

THE LEADING REIN

A UGA Extension Newsletter for Horse Owners and Professionals



SERVING GEORGIA EQUESTRIANS

By Ashley Best

The equine industry in Georgia produces quality horses and boasts nationally recognized facilities. The growing industry in Georgia has an annual economic impact of over \$750 million dollars. This newsletter will provide information on upcoming events, relevant information for all aspects of the equine world as well as access to horse experts across the state. No matter the size of equine operation, from weekend trail riders to breeders and trainers, this quarterly newsletter will provide up-to-date information from UGA Extension.



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

HAY IS FOR HORSES

**BEFORE YOU HIT THE
TRAILS THIS FALL**

TACK CORNER

**MANAGING FESCUE
TOXICOSIS**

**GEORGIA 4-H HORSE
PROJECT**

EQUINE FIRST AID

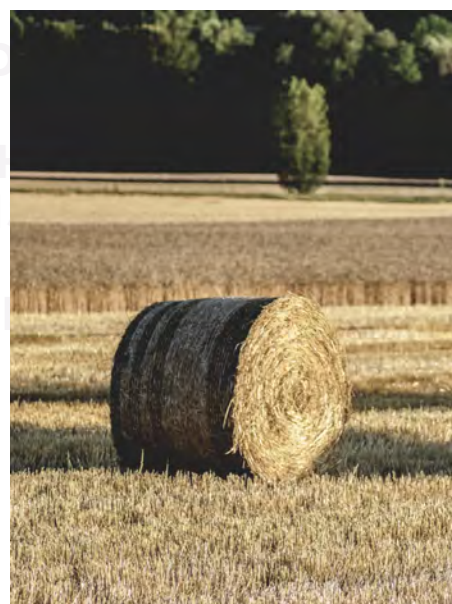
**MARK YOUR
CALENDAR**

HAY IS FOR HORSES

By Caitlin Jackson

How many times have we heard that in our lifetime? I have noticed that joke pops out even more when folks know you have a “horse-y” background. I am always a fan of cheesy farm jokes, but one thing that horse owners are notoriously known to take seriously and not joke about is hay. From sniffing every bale loaded into the truck to swinging magnets over bales to determine energy flow, I have heard of many ways that horse owners select hay. While I do see some validity of those selection methods as hay should be sweet smelling and trash free, the best way to really know what's in your hay is to have it tested. There are several companies that you can have your hay tested through; University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, Waters Agricultural Labs Inc., and even feed companies will send a representative to analyze a sample. There is a nominal fee associated with getting your forage report, but that data is going to save money in the end because you are going to know exactly what the nutritional content of your hay is. You may even try asking for a forage report from your supplier, as many large hay producers regularly test their forages. Once you have your report, the quickest way to evaluate your hay are by the Relative Forage Quality (RFQ), Crude Protein, Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) and Calcium: Phosphorus Ratio values. RFQ is an indicator to help compare forage types and ranges for the specific animal management needs and TDN can be used to compare the energy values. TDN may also be expressed as Digestible Energy (DE). The chart below will assist you in determining quality value of your hay.

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Forage Comparisons for Dry Hay Quality based on Relative Forage Quality (RFQ) Index, Protein, and Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN)

Forage Test Results Comparison (Dry Matter Basis)

Quality Measure	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Premium
RFQ Index	65-70	70-80	80-100	100-120	120 and above
% Crude Protein	<8%	8-9%	10-11%	12%	13% and above
TDN	Below 52%	52-54%	55-57%	58% or above	



HAY IS FOR HORSES

continued

Now you might be asking, “What is the next step?” The next step is matching the right quality hay to your horse, because as much as we would like to feed premium hay to all our horses, not every horse requires premium hay. We love “easy-keepers” in the herd and horses that “stay fat on air” from a monetary standpoint however, be careful with your ponies and thicker crested horses in that they are susceptible to metabolic issues, founder and prone to obesity. If your horse is having little to no exercise, their requirements will be significantly less than that of a two-year old performance colt in training. How much quality difference? University of Florida Extension has some great publications on guidelines for matching hay to the horse and I included a chart that I frequently share with clients.

