

EQUINE LINE



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FROM BEHIND MY WHEEL



What Will It Take?

As I listen to the hullabaloo around the Northeast related to water quality and the shove of the stronger watershed policies into New York, I start to wonder who is driving our farms and way of life out of New York State.

"Farmers in New York are in outcry over a proposal to give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) broad authority to regulate Southern Tier farms and other businesses in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed," read one article.⁽¹⁾ Another document from New Jersey reports "Farms with more than 8 animal units (1 animal unit = 1,000 pounds of live animal weight) must comply with the rules as well as complete an Animal Waste Management Plan (AWMP) for their farm."⁽²⁾

As a horse farm community, we should worry about our neighboring State's policies. We need to be proactive in our stewardship and our involvement in decisions that affect all farming entities in New York State. Let's face it, we like to eat, our animals like to eat (and leave the waste), our clients, borders, and neighbors enjoy the scenery that our farms provide...but if farms are this strictly regulated

in New York State, who will be left to grow our food? Afford to grow and make hay? Own the land that the animals need to live upon?

New York is a state rich in agriculture. New York State farm and land owners are respectful of their lands. Horse farm owners can make a difference through their voices and their actions. As members of a community, be proactive in environmental stewardship. As members of a community, be involved in your local and county government committees. Read the Grass Roots Newsletter from Farm Bureau, join your professional horseman's associations and Horse Council and voice your opinion, your concerns, and your ideas to improve and protect your way of life. As horseman, you must speak up for our farms and our farm communities. As one voice in agriculture, we must speak up. We must be involved in the future of all of agriculture in New York State.

Regulations are costly to farmers, and to the residents of our communities. What will it take to hold the reins on agriculture's future in New York?

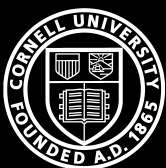
My answer is simple, "YOU."

(1)*Farmers Fight EPA Permit to Grow Food, article published 10/26/2010; www.nyfb.org/resources/topic_detail.cfm?ID=282

(2)*Agricultural Waste Management Practices (and additional documents) available at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/animal-waste-management/ag+waste+mgmt+practices.asp>

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Equine Environmental Stewardship Program

A series of Environmental Short Courses has been developed for delivery through county extension programs this year. The Equine Environmental Stewardship Short Course will provide information and "hands on" learning experiences designed to provide you with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop sustainable and environmentally sound farm management practices. The short course will include a minimum of 12 hours of instruction and activities and will be offered from April to May.

The curriculum focuses on pasture management for the horse and includes the following topics: Pasture Grazing Basics, Pasture Plants & Pasture Renovation, Soil Fertility Management, Weed Management and Nutrient Management. The series has been developed by educators and specialists at Penn State and will be offered as a multi-state initiative to allow New York horse owners to be proactive in environmental stewardship planning.

Dates and Locations of upcoming Equine Environmental Short Courses:

April 4 and 18, and May 9 and 23, 2011

The topics that will be included in the short course are:

- ◆ "Update on Regional Environmental Regulations for Horse Owners"
- ◆ "The Good, the Bad and the Ugly of Equine Pastures"
- ◆ "Growth and Biology of Grasses for Equine Pastures"
- ◆ "Setting Equine Pasture Management Goals"
- ◆ "Renovating Equine Pastures"
- ◆ "Equine Pasture Soil Fertility"***
- ◆ "Weed Management for Equine Pastures"
- ◆ "Toxic Plants that are Harmful to Horses"
- ◆ "Living with Manure"

Deadline for the April class registration is Friday, April 1. There is a \$40 registration fee per person which includes dinner each day, and an information resource notebook.

Participants will each receive a soil test kit for use on their own equine pasture.

Contact: Audrey L. Reith Equine/Livestock Educator, or Cathy Hughes, Ag Program Secretary, Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County, at (845) 344-1234.



Fall Leaves In Horse Pastures

*Prepared by Dr. Ann Swinker,
Penn State Extension Horse Specialist*

Dispose of fall leaves properly or compost in an area outside of the horse's pasture. Horses like the taste and smell of recently fallen leaves. However, the leaves are dense and can compact in the horse's digestive system and cause impaction colic. The horse's GI tract is a delicate system. Therefore, feeds should be selected not only for their ability to meet the animal's nutrient requirements, but also for compatibility with the horse's GI tract.

Feeding dense leaves and grass clipping can result in "choke." If feed becomes lodged in the esophagus, the end result is called "choke." Choke in the horse occurs in the esophagus and, although it is painful and uncomfortable to the horse, it is not life-threatening as in humans where the airways are cut off. Feed in the esophagus can only move in one direction; toward the stomach. A choking horse often presents itself with its head hung low with saliva and masticated feed coming out of the horse's nostrils. A choking horse requires immediate veterinary attention and is usually treated with minimal complications.



