What’s Coming Up?

We have many events coming up that are likely to interest every horse enthusiast. Read on to discover more about these activities and think about adding them to your calendar!

April 11-12: 4-H Equine Educational Expo
Join us Friday evening for the Equine Communications contests which include public speaking and demonstrations. The fun continues all day Saturday with the state-level contests for Horse Judging, Horse Bowl and Hippology. It will all wrap up with an awards program on Saturday evening. This event provides young people the opportunity to qualify for national 4-H Communications, Horse Judging, Horse Bowl and Hippology events!

June 18-20: 4-H Exploration Days
Explore MSU’s campus while making new friends and exploring your interests! All of these things can be done at 4-H Exploration Days!

Every year, over 2,500 youth and chaperones from the four corners of Michigan travel to MSU for 4-H Exploration Days. This really fun MSU pre-college program could be the highlight of your summer - it could even change your life!

This year we will be holding many exciting equine-related sessions; Equine Welfare Assessment, Biosecurity on the Farm, Intro to Competitive Horse Judging, Equine Nutrition, Healthy Living for the Equestrian, and Communication with your Horse.

June 20-22: State 4-H Trail Ride & Family Camp Weekend
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 2014 State 4-H Trail Ride is June 20-22. This is a fun-filled event that YOU should add to your calendar this summer! 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 flyer on page 6 for more details.

August 9-11: State 4-H Horse Show
Over 550 youth from the four corners of Michigan will be travelling to East Lansing, MI to participate in this annual, 3-day event! Members are selected by their county 4-H programs to participate in the show. Competing at the show and being able to represent their county is an honor for the youth involved!

Stop by the MSU Pavilion to visit this event (which is FREE to spectators). There will be plenty of great opportunities to watch Michigan 4-H youth demonstrate their skills with their equine partners!

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!

Dates to Remember >>>

- April 11-12, 2014: 4-H Equine Educational Expo
- June 20-22, 2014: State 4-H Trail Ride
- August 15-17, 2014: State 4-H Horse Show
Stress and the equine immune system

By Karen Waite

Basic management will help keep horses healthy in stressful situations.

During the winter, ice, snow, sleet, power outages and significant temperature fluctuations sometimes happen all in the same day. The winter months have provided a great deal of stress, not only in people, but also in horses and other animals. What is stress in horses, and is it really something that horse owners need to be concerned about? According to Carey Williams, Extension equine specialist at Rutgers University, stress may be defined as “...the body’s response to anything it considers threatening. For a horse, this could be a number of factors, including trailering and traveling, showing, poor nutrition, feeding at irregular times, changes in other routines, environmental toxins, interactions within their social environment, variations in climate and illness.” Each of these potential stressors can cause unique issues in the horse. Long-term stress may result in a depressed immune system and subsequently, a greater risk of illness in the animal. The immune system of the horse is a fascinating and complex, yet typically effective physiological means of fighting off disease causing agents such as bacteria, viruses and other pathogens. The three main factors that influence immune system function in the horse include: stress, nutrition and age. If a horse is young or very old, when they are not receiving an appropriate level of nutrition, or when they are otherwise stressed, their immune system may fail to protect them effectively, therefore increasing the risk of disease. At this time of year, cold stress combined with age, low body condition, or some combination of the three may create a situation where horses are more susceptible to illness.

When considering the many factors of stress causing agents, maintaining proper immune system function is a primary concern. When horses are transported to events where large numbers of unfamiliar horses congregate, such as a horse show, rodeo or organized trail ride, there is the potential for them to be exposed to pathogens. It is imperative to realize that their immune system may be compromised by the stress of travel or a change in routine. Michigan State University Extension recommends the following practices to reduce the risk of disease to horses, regardless of the time of year:

- Maintaining a body condition score of 5
- Keeping horses on a regular vaccination, deworming and dental schedule
- Maintaining a similar feeding routine when at home or on the road
- Making sure horses are physically prepared for the work they are asked to do.

Implementing good biosecurity procedures when traveling and returning home

While there are no guarantees that horses will always stay healthy, practicing these methods will assist in the prevention of illness and disease.

Calendar of Events

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<td>Norma Agnew Memorial Hairy Horse Show/Clinic</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 29</td>
<td>Pattern-O-Rama Hairy Horse Show/Clinic</td>
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<td>April 6</td>
<td>Hoofin’ it for Horses 5K Run/Walk</td>
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<td>April 11-12</td>
<td>Equine Education Expo</td>
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<td>Whiskey Creek Campground, Custer, MI</td>
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As spring draws near, we will inevitably be dealing with mud. Learn how to make the best of this messy situation.

Many areas of our state are experiencing a winter that brought colder than normal temperatures and higher than normal snowfall totals. For more than a month, Michigan has remained below freezing temperatures and the snow has kept piling up—many of us are literally running out of places to put the snow! This means when things begin to thaw out in the coming weeks, we will be faced with a mess!

Since we know this mess is inevitable, what can we do to prepare? Below are some tips to help you manage the mud!