Guidelines for Matching Hay to the Horse				
Horse	Type of Hay	Visual Characteristics	Laboratory Characteristics	
			Crude Protein	ADF
Weanlings Lactating Mares	Early-mid maturity Legume or grass/legume mix hays	Leafy, finely stemmed, few seed heads/flowers	>14%	<34%
Performance Yearling- 2 Years	Mid maturity Grass, legume or grass/legume mix hays	Leafy, medium-fine stems, small/soft seed heads/flowers	12-16%	30-36%
Recreation/ Idle	Mid-late maturity grass hays Late maturity grass/legume mix	Medium stems, large/soft seed heads, flowers on legumes	8-12%	37-40%
Overweight	Late maturity grass hays	Thick/course stems, large/brittle seed heads	7-10%	>40%

A few things to keep in mind when looking at this chart. A glance back at the quality chart above you’ll observe that quality grade for an overweight horse falls into the poor, fair, or good grades. That is ok! Don’t push the panic button just yet because I do not want you to immediately jump to the image of a black moldy square bale. Quality has a lot to do with the length of time between cuttings. For our overweight horses, they do not need the 4-week cut Bermuda; they can handle the 6-7 or even 8-week cuts. Additionally, you should not be feeding hay that visually looks or smells bad. Storage is a key factor when looking for mold. Best practice for hay storage would be a covered barn, off the ground, and with enough space around the outside for airflow. Poor storage and poor feeding management can lead up to 75% loss of hay; so it is important to make sure you are properly storing and feeding your hay.

Horses play a big part in our lives, and we so often want our horses to have “everything”. Trust me, I am guilty too! However, we know so much more about equine health and nutrition and now we know that we cannot give them everything that we want to give them. As always, if you have any concerns about your horse’s health, please consult with your veterinarian. They can work with you to determine a specific diet that will make your horses healthy. If you do have your forage report, share that information with your vet so that they can help you come up with a feed ration. Happy Trails!

BEFORE YOU HIT THE TRAILS THIS FALL...

By Brooklyne Wassel

I truly think equestrians can feel the fall breeze before anyone else. It signals relief from the heat and boundless opportunities for equine fun. But before you grab your boots and saddle bags to hit the trail, there are a couple considerations I would encourage you to make.

Make sure you and your equine partner are ready for the planned activity. Some of us have been in the air conditioning throughout these hot months and our horses sitting in the pasture; I know that describes my herd. Conditioning your horse before hitting the day-long trail ride will make for a much happier trail companion. Just as you would not take off and run a marathon after munching on potato chips in your pajamas for a couple months, your horse might not be ready for heavier exercise quite yet. He will appreciate easing back into work, so take it slow. Limit the length of those initial rides, ride during cooler portions of the day, factor in rest days and listen to your horse when he says, "Wow, I'm out of shape."

Riding is about you and your horse, so pack for both of you. A saddle bag on the trail is greatly underrated. It can be a treasure trove of useful equipment that you never think you will need, until you do. Think about including first aid items for you and your horse, spare tack, snacks, identification, hay string, insect repellent, knife, hoof pick, water and a lead rope.

Trail riding is an equine activity for all ages, so I hope you are able to enjoy this beautiful fall weather from the best view there is, the back of a horse.



**"CONDITIONING
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Tack Corner

By Ashley Best

Expert: Ajax Sugier, Maestro Equidador (Master Rider) from Argentina

Ajax competes internationally in jumping, eventing and dressage. He has been riding and training for over 35 years. When determining tack to use, Ajax says to never buy the tack before you buy the horse. Each piece of tack is part of the whole and they work together to accomplish a goal. When choosing tack, it is not a matter of preference, but a matter of need between the individual horse and rider. Expensive tack does not necessarily mean that it is better quality or functions better. When choosing a saddle pad, make sure it is made of natural fibers and has a shape that fits the horse's back not a flat restricting shape. Ajax prefers more simple classical things. Use what works best for the horse and don't choose an item because someone is winning with that piece of tack. He uses polo wraps instead of boots because they offer more support. However, one can harm the horse if the wraps aren't properly put on. So, with lesson students, Ajax uses boots until he feels like the student can properly wrap the leg. Ajax says if you are experiencing an issue with your horse, don't automatically blame tack. Have your vet check the horse, consult with your farrier and equine dentist, then look to an established trainer for advice



HORSE CLUB ACTIVITIES

BIT ABOUT BITS

Understanding and teaching bit action can be a challenge. Try to start with the basics, and add in some fun. Discuss the difference between the direct contact of the snaffle versus the indirect of the curb. Have students in groups of two with a bit and two lunge lines for each group. Have one student hold the bit using two hands and the other "driving" using the lunge lines as extra long reins. You can create something like a trail course or keep it simple. Focus on bit action and constant but light contact. Make sure each gets to be the horse.

