



# The Official Report of the 2024 Maryland Horse Forum

*Unbridling Our Future*

August 8, 2024  
McDonogh School  
Owings Mills, MD



[MarylandHorseForum.com](http://MarylandHorseForum.com)

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## **Acknowledgments**

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**Hosted** by McDonogh School

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Maryland Horse Forum 2024  
Official Report



**Maryland  
Department of Agriculture**

*Office of the Secretary*

**Wes Moore**, Governor  
**Aruna Miller**, Lt. Governor  
**Kevin M. Atticks**, Secretary  
**Steven A. Connelly**, Deputy Secretary

Agriculture | *Maryland's Leading Industry*  
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Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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Dear Maryland Horse Community Partners and Friends,

Thank you for your interest and participation in the Maryland Horse Forum. This year's event saw meaningful conversations and creative thinking on how Maryland's horse industry can continue to grow. I've been a long-time champion and supporter of the horse industry and value the relationship between the community and the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Over the last few years there has been growing public appreciation for equestrian activities and the department continues to support ongoing efforts to highlight and expand the beneficial impact horses have on our lives. We eagerly anticipate the innovative approaches the horse industry will employ to attract a diverse range of participants and ensure its enduring success. We know horse owners want to optimize the care and management of their horses while fostering greater cooperation across the industry. The department remains committed to tackling workforce shortages and developing workforce enhancement programs within the equine and animal science sectors.

We are dedicated to preserving horse farms by enhancing horse venues, recognizing their significant contributions to the economy, the environment, and mental well-being. Home to world class horse competitions and exhibitions, this forum served as an opportunity for each sector of this industry to come together and discuss what the future holds. The diverse group of stables and organizations is what makes Maryland a global horse state!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kevin Atticks".

Kevin M. Atticks, DCD  
Maryland Secretary of Agriculture



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Maryland  
Department of Agriculture

Office of Marketing, Animal Industries and Consumer Services

**Wes Moore**, Governor  
**Aruna Miller**, Lt. Governor  
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Dear Maryland Horse Community,

As the Executive Director of the Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB), I want to express our deepest gratitude for your participation in this, our fifth Maryland Horse Forum. Your voices, insights, and unwavering support are the foundation of this gathering, and without the collaboration of so many dedicated industry partners and sponsors, none of this would be possible. I would especially like to recognize the leadership of Co-Chairs **Dr. Amy Burk, Anne Litz, and Jennifer Reynolds**, who have once again guided this event to great success. As we look forward to the next Forum in 2029, we carry the torch of this powerful tradition that unites us all.

At MHIB, our commitment has always been to listen, engage, and understand the needs of our vast and vibrant equine industry. With over 200 equine organizations in Maryland, our small but dedicated team strives to attend as many events, meetings, and farm visits as possible. Yet, it's the collective strength of our industry partners and gatherings like this Forum that allow us to truly hear and address the concerns of our community. These conversations, driven by your passion and expertise, shape the future of Maryland's equine industry.

I started as MHIB executive director in January 2011. My lifelong participation in Maryland's equine industry began as a cadet in McDonogh School's mounted cavalry, then as a horse show competitor, foxhunter, amateur steeplechase jockey, and Thoroughbred racetrack groom, trainer and owner-breeder. As a writer, I've been a contributor to *The Maryland Horse*, *The Equiery* and staff member of *Horsemen's Journal* magazines, publicist at Bowie-Laurel-Pimlico racetracks and an 18-year career as racing handicapper and columnist for the *Baltimore Sun*. Finally, after a 15-year hiatus as a development officer/marketing director at Mount St. Mary's University and co-publisher of *Maryland Life Magazine*, I ended up back in the horse business at the MHIB.

As I prepare to retire on December 31, 2024, after 14 incredible years, I want to express my heartfelt thanks to the Maryland Department of Agriculture and to all of you. Together, we've hosted two 5 Star international events, fostered a thriving network of licensed stables and Horse Discovery Centers, and seen the economic impact of our industry reach \$3 billion. We've maintained Maryland's status as the state with the most horses per square mile in the nation, an achievement we can all be proud of.

But our work is far from done. The challenge ahead is to build on this momentum. By continuing to speak openly, work together, and meet challenges head on, we will keep pushing our industry forward—creating positive change and ensuring that Maryland's equine legacy continues to thrive for generations to come.

Thank you for a wonderful and unforgettable 14 years. It has been my honor to serve this remarkable community.

With deep gratitude and optimism,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ross Peddicord".

Ross Peddicord, Executive Director, Maryland Horse Industry Board





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## Executive Summary



The **2024 Maryland Horse Forum** united stakeholders from across the state's horse industry to address pressing challenges and strategize for a vibrant and sustainable future. The Maryland horse industry is a vital contributor to the state's economy, culture, and rural landscapes, supporting thousands of jobs and fostering community engagement. Co-hosted by the Maryland Horse Industry Board and other equestrian organizations every five years, this year's forum served as a critical platform for sharing insights and developing actionable plans to strengthen Maryland's horse industry. A pre-forum survey helped to identify twelve key topics of concern, which were then discussed in depth during moderated sessions. This summary highlights the key concerns discussed and the proactive steps identified to secure the industry's long-term success.

### **Participation, Promotion, and Education**

The forum calls attention to the need to increase public awareness of the benefits of equestrian activities and address misconceptions about the industry by promoting a positive image through a unified social media strategy and increased outreach to schools and communities. To attract diverse participants and ensure the industry's sustainability, it is crucial to enhance inclusivity and accessibility through targeted marketing, improved spectator experiences, and increased support for breeding and horse-keeping in Maryland. Additionally, addressing the workforce shortage with targeted development programs and reaching out to underrepresented groups are vital steps in fostering a thriving equestrian community.

### **Horse-Keeping and Business Sustainability**

The forum emphasized the key challenges impacting horse-keeping and business sustainability. Rising operational costs, including workman's compensation insurance, minimum wage increases, and escalating land costs, are putting financial strain on horse businesses. Outdated zoning laws and inconsistent regulations further hinder the growth and establishment of equestrian facilities, while small horse farms face threats from urbanization and development. Additionally, the shortage of veterinarians makes it difficult to maintain consistent horse healthcare. To address these concerns, action items include advocating for reforms in workman's compensation insurance, updating zoning

laws to support equestrian activities, promoting financial literacy and operational efficiency among horse business owners, and encouraging greater collaboration within the industry to share resources and reduce costs.

### **Land Use, Legislative, and Liability**

The forum identified several pressing concerns threatening the sustainability of competition venues, trail systems, and small horse farms, including funding gaps, urbanization, and regulatory challenges. It emphasized the need for securing funding for equestrian venue improvements, advocating for dedicated trail maintenance resources, and increasing awareness of land stewardship programs. Strengthening legislative involvement and showcasing the economic benefits of equestrian activities are also critical to gaining broader support from policymakers and the public.

### **Moving Forward**

The action items outlined in this report provide a comprehensive strategy to enhance participation, sustain horse businesses, and secure support for the Maryland horse industry. We sincerely thank all participants at the Maryland Horse Forum for their invaluable contributions and dedication. By implementing these strategies, the Maryland horse industry can ensure its long-term success, broaden its impact within the state and beyond, and continue to thrive in the years ahead.



Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Kevin Atticks welcomes attendees and speaks to the importance of Agriculture - including horses, to Maryland



## KEY CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Participation, Promotion, and Education

#### Key Concerns:

1. There is a lack of public awareness regarding the mental, emotional, and physical benefits of horse activities.
2. A lack of understanding of the classification of horses as agricultural livestock, rather than luxury items or pets, by the public and government officials can jeopardize the industry's access to important agricultural benefits.
3. The media's focus on negative stories, especially on social media, harms the industry's image.
4. Young people are less inclined to pursue equine careers or engage in equestrian sports due to financial and accessibility barriers, other interests in digital and recreational activities, high costs of horse ownership, lack of exposure to industry opportunities, limited accessibility to facilities, and the perception of exclusivity.
5. The industry is struggling to attract and retain diverse participants, especially those from non-traditional backgrounds.
6. Existing breeding programs for racing and sport horses need more promotion and incentive funding.
7. Many horse events are not fully optimized for spectators, leading to lower engagement and attendance, while limited marketing and communication about these events restricts broader public participation.
8. The public often perceives the horse industry as exclusive and associated with wealth, which reduces support and makes it seem inaccessible, particularly to underrepresented groups due to the high cost of owning and maintaining horses.

#### Action Items:

- 1. Unify Messaging and Promotion:**
  - Develop a unified social media strategy that brings the entire horse industry together while allowing each sector to highlight its unique strengths and positive contributions.
- 2. Increase Interest Among Young Adults:**
  - Increase outreach to schools, youth organizations, and community groups to encourage interest and participation in the horse industry.
  - Create and/or promote accessible and affordable programs specifically designed for young adults, including introductory riding lessons, equine-related career workshops, and student clubs.
  - Partner with schools and community organizations to increase outreach and participation.
  - Launch interactive online platforms and social media campaigns to engage young audiences, featuring virtual tours, educational content, and interactive challenges related to horse activities.

**3. Financial Support and Incentives:**

- Advocate for state funding for horse breeding programs and explore new revenue sources like a horse-related tax or new license plates.

**4. Workforce Development Initiatives:**

- Establish certification programs for equine professions and create internship opportunities on farms to provide hands-on experience.
- Encourage the horse industry to apply for existing workforce development grants and apprenticeship programs to attract and retain talent.

**5. Improving Event Accessibility:**

- Enhance spectator experiences at horse events by improving seating, parking, and amenities.
- Develop better marketing strategies to reach non-horse owners and engage local communities with equestrian events.

**6. Outreach and Engagement:**

- Encourage industry members to participate in public outreach events like Horseland, open barns, etc to broaden their reach.
- Develop an outreach initiative to highlight the mental, emotional, and physical benefits of all horse activities to expand reach and impact.
- Engage policymakers and government officials with informational materials to highlight the agricultural significance of horses, while launching public awareness campaigns to support unified industry advocacy.



Attendees check in at the 2024 Maryland Horse Forum

## Horse-Keeping and Business Sustainability

### Key Concerns:

1. Workman's compensation insurance, minimum wage increases, and associated operational costs are becoming unsustainable for many horse businesses.
2. A critical shortage of veterinarians is impacting horse health management, forcing owners to switch between multiple providers.
3. Outdated zoning laws and rising land costs hinder the establishment and growth of horse businesses.
4. A growing number of unwanted horses are straining rescue resources, driven in part by financial hardships, rehoming challenges, and lack of end-of-life planning.
5. Changing climate patterns are leading to health issues, reduced pasture availability, and increased hay costs.

### Action Items:

#### 1. Strengthen Financial and Operational Resilience:

- Increase educational opportunities for horse business owners on financial management, including pricing strategies and estate planning.
- Encourage greater collaboration among horse business operators to support each other and share resources.
- Explore alternative revenue opportunities such as hosting events, offering partial leases, and utilizing volunteers.

#### 2. Lower Operational Costs:

- Work with industry associations to lobby for more affordable workman's compensation insurance rates and other cost-saving measures, such as tax incentives for horse businesses.
- Promote cooperative purchasing programs for essential supplies and services, and share best practices for operational efficiency among horse businesses to help manage rising costs.

#### 3. Reduce Shortage of Veterinarians

- Partner with veterinary schools and institutions to offer specialized programs and incentives that encourage students to enter equine practice, such as scholarships, loan forgiveness programs, internships, and mentorships.
- Develop networks for shared veterinary services and telemedicine options to provide consistent care and address shortages by allowing practitioners to cover larger areas more effectively.

#### 4. Improve Zoning Laws and Lower Land Costs:

- Work with local governments and industry groups to update zoning laws that support equestrian activities and business growth, focusing on creating more favorable regulations for horse-related operations.
- Support and participate in land preservation programs and incentives to protect land for equestrian use, and explore alternative funding sources to alleviate rising land costs.

## **5. Reduce Burden on Horse Rescues**

- Increase public awareness and accessibility to rehoming programs, and collaborate with rescue organizations to develop effective strategies for managing and rehoming unwanted horses.
- Offer educational resources and support for horse owners to develop comprehensive end-of-life plans, including financial planning, rehoming options, and low-cost euthanasia programs.

## **6. Reduce the Impact of Climate Change:**

- Promote and implement best practices for managing pasture and hay resources in response to changing climate patterns, such as soil conservation techniques and alternative forage options.
- Invest in research and development of climate-resilient solutions for horse health and management, including new technologies and practices to mitigate the impacts of climate change on the industry.

# **Land Use, Legislative, and Liability**

## **Key Concerns:**

1. Many horse competition venues are outdated, in need of improvements, and face challenges due to regulations, funding, and maintenance. The sustainability of these facilities is a growing concern, particularly with the lack of consistent government support and the need for facilities that can accommodate diverse equestrian disciplines.
2. Trail systems require more maintenance but there is a lack of transparency and funding for trail upkeep, and non-horse recreational activities are often prioritized over equestrian needs.
3. The horse industry faces challenges in land preservation, particularly with small horse farms, urbanization, and the impact of solar developments. There is also a lack of awareness and participation in land stewardship programs among horse farm owners.
4. The horse industry struggles with inadequate involvement in legislative processes and representation. Concerns include the high cost of workman's compensation for non-profits, lack of accreditation for lesson programs, and inconsistent zoning regulations affecting equestrian facilities.
5. The economic benefits of equestrian events and facilities are not widely recognized, leading to insufficient support from legislators. There is also a need for better marketing and public engagement to promote equestrian events and facilities.

## **Action Items:**

### **1. Enhance Competition Venues**

- Conduct comprehensive assessments of competition venues to identify necessary upgrades and improvements. Collaborate with stakeholders to create and implement strategic plans for modernization and maintenance.
- Work with industry associations and local governments to secure increased funding for venue improvements and maintenance. Explore partnerships with private sponsors and businesses to support facility enhancements.

### **2. Improve Trail System Maintenance**

- Advocate for dedicated funding for trail maintenance through government grants or partnerships with non-profit organizations. Improve transparency in funding allocation by

- publishing regular reports on trail upkeep and investments.
- Establish partnerships with organizations involved in non-horse recreational activities to ensure equitable prioritization of trail maintenance. Engage in joint initiatives that promote shared use and mutual benefits for all recreational users.

