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!

Come join us at the 2013 State 4-H Horse Shows!

Once again this year, we will be hosting the State 4-H Horse Show at the beautiful MSU Pavilion for Agriculture and Livestock Education. It will take place August 9-11, 2013. Over this 3 day event, more than 550 youth from many of the 83 counties of Michigan will be invited to attend. These talented members have been 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! Exhibitors will be competing in a variety of classes; English, dressage, western, trail, jumping, gymkhana and PEP (Proud Equestrians Program, a therapeutic riding program). These showmen have spent months, even years preparing themselves and their horses or ponies for the show, in hopes of bringing home a gold medal, or even being named a State 4-H Champion in an event. Although the show is very competitive the experience the youth gain from it is far greater than the awards won.

What is unique about the State 4-H Horse Show is that it is almost entirely run by volunteers. Family and friends of 4-H from across the state come together to plan and run the show. Without their help and the support of the many sponsors and commercial vendors, the show would not be the great event that it is.

Don’t forget, this is a public-friendly event! Stop by the MSU Pavilion to visit the horse show (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! Of course, the shopping is great too!

NEW THIS YEAR! The State 4-H Miniature Horse Show will be held separately this year. This is to encourage participation in this event and allow exhibitors to show both their miniature horse and their pleasure or speed horse, if they qualify through their counties. This event will be held in the South Barn at the MSU Pavilion on Sunday, August 4th.

For more information, check out our website (http://www.ans.msu.edu/ans/youth_extension_programs)

Dates to Remember >>>

> July 15:  
ALL State 4-H Horse Show entries due to STATE office

> Sunday, August 4:  
State 4-H Miniature Horse Show

> August 9-11:  
State 4-H Horse Show
**Calendar of Events**

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<td>State 4-H Trail Ride</td>
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<td>Ag Expo</td>
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<td>August 4</td>
<td>State 4-H Miniature Horse Show</td>
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<td>August 9-11</td>
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<td>November 22-24</td>
<td>4-H Teen &amp; Adult Leaders’ Conference</td>
<td>Kettunen Center, Tustin, MI</td>
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That’s right, we have a facebook page! Hop on over to [www.facebook.com/MI4HHorseLeaders](http://www.facebook.com/MI4HHorseLeaders) and “like” our page. We want to keep this page current, informative and interactive!

**What’s in a Webcast??**

A webinar is a media presentation distributed over the Internet.

At Michigan State University Extension, we are always working hard to bring you useful, factual, science-based information on a large variety of topics. With the advancements in technology, it makes sharing this information easier than ever! One of the great ways that we have worked to provide you with equine information is through [My Horse University](http://www.mhull.com).

For those of you who are unfamiliar, **My Horse University** (MHU) was established in 2005 at Michigan State University. MHU brings research and knowledge from world-renowned experts to online courses and products. MHU’s offers courses that provide a comprehensive and convenient learning experience for horse enthusiasts throughout the world. The online format of MHU is very flexible, in order to meet everyone’s demanding schedules!

Maybe not ready to commit to taking a full course? Not a problem! [My Horse University](http://www.mhull.com) and eXtension offer free monthly webcasts September through May. Webcasts are also recorded and archived and are available for free viewing from anywhere at any time!

Some of our recently archived webcasts are listed below. Visit the [archived webcast page](http://www.mhull.com) to see if there are any others you want to watch!

You can also [join MHU’s mailing list](http://www.mhull.com) to be informed as soon as our 2013/2014 webcast season is announced.

Watch these webcasts anytime!

- **Protein Requirements for Horses**
  By: Dr. Holly Spooner, Middle Tennessee State University

- **Structuring Your Horse Business to Succeed in the Future**
  By: Michelle Greenlee, Farm Financial Consultant, Nebraska Farm Business

- **Managing Live Horse Events**
  By: Karol Dyson, University of Maryland Extension

- **Showing Trends from a Judge’s Perspective**
  By: Dr. Kathy Anderson | University of Nebraska
By: Dr. Chris Skelly

This article was originally published by MSUE News.

The optimum body condition score should be determined on an individual basis, considering the horse’s workload, age and production status as primary factors. A young growing horse should be developing healthy skeletal and muscle tissue without excessive fat tissue. Both clinical and field observations suggest that excess weight can cause a growing horse to have bone abnormalities, especially if there is a genetic predisposition to developmental orthopedic disease. A goal of a moderate body condition score of 5 would guard a healthy young horse from unnecessary fat that would burden developing bone tissue.

This mare has a moderate body condition score of 5. She is in good shape for work or breeding.

A performance horse needs body fat stores to provide energy for exercise. Too much body fat can decrease performance and hinder a horse’s ability to dissipate heat during hot weather. However, a thin horse does not have enough energy stored to maintain a high performance level. An optimum BCS for a performance horse ranges from 5 through 7, depending on its work requirements. For example, a draft horse used for pulling would be kept closer to a BCS of 7 while a racehorse would be kept closer to a BCS of 5.

