What’s Coming Up?

We have many events coming up that are likely to interest the horse enthusiast (youth and adult alike!), so read on to discover more about these upcoming activities and think about adding them to your calendar!

March 25: Norma Agnew Memorial MSU Hairy Horse Show.
This event is your opportunity to participate in a warm-up show, all while receiving valuable feedback from actual judges! Space is limited and you must have a stall to participate.

April 1: Hoofin’ it for Horses 5K Run/Walk
This fun, new event is sure to be a great time! The 5K will raise funds for the MSU Horse Judging Team, which is a fantastic student experience that allows team members to gain communication skills, confidence, networking, equine knowledge, and so much more through traveling to and competing in Intercollegiate Horse Judging Contests. Students work hard all year to raise funds to support their travel. Please join us for what is sure to be a fantastic event! Visit: [www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs](http://www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs) or like “MSU Horse Judging” on Facebook for more details. Contact us if you’re interested in sponsoring this great event!

April 14: Spotlight on Speed
Are you looking for an opportunity to get your horse out and warmed up for the season? Hoping to shave a few tenths off your best run? This “hairy horse show” is a great chance to get some coaching and feedback on technique in your gymkhana events. Space is limited and you must have a stall to participate.

April 21: MI 4-H Horse Jamboree
This event includes the state-level contests for Horse Judging, Horse Bowl and Hippology. Newly added this year will be the contests for public speaking and demonstration! Teams competing in the Horse Bowl portion will have qualified at their regional event. Additionally this event provides young people the opportunity to qualify for national 4-H Communication, Horse Judging, Horse Bowl and Hippology events!

June 8: Adult Riding Clinic
MSU Extension will provide a one-day riding clinic for adults who work with youth and horses, Friday June 8, 2012. The clinic is limited to 15 horses/rider and open to all auditors. See the story on page 2 to learn more about this exciting event for 4-H Horse leaders!

June 22-24: State 4-H Trail Ride
Have you ever been to the State 4-H Trail Ride? Recently? If not, (or of course if you have), think about attending this year! The 2012 State 4-H Trail Ride is June 22-24. This is a fun-filled event that YOU should add to your calendar this summer! Don’t have a horse? No worries! There are plenty of activities for non-riders. Plan on attending to meet other horse-enthusiasts, camp, and make great memories. This is a great event for the whole family to share! Read the story on page 2 for more details.

Camping fees and all meals are included with your low registration fee. Call your local county extension office for registration details. Registration deadline is Monday, May 23rd.

To learn more about ANY of these events, and many others, check out our website (http://www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs) for more information!
### Calendar of Events

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### The Details of Dressage: Adult Riding Clinic

MSU Extension will provide a one-day riding clinic for adults who work with youth and horses, Friday June 8, 2012. The clinic is limited to 15 horses/rider and open to all auditors.

This year’s clinic will focus on the basics of the increasingly popular dressage classes. However, many of the themes covered will prove useful in many other riding disciplines.

**The objectives of the clinic are:**

1. Promoting safe teaching and handling techniques to adults working with youth.
2. Developing progressive horsemanship skills and knowledge for coaches and leaders, regardless of discipline or activity.

**Benefits of participation:** Clinic participants will learn the basics of a progressive training system that will benefit any horse and rider, at any skill level. Instructors will consist of faculty, staff and partners of the MSU Department of Animal Science. Certificates of completion will be awarded to all participants (riders and auditors).

**Cost:** The costs are $100 for each horse/rider and $40 for auditors. Registration includes box lunch and break, and a clinic proceeding.

*For more details visit our website ([www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs](http://www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs)) for more information as the date approaches.*

### Same Name, NEW Location, NEW Activities!

**Why you shouldn’t miss the 2012 State 4-H Trail Ride...**

The 2012 State 4-H Trail ride will be an event you won’t want to miss! The State 4-H Trail Ride Committee is excited to announce the new location for 2012; Whiskey Creek Campground in Custer, MI. With this new venue comes many new activities and amenities! This is sure to be an event for the whole family!

Whiskey Creek Campground is located on 80 wooded acres and surround by 22,000 acres of Manistee National Forest and 100's of miles of trail systems. Whiskey Creek Campground’s 16,000 sq ft lodge includes a lounge, a large in-door heated pool, with hot tub, a patio to enjoy the sunshine, banquette hall, full kitchen, and much more!

We’ll be including even more educational activities for our youth attendees (including crafts and science projects!) and with the lodge, we’ll have a place to get together, rain or shine! This is a weekend for more than just the trail riding enthusiast, we encourage all MI 4-H members to attend, as the camaraderie with or without horses will be fantastic! For those of you bringing horses there will be ample opportunity to ride along the beautiful trails of Northern Michigan.

As always, your registration fee will cover all of your camping fees and meals for the entire weekend (extra fees apply for campsites with electric hookup).