### 3. Increase Land Preservation

- Launch educational campaigns to raise awareness about land stewardship programs among horse farm owners, highlighting the benefits and incentives for participation. Partner with conservation organizations to provide resources and support for land preservation.
- Work with local governments and conservation groups to develop policies that protect small horse farms from urbanization and development pressures. Support zoning reforms that include provisions for preserving agricultural land.

### 4. Improve Legislative Involvement and Representation

- Increase involvement in legislative processes through horse owner support of the Maryland Horse Council legislative initiatives to engage with legislators and advocate for policies that support the horse industry.
- Educate the public on how to regularly engage with legislators to address key concerns such as workman's compensation costs, improved lesson programs, and zoning regulations.

### 5. Showcase Economic Benefits and Enhance Public Engagement

- Create and distribute reports that showcase the economic benefits of equestrian events and facilities, emphasizing their contributions to local economies. Share these findings with legislators and the public to build support.
- Launch comprehensive marketing campaigns to promote equestrian events and facilities, including social media strategies, community engagement activities, and partnerships with local media. Focus on increasing visibility and public interest in the economic and recreational value of the horse industry.



Anne Litz, Forum Co-Chair, Maryland Horse Industry Board  
Jennifer Reynolds, Forum Co-Chair, University of Maryland Equine Studies Program  
Dr. Amy Burk, Forum Co-Chair, University of Maryland Equine Studies Program  
Hal Turner, Ed.D. Director of Auxiliary Programs and Campus Management



# 2024 Maryland Horse Forum Agenda

Thursday, August 8<sup>th</sup>  
McDonogh School, Owings Mills, MD



8:00 am	<b>Registration and light refreshments. Visit with Sponsors - Edward St. John Student Center</b>		
9:00 am	<b>Welcome - Edward St. John Student Center's Paterakis Dining Hall</b>		
<b>Location</b>	<b>Klein Lyceum</b>	<b>1873 Room</b>	<b>Esther Ann Dining Hall</b>
9:30 am - 10:30 am	<b>Social License &amp; Public Perception</b> <i>How does the public currently perceive our industry? What is the reality? What steps can be taken to enhance its social license? What changes in policy and practices need to be made?</i>	<b>Operating &amp; Sustaining a Horse Business</b> <i>What are the biggest challenges of operating a horse business in MD (insurance, land, costs, staff, etc.)? What resources do stables need? How do we address staffing and labor shortages?</i>	<b>Quality of Horse Competition Facilities</b> <i>What features attract and keep high-level and local events? What makes a quality competition venue? How can facilities ensure a positive experience for all? How do we enhance the prestige of our facilities and events?</i>
10:45 am - 11:45 am	<b>Incentives for MD Horses: Competitions, Breeding, Keeping Horses in MD</b> <i>What incentives would encourage more Maryland breders? What incentives could attract more competitions &amp; events? What would make MD more attractive to horse businesses, owners and breeders?</i>	<b>Workforce Development &amp; Careers</b> <i>What skills and qualifications are most in demand? How can educational institutions and industry stakeholders collaborate to prepare individuals for careers? How do we improve access to education? How do we retain our young professionals?</i>	<b>Trail Riding &amp; Public Land Use</b> <i>How can we convey the importance of maintaining access to public horse facilities? What current issues challenge keeping public facilities available? How can horse riders collaborate with other user groups to promote shared stewardship and maintenance of public facilities?</i>
12:00 pm	<b>Lunch, Speakers, Networking and Visit with Sponsors - Paterakis Dining Hall</b>		
1:15 pm - 2:15 pm	<b>Recruitment, Retention, Expansion</b> <i>What does the current horse industry look like? What is our future given MD's demographics? What are barriers to entry? How can we ensure equitable participation and leadership roles for underrepresented groups? How can we be more welcoming?</i>	<b>Unwanted Horses and Rescue Resources, Cost of Horse Ownership</b> <i>What does our current unwanted horse population look like? How does cost of ownership contribute to rescues? What resources are needed to reduce unwanted horses? How does education come into play?</i>	<b>Land Availability &amp; Land Preservation: Public, Private and Environmental Concerns</b> <i>How can we maintain horse farms in the face of urbanization? What would best support environmental concerns? What efforts are necessary to influence policies that affect land use and preservation for the horse industry?</i>
2:30 pm - 3:30 pm	<b>Spectators &amp; the Fan Experience: Promotion, Marketing, &amp; Tourism</b> <i>How is the public hearing about events? How should we be promoting them? Who is attending equine events? How can we enhance the fan experience? How can we reach local communities and tourism agencies?</i>	<b>Horse Health and Climate</b> <i>Outbreaks of infectious disease, access to horse health care professionals, horsemanship, environment concerns, and extreme weather. How can we improve bio-security? What practical steps can create a healthier environment for horses?</i>	<b>Legislation and the Horse Industry</b> <i>How can horse owners effectively advocate for favorable legislation? How does our industry stay aware of upcoming legislation? How can we foster better relationships with our representatives? How do we build our grassroots advocacy efforts?</i>
3:30 pm	<b>Summary remarks and Touch of Class Award presentation to MyRacehorse - Paterakis Dining Hall</b>		
4 pm - 6 pm	<b>Reception - McDonogh Equestrian Center sponsored by B &amp; D Builders</b> <b>Music by bluegrass band T-58s, tours of school and stables</b> <b>Door Prizes for those in attendance - Must be present to win!</b>		

## Notes from Individual Sessions

### Social License & Public Perception

#### Concerns:

- The public and those in government don't view horse industry participants as needing support, because they view participants as wealthy already
- Many don't see horses as an agricultural business but see horses as an entertainment business or as pets. This is to our detriment because then we don't get the benefits of being "agriculture" and there are different welfare concerns and implications if horses were considered pets.
- Media focus is not on the positive that comes from working with horses but rather on negative stories - specifically in regards to social media - there isn't a unified front on showing the positive aspects of the industry in social media. (Ex. Therapeutic riding is a positive aspect that is not publicized well)
- There is a challenge in differentiating abuse and abusive training and restraint techniques from acceptable practices
- The public views horse farm owners as wealthy because they know land is expensive so they assume everyone who owns a farm or rides at a farm is wealthy, but that is not true.
- People don't think horses are accessible to everyone so why should they care about them? Therefore it's not a high priority of concern to others.
- The public lacks knowledge of how horses can be positive for mental, emotional, and physical health
- Lack of one social media portal that allows for unified communication regarding the horse industry
- The perception is that a typical horse in MD is a fancy expensive racehorse or show horse, but, in reality, more are horses used for trail and recreational riding owned by individuals
- The racing sector needs to be more transparent. People don't understand what is happening and often feel that the industry is covering up issues like racing injuries and trainer abuse
- How do we make horses accessible to everyone? Financial limitations discourage kids and adults from participating.

