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BAILEE SNOW AND GOOSE: A LASTING BOND

THE LEGACY OF BOB FUNK

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Abbie Trexler with Dan Rosenthal, ADS President, out on the cones field with Dan's four-in-hand of Dartmoor Ponies.

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— Abbie Trexler, ADS Executive Director

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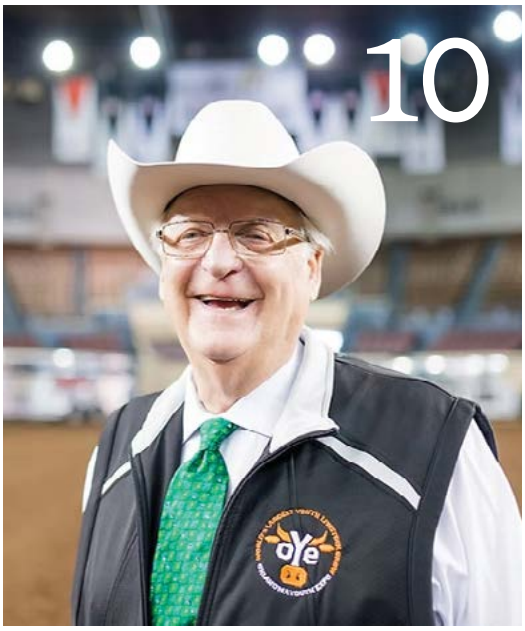

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As we welcome a new year, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who makes Oklahoma Horses possible — our loyal readers, talented writers, dedicated photographers and the advertisers who continue to believe in our mission. Your support, passion and partnership are the heartbeat behind this magazine.

Every issue reflects the people who make Oklahoma's equine world so extraordinary, from the riders feeling the rhythm of a gallop and the breeders nurturing the next generation of champions to the trainers, ranchers and enthusiasts whose lives revolve around horses. It is truly our privilege to share the traditions, innovations and inspiring individuals of our community with you.

In 2026, our commitment remains stronger than ever. We will continue working to deliver relevant, practical, timely and inspiring content that celebrates the many facets of Oklahoma's horse industry. From training and health to event coverage and personal profiles, our goal is to offer information that serves you, supports your work and reflects the community we're proud to be part of.

Thank you for riding alongside us into another exciting year. Here's to fresh stories, new opportunities and the love of horses that connects us all.

Warmest regards,

Casey

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COVER

Bailee Snow and Goose (Eysa Slick Eddie) winning reserve in the Derby and the Open at Pink Buckle 2024. Photo by Lexi Smith Media.

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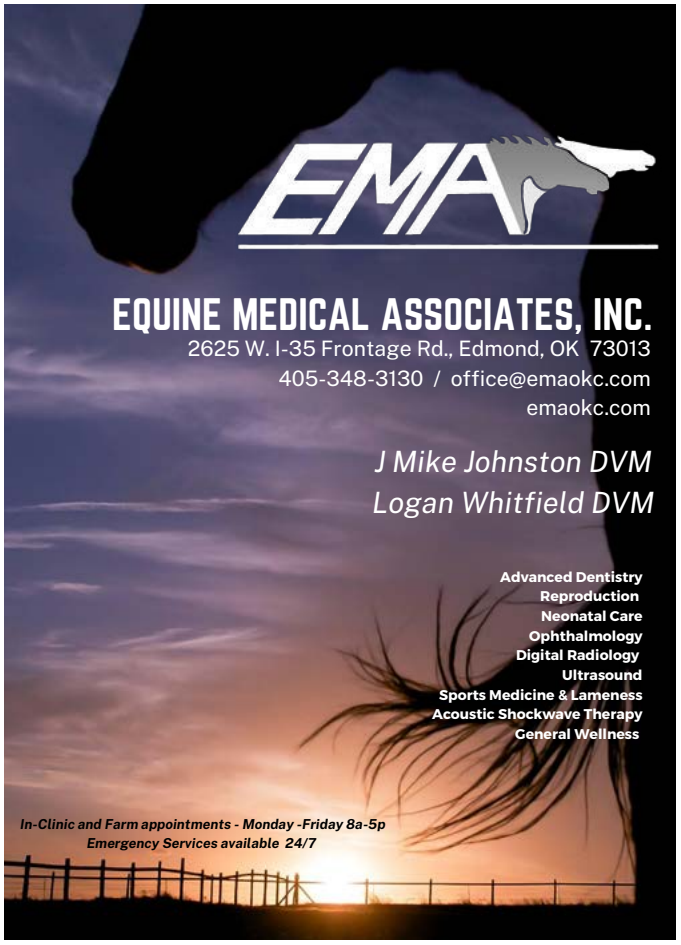


Photo by Lexi Smith Media.

Taming wild. Winning big.

Bailee Snow builds a lifetime bond with a wild colt

by JOSIE CORRELL | Photos courtesy of BAILEE SNOW

Down the alley they flew with a natural partnership, smooth, fearless and fast. The clock stopped at 16.7 seconds — a moment born of countless hours in the saddle and a bond many trainers dream of having.

Oklahoma barrel horse trainer Bailee Snow has spent her life chasing speed, precision and heart. What began as a family tradition grew into a lifelong career that's taken her from the rodeo circuit to the top levels of futurity competition. None of her success would have been possible without her once-in-a-lifetime partner, Goose, who left an unforgettable mark on her story.

The arena is where Snow, of Sallisaw, Oklahoma, has spent most of her life. When she was 3 years old, Bailee's parents, Hank and Shawnna Snow, bought their daughter her first pony.

"I was born into it," Bailee says. "My entire family either roped or barrel raced."

By age 5, she began competing in local jackpots and quickly found success, Shawnna says. She gained recognition through junior high and high school rodeos, even qualifying for nationals. At 14, she earned reserve champion honors at the Barrel Futurities of America and went on to win the 2014 Josey Junior World Barrel Race.

After high school, Snow attended Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, competed as a member of the rodeo team, and won the Central Plains region in 2014 to qualify for the College National Finals Rodeo. She also earned her professional rodeo card and made the circuit finals a few times before shifting her focus to futurity horses.

Snow says she cannot put into words how much Goose means to her.

Snow decided to explore the futurity route, which led her to work for Ryann Pedone. It was a new challenge, but she wasn't new to training. Her family had always bought and trained young horses.

"My parents had taught me everything up until I went to work for Ryann," Bailee says.

The Snows encouraged their daughter to take advantage of the opportunity offered to her.

"I thought it was great," Shawnna says. "I don't think you could ever learn enough."

Snow worked for Pedone for nine months in 2020, soaking up everything she could during her time in Texas. It didn't take long with Pedone for her to discover she wanted to train futurity colts.

While working for Pedone, she bought and sold a few colts, trying to find the right one. She kept learning and gaining experience before starting with horses of her own.

Following her work in Texas, Snow spent two years with well-known futurity trainer Cody Bauserman in Sallisaw, refining her skills and expanding her connections in the industry.

"While I was working for Cody, I bought Eysa Slick Eddie," Snow says.

She purchased Eysa Slick Eddie, better known as Goose, for $3,000, unaware that this little "wild" colt would soon change her life.

"I just took a gamble on a cheap colt," Snow says. "He was paid up and everything, so I just tried it."

A halter had to remain on the colt as he proved almost impossible to catch and uninterested in most human contact, causing her to attempt to sell him at one point.

"He was just pretty wild and would paw and kick — the whole deal," Snow says.

Thankfully, she didn't sell Goose. Instead, she sent him to a colt starter, where, as a 2-year-old, he started under saddle in the fall of 2021 and stayed for 60 days. Once Goose was back home, Snow did little with him through winter. Still young and small, Goose was allowed to grow before beginning barrel training in the spring of 2022.

"When I started him on the barrels, he was pretty sensitive," she says.

Snow took her time with Goose, and he proved he wasn't hard to train. She feared rushing him could hinder performance later, so she didn't show him until August 2022.

Snow and Goose made their futurity debut in December 2022, and he performed strongly in the first few competitions they entered through January.

"I knew he was great, but it was hard to tell his full potential," Snow explains, "since I had to go so slow with him for a while."

In April 2023, Goose ran a time of 17 seconds on a standard pattern at the Ruby Buckle Barrel Race in Guthrie. At only 4 years old, Goose placed fifth in the 1D average and won $5,950 — a promising start to his career.

"From then on, he just stayed that good," Bailee says.

During his futurity year, Snow seldom practiced barrels with Goose, only exhibitioning him to keep his nerves in check.

"He didn't like us to do anything with him," Shawnna says, "other than maybe tie him up."

As Goose progressed, he became faster and more confident, which led to both more wins and a few losses from hitting barrels. Despite hitting some barrels

Photo by Lexi Smith Media.

along the way, Goose excelled in many races, winning $80,000 overall his futurity year.

Goose also proved he did not like anyone but Bailee. If anyone else rode him, he would act wild and be spooky, she says.

"He acted scared of me when I was on his back," says Shawnna. "He was not like that with Bailee."

At the 2024 Pink Buckle Barrel Race, Goose proved just how talented he had become.

"We had all the confidence in him going into the Pink Buckle," Shawnna says. "He was just doing everything perfectly."

The Pink Buckle Barrel Race consists of Futurity, Derby, 5D Open and Youth competitions, and a horse sale. Of about 380 horses competing in the Derby, Eysa Slick Eddie, aka Goose, placed second in the Open and Derby.

"Oh, my goodness!" Shawnna says. "It was life-changing."

After the Pink Buckle, Goose won reserve at the American Quarter Horse Association World Show and the Ruby Buckle Barrel Race Derby in Memphis, Tennessee.