A broodmare’s energy demands double once a foal is delivered and begins to nurse. A mare has her highest energy needs during peak milking period. A thin mare will have a higher incidence of reproductive failure, that is, failure to conceive or early abortion, than a mare kept in a moderate to fleshy condition (BCS 5 – 7). Thus a breeding manager should keep a broodmare no lower than a moderate BCS (5) during breeding and gestation. Preferably a broodmare should foal in a BCS of 6 or 7 to ensure that she is at least a BCS 5 during peak lactation. Prior to gestation, a mare should have adequate body fat stores to approach the breeding shed at a moderate body condition (BCS 5).

A geriatric horse should be maintained at a condition score of 5.5 through 6.5. An older horse tends to have a more difficult time gaining weight. A horse with Cushing’s Disease may also be harder to score as a result of a long hair coat. In addition, horses with a metabolic disorder may have visible ribs, but may store fat extensively in other areas like the crest of the neck.

The most important aspect of body condition scoring is to accurately determine if your horse is thin, moderate or fat. If your horse is in the moderate range you are doing a good job of balancing your horse’s energy needs with his energy intake. If your horse is thin, then you need to work with your veterinarian or a nutritionist to get your horse into the moderate range. A fat horse is more prone to nutritionally related diseases. You should also work with a veterinarian and/or nutritionist to get your horse to a more moderate and safer body condition score.

This fat horse depicts a body condition score of eight. Note the creasty neck and fat deposits behind the shoulders and along the tail head.

Learn more about Body Condition Scoring www.eXtension.org/horses or watch Equine Energetics a webcast that provides an overview of calorie requirements and energy utilization for horses.
Top 3 “Do’s & Don’ts” to Prepare your Horse for Summer

Now that spring has made its mark on Michigan, I’ve noticed a few changes around the barn. Areas of the pastures have turned into spas for horses (places where the horses are compelled to take mud baths), every boarder at my barn has a pair of muck boots next to their saddle racks and of course, I have to visit my spoiled show-pony every morning before work to dress him appropriately for the day’s forecast. Okay, so maybe the last one is just because I’m an over-cautious mother, but still it’s quite obvious that spring has sprung! Michigan weather is at times frustrating and inconvenient, so what can be done to ease the pain a bit? Read on for some do’s and don’ts of dealing with springtime changes.

**Do** Visit and consult with your vet. If you haven’t already done so, now is the perfect time to have your horse’s annual Coggins test done. To learn more about the laws relating to the Coggins test visit [http://www.michigan.gov/mdard](http://www.michigan.gov/mdard) You will also want to discuss your plans regarding your upcoming deworming and vaccination schedules.

**Don’t** ignore your horse’s health needs. Of course you are a responsible horse owner who is focused on providing the best care for your four-legged friend. Just be sure to not let things like vaccinations, dewormers, potential dental problems and other health needs go unnoticed. Additionally, pay close attention to your horse’s body condition score to be sure they are maintaining the ideal weight. For more information on how to assign the correct body condition score to your horse, read this eXtension article [Body Condition Scoring in horses](#). Lastly, keep your eye out for common springtime problems such as [rain scald](#) and [thrush](#).

**Do** brush before you tack-up. Be sure that you are not putting on tack until your horse is clean enough. Obviously, you’ll want to clear the saddle area of any muddy or wet spots, but additionally be sure that your horse’s legs are also dry and clean before applying equipment like splint boots or leg wraps, to prevent uncomfortable rubbing. Also, don’t forget the hooves! My hoof pick gets a lot of attention, especially in the springtime. Mud is the perfect medium to help rocks and other debris become lodged in the hoof’s sole. Clear out any debris before you mount up!

**Don’t** brush “wet” mud. Okay, yes all mud is wet, that’s why it’s mud and not dirt. But before you come wielding that curry comb or stiff brush, be sure you are not scrubbing wet mud! Brushing the wet mud out of shaggy hair coats is not only an extremely time consuming task, but will often tug and pull at your horses hair coat and could even cause them to be sore. Allow your horse to dry before you rid him of his muddy layer. Additionally, if your horse is heavily caked with a dirty brown layer, think about waiting for a warm, sunny day and give him a good soapy scrub down! Lastly, if you are more like me and your supply of elbow grease is running low, you could keep a light sheet on your horse and just let the laundry-mat do the work!

**Do** practice! Does anyone out there know how you get to the [State 4-H Horse Show](#)? Practice, practice, practice! Okay, that’s a lame joke that really sounds better in person (trust me!). The message however is still important. We cannot achieve our goals without first setting them. Be sure these goals are achievable and measureable.

**Don’t** over-do it! If you’ve opted for the couch more than the saddle over the winter then it is likely that both you and your horse need a bit of toning-up. Do not ignore your own fitness routine as you encounter the summer months, both you and your horse are athletes that need proper conditioning! Remember, if your horse is still sporting his shaggy winter hair coat, he will heat up faster when being exercised as well as take longer to cool down. Take this into consideration as you resume your riding regimen. Read about [conditioning your horse for the summer](#).

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**Horsey Humor >>>

It keeps ’em from gettin lost in the tall grass...