#### Recommendations:

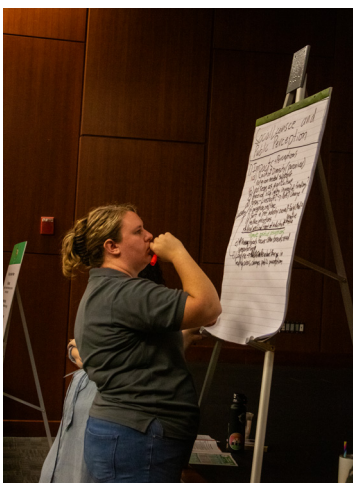
- We need a unified social media source with greater impact for owners to send stories to highlight the positive.
- Develop a cohesive social media message to include influencers and present the industry in a more positive light
- Change the focus from horses as luxury items to focus on how horses improve people's lives regardless of socioeconomic status
- Publications should feature the basics of racing, showing, etc. to appeal to newcomers and teach newcomers about different aspects of the horse industry
- Increase promotion of equine-assisted therapy for veterans. It is now an official way of helping military individuals covered by medical insurance.
- Increase outreach to Girl Scouts, Scouting America (Boy Scouts), 4-H, FFA, and high school community service programs
- Increase education about how to drive safely around horse trailers on the roads. The public is creating dangerous situations for the horse trailer drivers and their passengers by causing accidents. Reach out to new driving programs to include in their education.
- Look for opportunities to partner with local schools with curriculum and activities to increase positive perception.

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- The Pimlico Plus Program- probably a lot of non-horse people in MD that think it's a bunch of money being given to rich horse people - can we have a community outreach center at Pimlico that's not specifically related to racing?
- Increase marketing/promotion and take advantage of October Horse Month to engage a broader audience
- Have to be among the people you want to influence- have to identify the audience, (children, parents, schools, etc) and must be on the ground with them, meet them where they are. Show up with a horse, and 15 minutes later you'll have a crowd. We must travel to them.
- We need to reach a broader audience by supporting and volunteering at Horseland at the Maryland State Fair and supporting MAEF trailers at schools.
- We need to establish what's not acceptable in training, riding, and restraining horses and make sure that all members abide by the rules. If the industry does not police itself the public will.
- Encourage trail riders to be nice and educational to all other hikers and bikers who use the trail. Be positive.
- We should increase taking horses to the public like pony rides, miniatures at hospitals and libraries, and horse viewing areas at public events.
- Simplify the dialogue. Make horse activities and entertainment more accessible to the public in terms anyone can understand
- Connect with the public and engage the public so they want to come to annual equestrian events as they do in VA at the Chincoteague pony swim. We should increase public participation and enjoyment at our annual events like the MD Five Star, MD Hunt Cup, and Preakness, MD Horse and Pony Show, and the Washington International Horse Show. Perhaps have co-existing wine or music festivals? Bring back festival in the country at the Maryland 5 Star.
- Promote non-horse-owning activities with youth like reading horse books, playing with Breyer horses, and hosting a stick-horse show. The popular Chincoteague pony swim mentioned in this session gained popularity with a book, which then became a movie. There are so many literature options we could promote that would spark kids' interest in horses. We should have a book of the week during October Horse Month or give out horse books at Horseland.
- The horse industry needs to recognize that horses are not accessible or financially feasible to a wide range of people. So as an industry, stop saying "horses are for everyone" because they are not. We need to find a way to help people enjoy horses without telling everyone they should ride or own a horse.
- Promote alternative ways to be involved with horses. One example is promoting a micro share ownership of a racehorse. Owners only paid \$147/share of 2024 Preakness winner Seize the Grey. One horse created a lot of joy and engagement with a large community, no need to be ultra-wealthy.



Scribes, Attendees and Moderators kept the sessions in full swing during the 2024 Horse Forum



## Operating & Sustaining a Horse Business

### Concerns:

- The cost of workman's comp insurance increasing or becoming financially impossible to pay off
- Cost of minimum wage and its ripple effect on other expenses like hourly wage, workman's comp, medical insurance, stable workforce, vet compensation
- We have a shortage of equine vets and there is a problem of having to jump from vet to vet to get proper health care for your horse
- There are discrepancies in rates among businesses. Some horse business operators are not business savvy and they are not charging what they need to charge to be sustainable. Some have inherited land which allows them to charge lower rates. Uninsured or young (below the age of 18) people are charging different lesson amounts than professionals who are insured
- Lack of knowledge and understanding of local zoning laws before buying a property or doing something to a horse property which results in many troubles for horse business operators
- Horses not being perceived as agriculture by some local authorities cause problems
- Reduction in the number of boarding facilities due to closing and not many opening thought to be due to rising costs (mortgage costs and interest rates, commercial investors up-charging because of lack of horse knowledge, running facilities is a lot of work, lack of people willing to put the effort and long hours into the business)
- It is difficult to lease or purchase horse properties to create a successful business because of rising land costs or simply a lack of farms
- Too many horses kept on not enough acreage is believed to be due to a lack of education in grazing management
- Lack of interest in equestrian sports among young adults

### Recommendations:

- Need to address the high cost of workman's compensation insurance by:
  - Finding out why it's so expensive in the horse industry
  - Work to negotiate with the MD commissioner's office to develop a lower rate for worker's comp insurance that includes transparency and re-figuring rates based on facts and real examples
  - Change who provides workman's comp insurance
- Increase educational opportunities for potential buyers and business owners about Ag easements, ways to subsidize cost, MALPF rural legacy, etc.
- We need to update old and outdated zoning laws for equine businesses
- Develop a list of national and statewide grants/ grant organizations that fund grants for not-for-profit and for-profit businesses and publicize it
- For many reasons, including retention, the horse industry needs to pay people a liveable wage
- Develop an article (Ex: by the Equiery) that serves as equine ownership education and lists current itemized costs of horse ownership
- Be transparent about how lesson barn quality assurance is maintained and how lesson horse use and welfare may affect the cost of lessons
- Get creative to lower costs by offering half- or partial-leases of horses
- We need to increase Ag education overall, but specifically classes for financial education for horse farm owners
- We should employ new ways to lower costs by having boarders do some barn tasks. Improve income streams by hosting birthday parties, Girl Scout gatherings, Mommy and Me classes, shows, clinics, and camps, all of which may lead to a new person taking lessons.
- Work to increase diversity and inclusion on horse farms and within horse activities
- Utilize more volunteers on the farm including homeschoolers, seniors, community program volunteers, veterans, and boarders
- Develop sponsorship opportunities to lower the costs of horse events for organizers and participants
- Host community events to increase interest and awareness of the equine industry (i.e. take mini horses to libraries)

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## Maryland Horse Forum 2024 Official Report

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- Horse business people should not treat each other like a competition, we need to be friendly and supportive of each other and refer people to each other
- Increase marketing to the public to increase business traffic at horse farms
- Increase state funding for equestrian use venues, especially for youth, to the funding levels used to fund other sporting venues (i.e. soccer, lacrosse, etc)
- Get to know local county ag marketing professionals in economic development offices. They can be great partners in providing support and assistance to other agencies.