Today, Goose is retired from barrel racing; however, Bailee says his legacy continues to shape how she trains her horses and sets future goals.

"Honestly, Goose was pretty life-changing," Bailee says. "Everything gets compared to him."

Eysa Slick Eddie (aka Goose)

Happy Trails

Remembering Bob Funk

by CAROL MOWDY BOND

In August 2025, Bob Funk's Express Ranches held the 29th annual Big Event Production Sale on the north edge of Yukon in Canadian County. But just one month earlier, Funk died at his Yukon ranch home. He was 85.

Nevertheless, the two-day event went forward, marking a record-breaking achievement for Express Ranches, grossing $9,394,500. With some of the largest crowds ever attending, the cattle sale was the main attraction, featuring Angus genetics from one of America's largest seedstock operations.

A Really Big Event

Every year, some of the ranchland's rolling fields come to life with visitors from across the continent, transformed with an auction ring, dining room and temporary cattle pens for The Big Event cattle auction. Funk loved all things American West, so, of course, there's even an onsite boot shine stand.

On Friday night, a high-tech band shell rose from the prairie grasses for an open-air, boot-scooting jamboree. Guests gathered on the dance floor or lounged on plush living room furniture on the lawn, while massive tents hovered over tables loaded with top-notch eats and drinks. Music erupted from the stage, carrying for miles across the prairie as country duo Big & Rich entertained the August 2025 crowd.

Despite the record-breaking event, a quiet sense of loss lingered. Funk, the giant cattleman behind it all, was gone.

Origins

Robert A. Funk, Sr., known affectionately as "Bob," was born in 1940 in Duvall, Washington. He grew up in a modest home during lean times. At age 14, he began working on his cousin's dairy farm. During high school, he was a member of the FFA. He not only earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in business administration and theology but also became an ordained minister.

Funk and his partners purchased a personnel agency, which eventually became Express Employment Professionals. Founded in 1983, today the business has more than 800 franchises with almost 7,500 staff members in the United States, Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Reaching sales of $3.7 billion in 2024, Express employed 560,000 people.

In the late 1980s, Funk started his Oklahoma cattle herd. For that purpose, he was expanding his Yukon ranch, and in the early 1990s, he bought the Briscoe Farm in Canadian County. The farm included a barn built in 1936.

The dilapidated barn was bending over with a roof in tatters, yet it remained a beloved location. During World War II, U.S. Army horses trained in the barn, and the community gathered for dances in the barn's better days. Recognizing its history, Funk hired an Amish barn builder to restore the structure, giving it new life for the community.

Cattleman

By 2006, Funk's cattle ranches had expanded to thousands of acres across four states and gained global prominence for their artificial insemination cattle operations. His massive Express Ranch near Yukon stretches across central Oklahoma's hills and plains, and the historic Chisholm Trail runs directly through the property.

Funk's cattle enterprises now participate in every phase of beef production. He was recognized among North America's largest registered beef and Angus producers and ranked among the nation's top landowners.

In 2006, Express Ranches acquired the historic UU Bar and Mora Ranches, encompassing about 180,000 acres in northeast New Mexico. Now a cattle ranch, Express UU Bar lands were originally part of a huge land grant connected to the 1848 establishment

Bob Funk was known for his big smile and signature cowboy hat and boots. Photo by Jerry Hymer.

Above: Bob Funk stands with one of his horses in northeastern New Mexico. Photo courtesy of Express Clydesdales Barn.

Right: In keeping with the Western theme, the boot shine stand is busy at The Big Event in 2023. Photo by Carol Mowdy Bond.

Right: The legendary Bob Funk was an avid fundraiser and philanthropist. Photo courtesy of Oklahoma Youth Expo.

Below: A Clydesdale greets visitors inside the Express Clydesdales Barn. Photo by Carol Mowdy Bond.

of the township and ranch settlement of Rayado (in the future New Mexico) on the Santa Fe Trail. Over time, the land passed through other hands, with a portion eventually becoming the Philmont Boy Scout Ranch. The area is also home to one of North America's largest native elk populations.

Clydesdales and Percherons

In the late 1990s, while promoting Express Ranches at the Canadian Western Agribition in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, Bob Funk was joined by then-Oklahoma City Blazers hockey coach Doug Sauter and Sauter's cousin, Bill Aulie. As the three walked through the barns, Funk fell in love with the Clydesdales.

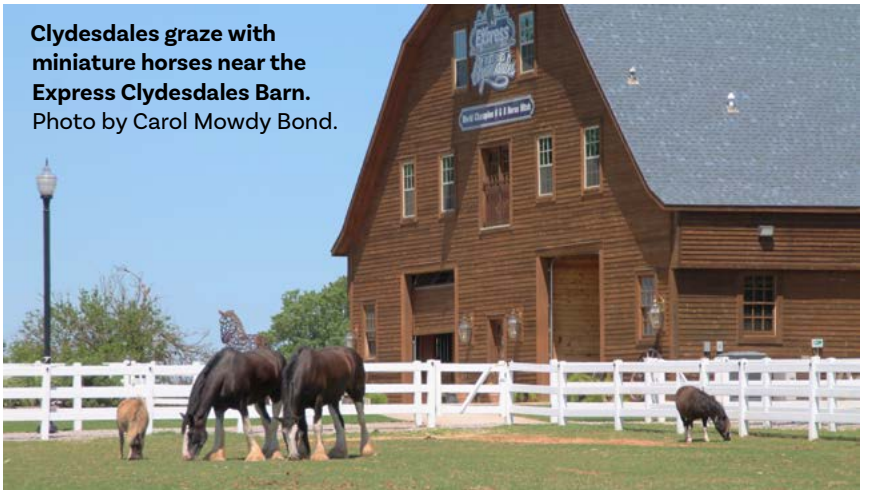
He bought eight Clydesdales, marking the beginning of an Oklahoma landmark, Express Clydesdales. Funk, Sauter and Aulie were the driving force behind the new equine venture, with Aulie training the horses and delivering them from Canada to Oklahoma.

Clydesdales weigh roughly 1 ton each. For protection from harsh Oklahoma winters, the Express Clydesdales live in the restored historic barn. In mild weather, they graze around the barn, surrounded by crisp white fences.

The Express Clydesdales began competing in 1999 and won numerous championships. They've helped raise funds for Children's Miracle Network Hospitals and other charities, appeared in many parades and events, and even chauffeured British royalty in Canada.

Among draft horses, both Clydesdales and Percherons are known as "Gentle Giants." But Percherons are more agile and have smaller feet than Clydesdales, and they can compete at higher levels. So Express Horses Manager Josh Minshull located a hitch of Percherons in Canada. In 2018, Express purchased the Percheron hitch. About that time, Express began showing Percherons. Minshull trained the Percherons and navigated their pairings for competitions. As a result, the Express Ranches Percherons won prestigious awards.

Both the Express Clydesdales and the Express Ranches Percherons worked together, representing Express Employment Professionals at draft horse shows and events across the continent. However, in 2025, the Express Ranches Percherons were sold.



Clydesdales graze with miniature horses near the Express Clydesdales Barn. Photo by Carol Mowdy Bond.

Bob Funk shares a laugh. Photo by Jerry Hymer.

An eight-horse hitch from Express Ranches Percherons performs, driven by Josh Minshull (left) with Bob Funk (right). Photo by Casey McBride, courtesy of Express Ranches Percherons.

A Global Legacy

In late 2000, Funk formed Express Sports to operate the Oklahoma City Blazers and other sports teams. He used the corporate entity to promote professional sports in Oklahoma and boost the economy. As a sports team owner, he was involved in hockey, baseball, tennis and more. He also signed and sponsored some of the top rodeo athletes in modern history.

The Express $1 million contribution toward Oklahoma's long-awaited new State Capitol dome added another chapter to the building's history. The dome, added in 2002, crowned the Capitol, which was originally completed in 1917.

As a cattleman, sports team owner and businessman, Funk served on numerous organizations' governing boards, and he was honored with innumerable professional awards and accolades, including inductions into various halls of fame.

But he was also an active fundraiser, philanthropist and voice for many causes. He founded the Express Ranches Professional Junior Scholarship Program, which donated $5 million in scholarships. He was also a supporter of state and national FFA.

Additionally, Funk donated $6.5 million toward the Oklahoma Youth Expo (OYE), and Express Ranches donated $4 million for OYE scholarships. As the largest junior livestock show in the world, OYE features 7,000-plus exhibitors from all 77 Oklahoma counties, displaying 13,000-plus head of cattle, swine, sheep and goats.

Still open to the public, the Express Clydesdales Barn remains a popular location, sitting on Yukon's northern edge. Thousands visit the barn annually, exploring a working ranch as part of the venue.

However, Funk's global footprint reaches further than horses and livestock. He gave generously of his time and resources, donating millions and leaving a lasting impact through his business, community and development efforts. Known for his signature cowboy hat and boots, everything he did seemed bigger than all outdoors. He often said, "You're only as successful as the last person you helped."

Express Clydesdales Barn is open by appointment only, offering free self-guided and guided-for-a-fee tours. Express offers barn wedding and birthday packages and educational tours. It is located at 12701 Wilshire Blvd. in Yukon. Visit expressclydesdales.com to learn more.

Treat balls are a simple fix to help curb boredom.

BARN BOREDOM BUSTERS

Keeping horses and riders engaged through chilly months

by ABIGAIL STARK

It's a miserable winter day — day 15, to be exact, of not being able to ride. Your normally mild-mannered, steady Eddy gelding, who usually stays in tip-top shape, has no outlet for his pent-up energy and has decided to take it out on the barn walls. He's made it his personal mission to gnaw his way to freedom like a rabid beaver.

