

Who and What

- A study conducted at Virginia Tech looked at differences in **energy metabolism in foals** whose dams were given varying levels of starch in their rations in the **last months of pregnancy**. Mares were fed diets providing the same number of calories, but energy was provided as **fat in some diets and as starch in others**. Glucose tolerance tests performed on their foals showed higher glucose concentrations through 80 days of age in foals whose **dams ate the high-starch rations**. A trend for lower insulin sensitivity was also found in these foals at 160 days of age. The findings suggest that feeding high-starch diets to pregnant mares may affect the development of body systems that regulate energy metabolism.
- The Agricultural Research Service has registered **six new corn strains** that have increased **resistance to aflatoxin** contamination. Strains found in the United States were crossed with resistant corn grown in Africa to produce the new types.
- The USDA is predicting that **world soybean output will be 19% higher in 2009-2010** due to record production in the top three global producers. Bigger plantings are expected in Argentina and Brazil, while better yields are predicted in the United States.
- Though colic can occur in horses of any breed, certain types of colic are more common in some horses than in others. Strangulation of the intestine by a **fatty tumor (lipoma)** is seen somewhat more frequently in older Arabs and Quarter Horses, while Miniature Horses are more prone to **impaction colic** caused by clumps of hardened manure blocking the intestinal tract. **Strangulating hernias**, where part of the intestine protrudes into the scrotal sac and cannot be pushed back into the abdominal cavity, are found in an abnormally large number of mature Quarter Horse, Walking Horse, and Standardbred stallions.
- Severe **colic may require surgical treatment**, a risky option that may be the only chance to save a horse's life. While younger horses typically survive the surgical procedure and recovery period from anesthetic better than aged equines, there is **little age-related difference in survival rate** to discharge or in survival at one year following the surgery.
- There were 17 **dust explosions in grain-handling facilities** in 2008, the most in almost 15 years. According to an analysis by RCI Safety, following regulations to limit the risk of explosions is not a guarantee of safety. Elimination of dust explosions requires a commitment by both management and employees; an analysis of on-site hazards; a systematic effort to control those hazards; and a written, documented, ongoing training plan for employees.
- The number of Thoroughbred **mares bred in the U.S.** in 2009 dropped 13.5% from the total in 2008. Kentucky-bred mares fell 10%, from 21,317 in 2008 to 19,059 in 2009. Florida-bred mare numbers fell 24%, and California-bred mares fell almost 23%. The number of breedings increased in Pennsylvania (almost 30%) and Indiana (44%), totaling about 2550 mares between those states.
- A study of **equine vocalizations** conducted at the Laboratory of Animal and Human Ethology in France concluded that horses easily distinguished between whinnies of horses in their own group, horses that are

neighbors but not close friends, and completely unfamiliar horses. The whinnies that horses use to maintain long-distance contact (0.6 miles, out of visual communication) carry information about an individual's identity, body size, and sex. The researchers stated, "Our results support the existence of social knowledge in horses and suggest a process of vocal coding/decoding of information."

- A note in Horse Journal reported that a German study found the **lowest levels of ammonia in stalls** where only manure was picked out. Unmucked stalls had slightly higher ammonia levels, and stalls that were completely mucked out every day had a level 1.5 times that found in "picked out" stalls. Stirring up bedding increases particulate matter in stable air, but bedding may block movement of ammonia particles from stall floors into the air. Providing **excellent barn ventilation** is a good management practice to minimize inhaled irritant levels.
- Thoroughbred sales totals were down 44.8% on the first day of the **Keeneland January sale** of horses of all ages, but the second day saw an increase of almost 25% over figures from last year. The first day's session topper was the four-year-old Mr. Greeley filly Miss Catalyst, winner of the 2009 Pebbles Stakes. Over the course of the entire sale, total **decline in price** was more than 27% from the previous year. However, due to differences in the economic situation and the particular sets of horses offered for sale, it is difficult to compare this sale directly with last year's market.

Wins and Wows

- The National Turf Writers Association has honored trainer **Larry Jones**, veterinarian and Oak Tree Racing Association founding director **Jack Robbins**, and international journalist **Dan Farley** with awards to recognize their outstanding contributions to the sport of Thoroughbred racing.
- For his three wins in the 2009 Breeders' Cup race series, jockey **Julien Leparoux** collected the Bill Shoemaker Award. The honor goes to the top jockey at the event, and Leparoux was the only rider with multiple victories.
- **Rachel Alexandra and Zenyatta**, the talented mares that captured the hearts of American racing fans last year, were high on the list in an Associated Press poll for top female athlete of 2009. Tennis star Serena Williams led the voting with 66 points, Zenyatta captured second place, and Rachel Alexandra was seventh.
- Four scientists have been inducted into the University of Kentucky Equine Research Hall of Fame. **Dr. Douglas Antczak** of Cornell University was recognized for his work on equine immunology, genetics, and reproduction. **Dr. I.G. Mayhew** was honored for his research at Massey University on neurological disorders and comparative neurology. **Dr. Alan J. Nixon** was chosen for his research on musculoskeletal injury and regenerative medicine at Cornell University. **Dr. Peter J. Timoney** of the University of Kentucky was selected for his work on various infectious diseases of equines.
- **William Farish**, owner of Lane's End Farm in Kentucky, received the Eclipse Award of Merit based on his many years of outstanding achievements in and contributions to the Thoroughbred industry. Farish is a steward and vice-chairman of The Jockey Club, a member of the board of directors of the Keeneland Association, and a former chairman of the Breeders' Cup executive committee. In two previous years, Farish was honored with Eclipse Awards as an outstanding breeder.
- **Dr. C. Wayne McIlwraith**, professor of equine orthopedic research at Colorado State University, and **Dr. Tom R. Lenz**, longtime promoter of equine welfare and trustee of the American Horse Council, were honored with the Distinguished Lifetime Member award at the 55th annual convention of the American Association of Equine Practitioners.