Attendees walk through Vendor Row and attend a session in the 1873 Room at the 2024 Maryland Horse Forum

## Quality of Horse Competition Facilities

### Concerns:

- Competition facilities near solar panel fields can be problematic
- Covid prevented the development of facilities for 2+ years
- A limited number of rated shows in the area because it's difficult for venue owners to run rated shows with low rider turnout
- Facility regulations prevent diversity of competition disciplines (i.e. won't change footing for a Western show)
- Many facilities are old and in need of improvements
- Fewer permanent facilities are available or they are not known to organizers
- Lack of hotels, etc to support the people that come to a bigger show/event

### Recommendations:

- Infrastructure to support competitions at facilities is needed - parking on all-weather surfaces that are easily accessible, appropriate footing for discipline
- Organizers should utilize online evaluation forms after shows that would allow participants to give feedback on any concerns
- The sustainability of facilities is as important as the initial investment to build the facility
- Permanent facilities can be more sustainable and useful than temporary ones but only if maintained consistently
- Need government funding to maintain facilities, support operations and protect land
- Maryland needs a large, multi-faceted facility that can be used for all kinds of equestrian events
- Promote the fact that by holding large events like WIHS at Maryland facilities, the economic impact spreads to the community and will flow back into the venue. Legislators need to know this so they are supportive of funding these venues

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- Fair Hill Special Events Zone has received a lot of positive attention from international competitors and can be used for all kinds of events if more funding is secured
- Organizers need to get creative in marketing their events to the public if they want the public to attend their events.
- Develop a map of all the possible venues (Columbia Horse Center, Schooley Mill Park, Loch Moy Farm) and a calendar of all of the shows and events and have the Office of Tourism and Equiery promote it.
- Increase green branding and environmental stewardship for showgrounds to promote healthy and diverse climates and wildlife that Maryland offers
- Develop criteria for what it takes to be a venue included in the Horse Park System so that the system can be expanded upon.
- Equestrian venues need to appeal to spectators in addition to participants. The areas around horse show facilities must be able to accommodate guests, suitable parking, easy access to spectate, food and restrooms available, etc.
- We need to work with zoning offices to make sure there are allowances for equestrian competition venues that temporarily house animals and sometimes humans.
- Need to increase volunteer support to help maintain public equestrian facilities at a lower cost (Schooley Mill, Woodstock Equestrian, Fair Hill trails)



## Incentives for MD Horses: Competitions, Breeding, Keeping Horses in MD

### Concerns:

- Lack of funding to support ways to keep horses in the state means equestrian facilities and events are less sustainable
- We aren't promoting ourselves enough as a horse state
- Lack of interest in horse careers and the type of jobs we have to offer
- Lack of advertisement for horse shows causes a decrease in revenue to that show
- Lack of awareness of job opportunities in the Thoroughbred breeding industry
- Inclusion of a horse's bloodlines in horse show programs (if no published bloodline in programs, it does not allow potential clients to seek out horses from particular breeders)
- Lack of use of a horse's registered name or ID during shows and competitions so horse cannot be tracked during their lifetime.
- Lack of breeding programs that produce quality hunters
- Bonuses are needed for trainers who develop young horses
- There aren't enough rated shows for Hunter Jumpers
- There is a workforce development problem where we don't have enough employees to work across all facets of the horse industry

### Recommendations:

- Promote MD Thoroughbred breeder incentive funds to encourage more breeding of TBs
- Establish breeder incentive awards for MD sport horses (breed, foal, compete, etc) like they've done for Thoroughbreds to encourage more breeding and competition of quality sport horses.
- Convince state legislature to grant funding for the MD horse breeding industry and/or other horse programs
- Create a new horse license plate that supports MHIB grant funding (ex. KY license plates)
- Organizers should include a voluntary donation fee on eventing entry forms
- Install an "Equine tax" on tack and supplies to collect into a gross fund to add to revenue for Thoroughbreds and other breeds
- Developing handicapping/bettable games or fantasy football-type activities that are not only exclusive to Thoroughbred racing, sparks potential interest in the equine industry
- Expand and promote MD Horse Council's Sporthorse database
- Increase job training and education for employees through online curriculum programs or workforce development grants (Examples: Employment Advancement Right Now Maryland, Maryland Apprenticeship Program, Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Programs, Maryland Community College Promise Scholarship, and Skills2Compete Maryland)
- Horse businesses should create internship opportunities and offer job opportunities after internship completion
- Reintroduce agriculture and agriculture education, including horses, to the current and future generations
- Enact a major fundraising effort to create scholarships or loan forgiveness programs for veterinary medical students if they work in the state for a certain amount of years.
- Develop and promote large animal veterinary technician programs
- Make veterinary medicine more attainable through scholarships
- Residency requirements in MD for TB's (Mare has to stay in MD for x amount of time)
- Put claiming race protections in place for MD breeds so they can't get claimed and taken out of state.

## Workforce Development & Careers

### Concerns:

- Lack of replacement for professionals (i.e. veterinarians, farrier, dentists) that are retiring
- Equine vets don't get paid as much as small animal, yet they take on more physical risks
- Until they get prices down for vet schools the issue with students getting in but deciding they don't want to go because of the debt will continue
- Many in the younger generation don't have the work ethic of the older generations
- Students are going to vet school with little horse husbandry experience and they either feel like they don't belong and go into an easier path (i.e. small animal) or they don't have great handling skills when they graduate
- It's not easy for youth to find jobs in the horse industry
- Running a horse stable is expensive and if no one can afford it, we're out of a job, but we have to price it accordingly to make a living
- There isn't workforce housing on farms and the farm workers can't afford to live in the areas where the farms are which contributes to hiring and retention problems
- Transportation is an issue for underrepresented groups to work with horses. The cost of transporting people from urban/suburban centers to rural horse areas is high.
- DOT makes routes based on high population density. Metro Access will bring people with disabilities to appointments, but they work on a grid basis. Agriculture is not on their grid. It is only available in DC, Montgomery, and PG Counties.

**Recommendations:**

- Come up with a certification program so that people can use that for credentials for future jobs
- Allow more students to work on your farm so they get husbandry experience
- Find ways to financially assist professionals to ride like they do in Europe
- Create vet school scholarships with an equine focus or agreement that they become large animal vets
- Develop a state farrier school
- Offer unique benefits and increased wages to staff, but don't make them long-term and make sure employees know they are a stepping stone to the next job
- We have to treat equine vets better and more like professionals and give them the respect we give our human doctors
- Utilize programs like Maryland's Blueprint for Maryland's Future to integrate youth apprenticeship programs, starting at age 16, to cultivate a skilled future workforce and ensure long-term sustainability.
- Do a better job at promoting other jobs in the horse industry, not just veterinarians
- Reduce the negative talk about how this generation doesn't want to work. Increase the positive mentoring of youth in the horse industry. Be positive and be a good mentor
- Connect skills developed when working with horses to the passion of owning/caring for horses.
- Try to keep riding programs affordable, especially for newcomers and youth
- Utilize the most popular job search sites, Indeed and Yard and Groom, to advertise jobs.
- Make "work" educational for youth. Focus less on getting the work done and more on what they learn about the work.
- Invest your time in the horse industry members who want to learn
- A farm can create an internship program with learning outcomes on the farm that any youth could put on their resume
- Look for internship programs like UMD Intern for a Day to help get students on horse farms
- Consult MD dept of labor for guidance on labor regulations
- Employers need to do a better job of promoting diversity in the industry
- Develop an educational center at Pimlico- have a job training center on-site, apprentice with farrier, meet with people in the horse industry, outreach to the community
- Involve Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts as a way to recruit folks into the industry
- Take horses to populations that couldn't otherwise come to the farm
- Offer a "Maryland horse industry" benefits package that includes life insurance, health insurance, 401K or partner with a national organization to do so
- MD horse industry members should check with their member organizations because they may offer something (e.g. PATH, MD Farm Bureau, USEF)
- Partner with the state to extend bus routes to rural areas to connect urban individuals who want to get to horse farms.
- Expand Dept. of Transportation's ability to take agricultural workers to farms from urban areas.



Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Kevin Atticks speaks to attendees and at the 2024 Horse Forum at McDonogh School, Owings Mills, Maryland.



## Trail Riding & Public Land Use

### Concerns:

- Post-pandemic, the trail systems have gotten worse and require more maintenance
- Trail and recreational riding is the #1 activity with horses and yet we lack representation within government to represent us
- Non-profit organizations, like Trail Riders of Today, offer great resources, but volunteers run them, and that limits their scope. Volunteers can't maintain trails themselves
- Limited manpower in the Department of Natural Resources to assist with trails
- DNR lacks transparency in where money awarded for trail maintenance (\$1 million) is going
- The safety saw course is required for volunteers but not offered enough
- There are too many trails called "switchback" in Patapsco. That makes each trail less identifiable.
- Why did DNR turn over the management of Patapsco Park to Friends of the Park which is a group that doesn't represent all trail enthusiasts?
- The most commonly used horse trails in the park are often in the worst condition and when volunteers ask to help maintain them, they are turned down
- Bike riders are being allowed to ride in the parks after a large rain event, but that is not in keeping with COMAR in MD. This is causing the degradation of the trails. Horses aren't allowed and neither should bike riders
- There are other non-horse sports (soccer, basketball) and horse sports (racing) that seem to get more funding from the state and counties and yet trail and recreational riding accounts for probably more people

### Recommendations:

- Convey the importance of maintaining public use facilities for horse use to all
- We need more transparency from DNR about where money is going for trail systems and we need to ask for more funds to be distributed to trail maintenance
- Trail users should help volunteer to maintain trails especially since we don't pay to access them
- Establish a DNR trail advisory board similar to the wildlife advisory commission that has been appointed by the governor
- We should put together an "action plan" regarding the trail system and present it to the Governor and ask for assistance
- Maryland Horse Council should draft legislation to form a trail advisory board to ensure that trails are taken care of and riders are heard

- We need to seek out alternative types of funding from private companies that may provide grants or donations for trail resources
- Would be good to have some paved areas for easier access to trails (not the trails themselves) and to have potholes and broken areas in parking fixed
- Suggest a full-time employee at the MD Horse Industry Board to voice the interests of trail and recreational riders and to help preserve, protect, and enhance trails
- Suggest a full-time employee at DNR or Parks and Rec that is dedicated to maintaining trails and promoting the trail system
- Increase marketing and promotion of the trail system by DNR, MDA, Parks and Rec, and Office of Tourism
- Ask DNR to put mile markers on trails for easy identification in case of emergency
- Increase signage indicating the presence and priority of horses along trails
- Include signs to warn hikers, bikers, and riders about steep slopes ahead
- Ask bikers to have a bell on their bikes to warn people and horses before going down steep terrain or around blind corners
- Create a website with maps of all scheduled events and activities so trail riders are aware of traffic
- Offer safety saw course by OSHA for DNR needs more often
- Trail riders need to be present at local planning meetings to advocate for horses and horse needs
- Need to educate personnel at DNR on ideal conditions for riding
- Have the MD Horse Council meet with Sandi Olek at DNR's Outdoor Education Program to work on trail concerns
- Educate Parks and Recs about the importance of horses to the health and quality of life of humans and how horseback riding should be included more in their programming
- Rename several trails called switchback in Patapsco to a new name so that they are more identifiable.
- DNR needs to go back to running Patapsco State Park and not Friends of the Park so that all trail enthusiasts are represented
- Limit bike use to certain days a week, because they cause problems with scaring and running into hikers and horseback riders.

## Recruitment, Retention, Expansion

### Concerns:

- Our mostly rural location is one of the most significant barriers to participation, as well as transportation to horses and locations where horses are
- Traditionally industry has been very homogeneous and this prevents kids from diverse backgrounds from being interested
- Positions in the industry are stratified by race and socioeconomics and not always welcoming to others
- Insurance for horse businesses is expensive because horse activities are considered high-risk.
- The high cost of living makes it almost impossible to cover horse expenses
- While work-life balance is important, young people don't realize how many work hours are required to have horses
- Decline of physical fitness and work ethic in students
- Youths want to work but don't know how to get started on horse farms
- Lack of certification or education requirements for farm professionals leads to problems when injuries occur regarding negligence questions
- Sometimes multiple certifications keep people from jobs- perception of over-qualification

**Recommendations:**

- We need to identify funding sources to support transportation to bring people to horse farms in rural settings
- Get more 50+ aged volunteers as they would benefit from physical and mental health while they have the patience, perseverance, and wisdom to work with horses
- Focus on increasing participation in the Interscholastic Equestrian Association to increase youth participation
- A website or social media page should be created to post horse industry jobs and job wanted ads.
- Post jobs in public schools
- Embrace the use of technology because young people are looking for more technology engagement
- Promote riding as a means to encourage an increase in body control and fitness overall in youth
- Utilize virtual reality games with horses to encourage participation. Would be great at Pimlico, Horseland, and the Maryland 5 Star
- Exposing different communities to horses early to establish positive affiliations
- Promote diversity in support industries (accountants, lawyers, veterinarians, etc) and then they promote horses within their industries
- Farm owners should consider creating after-school programs for school-aged children
- Take a miniature horse to a public library
- Increase funding opportunities for scholarships for kids to attend horse camps
- Offer professional development and training opportunities for employees on horse farms and racetracks
- Connect with local public schools and local law enforcement agencies to offer community service opportunities on the farm
- Offer certificate programs in the industry
- Make sure employees can not only take care of themselves today but they want to stay in the industry because they see a future in it. We do this by making the jobs worthwhile jobs.
- Recruitment must be targeted to the need. Different aspects of the industry have different recruitment needs



Attendees participate in a session in the Klein Lyceum at the 2024 Maryland Horse Forum



## Unwanted Horses and Rescue Resources, Cost of Horse Ownership

### Concerns:

- Horses not affiliated with racing or racetracks do not have the same aftercare facility options in place
- Horse owners are not always aware of rehoming options
- Rescues are overburdened with horses in need and that increases financial obligations
- Horses most often become unwanted due to:
  - The owner's medical and financial situation
  - Horses are unusable due to age, soundness, health
  - Owners find it difficult and expensive to make end-of-life decisions
  - Poor Estate planning
    - Inherited horses are largely unwanted

### Recommendations:

- Create Low-Cost Euthanasia programs for unwanted horses or horses with poor quality of life more available
- Increase awareness, funding, and use of Days End Horse Farm's free Owner 2 Owner program that helps owners transition their horses to new owners.
- Develop an online program to educate prospective owners about the responsibilities and cost of horse ownership
- Breeders should invest in genetic testing to minimize breeding horses that have heritable disorders
- Industry needs to find a way to collaborate to help each other
- Consider asking show organizers to include a small voluntary donation fee to fund aftercare programs
- Promote education regarding the true costs of horse ownership
- Consider developing a horse ownership license program
- Promote UMD Extension educational programs for horse owners including youth programs geared towards agriculture and the horse industry
- Have one website hosting all of the resources for horse ownership and care
- Have people promote the "Hug a Horse" movement