So what's a rider to do? It's cold, it's wet, and it's downright miserable outside. The following is a short list of tips and tricks to help keep your horse from eating down the barn, prevent bodily injury when you attempt to hand-walk your fire-breathing dragon, and maybe even save yourself from pulling a muscle the next time you're training in the saddle.

Simple Fixes for Big Results

Before you start designing an elaborate equine obstacle course or enrolling your horse in every spring clinic on the schedule, take a breath. Overcomplication is the enemy! Sometimes the simplest fixes make the biggest difference.

We just talked about how horses are forage-seeking, constant grazers, right? But we also don't want to pull out a nearly foundered, hay-stuffed water buffalo with no sign of rib or muscle by spring.

Slow feeders are an excellent option to strike a balance. Brands like Chewy and Dover Saddlery offer endless choices for slow feeders and treat balls that can attach to almost any style of stall or be used loose. For non-food entertainment, Jolly Balls are a great choice — tough, long-lasting and capable of surviving several seasons of abuse (and the occasional temper tantrum).

The Why and the How

So why do horses act out during the winter months? Simply put, horses are grazing herd animals built for constant movement. At their core, they're designed to wander miles each day, browsing and grazing as they go. Unfortunately, when we domesticate them, we take that freedom away and replace it with the comfort and safety of stalls, turnout schedules and cozy blankets.

That comfort comes at a price. The result is a conflict between their survival instincts and their wild side, the one that still dreams of running with the bison across open plains. (Let's be real though: "Fluffy" wouldn't actually want to be out there shivering under a frozen sky, pawing at icy grass. But good luck convincing him of that while he's spinning his shavings into a mushy mess and plotting his next great escape.)

The bottom line? We have to strike a balance. We must provide enough enrichment to keep their minds active and happy, while still keeping them safe and comfortable through winter's worst.

Inexpensive Options

Winter is often a slow season for all of us and no doubt an expensive one at that, especially when you're already tossing piles of hay into the stall just for your horse to stomp into his shavings. But enrichment doesn't have to drain your wallet. Here are a few cost-effective ways to keep your horse's brain busy without breaking the bank:

Rinse out an empty milk jug, remove the cap and fill it with a handful of treats. It might not last long, but it'll provide a few glorious minutes of entertainment (and chaos). Water bottles can work the same way; toss in a handful of grain, leave the cap off, and hang or tie it to the stall wall for some satisfying rattle-and-roll fun.

Old soccer balls also make great DIY toys. They're sturdy enough for a good batting session, easy to replace, and offer simple, effective stimulation that curbs boredom before it becomes bad behavior.

Get Out of the Stall

Anytime you can get your horse out of the stall, peel off that blanket and enjoy a good old-fashioned grooming session, it's time well spent. Bonding time is every bit as important as saddle time, and it gives you a chance to catch small warning signs of illness or injury before they turn into big problems.

Beyond grooming, there are countless online resources for groundwork and non-riding activities that are far more engaging than a simple hand walk. These sessions can make a huge difference in your horse's mental health as well as your own.

In "Groundwork Boredom Busters," by Jessica Lefoy, she says, "Groundwork can be extremely beneficial to both inexperienced and seasoned horses. What I like most is that it really gives you the ability to analyze the horse's movement much differently than when you're on their backs. You can produce work that's mentally stimulating while also improving their training — and I feel that anything that can be done on the horse can be done from the ground."

Safety First

Before you go wild crafting in the barn, let's talk safety. Always pay close attention to how you attach any toy, so there's minimal risk of your horse getting caught. Loose twine, hanging cords or frayed straps can easily trap a jaw, leg or halter. Check every edge and connection for sharp spots that could snag an eye, nick soft skin or scrape a curious nose.

When using hay nets, hang them high enough to prevent a pawing leg or the edge of a shoe from getting caught in the mesh. What starts as a well-meaning boredom buster can quickly turn into an expensive vet bill and a missed spring show season.

According to GG Equine, "Behavioral changes are one way for horses to express boredom, although it can look vastly different from horse to horse. You may see:

- Lethargic behavior and sluggishness
- Spicy, rambunctious play
- Repetitive behaviors like weaving or stall walking
- Surly expressions and an unwillingness to interact with you
- Stage-10 clinging behavior
- Development of stable vices

"Notice that these behaviors are also signs of many other conditions, like ulcers, mystery pain and self-soothing vices. Anytime you notice a sudden change in your equine partner's behavior, call your vet. It's tricky to help your horse without first narrowing down the reason for the behavior."

Personal Tips

We've talked plenty about keeping your horse entertained and your barn intact this winter, but what about you? Winter is a perfect time for rest and recovery, but it's also ideal for cross-training. Staying active now means coming back in the spring stronger, more balanced and less prone to injury.

Lengthening exercises, like stretching and Pilates, are excellent, low-impact ways to stay in shape. Back and core work, something we often neglect, can make a huge difference in your riding strength and posture. As noted in an article featured on the R.J. Classics blog: "Another abdominal muscle for equestrians to focus on is the transverse abdominis (TVA). The TVA forms a corset shape between the ribs and pelvis, and its purpose is to help you remain upright. It also supports the spine, making TVA strengthening exercises a pivotal part of reducing back pain."

Simple, no-equipment moves like planks, bird dogs, burpees and Supermans can all be done from the comfort of your home (preferably near the heater). A few minutes a day can make the winning difference when show season rolls back around and might just keep you from pulling a hamstring the first time your trainer says, "Drop your stirrups."

Winter might test your patience (and your barn walls), but with a little creativity, it doesn't have to be boring. A mix of smart enrichment, safe play and a bit of rider self-care can turn those long, cold months into an opportunity for growth, for both you and your horse. By spring, you'll both be stronger, saner and maybe even less inclined to chew through the stall boards.

Hay nets turn mealtime into enrichment.

HOLD YOUR HORSES (AND YOUR SKIS!)

Skijoring blends Western spirit with winter sport

by ASHLEY DAILY
Photos by Mark LaRowe (www.marklarowephotography.com)

Skijor style is on full display as one rider pulls a skier down the "Avenue" in Leadville, Colo.

Oklahoma's lack of significant snowfall means winter thrill seekers often head out of state to take part in winter sports, such as skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiling. But if you're looking for a winter sporting event that's a little outside the box, look no further than skijoring.

Skijoring is a winter sport in which a skier is pulled across the snow by a team of dogs, a motorized vehicle (often a snowmobile) or a horse. The activity dates back hundreds of years, originating in Scandinavia where people were first towed on skis behind animals. Historical records also show similar practices in parts of Asia. The word skijoring (pronounced skee-JOHR-ing) comes from the Norwegian term meaning "snow driving."

Skijoring first appeared in America in the early 1900s. The 1915 Winter Carnival in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, is credited with hosting the first exhibition that introduced the sport to the West. It was later featured as a demonstration sport at the 1928 Winter Olympics in Switzerland. Over a century later, the activity has become widespread across the Western states, and Leadville, Colorado, is home to arguably the biggest skijoring event in the country.

In 1948, "Mugs" Ossman and Tom Schroeder sat in The Golden Burro Café, trying to decide on a new event to offer for the upcoming winter festivities in Leadville. They decided to take a trip to Steamboat Springs for inspiration. Upon their arrival at the carnival, Ossman and Schroeder witnessed horse and rider pairs casually towing skiers along the snow-covered streets. Impressed by the display, Ossman and Schroeder decided to bring skijoring to Leadville.

However, they couldn't understand why anyone would choose to go so slowly. Ossman raised Quarter Horses — bred for speed — and Schroeder, a feisty Irish skier, declared there wasn't a horse around that would be able to lose him on a pair of skis. Returning to the Ossman Ranch, the two began testing out a faster version of skijoring, using a horse pasture that was deeply bedded in snow for their practice runs. Thus, the skijoring we know today was born.

Held the first weekend of March, the Leadville Ski Joring (split into two words) competition has been going strong since it was first held in 1949. "Leadville Ski Joring is the longest-standing high-alpine equine skijoring event in the country," notes event organizer Duffy Counsell. "About to enter its 78th year, and attended by tens of thousands, it is literally the granddaddy of them all."

Each year, crowds gather on historic Harrison Avenue — braving 36 inches of snow one year — to cheer on competitors from all across the country, including Oklahoma. The event has welcomed spectators from as far as New Zealand and the United Kingdom and has captured the attention of countless national and international publications.

An estimated 12,000 people attended the 2025 event, marking it as the larg-

LaRowe captures the exhilarating action as teams take on the course.

Spectators line Harrison Avenue in Leadville to enjoy the longest standing skijoring event in the country.

est turnout in event history. Participants vary each year, ranging from 50 to 300 runs. Leadville holds in-person registrations on Friday night. Similar to those in golf games, a Calcutta is organized once teams are identified. The teams are then auctioned off, with the highest bidder becoming the "owner" of the team. Owners of the first, second and third place teams receive a portion of the Calcutta pot.

The National Anthem opens the event, then contestants line up for a dose of Wild West adrenaline. As skiers are pulled down Harrison Avenue by a galloping horse and rider, often reaching 40 mph, the skier must neatly land jumps and pick up rings, aiming for the fastest time. Crashing or missing a jump earns a team a "did-not-finish," while missing a ring adds time to their score.

Counsell knows firsthand the anticipation of competing in the high-octane sport. "You're never ready," he says. "As a former competitor, you're at the start, you have butterflies, you're nervous, thinking about a million different things. You're never ready; it's just your turn."

Leadville Ski Joring offers a family-friendly atmosphere, and kids can get in on the action with a children's event, held Saturday evening after the main runs. During the children's event, kids are pulled along the track by a snowmobile, earning a 50-cent piece after their run.

