



The Maryland Horse Council

NEWSLETTER

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Dr. Michael Erskine, DVM,
President of the Maryland
Horse Council

2007 President's Report

It's been a great year for the Maryland Horse Council. We have just completed an 18-month strategic planning period and we are pleased this year to be rolling out even more benefits for not only MHC members but the equestrian community as a whole. We have just launched our annual Business and Health Seminars, and each initial seminar was extremely successful.

MHC not MHIB

First, let's clear up any possible confusion between us, the Maryland Horse Council (MHC), and the Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB). The Maryland Horse Council is an independent umbrella organization for all equestrian associations in Maryland, plus businesses, stables, and individual horse people. MHC has a democratic voting system, and because we are independent—not a quasi government entity—we can speak out on governmental actions and initiatives that affect us. We can lobby with a strong and solid voice. MHC's primary mission is to represent and protect the interests of the industry in the state government. (We do the same at the federal level via the American Horse Council.) It is also part of

our mission to help support education efforts and develop awareness of the industry, but first and foremost it is to build relationships in Annapolis—not only with the legislature but with agency officials as well. The MHIB operates under the auspices of the Maryland Department of Agriculture to market and promote the Maryland horse industry, similar to many agricultural commodity boards.

Legislation

The Maryland Horse Council tackles lots of tough issues, including the following:

- Insurance coverage for all horse people preserving favorable liability laws in Maryland
- Legal classification of horses as agriculture
- Maryland equine health issues
- Land use, zoning, land preservation and related issues
- Taxes, slots and other economic issues.

What is on our agenda for 2007? Slots! Sunday Hunting! Liability!

Preserving Favorable Liability Laws

The most critical pieces of 2007 legislation were not about the horse industry in particular but would nevertheless have had a devastating effect on our ability to run riding stables, horse shows, and other events. HB110 and SB 267 would have overturned Maryland's current standard of negligence (contributory) and change it to a standard that makes it easier for plaintiffs in negligence lawsuits to be awarded large jury settlements (comparative); were this bill to have passed, Maryland would have had a more "sue happy" legal climate. Maryland's current standard of contributory negligence was established over 300 years ago and provides a wonderful level of protection to horse owners, land owners and business owners.

Contributory negligence requires that if the plaintiff played any role whatsoever in his injury (for instance, misrepresented his level of riding ability; switched lesson or rental horses without the stable owner or manager's permission; yahooping on the back of the horse; did not follow stable instructions or protocols), then the plaintiff is awarded nothing. Maryland is one of only a handful of states with this very unique legal standard.

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Were Maryland to switch to the standard of comparative negligence, then the case could not be dismissed based on the plaintiff's contributions to his or her accident; the jury would have to decide who bears the bigger burden of responsibility. Generally, businesses are considered to be "more responsible" (and have deeper pockets). Thus, if these bills succeed and Maryland's standard of negligence is changed, you can be sure that we will be seeing a lot more frivolous lawsuits, a lot more "I spilled hot coffee in my lap and now I am going to sue you for selling me hot coffee" types of cases. Affordable liability insurance could become hard to find in Maryland.

Those supporting passage of HB 110 and SB 267 lobbied under the banner of "liability reform." This is not a positive reform, but a step backwards. This legislation would not only affect the horse industry, but every business or event that interacts with the general public, from retail stores to fairs to any sporting activity. These bills were withdrawn due to the organized opposition of the horse community under the leadership of the MHC.

Including Rescue Facilities in the Maryland Stable Licensing Program

Additionally, in this session, MHC supported HB 1352 which expanded the stable licensing regulation to include rescue stables. The purpose of the stable licensing program is to provide a base level of assurance to the general public that the horses in a public facility are receiving the basic standards required for good health and welfare. Until now there has been no oversight of rescue facilities and consequently there have been, unfortunately, purported rescue facilities unable to offer their rescue equines even a minimal level of care. The equestrian community took the lead in ensuring that horses in rescue facilities are indeed receiving a certain level of care in the most effective way via the Maryland stable licensing program, which is under the direction of the MHIB.

Regulations for Handling Infectious, Contagious Equine Diseases

Of critical interest to our horse owners is the effectiveness of Maryland's animal health monitoring system and our system for dealing with infectious, contagious equine diseases. Not only is this important to the owners of horses, it is of critical importance to the owners of stables and the organizers of shows and events, because one quarantine can bring equine commerce to a screeching halt. MHC spearheaded the establishment two years ago of the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Equine Health Advisory Committee. Comprised of members of the general equestrian community, the Committee advises the Maryland Horse Industry Board and the Maryland State Vet on health issues of importance to you, the horse owner, the stable owner. As a direct result of the Equine Health Advisory Committee, we have seen vast improvements in how the Department of Agriculture has handled the last two outbreaks of Equine Herpes.

Trails and Greenways

Our Trails and Greenways Committee each year increases the efficiency and benefits of its statewide network and will continue to host meeting so that equestrians can share and learn from each others' success and challenges with their local trails.

Education—Two new Annual Seminars

Part of the original vision for MHC included educational efforts, and the long range plan includes an increased level of educational activities. Beginning in 2007, the MHC will offer two annual seminars, one for business and one for health issues. The seminars will be open to all, but MHC members will receive substantially discounted seminar rates as a benefit of membership.

Additionally, we are looking forward to renewing our sponsorship of the University Seminars at Horse Word Expo and will continue our support of the "Ag in the Classroom Trailer" operated by the Maryland Ag Foundation, as well as other educational efforts within the equestrian community.

Membership Benefits Increased in 2007

Every member receives a copy of the quarterly MHC Newsletter as well as a complimentary subscription to The Equiry. Individual members of the Horse Council will receive one discounted registration to each MHC Seminar; business and farm members will receive two discounted registrations to each MHC Seminar. We will soon be unveiling even more benefits of membership.

**Executive Committee
of the Maryland Horse Council**

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Business Seminars by Jane Seigler

On Wednesday, February 7, the MHC held the first of its new, twice yearly, series of educational seminars. Hosted by MHC's Business Committee, in cooperation with the MD Department of Agriculture, the International Business Seminar presented a wide range of speakers on topics related to importing and exporting horses. Representatives of State and Federal Departments of Agriculture provided information about programs available to assist Maryland horseman who might wish to sell horses to overseas buyers. Other speakers talked about details of financing import or export sales, negotiating sales contracts, arranging for shipping, quarantine and health requirements, etc. Two Maryland breeders and an importer of sport horses shared their experiences with buying and selling horses overseas.

Rounding out the program was a report on the status of the proposed Import and Export facility at BWI, and a presentation by an immigration lawyer on guest worker issues. The seminar was very well received, and netted MHC \$1939 in income, plus - even more importantly - 2 new farm members and 6 new individual members!

Watch for next year's seminar on another topic of interest to Maryland's equine business owners and consumers.

MHC 2007 Equine Health Seminar Report

The Maryland Horse Council presented its first annual Equine Health Seminar on March 17, 2007 at the Glenwood Community Center in Glenwood, Maryland. The topic was Equine Laminitis and featured four exceptional speakers; Drs. Scott Pleasant, Ray Geor, Harold McKenzie and Amy Burk. They presented an authoritative and extremely useful seminar discussing common causes, predisposing factors, treatment and prevention of this devastating disease. The Maryland Horse Council extends our sincere appreciation for their generosity and expertise.

The seminar was attended by more than 60 people including veterinarians and horse owners. We received many positive comments about the seminar. The Maryland Horse Council looks forward to providing annual health seminars and invites you to attend in the future. You can expect high-quality, expert presentations on topics important to the health of your horse.

We are also very appreciative of the generous support from our sponsors; Naden/Lean LLC, The Equiery, Nutramax Laboratories, Maryland Tack and The Maryland Association of Equine Practitioners. Without your help we would not have been able to provide this seminar, and we look forward to your continued support.

Dr. Guy Hohenhaus, the Maryland State Veterinarian, joined us for lunch. He gave a report and answered questions on the recent neurologic Equine Herpesvirus-1 outbreak involving the Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center in Leesburg, Virginia. Dr. Hohenhaus, and the veterinarians and staff he directs, continue to demonstrate a professional response to diseases that threaten Maryland's horse population. Thank you for attending.

I want to thank a number of individual volunteers; Sharon Akers, Chris Bricker, Carolyn DelGrosso, Kathleen Erskine, Olivia Erskine, Amy Steele, Nanci Steveson and Jeannie Willems. A great deal of time and effort are necessary to plan, organize and provide a seminar of this scope. I can say, without a doubt, that volunteers like these, willing to give of their time and energy, are essential to an organization like the Maryland Horse Council. I am truly impressed by this spirit and enjoyed working with all of you.