*For more details visit our website ([www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs](http://www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs)) for more information as the date approaches.*

Also, visit [www.whiskeycreekcamp.com](http://www.whiskeycreekcamp.com) to check out more information about our new location!
Show Ring Tips: From the Judge’s Perspective

Have you ever wondered what the judge was thinking under that well-shaped hat? Well, I recently sat down with MI 4-H Horse Judge Marc DeLisle to discuss what things looks like from the judge’s perspective. It was a great chance to learn some Do’s and Don’ts for the show ring! Here’s what Marc had to share:

Do’s

1. Be clean and neat. You don’t have to have the super expensive outfit just be clean and neat.

2. Be prepared. Good results don’t come from working with your horse once a month. Develop that relationship to its fullest. Your horse has to trust you before they can perform at your expected level.

3. Watch classes that are before yours and look for signs of what the judge is looking for; (straight lines, pivots, turns and/or showmanship)

4. Take time to break patterns up and look for key points to concentrate on. Long straight lines might mean straightness is important. Lots of turns and/or pivots might mean sticking your pivots is something that judge is specifically looking for. Again watch the classes before yours and make mental notes of the winners to see what they did.

Measure your performance on your prior ride or pattern rather than the judges placement. A good judge will see good rides and I hope will reward you for it.

Do Not’s

These are things that will not disqualify you but things that need your attention.

1. Don’t use your hat as a pillow because you slept on the way to the horse show. A whacked out hat just makes for a really rough first impression.

2. Dirty horses - SCRUB YOUR HORSE!!! I understand that there are lot of “come as you are” shows out there. But if your horse decided to lay down in his “dirty spot” and has a huge yellow spot on his barrel this doesn’t help your showing situation.

3. If you are that person that is constantly playing with the reins or jerking on your horses mouth, STOP!!!!!! One correction hurts but the next one gives you a one way ticket to Gatesville. Train at home not in my ring.

4. Be ready!!!! It’s always frustrating to wait for someone that just wasn’t ready or was day dreaming. I will never forget listening to the gate person call a number 3 times and looking up and seeing her back to me just outside the ring. She was in a deep conversation with her friend that had already gone. I finally walked across the ring and leaned on the fence to ask her “if she would like to play in our horse show today”. When she realized I walked halfway across the ring to ask her. She was embarrassed and totally blew her pattern. A lot of judges would just DQ her and shut the gate.

Thanks Marc for sharing your thoughts, from the judge’s perspective! Have any questions you’d like answered by a MI 4-H Horse judge?
Email them to Taylor at tenlenta@msu.edu with the Subject line: Newsletter Judge Question.

Marc DeLisle is a respected member of the MI 4-H Horse Judges List and MI 4-H Horse Judges Advisory Committee. Marc volunteers much of his time to MI 4-H and supports the numerous educational events throughout the year such as; State 4-H Jamboree, 4-H Benefit Clinic, 4-H Hairy Horse Show, and much more!

It’s here! >>>>

Michigan Equine News!
http://equinenews.msue.msu.edu/

The Michigan Equine News website and an electronic newsletter for Michigan equine enthusiasts! Visit “Michigan Equine News” on facebook, “like” it and be sure to sign up your email address to receive each edition of this newsletter! This community is designed for Michigan equine enthusiasts to engage in discussions, share ideas, and learn the latest news impacting the equine industry.
Let’s face it; times are tough and budgets everywhere are shrinking. Horse showing certainly isn’t immune to the budget crunch, so if you are looking for ways to save money in this expensive sport, read on for some useful advice! (This is part two of a two-part series.)

Work Together...
Besides having more fun, sharing the horse show experience with friends can help you cut down your costs. First, think about hauling together. You can certainly save money on fuel by driving less vehicles. Also, plan ahead when reserving stalls. Stalling together in groups can make free time more enjoyable, and splitting tack stalls with friends can save you $100’s over the course of a show season. Another way to work together is through planning group lessons. Work with your friends or fellow 4-H club members to have instructors work with a group, which is often much less expensive than an individual lesson.

Dress to impress...
Consignment shops and tack swaps are a great place to shop for show clothing. You can often find gently used, still in-style show clothes for dramatic discounts. Additionally, keep these venues in mind when you want to sell your used show apparel. Use those earnings to build up your show fund!

Lastly, make friends with your local dry cleaner. Although at-home ironing may do the trick, a profession press and starch job can be just the finishing touch on those button-up shirts, show pants, breeches, etc.

Plan Ahead...
Buy in bulk things like Show Sheen, Fly Spray, etc. Buying in bulk can really help you stay within the confines of a strict budget. Stock up only on those things that you know you’ll use often.

Bring your own bedding. Buying bedding at your local feed store or elevator is often much cheaper than purchasing it at the show. Additionally, you can be more comfortable with using a consistent bedding at each location.

Think about going on an “all cash diet”; select your classes ahead of time and only bring enough cash for those (plus other planned fees/expenses). This can prevent you from making those expensive impulse decisions to go in just “one more class”.

