

Who and What

- The Jockey Club Thoroughbred Safety Committee has recommended a rule change to allow **toe grabs** of up to **four millimeters** on the front shoes of horses racing on dirt. An earlier move to restrict toe grabs to **two millimeters** came as part of an effort to reduce injuries resulting from hooves stopping too quickly rather than sliding slightly as they landed. The Delaware Racing Commission adopted an emergency regulation to allow the longer toe grabs after seeing a high number of horses stumble soon after leaving the starting gate on dirt courses.
- In North America, **numbers of breeding mares and stallions** in 2008 and live Thoroughbred **foal births** in 2009 were all lower than in the respective previous year. For the 10 states and one Canadian province reporting, only Pennsylvania had more live foals in 2009 than in 2008. The **foal crop** for 2009 is expected to total around **34,000**.
- **A horse's sweat** can appear lathery or foamy because it contains latherin, a substance not found in human perspiration. Latherin reduces the surface tension of water and aids moisture in moving away from the skin to the surface of the coat. This **improves evaporation and cooling**, a necessity considering the horse's need to shed a large amount of heat during and after exercise.
- What's that formula for **predicting how tall a foal will be** when it is mature? One method of figuring adult height is to measure the distance from the ground to the foal's elbow (the leg joint just in front of the girth area). Doubling this measurement will give an approximation of the eventual distance from the ground to the withers.
- Good growing conditions in 2009 are predicted to lead to the **second-largest corn crop** in U.S. history, according to the USDA. Harvest forecasts call for a yield of **13 billion bushels** of corn. The bumper crop will likely lead to a 100-million-bushel increase in corn export levels.
- The newly opened **Regenerative Medicine Laboratory** at the UC-Davis School of Veterinary Medicine is one of a very few in the world to process, culture, and store stem **cells for use in horses**. Researchers have discovered ways to use stem cells in the treatment of colic, burns, neuromuscular degeneration, and injuries to bones, tendons, and ligaments. Regenerative medicine involves **creating tissue to repair or replace organs** and tissues that have been destroyed or damaged in some way. The new facility does not use embryonic stem cells but instead works with stem cells that have been collected from a horse's blood or bone marrow.
- Horses that are "easy keepers" and tend to become **overweight** are at increased risk of developing **laminitis**, and also of dying from this disease, according to researchers in England. In a study of 103 equines with laminitis, over 80% were overweight. Smaller horses tended to recover better than larger horses, while many stockier types—ponies, cobs, and large horses—did not have good outcomes. Bottom line: Take management steps to **avoid allowing horses to become overweight**. Cutting down on feed, increasing exercise, and using round pens, dry lots, or grazing muzzles for turnout are all possible steps to avoiding obesity.

- Extracorporeal **shock wave** therapy (ESWT) has been shown in two separate studies to aid in the **treatment of arthritis and wounds** in horses. A project at Iowa State University showed that induced skin wounds in the cannon area healed up to two weeks faster in horses treated with ESWT than in nontreated horses. A study at Colorado State University used three groups of horses with similar levels of arthritis in their knee joints. The first group was treated with an intramuscular medication, the second group received ESWT treatment, and the third group served as an untreated control. Horses in the first and third groups showed no change in lameness scores, while the **horses treated with ESWT had greatly improved soundness** that lasted seven weeks until the study ended.
- A new technique assuring positive **identification of individual horses** is being developed by Global Animal Management, Inc. The technique to be known as Eye-D will use a noninvasive biometric **iris scan** to assign an identification code to each horse. The scan will be made with a portable device that can capture an image of the horse's iris with a low visibility infrared light source.
- A drug predicted to be useful in treating **endotoxemia** is not as helpful as expected. The experimental drug **pirfenidone** was tested on horses with experimentally induced endotoxemia at UC-Davis after tests on other species indicated it might be therapeutic in horses. The equine test subjects showed **no benefit**, and a larger than acceptable proportion of the horses became excited after administration of the drug, indicating it is not a good choice for use in clinical cases of endotoxemia.
- Most **Canadian crop production** is predicted to be down for 2009 compared to yields in 2008. Lower harvest totals are expected in corn, wheat, barley, oats, and canola. Only soybeans and flaxseed forecasts called for increases of 4% and 6% respectively.
- A note in World Grain magazine says that **rats and mice** can damage about 1% of the world's cereal crops each year, and the level of damage increases to 3 to 5% in developing countries. Besides loss of the product, rodents have the potential to **transmit as many as 50 diseases to humans**, an important reason to protect stored grain from animal contamination.
- **How much hay do you need** to buy to get your horses safely through the winter months? To find an answer, you need to know each horse's approximate **weight** and also the **number of days** you will have to provide hay. Suppose you plan to start giving hay when the grass dies back, maybe in early November, and will continue to offer hay through mid-April although some grass will begin to grow before that date. That's about 165 days. If you can't weigh your horses and don't have access to a weight tape, you can use the figure of around 1000 to 1200 pounds per average-sized adult horse. Allowing about **2% of the horse's body weight** in hay per day, or about 22 pounds, multiply that number by 165 days and divide by 2000 to see the number in tons. You would need about 1.8 tons of hay per horse...but for peace of mind, get about 2 tons so you have a little extra for unexpected bad weather, a late spring, or other crises.

Wins and Wows

- Standardbred racehorse Muscle Hill knocked a full second off the previous **record time** in the \$1.5-million Hambletonian at the Meadowlands Racetrack last fall. The trotter led the pack all the way and finished in 1:50.20, a mark that also equaled the **world record for the fastest trotting mile**.
- Rider and instructor Linda Zang and equine star Brentina were inducted into the **United States Dressage Federation Hall of Fame** at the recent USDF Annual Convention. Hall of Fame inductees are chosen on the basis of their outstanding contributions to the discipline of dressage in the United States.