It's all hands on deck to prepare for the event, and Counsell says that the countless volunteers who help make Leadville Ski Joring such a success are a huge testament to the Leadville community.

With an energy often compared to the Super Bowl, and set against Colorado's stunning mountains and historic buildings, it's no wonder people from around the world flock to this small mountain community each year to witness the event known as "The Granddaddy of 'Em All."

Saddles rigged for skijoring line the street.

The 78th Leadville Ski Joring competition is planned for March 7-8, 2026.

For more information on Leadville Ski Joring, visit www.leadvilleskijoring.com.

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- Fiber/forage-based formula
- Low NSC (starch and sugar)
- Pre-and pro-biotics

EFFECTIVE

- Controls gastric acidosis
- Promotes an environment where ulcers won't develop
- Nutritionally sound

ECONOMICAL

- No additional additives or supplements are necessary
- Competitive pricing

CURATING CONNECTIONS

Between Horses and Art

by ANNA HOLTON-DEAN

Photo by Michelle LaVasque Photography.

For Edmond artist and horse trainer Jennifer Cocoma Hustis, art and horsemanship have always been two sides of the same coin — both requiring presence, patience and the courage to listen and communicate without words. As founder of Art of Horsemanship LLC, Hustis has built a unique space where students learn not only how to ride but also how to observe and create through various artistic mediums.

From an early age, Hustis felt a connection to horses.

"When I was 2, my family moved to Oklahoma, to a neighborhood where the lots were a couple to five acres, and many homes had horses grazing in their pastures," Hustis says. "I didn't have a horse of my own, but that didn't stop me. I'd sit by the roadside, notebook in hand, sketching their silhouettes and scribbling stories, trying to capture the mystery of their movements."

Despite the fact that she spent much of her childhood "on the 'wrong' side of the fence," it never felt that way to the horse lover.

"That space became my sanctuary, my studio, my first classroom in the language of horses," she says. "I can't remember a time I didn't love these majestic animals. It's as if horses were part of my DNA."

Today, Hustis is known for her expressive paintings, prints, drawings, sculptures, and photography of horses and wildlife — artwork that explores the idea of animals as messengers. A graduate of Pratt Institute in New York, she exhibits in galleries and museums across the country and abroad, and her work is represented by Terra Rosa Art Gallery in Guthrie. She's also a member of the Cowgirl Artists of America and a published author of children's books that blend art, stories and lessons from life with animals.

For Hustis, art and horsemanship have never been separate callings though art took shape first. "My mother was an artist, and while she didn't know much about horses, she always made sure I had plenty of art supplies," she says. "Art became my first language. It was a way to express emotions.

Her deeper understanding of horses came later, after studying equine behavior and training across disciplines.

"I discovered what my heart had known all along: there are science-based links between horses and humans, especially those of us who think with our right brains," Hustis says. "Horses are right-brain dominant. They are sensitive, intuitive and holistic in how they perceive the world. Artists are the same. We feel first, then interpret."

Today, her competitive riding record is just as impressive as her artistic resume. In 2018, Hustis and her Spanish Mus-

"Punchy Western Art Invitational: A Celebration of Oklahoma's Creative Grit." Photo courtesy of Jennifer Cocoma Hustis.

Students paint a colorful mural. Photo courtesy of Art of Horsemanship LLC.

tang placed in the top 10 nationally in Working Equitation and at the Western Dressage World Championships. In 2022, they earned WDAA World Reserve Champion in Musical Dressage, followed by World Reserve Champion in Horsemanship in 2023.

Beyond the arena, Hustis continues to curate interactive art exhibits that merge education, storytelling and hands-on experience. Her most recent curation was the "Punchy Western Art Invitational: A Celebration of Oklahoma's Creative Grit," displayed at The Goddard Center in Ardmore.

"After spending the time it takes to curate or create an interactive exhibit, I love seeing the public engage with the art exhibition and having it resonate with all ages," she says. "Often, the exhibit ends up staying on display longer than expected due to the positive response.

"When I create a museum or gallery exhibit, my goal is to make learning feel like a curious encounter for all ages. I design each space to invite curiosity, layering visual storytelling with interactive elements that encourage viewers to explore, feel and connect. My own quiet, inquisitive nature as a child still guides me: I want each person to leave with a sense of wonder and a desire to learn more."

Through these exhibits, Hustis hopes to bridge the gap between people and the animals she's always felt so close to. "Much of my work centers on advocating for horses whose language is often misunderstood," she says. "Through art and education, I help translate equine behavior into something people can see, feel and begin to understand."

Her creative process always begins with a feeling, a memory or a dream often sparked by time spent in nature or on horseback, she shares. "I do not always know where a series of art is leading when I begin, but over time, its meaning reveals itself. My work is guided by intuition, spirit, and of course, the horse."

For Hustis, whether she's curating a museum exhibit, helping a student learn to trot or painting a wild mustang from memory, it all stems from the same impulse — to understand the horse, guide students with care and bring her observations to life through art.

Showing Lewis and Clark and their guide Sacagawea, artist Edgar Samuel Paxson painted the "Lewis & Clark at Three Forks" mural, which hangs in the lobby of the Montana House of Representatives.

THE LEWIS & CLARK EXPEDITION

Spies, Intrigue and a Big Hunk of Land

by CAROL MOWDY BOND | Images are Public Domain

In August 1803, Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark led a U.S. exploration party westward across the northern areas of the Louisiana Purchase. They reached the navigable limits of the Missouri River in the Rocky Mountains. Their expedition crossed the Continental Divide at Lemhi Pass in present-day Idaho, hoping it was the link between the waterways of the Missouri and Columbia rivers. Instead, they looked out and saw a series of Rocky Mountain ranges hundreds of miles wide and realized that a water passage across the northern United States probably did not exist.

On Horseback

The group maintained friendly relationships with the Shoshone tribe, who gave them horses and guides for their trek through the Rocky Mountains. On horseback, the party reached Lolo Pass and crossed the Bitterroot Range until they reached Nez Perce country in Idaho. They left their horses with the Nez Perce, resuming their travels in dugout canoes. Navigating three rivers, the expedition finally reached the Pacific Ocean by November 1805.

In March 1806, they retrieved their horses from the Nez Perce tribe and headed east on horseback as well as by water routes. After traveling 8,000-plus miles, their two-and-a-half-year journey ended in September 1806 in St. Louis, Missouri.

Results of the Big Road Trip

For the most part, Lewis and Clark maintained peaceful cooperation with Indigenous tribes they encountered, providing the first general survey of cultural life among them. In addition to adding important zoological and botanical findings and expanding geographic knowledge of the continent, they collected classified information about foreign powers in the region.

The Backdrop

With a May 1804 start date, the Lewis and Clark expedition was a result of President Thomas Jefferson's April 1803 acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase — aka Louisiana — which gave the United States ownership of the Mississippi River basin and the port at New Orleans. The purchase doubled the size of the United States, which paid $15 million to France for 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River.

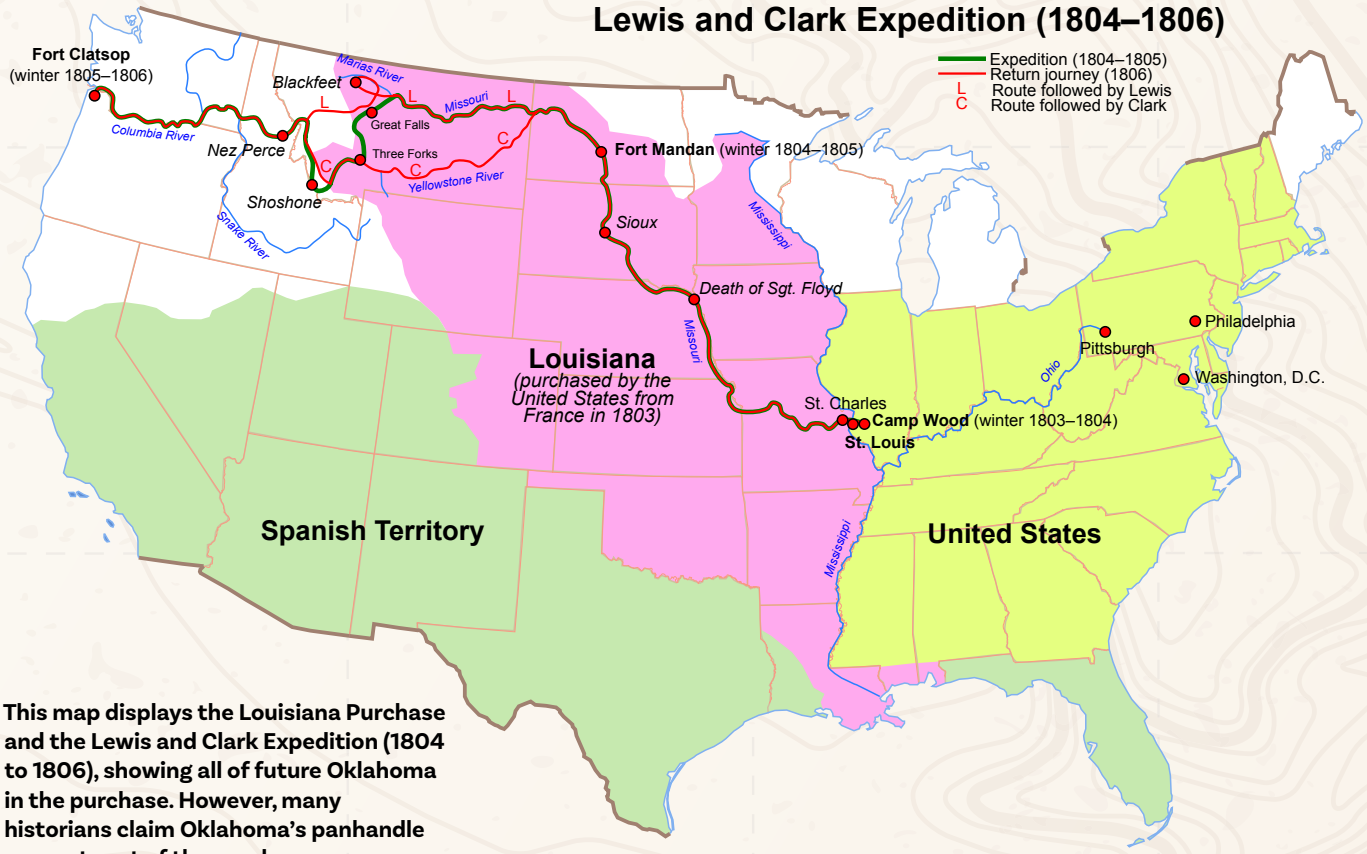
But the origins of Lewis and Clark's expedition traced back two decades earlier, when Jefferson began planning transcontinental explorations. In his younger years, Jefferson engaged in multiple efforts to organize ventures into the West. Spurred by his scientific interests and curiosity about the West, Jefferson's actions surrounded his plans for the young nation's future and expansion to the Pacific. So partial mapping and information about Louisiana were already available to Lewis and Clark.