Suit up! Be sure you are properly outfitted for a trip to the barn.
- So I can be prepared for a trip to the barn whenever the chance arises, I keep a pair of insulated muck boots at the barn during the springtime. A great tip to help your older boots last longer is to put large plastic bags over your socks. This will eliminate that terrible moment when you “find” the hole in your boot. Wet socks are no fun!
- Have you ever found yourself walking through mud when suddenly your foot comes up with no boot attached? A great tip is to NOT pull your foot straight up, which is likely to cause your boot to stay with the mud. Pull heel first, and you’re much more likely to keep foot and boot attached.

Protect your horse! In addition to mud, spring brings with it many difficulties for the horses themselves.
- This recent MSU Extension article focuses on the unfortunately common problem of rain rot.
- Additionally, you may have some questions on what your horse should be wearing. When considering blanketing or not, it is most important to provide your horse an opportunity to stay dry. Wet horses are more susceptible to hypothermia in cold temperatures and dermatologic issues (such as those discussed above).

Prep the farm! To best answer the question of how to prepare your farm for mud management, I reached out to some of my horse-owning friends to see how they cope. Their useful tips are listed below!
- It’s best to recognize that whether or not we like it, parts of our horses’ turnout may be destroyed during the springtime. The soft footing that leads to mud will likely kill any vegetation growing where traffic patterns are high. To minimize the damaged ground, designate a sacrifice lot.
- You’ll also want to eliminate low-lying areas as best you can, especially if these are in high traffic areas. This can be done in a variety of ways. Bringing in sand, wood bark, sawdust, gravel, or crushed asphalt are all ways to help prevent mud at gates and entries to barns and arenas. Another idea is to utilize a High Traffic Pad.
- Another unfortunate side effect of mud is ruts and holes in the ground. It’s a good idea to smooth out these ruts as best you can when the weather is above freezing and the soil is still pliable. As temperatures fluctuate, which they tend to do in Michigan, these deep ruts will freeze when temperatures drop, leaving dangerous holes and uneven ground.

Feed wisely! These tips can help you minimize waste of feed.
- If you’re feeding hay on the ground outside, there are several ways to prevent waste. Feeding on a rubber mat can keep hay from being lost in the mud or water. Additionally, it can minimize the amount of dirt or sand the horses will ingest. Eating sand can potentially lead to sand colic.
- Another way to minimize mud is to encourage horses to change their traffic patterns. Feeding in a different location of the turn out lot each day can help prevent high traffic areas.

While we can’t eliminate the problem of mud altogether, using these tips can help us cope with the inevitable mess of springtime!
Top 5 Tips for maximizing the life of your horse tack & equipment

By Taylor Fabus

In order to maximize the useful life of your horse tack and equipment, you must properly maintain it. Tack and equipment costs can have a huge impact on your entire horse budget. Tack that is properly cared for not only lasts longer, but it can also prevent accidents and injury to both horse and rider. Read on to discover the top five ways to maximize the life of your tack and equipment.

1. **Clean up your tack room.** A crucial component of clean tack and equipment is your **tack room.** A clean, cool, and relatively dry room is ideal for maintaining the condition of your tack, especially leather. If your storage area is too humid, it can create an environment where mold can easily grow. Preventing this moist environment may require extra attention during Michigan’s humid summer months. Furthermore, it’s a good idea to scan your entire tack room on a weekly basis for excessive build-up of dust on rarely used tack, mold growth, or even pet or vermin droppings. Making this “scan” a weekly process will make it a quick job! You’ll have little mess build up in a week’s time, so clean up won’t take long either. However, if you only do a cleanup of your tack room on a yearly basis, you’ll find the mess will be much larger and clean up time much longer. In addition, some messes (especially animal droppings) may have caused permanent damage to your tack.

2. **Tighten Up!** This is a simple, yet oh-so important step. Set a schedule, say the 15th of each month, to go through your equipment to be sure things (like Chicago screws) are secure. In the photo to the right, you can see the common areas, circled in orange, where Chicago screws are located. Ideally, each time you saddle up you’ll want to give screws a quick check to be sure everything is tight and ready to ride!

3. **Sanitize between horses.** It’s commonplace at some boarding and training facilities to share grooming supplies between horses. While this can work well, it is important you limit the number of germs that are also shared. Keeping a can of disinfectant spray, such as **Lysol,** handy can be a quick and easy way to limit germs on brushes. Just a quick spray on all of the grooming supplies between each use can kill bacteria, fungi, viruses, mold and mildew. Another option is to have separate brushes and saddle pads for each horse. Be sure to label the equipment with the horse’s name clearly so it does not get shared.

4. **Condition your leather.** It pains me to see so many “thirsty” saddles being used at horse shows, so much so that I’ve been known to give my friends’ saddles a little conditioning before show time (I’m a great friend to have around, aren’t I?!). Although I’ve used many great products over the years, my personal favorite is a **one-step cleaner and conditioner.** If everything I need is in one bottle, I’m less likely to misplace it and let’s face it, one step is easier! No matter the product you use, it’s important to condition your saddle at home first to be sure you like how your newly conditioned saddle feels when you ride in it. Some conditioners can leave the saddle sticky and may even cause residue to come off while riding (so be careful if you have a light-colored riding outfit). Personally, in my hunt seat equitation class, I’m comfortable with a little extra saddle grip, but you may find the new feel uncomfortable so be sure to test out your new conditioning products at home first.