THAT'S A WRAP!

Teach wraps by discussing different types (Sweat, standing, polo, etc.) their uses and materials. Have materials for students to practice their wrapping. Either use a patient horse or the ever-patient table leg. Practice makes perfect! Be sure to demonstrate proper wrapping technique before asking students to practice.



Managing Fescue Toxicosis

By Brenda Jackson

Tall fescue is one of the most widely grown pasture grasses in the U.S., over a million acres grown in North Georgia alone. A bunch grass, it is the most heat tolerant of all the cool season grasses. However, that heat tolerance comes with a price, an ergot alkaloid producing endophyte that can have negative effects on certain animals.

The toxic endophyte (E+) in tall fescue is *Epicloe coenophialum*, (formerly *Neotyphodium coenophialum* and *Acremonium coenophialum*) and it grows within the plant in a symbiotic relationship. The plant benefits from increased drought and heat tolerance, improved seed germination and production, seedling vigor, tiller growth rate, improved mineral uptake, and insect and disease resistance. In return, the E+ receives nutrients, protection within the plant and dissemination through the seed.

These challenges to animal health are commonly referred to as “fescue toxicosis.” When compared to cattle, broodmares are more sensitive to the alkaloids in tall fescue infected with E+. Horses can exhibit prolonged gestation, increased incidence of foal and mare mortality from dystocia (difficulty foaling), thickened placentas that tend to separate from the uterine wall prematurely (aka red bagging), agalactia (lack of lactation) in post-partum mares and less vigorous and immune-challenged foals.

There are a variety of methods to deal with the problem of fescue toxicosis in horses. One is to eliminate the toxic tall fescue by killing the stand and replacing it with an alternative forage. Endophyte-free tall fescue cultivars are available but don't always persist well in the south, nor do they have the drought and pest resistance of the toxic tall fescue varieties. Another alternative is to establish winter annual grazing or a novel endophyte-infected tall fescue. Novel endophyte tall fescues contain a naturally occurring endophyte that does not produce the toxic alkaloids. Novel endophyte tall fescues have all the positive agronomic aspects of the toxic tall fescue (persistence, drought tolerance, and pest resistance). For more on novel endophyte

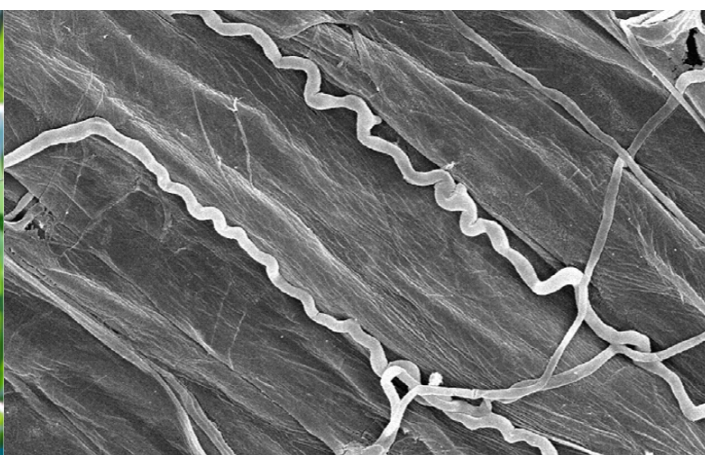
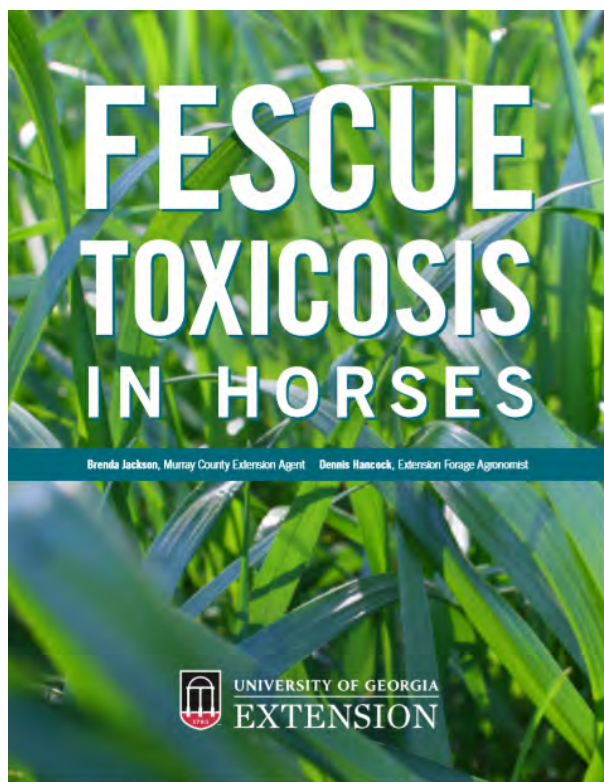
James H. Miller, USDA Forest Service, Bugwood.org
UGA2307190