Another goal of Jefferson was to find the elusive Northwest Passage to shorten routes to Asia. For centuries, explorers sought the waterway across the North American continent that linked the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. Jefferson also sought to broaden the American fur trade and open up commerce and settlement.

Spies and National Security

With international intrigue ablaze, ownership and maintenance of Louisiana had ping-ponged multiple times between Spain and France. The discombobulated situation was impacting American trade through the port at New Orleans. The situation intensified because England had designs on seizing Louisiana.

Jefferson was keenly aware of the ongoing Spanish and British attempts at securing the continent's inner heartlands and passages. So spies and U.S. national security were big issues, especially since Louisiana's ill-defined boundaries were bordered by Spain on the southwest. The British were pushing into Louisiana from the borders to the north, and their commercial interests were already reaching



This map displays the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804 to 1806), showing all of future Oklahoma in the purchase. However, many historians claim Oklahoma's panhandle was not part of the purchase.

into Louisiana from Canada. But Indigenous nations were Louisiana's primary inhabitants, and some posed their own challenges.

However, as part of his exploration efforts, Jefferson dispatched other explorers into Louisiana, besides Lewis and Clark, and they traveled through southern parts of the region. Among those were Zebulon Pike and James Wilkinson, sent in June 1806. A controversial figure who had sworn allegiance to Spain, Wilkinson had a history of treason.

At one point, the Pike-Wilkinson party split, and both groups traveled by water and horse. Wilkinson's party traveled into present-day Oklahoma, as did other Louisiana explorers, while Pike's group went another direction.

Artist Charles Marion Russell painted "Lewis and Clark on the Lower Columbia."

Was Pike a Spy?

Possibly acting as a U.S. spy, Pike may have been assessing Spanish strength along Louisiana's southwestern border. Believing American explorers were scouting routes for future traders and settlers, Spanish officials launched expeditions from New Mexico in 1804, 1805 and 1806 to block their advance. But they did not intercept Lewis and Clark. However, in 1806, they caught and imprisoned Pike and his men and took them all the way into Mexico. As a result, Pike drew a map of New Spain and brought it back to the United States.

The Louisiana Purchase eventually gave rise to all or part of at least 13 states. Of those, Oklahoma was the last to reach statehood in 1907. Explorers such as Wilkinson and Pike traveled through lands that would become Oklahoma, laying early groundwork for settlement. Horses were essential to these journeys, just as they would later shape Oklahoma's ranching and frontier heritage. The many expeditions provided a colorful backdrop of exploration intertwined with international intrigue, helping to shape the story of the American West and the formation of new states.

Howard dogging a steer.

SITTING ON THE BUBBLE

Chance Howard qualifies for his first NFR

by KIM REDO-THACKER
Photos courtesy of CHANCE AND KELSEY HOWARD and SHEA CHRISTINE PHOTOGRAPHY

The Cowboy Christmas run kicks off with the Reno Rodeo in June and lasts about three weeks, featuring some of the largest rodeos and purses of the season. From Reno through September, rodeo fans sit on the edge of their seats, waiting to see who qualifies for a coveted spot in the National Finals Rodeo (NFR) in Las Vegas. For contestants chasing the top 15 spots, September — the official end of the professional rodeo year — comes with wins or heartbreaking near misses to the pay window. This year has been especially exciting for one of Oklahoma's own, 34-year-old Chance Howard, qualifying at the final showdown for his first NFR.

For those who qualify, the Governor's Cup Rodeo in South Dakota can be the last-ditch effort to make the mark. This show, held the final weekend of September with over $1 million added money, can make or break a run for the finals. For Sallisaw cowboy Chance Howard, his runs pushed him into NFR qualifica-

Kelsey and Chance Howard with their son, Luke.

tion as his grandparents, Danny and Kay Jackson, watched from the stands.

Kelsey, his wife, was at an International Professional Rodeo Association (IPRA) rodeo warming up her horse when Chance was running at the Governor's Cup. "I was sick to my stomach watching," she says. "To say it was gut-wrenching is an understatement. It was so close." After all was said and done, Chance landed in the 13th spot with only $62 standing between the 14th and 15th spots.

Kelsey is a professional barrel racer whose latest big accomplishment was winning the Challenger Barrel Racing title at the 2025 Women's Rodeo World Championship (WRWC) in Fort Worth in May, along with making the semifinals at the World Champions Rodeo Alliance (WCRA) event in Corpus Christi. She has also been a contender at the American Rodeo.

When not chasing down the rodeo trail, Kelsey runs her own chiropractic and acupuncture clinic, treating both humans and animals, and is mom to 7-year-old Luke. Her work schedule revolves around her rodeo calendar.

Chance joined the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) in 2010 at the age of 19. His year-end standings read like a rollercoaster: after placing 182nd in his first pro year, he moved up and down in the rankings, getting as close as 16th in 2021. During a practice in 2023, a steer ran into his horse, causing it to trip and go end over end. Chance landed in the hospital with a concussion and a severely damaged shoulder, and surgery was imminent.

He finished 316th for the 2023 season. In 2024, his wins included Kansas, Florida, North Dakota, Texas, Utah, California, Louisiana and Arkansas, according to Kelsey. He ended the year ranked 33rd. He started the 2025 professional year (October 2024) by making the semifinals at all of the winter rodeos.

The road was not always smooth, but Chance never gave up. He competed in 79 official pro rodeos this year, over 90 total. Big wins include the Days of '47 Rodeo in Salt Lake City and co-champion at the Goliad (Texas) County Fair and Rodeo.

"Chance started off strong making," says Kelsey. "His horses stayed strong and worked well. There were no injuries. I really thought this would be his year. He worked so hard for this. It has been a long time coming."

One future goal he would like to reach is for both he and his wife to qualify for the Indian National Finals Rodeo (INFR). But conflicting rodeo schedules haven't allowed for that … yet. Chance hails from Cherokee blood, Kelsey from Choctaw. "We are working to get there together," Chance says.

His two main horses, Train (an 11-year-old gelding) and Momba (a 13-year-old mare), were able to hold up well under his care and schedule. The horses he rides are owned by Travis Burgett, former steer wrestler, who hazes for him when his work schedule allows. Occasionally, Chance has to ride horses he is not familiar with.

"Every horse is a challenge," he admits. "But they are all pretty seasoned, so I don't worry too much about riding them. Steer wrestling is the best event there is. Everybody out there helps me."

At the time of this interview Chance was at home trying to catch up on the myriad of chores left undone during his travels. He practices two to three times each week at the Burgett ranch just inside the Arkansas border (Rudy). The 6-foot-6 cowboy loves cheeseburgers and hopes to hit the gym to toughen up a bit before the finals.

Kelsey says, "I think all of western Arkansas plans to come out and watch Chance." A native of Cedarville, Arkansas, Chance will certainly have family in the stands — his grandfather, Danny Jackson, and his son Andy, both former steer wrestlers, will be there to cheer him on.

"He has had so many people reach out in support that it is overwhelming. I really don't think it has set in yet … that he is going to the finals," she adds.

Well, Chance, you are going — and you have a huge fan base!

Observing a herd of horses.

EDUCATING THE NEXT GENERATION

Raising Confident Riders Through Practical Care and Connection

Story by and photos courtesy of JENNIFER COCOMA HUSTIS

"How can you sum up what you do in one sentence?" a friend asked after watching his sons, ages 9 and 15, participate in a horsemanship lesson at my farm. I paused, reflecting on four decades of riding, training, teaching and learning alongside horses. The answer came softly but clearly: "I raise kids through my herd of horses."

That simple sentence holds the heart of my life's work. My goal is to foster kind, confident leaders who understand stewardship, work ethic and the importance of putting the horse's needs first while developing a creative connection to horses and the world around them.

At Art of Horsemanship LLC, you don't need to own a horse — all you need is a love for animals, curiosity, kindness and a willingness to learn. Our family herd is composed of step-up ponies and all-around horses. This herd helped raise my daughter and now guides other children toward becoming responsible, compassionate leaders. Each horse in our program is a teacher, and each lesson, tailored to each student, is a chance to grow. Together, we explore the world of horses through fine art, science and hands-on care.

