

Who and What

- Should you **look your horse in the eye** as you approach him in the field, or look at his shoulder, or pretend to ignore him until you get close enough to grab his halter? A study at the University of Pennsylvania evaluated the significance of **making eye contact** with horses that are turned out in a field. Two groups of horses, one made up of semi-feral horses and the other of horses that were regularly handled, were used. Results showed essentially no difference in outcome for either group when a handler made or avoided eye contact. The report admitted that different results might be seen with various handlers, groups of horses, environments, and individual equines. However, it can be inferred that **equines in general do not feel that eye contact implies a definite threat.**
- A survey by Tack'n'Togs asked respondents about their **equine-related purchases** in the previous twelve-month period. The top five purchase categories by dollars spent were **feed, bridles and accessories, blankets and wraps, medications/supplements, and boots/bandages.** Halters, lead shanks, grooming tools, horse treats, hoof care products, and fly spray were also popular purchases. A second part of the survey determined where these purchases were made. **Feed stores,** mentioned by 77% of respondents, were the **leading outlets for horse supplies,** followed by tack shops (49%) and catalogs (24%). Pet superstores (15%) and internet/online suppliers (14%) were used by fewer horse enthusiasts. Bottom line: Customers regularly visit feed stores to buy feed, and will use the opportunity to pick up other horse-related supplies if these products are on display.
- **Botox** may be helpful in **reducing pain**—but not inflammation—in arthritic joints, according to a recent study. Researchers speculate that the drug inhibits the neurotransmitters involved in pain transmission.
- Researchers at the University of California-Davis have described an emerging equine disease known as **bone fragility syndrome.** The disease is characterized by bone weakening and deformation in the spine and upper limbs. Affected horses show **lameness, stiffness, and reluctance to move.** Swayback and outwardly bowed shoulders are seen as the disease progresses, and many horses with this problem also have pulmonary inflammation that causes an elevated breathing rate, flaring of the nostrils, and accentuated muscles in the chest and abdomen. Cause and cure have not been determined.
- **Tiludronate,** a drug developed to treat **bone-weakening diseases** in humans, has shown promise in preventing bone mineral loss in horses whose limbs have been immobilized by injuries.
- In humans, **gelatin** (hydrolyzed collagen) is absorbed from the intestine and accumulates in cartilage, according to a note in *The Horse*. In a German study, horses were fed gelatin for six days, after which they had significantly higher blood levels of amino acids found in gelatin. It remains to be determined whether horses use these amino acids specifically in the **maintenance and repair of cartilage** and other connective tissues.
- The city of Shelbyville, Kentucky has agreed to let personnel from the Shelbyville Horse Show paint **murals of American Saddlebred horses** on its two water towers. The towers will showcase an important regional industry while saving public money.

- We've all heard the advice that when you find you're **riding a dead horse**, the best strategy is to **dismount**. However, if horsemen follow the example of government, industry, and education leaders, alternate strategies might include:
 - **Reclassifying** the dead horse as "living-impaired."
 - Hiring outside **contractors** to ride the dead horse.
 - Harnessing several dead horses together to **improve speed and strength**.
 - Providing **additional funding** to increase the dead horse's performance.
 - **Lowering the performance standards** so dead horses can be included.
 - **Rewriting** the expected performance requirements for all horses.
 - Doing a productivity study to see if a **lighter rider** would boost performance.
 - Declaring that, because the dead horse does not eat or require shoeing, it is less costly and is therefore **more efficient** and desirable for budgeting purposes.

- **Peanut hay** for horses? If you haven't heard of it, you're not alone, as this forage is grown in only a few spots in the southern United States. It's a legume with a **nutritional profile similar to alfalfa**. Unlike the common peanut plant, this cultivar does not produce peanuts, only foliage, and horses eat it readily. The crop takes several years to establish its extremely deep root system, but once it is growing well, it requires little fertilizer or pesticide spray.

- Do you think your horse (or another animal) may have been poisoned by something he ate? Help is available if you call the **Animal Poison Control Center Hotline** at 888-426-4435. The service can be used at all times to consult with veterinarians and toxicologists. **A charge of \$60** is assessed for each call, and recommendations are given for a follow-up veterinarian in the caller's area.

- In herds of **pastured broodmares** at one Thoroughbred farm in California, 44 of 72 mares were found to have **gastric ulcers**. There were no significant correlations between affected horses and pregnancy status, age, breeding history, racing history, herd size, diet, or feeding schedule. This rate of ulceration was higher than expected, according to the researchers, and further investigation as to the cause of ulceration is warranted.

Wins and Wows

- **The Delaware Park Hall of Fame** has five new inductees. They are Damascus, Horse of the Year in 1967 and winner of 21 of his 32 races; Foxcatcher Farms, where owner William DuPont Jr. bred numerous top performers and champions; and trainer Virgil Raines, whose career spanned 65 years. Also honored with induction are Chris McCarron, the 1974 Eclipse-Award-winning apprentice jockey, and R.R.M. Carpenter Jr., chairman for many years of the Delaware Racing Commission.

- Jockey Kent Desormeaux posted his **5000th race win** at Saratoga late last summer. Desormeaux has had three Kentucky Derby wins, was named Eclipse Award leading apprentice jockey in 1987, and collected two more Eclipse Awards as the nation's outstanding rider in 1989 and 1992.

- **The Texas Racing Hall of Fame** has inducted three horse owners—Bill Allen, Dorothy Turner Scharbauer, and Bobby Cox—as well as Joe Straus Jr., chairman of Retama Entertainment Group.



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