

## Who and What

- An investigation by Swiss and Polish scientists has suggested that **bovine spongiform encephalitis** (BSE, or **mad cow disease**) can't be eradicated because cases occur spontaneously in cattle. BSE is characterized by abnormal prion protein found in the brain and nerve tissue. Spread of the disease can be limited by control measures, but there is **no way to prevent its occurrence in individual cattle**.
- We've all heard it said, "If you work with large animals, sooner or later you're going to get hurt." How true is this? Figures from a survey in Colorado showed that **more than a quarter of injury claims by cattle dealers were caused by livestock**. Horses were involved in more than one-third of high-cost injuries among cattle/livestock handlers. Cattle and horses caused a major segment of nonfatal farm work injuries to children, according to a Kentucky study. Large animals kicking, stepping on or falling on the handler, or pinning the handler against a solid object were the main causes of injury.
- **Extreme poll flexion** (bringing the horse's face behind the vertical position) can interfere with some horse's **ability to breathe**. In a study during which Norwegian Coldblooded Trotters were exercised on a treadmill either with free head positions or with polls flexed, poll flexion significantly affected peak inspiratory pressure in all horses. Horses with **dynamic laryngeal collapse** induced by poll flexion had more difficulty breathing than horses that did not show this effect. Another study showed that **rollkur** (extreme, coercively obtained hyperflexion of the poll) seems to produce **discomfort and fear** as indicated by heart rate and behavioral signs.
- Physiological and behavioral variables at rest and when exposed to startling stimuli were compared between horses fed either a high-fat diet or a starch/sugar diet that delivered the same caloric content. The authors of the study said, "Our results demonstrate that the increment of **fat proportion in the diet reduces the level of stress at resting and the intensity of response to startling stimuli**." They concluded that increasing dietary fat proportion might help to reduce the risk of riding accidents by keeping horses calmer.
- Once a horse is in fit athletic condition, taking a **week off** now and then won't bother him. However, if he's idle for a longer period—three months, for example—how do you begin **getting him back into condition**, and how long will the process take if you want to avoid injuring him by asking too much? An article in Horse Illustrated suggests following the old maxim of **a day of conditioning for every day the horse has been out of work**, so in this case, ideally you should begin easing your horse back into condition about ten to twelve weeks before you plan a weekend of hunting, eventing, or strenuous trail riding. **Begin with short periods of slow flat work**, gradually building up in small increments to a full work schedule. Remember that muscular fitness returns fairly rapidly, but it's important to allow plenty of time for the much slower conditioning of tendons, ligaments, and bones. Bottom line: Using an unfit horse for long or hard work periods without the proper conditioning (asking the "pasture potato" to become a "weekend warrior") is a **recipe for injury**. *This explanation is greatly simplified. Consult a trainer or veterinarian for the specific steps to follow in conditioning athletic horses. Young horses, mature horses, and horses older than 10 or 12 years will follow different patterns for conditioning.*

- A technique that uses basic **fibroblast growth factor** (bFGF) may offer hope for faster **healing of fractures**. In Japan, veterinarians tested bFGF's influence on bone formation by drilling small holes into the cannon bones of living horse and injecting a solution of gelatin hydrogel microspheres containing the substance. The legs were x-rayed four, eight, and twelve weeks later. Signs of bone healing were seen in the treated legs after four weeks, while control horses did not show healing until eight weeks following the procedure.
- The thought of **riding a mule down the trail** usually evokes strong feelings—either positive or negative—in the minds of **Grand Canyon** National Park visitors. While the long-eared transporters have an excellent safety record, the park's Web site recently reported that a mule descending the Bright Angel Trail lost its footing, fell, and rolled over its rider. The **injured rider** was extricated from the canyon by helicopter and taken to Flagstaff Medical Center for treatment.
- **Horses being transported** are often calmer when an **equine companion** rides in the trailer with them. **Looking at a mirror** is almost as helpful in reducing anxiety, according to research that measured vocalizations, eating, head-tossing, head-turning, and pawing when horses were transported alone, with an equine buddy, or within sight of a large acrylic mirror.
- Researchers at Cornell University maintained rats on a **vitamin-E-deficient diet** for 36 to 43 weeks and then tested the ability of the rats' **blood-brain barrier** to keep injected rhodamine dye out of the central nervous system. Results showed E-deficient rats had more dye in the central nervous system than control rats, suggesting such a deficiency **may reduce the integrity** of the blood-brain barrier.

## Wins and Wows

- **Nicanor**, the three-year-old full brother to **Barbaro**, claimed his first victory in his fourth racing start. Running with blinkers for the first time, Nicanor had a time of 1:46 for the mile-and-a-sixteenth distance, winning by 15 lengths. The race was at Delaware Park, the same track where Barbaro posted his first win.
- Janet Elliot, trainer of top steeplechase horses, and Ben Nevis, winner of the Grand National Steeplechase at Aintree in 1980, are among those chosen for induction into the **National Museum of Racing's Hall of Fame**. Elliot is the first female trainer to be chosen for this honor. Her credentials include earning two Eclipse awards, topping the National Steeplechase Association's annual earnings list six times, and becoming the first woman to win a National Steeplechase Association trainer championship. Ben Nevis, talented but extremely difficult to handle and ride, won numbers of races and set a record at the Maryland Hunt Cup.
- With lifetime offspring earnings in excess of \$6 million dollars, reining sire **Topsail Whiz** set a record total that continues to climb. The Quarter Horse stallion passed former leader Hollywood Dun It in earnings by offspring last summer and hit the **\$6 million** mark earlier this spring. During his own performance career, Topsail Whiz earned honors including NRHA Hall of Fame, All American Quarter Horse Congress Junior Reining Champion, and NRHA Lazy E Classic Open Champion.
- Thoroughbred owner and breeder Gustav Schickedanz has been selected for induction into the **Canadian Hall of Fame**. Thoroughbred horses Peteski, Alywow, Maryfield, and La Voyageuse were also honored, as were Standardbred horses Somebeachsomewhere and Rich N Elegant. Harness driver and trainer Keith Clark was chosen as well.
- Moon Bully has been named **Appaloosa Racing Horse of the Year**. Moon Bully has raced ten times, won almost \$80,000, and broke two track records. The horse was bred in Tennessee and is owned by Brad Anderson of Detroit, Texas.