Managing Fescue Toxicosis

Continued

tall fescues, see the Extension bulletin entitled, “Novel Endophyte Infected Tall Fescue” (<http://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.cfm?number=C861>). However, destroying and replacing a toxic tall fescue pasture or hayfield is inherently risky and quite expensive. The significant cost premium for the seed of the novel endophyte tall fescue varieties makes the renovation even more expensive.



Left: Fescue Toxicosis in Horses
Publication

Above: Microscopic image of
Epicloe coenophialum by Nick
Hill, UGA

Another option would be to manage the toxicosis by removing late gestation mares from infected tall fescue pastures the last trimester. Veterinarians recommend removal of mares from infected tall fescue pastures 45 to 90 days prior to the expected foaling date. This will reduce the risk but does not necessarily eliminate it completely. Since the toxins are sometimes stored in fat cells, some mares can show signs of fescue toxicosis even with long-term removal from infected tall fescue.

A third possible method would be to dilute the toxins with either concentrates or other forage types to reduce the ingestion of E+. While there are no beneficial effects of feeding grain to gravid mares grazing fescue, yearling horses can have slightly higher average daily gains.

Most tall fescue pastures and hayfields are infected with the E+ that produces toxic alkaloids. These alkaloids are highly toxic to horses, resulting in prolonged gestation, dystocia, agalactia, thickened placentas, and the increased risk of mortality of both mare and foal. Horses are much more sensitive to E+ fescue than other livestock. However, the toxic effects of the endophyte can be successfully managed by eliminating the grazing or feeding of toxic tall fescue.

Georgia 4-H Horse Project

By Brooklyne Wassel

The horse bug bites early; I know I started riding lessons at the age of five. Too often, youth are not given opportunities to develop true horsemanship skills until they become adults or have a horse of their own. Georgia 4-H's Horse Project aims to provide opportunities to bridge the gap and delve deeper into horsemanship and a love of learning.

The Horse Project is open to ages nine and up, and is multifaceted. It is comprised of Horse Clubs, Horse Quiz Bowl, Horse Judging, Hippology and State level competitions. Additionally, these programs are often led by volunteers who have a passion for teaching the next generation of equestrians.

Horse Clubs

Horse Clubs may look different from county to county, but the purpose is very much the same, develop horsemanship skills and culture a welcoming environment around something we are passionate about, horses! Horse Clubs can be seen doing activities such as dressage patterns on foot, traveling to local barns, group trail rides, learning to clean tack, and much more. Horse Clubs form the base of the Horse Project and are a great starting point for youth interested in joining the program.

Horse Quiz Bowl

Horse Quiz Bowl is a knowledge-based, team competition about... you guessed it, horses! Teams learn about equine topics from digestive systems and feeds to breeds and colors. County teams practice and compete at the state level in January of each year. There are buzzers, fun trivia, and team comradery. This is a great activity for youth who love trivia, horses, and competing on a team with friends.



Pike County 4-H Horse Club member completes equine magazine scavenger hunt during Horse Club meeting

Horse Judging

Horse Judging teams learn to judge groups of horses based on conformation, movement, and performance. Individuals must learn about proper conformation, breed standards, and professionalism in order to compete. Teams show off their hard work by competing at State each year in the Spring.

Hippology

Hippology is Quiz Bowl on another level. This competition combines trivia, hands-on knowledge and horse judging skills all wrapped up into one. This is another wonderful opportunity to work as a team and develop real, practical horsemanship skills.

