



# Willing Participants

*Research horses integral to success*

The scope of the studies performed at Kentucky Equine Research (KER) depends largely upon a band of diverse research horses. Though consistency in horseflesh is fundamental to KER studies now, this was not the case in the first year or two of research. Molasses, an Appaloosa gelding once used as a polo pony, was involved in many digestion trials and has the distinction of being KER's first research horse. Years later, a small herd of Arabian horses participated in a nutrition study where they were compared with Thoroughbreds regarding physiological response to exercise. Five Quarter Horses are presently enrolled in a trial determining the effect of different feed formulation on the management of muscle disorders. Today, most of the research horses in KER's herd are Thoroughbred geldings. Purchased

as long yearlings in groups of eight to ten, they are selected to be as similar as possible in size. A menagerie of horses, different in breed and sex, are necessary to perform different facets of research.

Regardless of the type of study, each horse is handled daily and weighed weekly, and all are on a regular schedule of farrier care, dental work, and vaccinations. Stalls are large and airy and are arranged so each horse can see his neighbors. The horses are turned out daily in large paddocks for social interaction and free exercise. Depending on the study in which they are participating, they may be muzzled to prevent free consumption of grass. When the oldest horses retire from research, they often go home with staff members to live out their golden years as family pets or are passed on to responsible horsemen. 🐾

PHOTOGRAPH |  
MARK LLEWELLYN

This seven-year-old gelding was a member of the KER research herd for five years. Because the focus of research shifted to bone growth and development, the gelding found a home as a jumper prospect.



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