5. **Deep cleaning.** Periodically, say maybe twice a year, it is extremely beneficial to give your equipment a deep cleaning. Wash all horse blankets, saddle pads, polo wraps, and grooming supplies, regardless of if they’ve been recently used. Once your “deep cleaning” is complete, be sure your storage methods help keep things clean. I store all of my clean, dry blankets and sheets in large plastic containers when they’re not being used. Be sure your containers are marked with their contents, which will
As many of you may know, the key to success is setting goals. In order to achieve the goals that you’ve set, you must set S.M.A.R.T. goals! This short acronym is very useful, and if used appropriately, can mean the difference between success and failure. This system of goal setting has been described and dissected many times. This article will discuss specifically how you can use this in your Michigan 4-H Horse & Pony project to achieve success! The first step is to actually write your goals down. Putting pen to paper (or finger to keyboard) helps you clearly define goals and commit.

Specific
If you’re writing down your goals (as instructed above), that is the first step toward specificity. A specific goal should answer these five questions:
- What exactly do I want to achieve?
- Why – specific reasons, purpose or benefits of accomplishing the goal.
- Who is involved?
- Where – identify a location.
- Which restrictions or limits are important to consider?

Poor example, “Have a good western riding pattern in 2014.”

Better example, “To improve my confidence in the class, I aim to complete a western riding pattern at my spring warm up show in June where I perform all flying lead changes.”

Measurable
The thought behind this is that if a goal is not measurable, it is not possible to know whether you are making progress toward successful completion. Measuring progress can help you stay on track, reach your target dates, and experience the satisfaction when ultimately the goal is reached. A measurable goal will usually answer questions such as:
- How much?
- How many?
- How will I know when it is met?
- Indicators should be quantifiable

Poor example, “Buy new show clothes.”

Better example, “Deposit $15 per week into my savings account. At the end of 2014 I will have over $700 which is what I need for a very nice used horsemanship outfit.”

Attainable
It is important that your goals are realistic and attainable. While an attainable goal may be difficult to achieve, the goal is not extreme. That is, the goals are neither out of reach nor below standard performance, as these may be considered meaningless. When you identify goals that are most important to you, you begin to figure out ways you can make them come true. You develop the attitudes, abilities and skills to reach them. An attainable goal will usually answer the question: How can the goal get accomplished?

Poor example, “Compete at Rolex 3-Day Event this year.”

Better example, “Take lessons every other week with my local hunter jumper trainer (insert name here), with the goal of competing in one over fences class this year at fair.”

Relevant
Next, we will discuss choosing goals that matter. A bank manager’s goal to “Make 50 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches by 2:00pm” may be specific, measurable, attainable and time-bound, but lacks relevance. Relevant goals (when met) drive the team (you and your horse), department (your 4-H club) and organization (4-H) forward. A goal that supports other goals would be considered a relevant goal. A relevant goal can answer yes to these questions:
- When?
- What can I do six months from now?
- What can I do six weeks from now?
- What can I do today?

Poor example, “Lose weight.”

Better example, “Exercise at least 30 minutes, twice a week. I will use the exercises in Exercises for the Equestrian: Part 1 & Part 2. Becoming more physically fit will allow me to ride longer, improving my horsemanship, while also helping my horse becoming more fit!”

Time-bound
Lastly we’ll discuss the importance of giving goals a time frame. A deadline helps focus your efforts on completion of the goal on or before the due date. A time-bound goal will usually answer the questions:
- When?
- What can I do six months from now?
- What can I do six weeks from now?
- What can I do today?

Poor example, “Show a lot this year!”

Better example, “Go to at least one horse show per month (within 20 mile radius from my barn) from May-August. Since I saved my entry fees over the winter, I can use that money to pre-enter for each of these shows now.” (Saying per month will help you track your progress along the way, and pre-entering will help you commit while giving you tasks to do now.)
The State 4-H Trail Ride & Family Camp Weekend is a fun-filled event that YOU should add to your calendar this summer! The event takes place at the beautiful Whiskey Creek Campground in Custer, MI. Don’t have a horse? No worries! There are plenty of activities for non-riders. Whiskey Creek Campground offers an indoor heated swimming pool, full electric hook ups, stocked fishing pond, wi-fi, laundry, playground and so much more! The Trail Ride committee has an agenda sure to please: crafts, t-shirt making, science activities, delicious meals, line dancing, and more! Plan on attending to meet other horse-enthusiasts, camp and make great memories. This is a great event for the whole family to share! Camping fees and 6 meals are included with your low registration fee. Registration deadline is June 5th.

Who do YOU Contact for Entry Information?

Email Taylor Fabus: tenlenta@msu.edu

Visit our website:
http://www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs