

## Who and What

- Should you **keep a radio playing in the barn** to keep the horses company? Some **horses** might **prefer a quiet stable**, according to an Australian study of gastric ulcers. Scientists gathered data on more than 400 Thoroughbreds in race training. More than half the horses had ulcers, and the percentage increased with length of time in training. Ulcers were more common in horses that were turned out singly or not turned out at all; had to be transported to a training track; and were housed in barns where a radio was playing. Horses listening to talk shows had significantly higher rates of ulceration than those listening to music. Turning off the radio won't, of course, cure ulcers, but the study does suggest that **radio noise contributes to stress in some horses**.
- In some **exercise physiology studies** at Kentucky Equine Research, horses run on a high-speed treadmill while heart rate and blood parameters are measured. For research on the effect of climate change on marine life, scientists at Pacific University designed a tiny underwater treadmill to use in a study of water temperature and respiratory function in shrimp. To see the **cantering crustaceans** in action, type "**shrimp treadmill**" into your Internet search feature.
- At the most recent AAEP conference, Norm Ducharme of Cornell University reported on a study in which unconditioned horses were given **tart cherry juice blend** for two weeks prior to exercise. A control group of horses got a placebo. Both groups were placed in a program of increasing exercise, and blood samples were taken at the beginning of the study, before and during each exercise test, hourly for four hours after exercise, and daily for five days after the test. Horses in the treatment group showed **smaller increases in markers of muscle damage such as creatine kinase**. In humans, tart cherry juice blend has been found to have a beneficial effect on exercising muscle.
- Veterinarians have a new treatment for **tendon and ligament injuries using platelet-rich plasma**. In this technique, blood is drawn from an injured horse and centrifuged to concentrate platelets and remove red and white blood cells. The resulting plasma, which contains a high level of **growth factors**, is injected into the injured area. New body cells are also drawn to the area, helping to form blood vessels and connective tissue. Because the injected plasma comes from the injured horse rather than from a donor, **no rejection occurs**.
- **Australia's equine industry** contributes about **6.3 billion dollars** to that country's gross domestic product.
- Levels of **osteocalcin, a marker of joint metabolism**, might help identify very young foals that are at increased risk of developing **osteochondrosis**. Researchers drew blood from foals from 2 to 52 weeks of age and found correlations between osteocalcin levels and foals showing clinical signs of osteochondrosis at 5.5 and 11 months of age. Although more study is needed to validate the link, this finding might give foal managers an **early warning** so that they can more carefully manage nutrition and weight gain in growing foals.

- A lecture at the recent AAEP convention revealed that *Staphylococcus aureus* is widespread and can be found on the skin or inner nasal surfaces of 25 to 30% of humans and about 7% of horses. While the presence of the bacterium is not necessarily a reason for alarm, an **antibiotic-resistant strain known as MRSA** can cause dangerous infections in horses and humans. Handlers and veterinarians should **wash their hands** after contacting a horse with an MRSA infection to minimize chances of spreading the bacteria.
- **The number of farms in the United States has increased** in the last five years, according to the recent Census of Agriculture. Compared to all farms, the newer farms tend to be smaller with lower sales, more diversified production, and younger operators, most of whom also hold jobs at locations away from the farm. To see all results from the census, go to [AgCensus.usda.gov](http://AgCensus.usda.gov).
- In a report by the National Retail Federation, 85% of retailers said they had been victims of **organized retail crime**. Respondents to a survey estimated that 40% of products listed on auction Web sites as being “new, in box” are stolen goods. These items are often taken in well-planned operations that target loading docks and storerooms to remove boxes after delivery but before they can be logged into the store’s records. Retailers are advised to **keep storerooms locked** and to **monitor traffic into and out of loading dock areas**.
- **Going green?** Uh...great idea...but meanwhile, you have a farm to run! Four ideas that are not too hard to put into action: **manage manure** by composting; look into biological **controls for flies** and mosquitoes; **rotate pastures** to prevent bare spots and soil loss; use cisterns, rain gardens, and French drains (perforated pipe under gravel) to **catch and slow water runoff** from buildings and parking lots.
- **Headshaking horses** may be helped by sodium cromoglycate eye drops, a treatment used in dogs to relieve allergic conjunctivitis. The drops **improved behavior dramatically** in some horses, less in others, and not at all in some equines, leading researchers to conclude that headshaking behavior has more than one possible cause.

## Wins and Wows

- The Japan Racing Association named **Vodka** as Japan’s Horse of the Year and outstanding older female for 2008. Other honorees are **Selun Wonder** and **Buena Vista** as outstanding two-year-old male and female, **Deep Sky** and **Little Amapola** as three-year-old male and female, and **Screen Hero** as older male. **Yasutoshi Ikee** was named outstanding trainer by races won and training technique, while **Yutaka Take** was honored as the outstanding jockey by races won and winning average.
- **Mon Mome**, a nine-year-old horse, won England’s **Grand National Steeplechase** in April. Defeating 39 other horses and starting the race at 100-to-1 odds, Mon Mome tied the record as the **winner with the longest odds**. The hilly Grand National covers four and a half miles over 30 jumps, and is said to be the world’s most challenging race over fences.
- Selected for induction into the **National Museum of Racing’s Hall of Fame** are trainer **Bob Baffert**, jockey **Eddie Maple**, and racehorses **Tiznow** and **Silverbulletday**. Baffert, whose horses often train and race on KER-formulated feeds, has trained the winners of eight Triple Crown races and seven Breeder’s Cup races. Maple claims almost 4,400 wins in 34 years of riding. Tiznow is the only two-time winner of the Breeder’s Cup Classic, while Silverbulletday was the champion filly in both 1998 and 1999, winning well over three million dollars in her race career.