## Land Availability & Land Preservation: Public, Private and Environmental Concerns

### Concerns:

- The public and others don't see horse farms as contributing positively to the environment (wildlife habitat, providing dense grass to reduce water runoff into the bay)
- Limited funds are available to purchase land for horse use
- Lack of support to preserve horse farms that are 49 acres or below
- Hard and difficult to find larger farms to purchase
- Too many restrictions to get aid or support from Natural Resource Conservation Service and Soil Conservation Districts (small animal numbers, not enough acreage, etc)
- The electric company is trying to put power lines on Baltimore, Frederick and Carroll County farmland thus reducing productive land availability and land value
- Lost hunt land in PG county and others due to urbanization and townhomes
- Need to increase awareness of land stewardship cost-share programs available to horse people
- Cost-share programs are underfunded and have too long wait times
- Horse farm owners aren't taking advantage of the pasture and grazing management resources available to them. They are putting too many horses on too few acres
- Approx 90% of horse farms have less than 8 animals meaning we need to focus efforts on small farm best management practices for education and resources

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- Solar has a lot of drawbacks and is complicated
  - The Navy is turning the Navy Dairy Farm productive land into solar panels
  - Topsoil is often removed before panels are constructed
  - Solar companies are often dishonest during community discussions
  - Solar is not considered an agricultural use so loses tax benefit
  - Solar panels need to be taller for sheep to graze under
  - Solar farms and structures with solar panels on roofs prevent land from being used for horses and other Ag businesses
- County policies regarding purchase easements are different than state policies

**Recommendations:**

- We need to work with land acquisition assistance programs to increase funding for purchases of land used for horses
- We need to promote succession planning in the horse industry so we can prevent land fragmentation, maintain land in agricultural zoning and use, promote conservation easements, and prevent urban sprawl
- Update land preservation planning and standards in each county to better reflect where we want to head in the future
- Incoming residents into ag areas don't understand agriculture
- Set up rural conservation areas to prevent buyouts from commercial developer companies
- We need more Resource Conservation Zone 2 (RC2) zoning to help protect large tracts of land from being subdivided for residential or commercial development
- We need to not only protect the land but the horse businesses on the land
- Promote bay-friendly horse farms from the MD soil conservation program with profits coming from dues
- Promote nutrient management and soil conservation programs and other educational programs to horse farm operators
- Increase awareness of pasture and woodland management and cost-share programs and education to get more horse people to utilize them. Promote them to realtors, buyers, and horse farm operators
- Increase staff at soil conservation districts that have a background in horses so that resources and cost-share can be more accessible to horse owners
- Develop MD-specific BMP documents rather than use those from out-of-state
- Promote eXtension for horses and Ask the Expert where you can ask questions to an extension agent
- Promote the existence of the horse outreach workgroup that does direct outreach and has resources
- Ask MDA to consider developing a small horse farm mini-grant program
- Best management practices need to be affordable as well as effective
- Increase awareness of soil conservation district contacts for property owners
- Horse industry members should attend meetings or county discussions to represent the horse industry. Examples are the MD Horse Council and MD Farm Bureau
- State land preservation and use programs should be re-evaluated to work with the horse industry
- Horse industry members should be more involved in:
  - Awareness of legislation affecting them
  - Who their legislators are and creating relationships with them
  - County zoning regulations and proposals
  - Land preservation regulations
  - Farm Bureau/Horse Council
- Engage remote workers moving to rural areas



## Spectators & the Fan Experience: Promotion, Marketing, & Tourism

### Concerns:

- Media are inundated with content - spectators aren't going to come to us- we need to be proactive and go to them
- Events do not always engage both horse owners and non-horse owners/families
- Horse competitions are not always set up with spectators in mind
- A lot of horse shows provide poor seating options
- Many competitions lack a budget for advertising
- Spectators may not understand horse event/competition lingo

### Recommendations:

- Improve spectator seating options that include shade and back support
- Make sure parking is centrally located and easy to access for spectators
- Develop better amenities at horse shows that make a spectator's experience better. Giveaways, water, places to stand under shade (not 50 people crammed under one tent), food availability, restrooms, etc.
- Increase mainstream marketing for horse events. Target other equestrian avenues- but not outside of the equine world
- Reach out to local news outlets to ask them to cover local equine sports
- We need to do a better job telling our message consistently over the year, not just during Preakness and October Horse Month
- Organizers need to create a clear message about the level of accessibility for each event including about spectator seating location (outside/under tent), parking, and other logistics. Make it easier for spectators coming to the venues
- Consider having an "event translator" who can help spectators understand what they are watching. Or ask the announcer to help educate spectators throughout the event.
- Have the event program or announcer help promote the personal aspect of a show or event by including a background of the horse and rider and personal stories
- Offer fun spectator activities in "family areas" at the horse event
- Couple a competitive event with non-horse activities that fans would likely attend. An example is the Maryland Five Star also having a food festival at the event. Other suggestions were to provide scavenger hunts with a drawing after the hunt, thus forcing foot traffic through the venue/horse event.
- Review horse event information for spectators. Be clear in your start and finish time, event information, ticket price, food availability. Avoid using "horse terms" that are unfamiliar to spectators. For instance, we know "dark day" means no racing at the track on the race track Online calendar, but that term doesn't mean anything to spectators
- Develop a relationship with the county parks and recreation and bus companies to create a spectator day trip to your event. Allow for special pricing or activities for these groups
- Utilize Boosts to increase the visibility of event posts on social media - more engagement will increase traffic- get staff to like posts, which will make the algorithm show the post more- plan posts based on when people in your industry are looking at social media
- Organizers should consider hiring someone to do social media engagement.
- Horse event organizers should take advantage of Ag economic development opportunities and resources in each county
- Each event/horse competition/activity should consider reviewing its goals and existing metrics for spectator attendance. How many spectators do you want and why? Do you need spectators to increase income or are you trying to fill seats or create a certain type of atmosphere? How many can you accommodate? Are you reaching them with advertising? Are your existing spectators happy?
- A revitalized Pimlico lends itself to equine outreach opportunities - combine history and education- use materials to teach about racing and also meet horses, field trips could be done and tours could be all year

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- Organizers of major events should put together and distribute a media kit for their event to give people logos, timeline of posts, info, etc
- Agritourism ideas - develop horse trail with pumpkins, hayrides, apples, etc to mimic wine trails, ice cream trails, etc
- Collaborate with other businesses to promote horse activities
- Promote lesson programs over winter when most major horse events are limited due to weather and holidays
- Invite elected officials to events so they can better understand the community they represent. They can get face time with constituents, and bring their media to connect the horse event to their networks.
- Create a trail ride or hunter pace highlighting the history of the underground railroad, which could be opened to walkers, and could have tour guides along the way to talk about history and the role horses played
- Expand the Horse History Trail that the MD Horse Industry Board worked to create in different counties
- Promote reading of Misty of Chincoteague (or other horse classics) during October Horse Month in schools
- Take advantage of the destination marketing organization/tourism authority/visitor bureau in each county as they can amplify your message and they can add your event to the public calendar.
- Reach out to county TV producers/channels to promote shows/events.
- Think about the target audience- make sure you have content that is interesting for the audience- for TV, some action- for radio, a person who interviews well, etc. Make it easy for the editor to say yes to your story



Moderators, scribes, volunteers, and attendees keep the discussion rolling at the 2024 Maryland Horse Forum



## Horse Health and Climate

### Concerns:

- Mild winters may be increasing parasite issues
- Rising heat indexes affect riding time by limiting it to early mornings and possibly late in the evening
- Some riders and competitions are still riding horses when the heat index is too high
- Hot dry summers affect grass growth limiting hay yields and pasture availability. This is driving up hay availability and costs. Horses may be losing weight with less pasture available
- Advances in Vet Med have been progressive but people are resistant to change
- High humidity makes it hard to keep rain rot and other skin disorders at bay
- There seems to be an increase in allergies in horses, possibly due to poor air quality and high humidity

### Recommendations:

- Increase education on appropriate management of riding horses in heat including canceling rides and shows during high heat index periods
- Focus on local health issues - lymes disease, parasites, viral outbreaks, vaccine adjustments for weather conditions, and associated diseases
- Educate horse owners on the BMPs of all health-related things ie. dewormer
- Wild animal habitats are changing due to climate change. More thoughtful management may be needed to prevent them from bringing disease onto your farm
- Develop educational information on climate-proofing pastures (summer annuals, hardy grass varieties)
- Encourage barns to develop adaptable financial plans to accommodate hay needs in drought, winter storm management, etc.
- Consider farm workers and work schedules in extreme temperatures making sure to provide them with water and cool environments
- Find ways to incorporate more fire safety education
- Promote emergency preparation education for when severe weather events occur including identification of horses with microchips, developing an evacuation plan, etc.
- Make sure horse facilities have the right insurance for extreme weather/climate events



"Fred" the Standardbred from Rosecroft welcomed guests as they checked in at the Horse Forum

## Legislation and the Horse Industry

### Concerns:

- Non-compete clauses in contracts for veterinarians were making it difficult for veterinarians to practice in MD after they leave a practice. However, they were banned in Maryland in June of 2024 so veterinary business owners need to be aware of that
- We don't do a great job getting involved and making our voices heard to legislators
- Some bills are county-specific and need horse industry members in their county to speak up about it.
- Workman's comp for non-profits such as therapeutic riding programs is very expensive
- There is no accreditation/certification for lesson programs. No set standard for riding or lesson instructions makes safety a massive concern. Lack of structure or licensing for riding instructors.
- Requirements are very lax for licensing for stables
- Federal grants are hard to obtain
- A high rate of property taxes discourages land/facility ownership for horse use
- Agriculture structures and facilities (barns, arenas, etc) adversely affect tax rates and some buildings are considered commercial which makes building them more difficult
- There is a gray area surrounding building permits (indoor vs outdoor arenas) makes construction plans difficult. Some counties do not classify outdoor riding arenas as agricultural structures, which can lead to more stringent requirements
- Difficult to compete with development for land
- Different officials or departments may interpret zoning laws and regulations differently, leading to inconsistent guidance or unexpected denials. This can be frustrating and may require legal consultation or appeals
- Agritourism options for horse farms are not well-understood

### Recommendations:

- MD Horse Council is the main resource for legislative issues affecting horse owners and businesses (a volunteer organization looks at every bill on the table). All horse industry participants should join and consider being a part of the Political Action Committee
- Join the American Horse Council as well, tell your clients
- Get to know your representatives (county and state) before the lawmaking/bill-passing session
- Create a state-wide lesson instructor accreditation program with a collective standard of instruction, licensing procedure, and collection of teaching resources. Look at templates to copy from the National Association of Real Estate or the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH)
- Promote equine-assisted therapies because they benefit many types of individuals including veterans
- Create a horse industry grant writing training program to help business owners write grants for their businesses
- We need a grassroots effort to work with legislators to help lower workman comp insurance policies for horse farms and businesses
- Define and promote Agritourism opportunities in the horse industry so that other horse farms and businesses can learn how to increase their revenue streams
- Enact legislation that would increase the farm property tax paid when developers purchase farmland and remove it from production so that more money can go into land preservation trusts to preserve

## Speakers and honored guests at the 2024 Horse Forum



Dr. Amy Burk, MHIB Vice-Chair and MC of the Horse Forum



David J. Farace '87, Head of McDonogh School since 2018



Charlotte Davis, Executive Director of the Rural Maryland Council - presenting sponsor of the Horse Forum



Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Kevin Atticks



Julie M. Broadway, President of the American Horse Council Inc.



Kim Egan, President of the Maryland Horse Council



Jeff Newman, President & CEO of the Maryland 5 Star



Sec. Kevin Atticks and Marc Broady, Executive Director of the MTROA



Marc Broady, Executive Director of the MTROA

## Touch of Class Award at the 2024 Horse Forum



The Touch of Class Award presented to MyRacehorse for their racehorse, Seize the Grey, winner of the Preakness. Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, Kevin Atticks, Dr. Amy Burk MHIB Board Member, and Marc Broady, Executive Director of the MTROA present the award at the Horse Forum

## Post Forum Reception Sponsored by B&D Builders at the McDonogh Equestrian Center



Cricket Goodall, Executive Director of the Maryland Horse Breeders and Emma Owens from Equine Equipment draw the winner of the Equine Equipment Mower.



Miranda Grabill, McDonogh  
Head Varsity Equestrian Coach



The reception's Band, the T-58's



## MHIB: Championing Maryland's Horse Industry



The Maryland Horse Industry Board (MHIB), as outlined in Article 2-708.1 of the Annotated Code of Maryland, promotes equestrian activities and the use of horses for recreation in Maryland and abroad. It accomplishes this through:

- Promotional efforts that raise awareness and visibility of the equine industry,
- Educational and research projects that benefit the industry,
- Strategic initiatives, such as developing economic impact reports, career programs, stable planning, and marketing incentives to support the local horse economy,
- Advisory capacity to the Secretary of Agriculture and the Governor regarding industry matters, and
- Acting as the licensing authority for Maryland horse stables.

The MHIB board, composed of twelve appointed members, serves as an advisory body to the State of Maryland, with an Executive Director, and two stable inspectors. Therefore, its role encompasses advisory, promotional, educational, and regulatory functions.

### MHIB's Vision and Mission:

- Increase public awareness of Maryland's equestrian traditions
- Highlight the positive impact of horses on Maryland's quality of life
- Boost the visibility of equestrian activities statewide
- Serve as a key resource for Maryland horse owners
- Promote high standards of horse care in Maryland through horse stable licensing\*, educational programs, and grant funding

*\* All Maryland stables that solicit the general public, and have ONE or more horses - and either give lessons, board horses, have a rental service, offer Equine Therapy or Therapeutic Riding, or are a rescue or sanctuary stable, are required by the State of Maryland to obtain and maintain licensing through the Maryland Horse Industry Board.*

For more information visit [MDA.maryland.gov/horseboard](https://MDA.maryland.gov/horseboard) or email [mda.horseboard@maryland.gov](mailto:mda.horseboard@maryland.gov)