The First 30 Minutes: Understanding the Horse

Every first visit begins with a foundational lesson in equine behavior, taught with both students and parents present. Why? Because horses are prey animals with instincts, social structures and needs that must be understood to build trust. This knowledge makes caring for and working with horses safer, easier and more rewarding.

We start by observing the horses in their natural environment — how they move, communicate and respond to humans. This sets the tone for respectful interaction and helps students understand that horsemanship is not just about riding but listening and responding appropriately.

Horsemanship Essentials

- **Trust First:** Horses are prey animals, and humans are natural predators. Earning a horse's trust takes calm, confident and respectful handling. Understanding how a horse thinks and

responds is the foundation of every interaction.

- **Herd Instincts:** Horses follow wise leadership for safety. When we learn to read their body language and social cues, we can step into that leadership role — one based on mutual respect, not dominance.
- **Shelter & Safety:** Every horse deserves protection from the elements and a secure place to rest. A lean-to or barn with turnout access works well. Fencing should always be horse-safe — never barbed wire — and pastures should be free of hazards.
- **Lifelong Learning:** Lessons, 4-H programs and daily interaction teach us something new every day. A good horseman always seeks to improve for the sake of the horse.

Stewardship: The Heart of Horsemanship

True horsemanship is about stewardship and understanding what a horse needs to feel safe, healthy and respected. It's about being a caretaker, a listener and a leader.

Daily Care Essentials

- **Smart Nutrition:** A horse's digestive system is built for slow, steady eating, not a few big meals. Provide quality hay and clean water — five to 10 gallons a day — and supplement with loose minerals, vitamins or grains as needed. Watch for toxic plants and rotate pastures to prevent overgrazing and maintain healthy forage.
- **Clean Environment and Manure Management:** One horse can produce around 50 pounds of manure each day. Regular removal or composting keeps stalls and paddocks sanitary, reduces flies and provides natural fertilizer for pastures. Proper waste management is essential for the health and comfort of horses and helps maintain safe, pleasant turnout areas.
- **Visual Health Check:** Look for signs of injury, swelling or unusual behavior. Eyes, nose, coat and movement can reveal a lot about your horse's well-being.
- **Hoof Inspection:** Pick out hooves daily to prevent thrush, injuries and discomfort. Schedule farrier visits every six to eight weeks.
- **Handling & Touch Acclimation:** Regularly handle your horse over its entire body and ensure it's comfortable in a halter, advises Farrier Richard Anderson. This prepares young or inexperienced horses for vet and farrier visits, making appointments safer, quicker and less stressful for everyone.
- **Grooming:** Brush to remove dirt, stimulate circulation, and check for skin issues or injuries. Grooming also strengthens your bond, as horses groom each other to show affection.
- **Exercise and Turnout:** Horses are nomadic by nature and need regular movement. Turnout, riding and structured exercise build muscle, keep them mentally and physically healthy, and reduce boredom-related behaviors.

BE READY

HORSE EMERGENCY KIT

Emergencies can happen when you least expect them, so having a well-stocked kit for your horse is essential. Dr. David Danielson, of Danielson Veterinary Services in Edmond, recommends keeping the following items on hand.

ESSENTIAL SUPPLIES

- Ophthalmic solution and ointment, plus an ophthalmic flush
- Saline for flushing wounds
- BB satin and vet wrap for bandaging legs
- Diapers or puppy potty pads (useful for leg wounds or wrapping hooves)
- Wound spray or salve
- Pain relief: Bute and Banamine

ADDITIONAL SAFETY TIPS

- Veterinarians are on call through the Oklahoma Equine Natural Disaster Relief Fund.
- In the event of a natural disaster, microchipping your horse is recommended, or some owners write their phone number on the horse with a magic marker that matches the horse's color.

Environment and Shelter

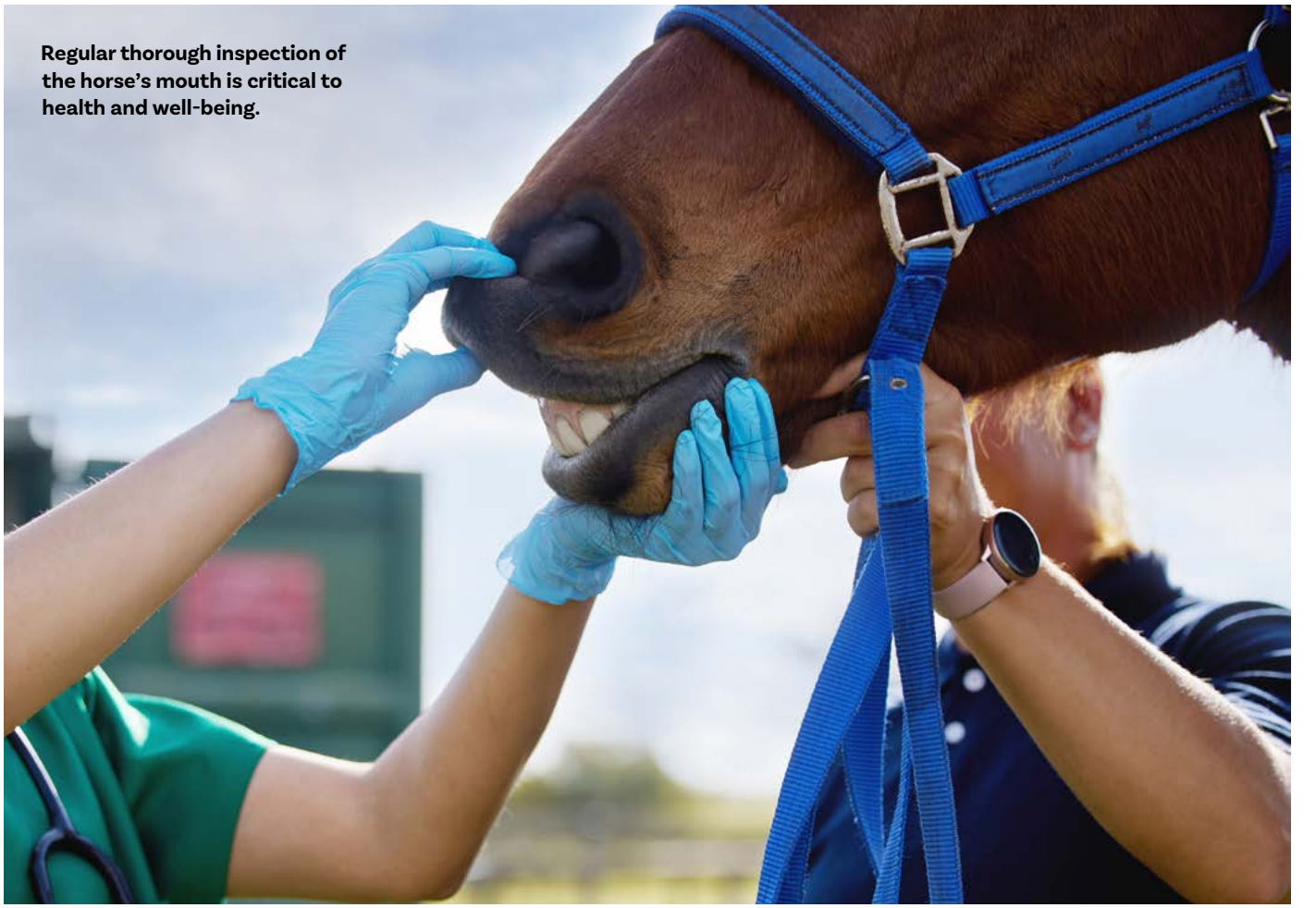
- **Safe Fencing:** Use woven mesh wire that prevents hooves from getting caught. If barbed wire is present, hot-wire it to prevent access.
- **Shelter Access:** Provide shade in summer and windbreaks in winter. Stalls with runs or gated access to pasture offer flexibility.
- **Hazard-Free Pasture:** Remove rusty equipment, fill holes and identify toxic plants. A safe pasture is a peaceful pasture.

Weekly and Monthly Tasks

- **Tack and Equipment Inspection:** Inspect saddles, bridles, halters and other gear for wear. Ill-fitting or damaged tack can cause behavioral or physical problems.
- **Stable Deep Clean:** Disinfect stalls and refresh bedding. Biosecurity is vital; quarantine new horses to protect the herd.
- **Vet and Farrier Scheduling:** Maintain a regular deworming program, vaccinations and hoof trims.

Common Sense Tips

- **Lease Before Owning:** Leasing is a great way to learn before committing. Horses can live 30 years, so understanding their needs is essential.
- **Know Your Horse:** Learn your horse's habits to spot changes early. Behavior is communication.
- **Veterinary Awareness:** Be able to describe symptoms clearly to your veterinarian. This helps ensure accurate diagnosis and effective treatment.
- **Companionship:** Horses are herd animals. A buddy — horse, donkey or goat — provides emotional security. Horses sleep deeply only when they feel safe in a herd.
- **Emergency Prep:** Keep a first aid kit and have a plan for fire or natural disasters.
- **Salt and Minerals:** Provide loose minerals as needed. Horses do not have abrasive tongues like cattle.
- **Consult a Professional:** When in doubt, ask for help. Professionals can provide insight that prevents injury or illness.



Regular thorough inspection of the horse's mouth is critical to health and well-being.

TIME FOR THE DENTIST?

The Importance of Oral Exams

by DR. KRIS HINEY, EQUINE EXTENSION SPECIALIST
OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY

While February is recognized as National Equine Dental Health Month, caring for your horse's teeth is a year-round necessity. Some aspects of horse care may change over time, but the fundamentals of equine health remain constant. First published in 2021, this article offers essential reminders for maintaining your horse's dental health and overall well-being.