Michael Erskine, DVM, DABVP

Your Membership is crucial and we hope you will take this moment to renew.



- Association-\$100/year
- Farm-\$75/year
- Business-\$100/year
- Youth Club-\$10/year
- Individual-\$40/year
- Institutional-One-time fee-\$1,000

Name _____
 (Assoc./Business/Farm/Youth Club/Individual/Institution)
 If Assoc., Name and Phone of Representative _____
 Phone _____
 Address _____
 City/State/Zip _____
 E-mail _____
 Website _____

Mail w/ check payable to: Maryland Horse Council
P.O.Box 233 • Lisbon, MD 21765



NEWSLETTER
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Make A Note

MHC Quarterly Meeting of the Board of Directors

Tuesday May 15, 2007 at Show Place Arena

Prince George's Equestrian Center

Meet and Greet Reception 6 pm, Business 7 pm

Trails & Greenways Contact peg1212@gmail.com

Meeting, Oct. 3 League of Md. Horsemen, Invitational Ride Oct. 12-14, League of Md. Horsemen

Maryland Horse Council Meeting of the Board of Directors, Thursday, January 18, 2007
Vista Room, Maryland State Fair Grounds, Timonium

Directors Present

Christine Bricker
 Amy Burk
 Darryll Ann Buschling
 Terry Christenson
 Charlie Colgan
 Kathy Dobson
 Michael D. Erskine, DVM
 Cricket Goodall
 Royce Herman
 J.B. or Michelle Jennings
 Crystal Kimball
 Sandy McCann
 Gretchen Mobberley
 Vicki O'Hara
 Steuart Pittman
 Beverly A. Raymond
 Mardee Rochelle
 Debbie Rollins-Frank
 Patty Scasser
 Mary Anne Steele
 Dorothy Troutman
 Gail Varnedoe
 Guillermo Warley
 Keith Wills
 Elizabeth Yewell

Directors Absent

Representing

MD TB Horsemen's Assn.
 Dir. at Large for Individuals
 Dir. at Large, Youth
 MD State Quarter Horse
 Fair Hill International, Inc.
 League of MD Horsemen
 MD Assn. of Equine Practitioners
 MD Horse Breeders Assn.
 Tuckahoe Equestrian Center
 MD Feed Company
 MD Steeplechase Assn.
 Plantation Walking Horses of MD
 Dir. at Large, Farms
 Dir. at Large, Individuals
 Dir. at Large, Farms
 Dir. at Large, Farms
 Dir. at Large, Individuals
 Potomac Valley Dressage Assn.
 Equine Rescue and Rehabilitation, Inc.
 Marlborough Hunt Club
 Howard Co. Horse Shows Assn.
 MD Equestrian Foundation/
 Rosaryville Conservancy
 Pasadena Horse & Pony Assn.
 New Market Middletown Valley Hounds
 Dir. at Large, Businesses
 Dir. at Large, Businesses

Representing

Monica Breland
 Tim Capps
 Ann Corcoran
 TBD
 Carrie Everly
 Holly Hamilton
 Jacqueline Harrington
 Felicia Hilleary
 Priscilla Huffman
 Alan Lohman
 Jim McDonald
 Deloise Noble-Strong
 Nicky Ratliff
 Sharon Roberts
 Kathleen Schwartz
 Jane Seigler, VP MHC
 Tim Streaker
 Judy Strohmaier
 David Turner
 Susie Webb
 Margaret Wilterdink
 Cindy Wood
 Albert (Jay) Young
 Joseph Zentgraf
 Potomac Hunt Club
 MD Stallion Station
 The Ranger Foundation, Inc.
 Howard County Iron Bridge Hounds
 MD Jockey Club
 Goshen Hounds
 MD 4-H Foundation
 MD Standardbred Breeders Assn.
 TROT - Trail Riders of Today
 MD Horse Shows Assn.
 Graham Equestrian Center, Inc.
 MD Horse Shows Assn.
 Humane Society of Carroll County
 Cloverleaf Standardbred Owners Assn.
 Days End Farm Horse Rescue Inc.
 Reddemeade Farm, Inc.
 MD Farriers Assn.
 MD Combined Training Assn.
 Mid-Atlantic Saddlebred Assn.
 Washington International Horse Show
 MD Dressage Assn.
 Wicomico Hunt
 Elkridge Harford Hunt
 Carroll Co. Equestrian Council