Wet Fall Weather Has Caused Rain Rot in Horses

Prepared by Ann Swinker,
Cooperative Extension Horse Specialist

The Northeast has had a very wet October, and owners of horses kept in wet, humid areas have reported seeing rain rot or "dermatophilosis." Rain rot, or rain scald, is caused by bacteria and often is mistaken for a fungal disease. The bacteria live in the outer layer of skin and cause pinpoint to large, crusty scabs to form. When removed, the base of the hairs can be seen sticking through the bottom of the scab. In early or less-severe cases of this disease, simply removing the scabs with shampoos and currying will take care of the problem. More severe cases in which the infection has affected deeper layers of the skin might require antibiotics.

The natural habitat of the bacteria that causes the skin problem is unknown, but many researchers believe that it lives in the soil. However, attempts to isolate it from soil have been unsuccessful. It has been isolated only from the skin of various animals, and it is restricted to the living layers of the epidermis. Infected animals are considered the primary reservoir.

The bacteria that cause this problem can live in dormancy within the skin for some time and become active when the skin is compromised in some way, such as prolonged wetting when left outside, high humidity, high temperature, or attacks by biting insects. When the infective zoospores reach a skin site where the skin's protection is reduced, rain rot will result. The zoospores germinate and produce hyphae (threadlike tentacles), which penetrate into the living epidermis and then spread in all directions from the initial infection site, resulting in an acute inflammatory skin condition.

If your horse spends most of its time outdoors during the wet season, you should examine the horse periodically for rain rot. During the wet winter months when the horses have full coats of hair, a hands-on examination is needed to see if the horse has a problem. The infected horse usually will have a series of bumps along the back and croup. When rubbed, the "bumps" might rub off in the form of scabs with a small, hairless spot of skin showing. Unlike other skin problems rain rot is not itchy.

Rain rot is relatively easy to diagnose, a positive diagnosis can be made by your veterinarian by taking a culture and sending it to a laboratory for testing.

Treatment of infected animals often involves intra-

muscular injections of procaine penicillin and streptomycin. External treatment with disinfectants that contain a cresol or copper salt base can decrease the spread of infection. Remember to read and follow the medical literature written on the label before commencing treatment. Controlling biting insects with insecticides can be effective in preventing the skin breaks that allow bacteria to get started.

Remember that a skin problem that goes untreated will get worse.

Health Alerts

Rare Horse Disease in North Carolina

Equine Piroplasmiasis is a disease caused by *Babesia* or *Theileria spp.* and transmitted by blood contamination (primarily ticks) to all members of the equine species, including donkeys and mules.

Originally thought to be eradicated in the United States, this disease is now present in 11 states, all connected to the single outbreak in Texas.

Equine Piroplasmiasis (EP) is a tick-borne disease that affects horses, donkeys, mules, and zebras. The disease is transmitted via tick bites or through mechanical transmission by improperly disinfected needles or surgical instruments. EP is currently not considered endemic in the United States; however, isolated outbreaks of the disease have occurred infrequently. Likewise, EP is not endemic to Australia, Canada, England, Iceland, Ireland, and Japan; however, the disease is found in Africa, the Caribbean (including Puerto Rico), Central and South America, the Middle East, and Eastern and Southern Europe. The increasingly international nature of the horse industry presents potential risks for EP's introduction from foreign countries. Many areas of the United States have climates suitable for foreign ticks to act as vectors for disease or even for other ticks to act as vectors. Because EP is not considered endemic, most U.S. horses are highly susceptible to acute forms of the disease.

Protecting Equine Health

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) protects the U.S. equine industry against the entry and spread of EP. APHIS' Veterinary Services (VS) program regulates equine



importation and maintains tick control and surveillance programs.

Transmission. EP is a tick-borne disease caused by the parasites *Babesia caballi* and *Theileria* (formerly *Babesia*) *equi*. Ticks ingest blood from infected equine and then bite uninfected equine, spreading the disease through blood contact. Moving hay, bedding, feed, and vegetation can also transport ticks carrying the parasites. The only known natural vector of EP in the United States is the tropical horse tick, *Anocentor* (*Dermacentor*) *nitens*, found in the southern United States. *B. caballi* and *T. equi* have been experimentally transmitted by at least three other U.S. tick species: *D. albipictus*, the winter tick; *D. variabilis*, the American dog tick; and *Boophilus microplus*, the southern or tropical cattle tick. Transmission studies to evaluate the competency of other tick species are ongoing. Because the disease spreads through contact with blood, EP can also be transmitted through blood transfusion, contaminated needles and other skin-penetrating instruments. Intrauterine infection from mother to foal has also been reported.

Recently, there have been three outbreaks of disease. In Missouri and Florida, horses have tested positive for an infection with *T. equi*. Investigations indicated that the disease was spread through the sharing of needles and/or blood transfusions among horses involved in unsanctioned racing. Tick surveys conducted in Missouri and Florida ruled out the presence of EP transmitting ticks in the area of the outbreaks.

Currently, an investigation into a *T. equi* outbreak in Texas is ongoing. Signs An EP-infected horse can take 7 to 22 days to show signs of the disease. Cases of EP may be mild or acute. Mild forms of the disease cause equines to appear weak and show lack of appetite. More acute cases can occur where EP is not common and horses have not built up a resistance to the disease. Signs of the acute phase include fever, anemia, jaundiced mucous membranes, a swollen abdomen, and labored breathing. Other signs of EP include central nervous system disturbances, roughened-hair coats, constipation, colic, and hemoglobinuria – a condition which gives urine a red color. In some cases, death may occur. Some infected horses, however, may show few or no symptoms in the acute phase and may not experience any decrease in performance. Horses that survive the acute phase of infection continue to carry the parasites for long periods of time. These horses are potential sources of infection to other horses through tick-borne transmission or mechanical transfer by biting ticks, needles, or surgical instruments.

Diagnosis. Because the clinical signs for EP are non-specific and similar to many other diseases and conditions, it is difficult to diagnose; the disease, however, can be diagnosed with laboratory tests. If EP is suspected, State or Federal animal health officials should be notified before veterinarians collect any samples.

For more information about EP, contact: USDA, APHIS, VS, National Animal Health Programs 4700 River Road, Unit 43 Riverdale, MD 20737 Telephone: (301) 734-6954 Fax: (301) 734-7964

Current information on animal diseases is also available on the Internet at www.aphis.usda.gov

Potomac Horse Fever Found in New York

The North Country may be seeing another outbreak of Potomac horse fever, a life-threatening gastrointestinal disease. Veterinarians in Watertown, N.Y., treated six ill horses in early September.

Equine monocytic ehrlichiosis is caused by *Neorickettsia risticii* (formerly *Ehrlichia risticii*). Originally described in 1979 as a sporadic disease affecting horses residing in the eastern United States near the Potomac River, the disease has since been identified in various other geographic locations in the United States and Canada. The disease is seasonal, occurring between late spring and early fall in temperate areas, with most cases in July, August, and September at the onset of hot weather.

Clinical signs are variable but may include: fever, mild to severe diarrhea, laminitis, mild colic, and decreased abdominal sounds. Uncommonly, pregnant mares infected with *N. risticii* (usually in the middle trimester between 90 and 120 days) can abort due to fetal infection at 7 months of gestation.

If Potomac Horse Fever has been confirmed on a farm or in a particular geographic area, it is likely that additional cases will occur in future years. Foals appear to have a low risk of contracting the disease. Vaccination against this disease has been questioned because field evidence of benefit is lacking. Proposed explanations for this include lack of seroconversion and multiple field strains whereas only one strain is present in available vaccines.

If you suspect that your horse has come in contact with exposed animals, please contact your attending veterinarian and plan your best course of action to prevent further transmission.



2011 Equine Activity Calendar

In an effort to get the calendar printed in time for the early year events, we are now gathering the information for the 2011 Equine Activity Calendar. It's easy to get your events, activities and clinics listed:

1. **Request an electronic (Microsoft Excel) form by calling 845-344-1234 or emailing cah94@cornell.edu. Please fill it out and return it by Monday, January 10, 2011.**

OR

2. **You may also fill out the form below and return by Monday, January 10, 2011 to Cornell Cooperative Extension, Attn: Equine Activity Calendar, 18 Seward Avenue, Suite 300, Middletown, NY 10940-1919.**

As a service to Cornell Cooperative Extension Orange County's Ag Focus Subscribers and other County Enrollees, events will be listed free of charge. Not a subscriber? Enrollment forms for Orange, Ulster, Dutchess, and Sullivan are available through our extension offices, or

key volunteers, and on line at cce.cornell.edu/orange. Send in the form with payment by the January 10, 2011 and you will qualify for the free events listing. Since we encourage subscriptions and enrollments to be completed within the county in which you live in, please send your enrollment to the appropriate county. Listings submitted by out of state organizations or non-enrolled farms/individuals will be charged \$5.00 per event.

Cornell Cooperative Extension Subscribers and Enrollees will also have the opportunity to list their farms on the new Lower Hudson Valley Equine Connection website.

A follow up email or telephone call will be made by our office to facilities managers and individuals offering events in 2011 to review the calendar before publication. This communication will assist all of our farms in planning events so that each venue will attract adequate numbers of participants.

I look forward to receiving your calendar input and a successful year for our Regional Equine activities. If you have any questions, please call Audrey Reith at 845-344-1234.

2011 Equine Activity Calendar Form (copy as many as needed)

Date of Event:

Name of Activity/Event/Clinic:

Place and Physical Address of Event:

Event Sponsor:

Contact Person:

Phone:

Email:

Website:



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EQUINE LINE



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