Smelly breath in our dogs and cats often encourages us to visit our veterinarian for a dental exam. Plus, we tend to get a better look into our dogs' and cats' mouths a bit more often than we do our horses.

For children, the beginning of the school year can be a reminder to visit the dentist, and our own dentists call or send texts to bring us into the office. But what about our horses? The drop in temperature can serve as a reminder for horse owners, as the horse's teeth need to be in top shape for the winter and the potential increase in energy needs.

Teeth Facts

Horses begin their lives with no visible teeth, but they emerge quickly thereafter. Foals' central incisors erupt at approximately 6 days of age, followed by the intermediate incisors at 6 weeks, then the corner incisors at 6 months of age. Along with these deciduous or baby teeth that you can see at the front of the horse's mouth, the young horse will also have 12 premolars growing farther back in the jaw — six in the upper jaw (three on each side) and six in the lower jaw.

In essence, 24 teeth will be emerging in the first year of the horse's life. We often think of dental care as an older horse issue, but malocclusions (jaws misaligned) may need to be addressed early. Therefore, having a dental inspection early in life may prevent issues down the road.

The wolf teeth are the next to make their entrance, typically between 6 and 9 months of age. These teeth are small, shallow-rooted teeth seated right in front of the premolars. Surprisingly, not all horses even acquire wolf teeth. These non-wearing teeth (i.e., they don't assist

with chewing) occur mostly in the upper jaw but can be present in the lower jaw as well.

These teeth are actually the first adult teeth (or permanent teeth) that erupt even though they may not be permanent for long! Young horses often have their wolf teeth removed and their teeth checked prior to starting under saddle since these teeth can interfere with the bit. Their removal ensures there is no discomfort in their mouth in a pivotal portion of their training.

Horses will begin to shed their "baby" teeth at about 2 and a half years old, and they do not have a complete set of permanent teeth until they are 5 years old. During this period of time, they will replace a full set of 24 teeth as well as gain 12 more true molars.

Often, caps of deciduous teeth may remain on the emerging permanent teeth and can create uneven eruptions or wear patterns in paired partners. The emergence of 36 permanent teeth within three years should be monitored by veterinary dental exams. Do not put dental care off until the horse becomes a senior citizen.

Canine teeth, not to be confused with wolf teeth, are the last set worthy of discussion. These teeth appear in the interdental space between the incisors and premolars in all male horses. Mares may also have canine teeth in variable numbers but are typically smaller than in males. Canine teeth should also be monitored, as they can become quite sharp and pointed and can cause lacerations within the mouth.

Unlike human teeth, horse teeth continue to erupt and wear down from chewing over the life span of the horse. As the long root of the tooth migrates down through the jaw, teeth may become loose or even fall out in older horses. As veterinary care and nutrition for horses has improved, it is possible for a senior horse to outlive his teeth.

Specialized feeds, which are more highly processed, can take the place of natural chewing action by the horse. With proper care and nutrition, horses can still lead happy, healthy lives with relatively few teeth.

The nature of the horse's jaw and chewing patterns can create uneven wear surfaces that can be quite sharp and painful for the horse. As the upper jaw is wider than the lower jaw, the outer surface of the upper jaw and the inner surface of the lower jaw may develop very sharp points and ridges.

These can even lacerate the tongue and cheeks of the horse and can be quite painful. While we might think of only older horses needing routine dental care, regular inspection of the horse's mouth may prevent discomfort and difficulty chewing.

Do not put dental care off until the horse becomes a senior citizen.

Signs of Dental Disease

Some symptoms of dental disease point directly to the mouth. However, issues under saddle, such as not taking a lead or head tossing only in one direction, may also be related to dental problems. Horses may have dental disease without owners knowing it, especially as symptoms may be as subtle as behavior changes occurring slowly over time.

Pain in horses is often difficult to assess, as they are a species that tends not to show clear signs of discomfort. Many owners may not call the veterinarian to address dental disorders until signs are quite obvious, which indicates advanced dental disease. Dental disorders such as periapical dental infections (essentially a pocket of pus at the root of the tooth) may only be discovered during routine dental inspections or may even require X-rays.

Horses demonstrating symptoms of dental disease often need sedation and the placement of a mouth speculum to visualize problems related to the disease process.

A study in Finland demonstrated the importance of identifying and addressing dental disease in horses. They surveyed horse owners on perceived behavior changes in their horses following tooth extraction of previously unidentified tooth abscesses.

As expected, many of the behaviors linked to feed consumption and pain, such as eating slowly, dropping feed or avoiding cold water, improved after teeth extraction (86% reported improvements). Bit-related behaviors also improved in 88% of the horses. These behaviors included evading the bit, differences in ability to bend and flex to the left or right, head shaking, opening the mouth and resistance to bridling.

The overall demeanor of the horses improved as well, with notable improvements in social behavior, reduction in aggression and a more positive expression of behaviors. Horses that had been fearful, bucked or were otherwise unpleasant to ride or care for, improved after addressing dental disorders. In particular, behavior issues that may be dealt with by harsh punishments were expressions of pain, which reduced following treatment.

Owners reported improved performance and weight gain. This study highlights the importance of considering a horse's underlying health, including dental health, when addressing performance or behavioral issues.

Bottom line: Regular thorough inspection of the horse's mouth is critical to horse health and well-being.

CARE NOTES

Typical symptoms of dental issues in horses:

- Weight loss, especially when relying on grain and hay.
- Dropping food while eating.
- Eating slowly, holding head to one side while eating and other abnormal chewing patterns.
- Slow to eat hay or dunking hay in water.
- Swellings on face and lower jaw.
- Nasal discharge from one nostril (usually no cough).
- Foul odor from mouth.
- Difficulty with position of head under saddle, poor collection, poor circular moves, fussy with bridle or bit, resistant on one side more than the other, head tossing.

Cribbing is often brought on by a combination of factors including stress, boredom and diet.

CRIBBING IN HORSES

Understanding the behavior, risks and management

by ASHLEY DAILY

Cribbing — also called "crib-biting" — can be an annoying, destructive behavior for horse owners, who often try a variety of "treatments" to stop it. But before attempting to curb the behavior, it's important to understand a little about why horses crib.

Understanding Cribbing

Cribbing is a stereotypic behavior in which a horse grasps an object — such as a fence rail or stall door — with its incisors, pulls back, arches its neck, and emits a characteristic grunting sound. Cribbing is often brought on by a combination of factors including stress, boredom and diet. Some research suggests a genetic component that makes certain breeds more likely to engage in the behavior.

A 2009 Cornell University survey included more than 3,500 horses. Of those, 162 were identified as cribbers, with 13 percent being Thoroughbreds and 5 percent Quarter Horses. Cribbing has not been observed in wild, free-roaming horses but has been seen in captive wild horses. Interestingly, cribbing is less common in donkeys and mules.

Cribbing will sometimes show up when a horse is young, most likely due to the stress of weaning.

"It's usually a learned behavior," says Dr. Logan Kembel-Whitfield of Equine Medical Associates in Edmond. "A lot of horses will pick it up from their mom or a cribber in the barn while they're babies." Curbing a foal's cribbing is often easier and more successful than waiting until adulthood, when the behavior has become ingrained.

In some cases, cribbing can be caused by gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). Humans aren't the only ones who suffer from heartburn after consuming certain foods. GERD is caused by stomach acid rising up into the esophagus, resulting in pain or a burning sensation. If your horse cribs during mealtimes or directly after eating, GERD might be the culprit.

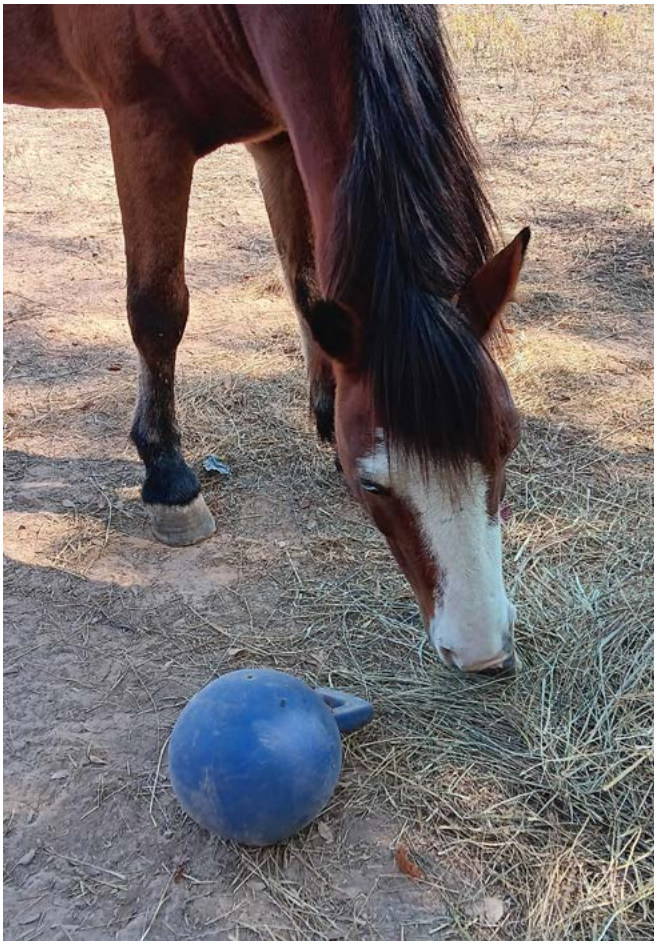
Since the exact cause of cribbing can't always be pinpointed, completely eliminating the behavior isn't possible. Opinions also differ on whether or not to allow horses to crib, as it can be used as a stress reliever and coping mechanism.

