigley Miller were named **Sportsmanship Award** winners.
- **Hagyard Equine Medical Institute** of Lexington, Kentucky has **donated \$10,000** to the Grayson-Jockey Club Research Foundation to **support research** on lameness in racehorses. Perhaps best known for its work with broodmare and foal management as well as reproductive issues, Hagyard Equine Medical Institute also provides veterinary services for performance horses in many disciplines.
- **The Eclipse Award of Merit** has been given to Alice Chandler, owner of Mill Ridge Farm, in recognition of her many years of contributions to the Thoroughbred industry. Among her other accomplishments, Chandler bred Sir Ivor, English Horse of the Year in 1968. She also raced multiple Grade 1 winners, and her farm has had connections to top horses such as Giacomo, Point Given, and La Ville Rouge, dam of Barbaro.
- Guy Warner has been selected as **Horse Person of the Year** by the American Saddlebred Horse Association. Warner has put in more than 40 years of service to the equine industry, specifically the American Horse Shows Association and the Minnesota State Fair Foundation. He has been the announcer at the Minnesota State Fair, the St. Louis Charity Show, and other shows in the American Midwest. Warner and his wife have also owned and exhibited some champion Saddlebred horses.
- Dr. Larry Bramlage, past president of the American Association of Equine Practitioners, has been honored as an **AAEP Distinguished Life Member**. Bramlage has chaired a number of committees and served on the Racing and Purchase Exam task forces. He is an AAEP On Call team member, an internationally recognized equine orthopedic surgeon, and a partner in Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky.



**Reprint Courtesy of
Kentucky Equine Research, Inc.**

3910 Delaney Ferry Road
Versailles, KY 40383
Phone: 859-873-1988
Fax: 859-873-3781
Order Department: 800-772-1988
www.ker.com
info@ker.com