Pot Luck time...
Who doesn’t love a good pot luck? Although it may be tempting, it makes good financial sense to stay away from those pricey concession stands. So talk to your friends and divvy up the meal responsibilities. Have someone bring lunch on Saturday, and you can bring dinner on Saturday...you get the idea. And since the horse show schedules can be so unpredictable, break out the Crock Pot and have something simmering away throughout the day. Slow cookers work great for having food ready when you have the time, perfect for the horse show!

Get involved...
Another great idea that a friend shared with me was to get more involved! By becoming a member of the association you can often take advantage of discounts on show fees. Also, ask the show manager if they’d offer discounts for volunteering at the show (especially if you aren’t showing that day and have some free time!). They often need the help and you need the discounts, win-win!

**ask the experts>>>**

**Q:** What is the best way to transition my horse from an all-pasture diet to an all-hay diet?

**A:** When transitioning a horse to a different feed source, the key is to do it slowly. Start by giving your horse a small amount of hay (a pound or a small flake) while in the pasture. It would be ideal if you have access to a dry lot or stall for feeding hay. Add small amounts (i.e. a small flake) of hay to the horse’s diet each day over a 10 to 14 day period until you have reached your desired amount of hay (usually about 2% of the horse’s body weight).

If you do not have access to a dry lot or stall for hay feeding, this transition will likely be difficult as most horses will prefer grazing over eating hay.

(This question and response was taken from the Frequently Asked Questions on [www.extension.org/horses](http://www.extension.org/horses))

Have a question that you want answered? Visit [www.extension.org/horses](http://www.extension.org/horses) and ask a nationally recognized equine expert YOUR question!
What in the World is “Learning Theory”...
And what does it have to do with me and my horse?

Learning theory is a summary term for what we know from psychology and horse behavior about how animals (in this case, horses) learn and respond to training. There’s a saying in the horse world that every time you work with your horse, you are either teaching him something or unteaching him something.

Three terms to learn from this topic area are: negative reinforcement, positive reinforcement and punishment. Firstly, negative reinforcement does not imply that it is bad! It simply means that you are trying to reinforce a behavior that you want the horse to repeat more often, and you are going to do something that the horse finds mildly unpleasant (aversive) in order to do that. For example, if you want to teach a young horse to lead, you can pull on the halter and lead rope until the horse takes a step forward. As soon as he or she takes that step forward, a skilled handler will immediately release the halter/lead rope pressure. That is the negative reinforcement part...

The release of the unpleasant stimuli (in this case, we see an example of pressure-release type training.) Much of what we do with horses revolves around negative reinforcement. How are most horses trained to walk forward while being ridden? The rider’s legs are squeezed around their rib cage. This is pressure and if the horse walks forward, a skillful rider will immediately release that pressure. If the horse doesn’t respond to light pressure, the pressure will get heavier. Eventually we want our horses to learn to respond to extremely light pressures that we refer to as cues.

Positive reinforcement is also when we are trying to increase the frequency of a behavior, but the reinforcement now is something that the animal will find pleasant, for example, a food treat or a scratch on the withers. For example, if you have a horse that is a bit tricky to catch, and you start giving him a peppermint after each time you catch him or her, the vast majority of horses will soon become easier to catch...provided that the catching isn’t immediately followed every time by something that the horse hates.

Punishment is a somewhat controversial area, so what follows should be viewed as my opinion on the topic (but I think you will find that my opinion on the topic is in agreement with many others). With punishment, we are trying to decrease the frequency of an unwanted behavior. For instance, if we have a yearling colt who tries to bite our sleeve when we are leading him, we might carry a dressage whip and tap him strongly on the chest whenever he attempts to bite. (I try to avoid slapping his face for fear of making him head shy.) With time and consistency, most horses will quickly reduce the frequency of the unwanted behavior. Another rule of thumb is to never punish the horse more severely than another horse would. For example, a cocky foal might try nipping his dam only to be reprimanded with a harsh, prompt nip back, but the mare would not proceed to reprimand, reprimand, reprimand for the next five minutes.

Now to one of my soap boxes for a moment...the warm up pen at a horse show. Be certain, whether at home or at the show, that you are asking the horse to do something that it actually knows how to do and that you give it an opportunity to be correct. This goes along with another industry saying – make the right thing to do easy and the wrong thing to do difficult. It is one of my pet peeves when I see people in the warm up pen yanking on their horse’s mouth (which would often tell the horse to slow down) while spurring or kicking it in the sides (which would often tell a horse to go forward). Talk about confusing! The poor horse may become confused or frustrated and eventually offer up some sort of conflict or resistance behavior. In a mild case, this might be wringing his tail; in a more serious case, it might involve rearing. There are a few special cases where mouth pressure and leg pressure might be sending the horse a sensible message, but often times, people in the warm up pen are just mimicking what they’ve seen someone else do without thinking through whether it actually makes sense to the horse.

Our horses are our partners; they deserve fair practices during training, competing, or just having fun with them. We owe our horses a good understanding of learning theory. Happy riding!

Thank you Camie for contributing to our newsletter. I’m sure this article will be useful for all of us learning with our horses!
Horsey Humor >>>

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And MORE!!