Recognizing the Risks

Cribbing does pose a few health risks, however. Horses who crib can quickly wear down their incisors. "Protect them as best as you can by not having metal or something wood for them to chew on all the time to damage their teeth," says Kembel-Whitfield.

Cribbing can cause weight loss in horses that spend more time cribbing than eating. It also increases their risk for certain types of colic, including epiploic foramen entrapment (EFE), a condition in which a portion of the small intestine becomes trapped between the pancreas

Providing hay will help keep a cribber's mouth busy.
Photo by Ashley Daily.



Stall toys provide mental stimulation.
Photo by Ashley Daily.

and the liver. A 2004 study looked at 419 horses treated for EFE. Of those, 47 percent were cribbers, while 53 percent developed EFE with no history of cribbing. Horses that crib are also more likely to develop temporohyoid osteoarthritis.

Kembel-Whitfield has firsthand experience caring for a cribber. "With my personal horse, when I tried to take everything away that he could crib on, he found a girlfriend in the pasture who would let him crib on her. Some of them are bad enough that they'll find a way," she explains.

Managing the Behavior

If your horse cribs, start by talking with your veterinarian to rule out any health issues. Studies have shown a link between cribbing and digestive problems, such as ulcers. Once health concerns are addressed, examine your horse's lifestyle. Stress can result from a lack of forage, a high-grain diet and little turnout. Ideally, horses should have 24-hour access to pasture, though that isn't always possible, so ensure they always have hay available. Stall toys can provide mental stimulation, and rubber-padded cribbing boards offer a safe outlet while protecting their incisors. Because cribbing is often stress-related, ask your vet if a calming supplement would be beneficial.

Cribbing collars — leather straps that horses wear around the throatlatch to prevent cribbing — can be purchased, but some still manage to crib even when wearing the device. Kembel-Whitfield advises keeping a close eye on your horse while he is wearing the collar, paying special attention to any rubs. "If they have prominent neck vertebrae, they can get rub sores. Make sure the fleece padding stays in place," she says.

Proper fit is also important. It should be snug but not so snug as to interfere with airflow or eating and drinking. You should be able to slip one to two fingers under the collar. Keep in mind that once cribbing is ingrained, some horses will continue their behavior even after management changes.

Cribbing still isn't completely understood, but researchers have shed light on the behavior over the years, challenging the old assumptions that once kept people from purchasing known cribbers and potentially missing out on a trustworthy partner.

Dr. Daniel Burba, McCasland Professor of Biomedical Lasers at Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine, agrees that these outdated beliefs still persist — even though cribbing rarely limits a horse's quality of life or usefulness.

"Unfortunately these assumptions are still out there with some scientific backing, but the incidence of causing problems is quite low," he says. "Cribbing is displayed in approximately 5% of the horse population, which is a fair amount. However, cribbing does not deter from the ability of the horse to perform their function or be a great companion. These horses can live a wonderful life, but management and husbandry is important. Little to no stall confinement and plenty of roughage as well as physical activity is key."

A healthy foal resting after delivery. Photo by Leigh Ann Matthews.

RED BAG FOALING

When Delivery Goes Wrong

by LEIGH ANN MATTHEWS

Caring for a pregnant mare can be a rewarding experience for horse owners, especially when a healthy new foal arrives without complications. The process can cause anxiety for the owner/handler, but the worry subsides as soon as the foal is up and nursing. The assumption is made that all is well once the mare expels the placenta, also known as the "after birth."

While horse owners hope for a smooth delivery, a number of complications can occur during labor and birth. One of those complications is known as "red bag foaling." This is a serious, life-threatening situation and can result in a stillborn foal or a foal suffering from hypoxia (oxygen deprivation). Although relatively rare in healthy foaling mares, immediate attention is necessary when it occurs.

The mare's placenta is made up of two major parts: the chorioallantois, also known as the red bag, and the amnion or white bag. During the pregnancy, the red bag is attached to the uterine wall, allowing the exchange of nutrients and waste to and from the fetus through the umbilical cord. The white bag surrounds the fetus, lubricating and protecting the fetus as the mare moves around throughout the pregnancy.

With a normal delivery, the red bag breaks just before the foal enters the birth canal. The white bag appears first, followed by the foal. If the red bag appears before the white bag, a portion of the placenta prematurely detached from the uterine wall. This is a critical situation, as the foal, still inside the mare, may experience a reduction or elimination of the exchange of nutrients. In order to save the foal, the red bag should be opened with surgical scissors or a sharp knife, exposing the white bag and the foal.

The feet and nose should be visible first unless the foal is breech (tail first), which brings other extremely dangerous implications. In either case, the white bag should be torn open to allow the foal to breathe until it is out of the mare and the umbilical cord is broken. If available,

oxygen should be administered to the foal.

According to vetster.com, the prognosis depends on how quickly the foal is released from the placenta. Even foals released quickly are prone to have hypoxia and should be closely monitored for weakness, lack of sucking reflex, blindness, hyperexcitability, lack of interest in the mare, and awkwardness and/or inability or lack of desire to stand. Some of these may not appear immediately and take time to develop, and if the foal survives, it may require extensive care or hospitalization.

If a foal needs resuscitation before a veterinarian arrives, Dr. Alan Dorton of EquineChronicle.com advises lifting the foal — lying on its side with its head extended — by the muzzle, so it's positioned at a 30- to 45-degree angle to the ground. Hold the mouth and lower nostril closed, then open the upper nostril and create a firm seal with your lips. Blow forcefully into the nostril, watching the chest to ensure the air is entering the lungs and not the stomach. If the chest isn't rising and filling, the neck and head may need to be extended further.

Another major risk associated with a red bag delivery, or many other abnormal or complicated births, is sepsis — the body's overreaction to an infection. This is also a risk for the mare, and a veterinarian should be consulted for treatment and close monitoring.

Premature placental separation from the uterine wall can be caused by placentitis, which is an infection or inflammation of the placenta. Bacteria can enter the mare through the cervix, or it can be transmitted through the bloodstream. Mares with this condition may show premature udder development or vaginal discharge.

Fescue toxicity is another cause of red bag deliveries. Mares who consume fescue grass late in the gestation period may also experience a thickened placenta, resulting in failure of the outer placental membrane to rupture during birth. Other problems associated with fescue consumption include prolonged gestation, lack of milk production, and larger but weaker foals with poor immunity and reflexes. Owners are advised to remove pregnant mares from fescue pastures 30–90 days before foaling due dates and provide grain and plenty of non-fescue hay.

Appearance of the amnion bag during a normal foal delivery. Photo courtesy of Colorado State University Equine Reproductive Laboratory.

Appearance of the chorioallantois, also known as the red bag, during an abnormal foal delivery. Photo courtesy of Colorado State University Equine Reproductive Laboratory.

Urine infections and stress can also lead to red bag deliveries. Mares should be monitored closely during the later stages of gestation. If it is necessary to remove the mare from the company of other horses, ensure the separation doesn't cause stress for the mare. Pacing, inability to relax and frequent nickering can be signs that a mare would do well with a companion present.

Unfortunately, there isn't much that can prevent a red bag delivery. Close monitoring during labor, preparation for potential complications, recognition of problems, and early intervention give the mare and foal the best chance for a safe birth. As labor approaches, it's wise to alert your veterinarian and keep your truck and trailer hitched and nearby for quick transport if needed. Being prepared and knowledgeable ahead of time can lead to healthy outcomes even in an emergency situation.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

10 Ways to Keep You and Your Horse Engaged This Winter

Cold weather doesn't have to put your horsemanship on pause. Here are 10 ways to keep your horse happy, healthy and moving this winter.

1. **STRETCH IT OUT** Cold muscles need extra care. Spend a few minutes before each ride doing gentle stretches and flexion work. It keeps your horse supple and ready — and helps you both stay limber until spring.
2. **SADDLE UP FOR SHORT RIDES** Even 20 minutes in the saddle beats skipping the day entirely. Short, focused rides build consistency, improve balance and shake off cabin fever for both horse and rider.
3. **ADD SOME POLE PLAY** Set up a few ground poles or a simple pattern in the arena. Walking or trotting poles keeps your horse thinking about foot placement and rhythm — a simple, low-impact workout.
4. **TRY A NEW CUE** Use winter downtime to refine your communication. Work on lightening transitions, side passes or backing softly. Small breakthroughs now will pay off big when show or trail season returns.
5. **GROOM WITH PURPOSE** Turn routine grooming into a bonding session. Massage sore spots, check for rubs under blankets, and notice changes in coat or condition. Your horse will love the extra attention.
6. **MIX UP THE ROUTINE** Change where and how you work — swap arena time for a hand-walk down the drive, a bareback ride or liberty play in a safe area. New scenery keeps minds fresh.
7. **TUNE UP TACK AND GEAR** Bring your saddle and bridle inside for an evening clean-up. Conditioning leather and checking for wear makes gear last longer — and keeps you connected to the details of your horsemanship.
8. **COZY UP WITH LEARNING** When it's too icy to ride, dive into a book, clinic video, or podcast about training, nutrition, or horse psychology. Expanding your knowledge now sets you up for a strong spring start.
9. **KEEP FITNESS FUN** Lead your horse through in-hand stretches, hill walks or a simple obstacle course. Staying active, even lightly, maintains muscle tone and sharpens trust.
10. **SHARE THE SEASON** Invite a barn friend for coffee and a grooming day, or take seasonal photos with your horse. Staying social around the barn keeps spirits high when the weather won't cooperate.

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