State Competitions

All parts of the horse project have the opportunity to compete at the state level. Horse Clubs have the ability to attend the Georgia State 4-H Horse Show in the summer. There are divisions based on discipline and age. The state show also offers educational classes such as drawing and speech. There really is a class for everyone at state!

Though not all counties offer every portion of the Horse Project, there are always ways to get involved. Contact your local Extension office to learn more about local opportunities and visit: <https://georgia4h.org/programs/focus-areas/agriculture-stem/agriculture/livestock-and-animal-projects/horse-programs/>



Equine First Aid

By Ashley Best

When working with horses, accidents and emergencies will inevitably happen. It is essential to know what to do during those times to remain calm and provide the best first aid to your equine partner. You need to be prepared and it is best to have a friend or someone you can call to help you remain calm or assist with emergencies. If you remain calm, your horse will be calmer. In this article we will highlight knowing the normal for your horse, some common equine emergencies and some items to have in your first aid kit.

Knowing the normal for your horse gives you a base line for when you should be concerned. Your horse's temperature can be slightly high right after you have worked them. If your horse rolls after every ride, you won't think it's colic when he rolls at the show after his class.

EDUD (eating, drinking, urinating and defecating) is also an indication of normal. Know how your horse normally eats, when he drinks, how often he is defecating and urinating. Also be aware of when your horse

prefers to lay down. If the horse doesn't normally lay down in the stall at shows, you might be concerned. Just being extra observant with your horse will pay off.

When dealing with emergencies, the first thing is to call your veterinarian. Some common equine emergencies are colic, lameness, wounds and lacerations, eye issues and respiratory emergencies. Colic is nothing more than abdominal pain which can be caused by many different problems. All potential causes have various methods to diagnose and treat. Be sure to remove all hay, feed, and water until the vet arrives. Walk the horse if it is safe to do so. Severe lameness that is noticeable at the walk or causes the horse to be unwilling to move constitutes a medical emergency. Important descriptors: lame at the walk vs. trot, a little off vs. non-weight bearing, swelling or heat in the limbs, presence of digital pulses. Pick out and clean the hoof and try to get the horse to a barn/stall before the vet arrives. Do not remove and foreign body in the foot unless otherwise directed by a vet. Also do not give any medications

EQUINE FIRST AID

Continued

because they could hide symptoms needed for diagnosis. While lacerations happen frequently with horses, the required diagnostics, treatments, and prognosis for healing depend upon location and structures involved. Try to describe where on the body, proximity to joint(s), how old is the injury (don't be embarrassed if the wound is not fresh – vets just need information and the more accurate the information is, the better job we can do. It's also okay to not know!) The equine eye is very reactive to injury and infection. Because it is so reactive, eye problems can severely worsen in a short period of time. Try to describe swelling, discharge, the cornea or surface of the eyeball (color, clarity, spots). Find a fly mask because it is often needed during treatment. Horses are natural born athletes with huge lungs and reserve air capacity. When horses have difficulty breathing, it is a medical emergency. Try to describe respiratory rate/effort, respiratory noise. Keep the horse cool by cold hosing or standing in the shade. Also increase ventilation by having a fan to improve air flow. Do not turn the horse out with others or ask them to move excessively or be out in the sun. Whenever dealing with an emergency, it is best to have some prior knowledge of how to describe your issue to the vet. Be familiar with terms and symptoms of each of the common emergencies to help your vet direct you for that essential first aid.

Always make sure you know how to use all items in the first aid kit. If you don't know how to give medicine in the vein or in the muscle, you probably shouldn't have needles and syringes in your kit. Always have your veterinarian's number written down because cellphones often go dead at the worst time. You can include human items in the first aid kit, like band-aids, bug spray etc. One thing to make sure you have is a head lamp. This will allow you to be hands-free but have light in case of a night time emergency. Before making your own kit, consult with your local vet to see what they suggest.

Prevention is the key for managing emergencies. Keep your horse updated on farrier services, dental maintenance, parasite control and vaccines. Forming that relationship with your vet will allow them to be more familiar with your animal and you. Be sure to regularly inspect stalls, fencing and pastures. Be sure feeds are properly secured and protected from spoilage and insects. Always check your truck and trailer and have an alternate form of transportation just in case. Murphy's Law says the less prepared you are the more likely you are to have an emergency.

Temperature



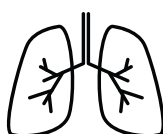
98.5 - 101.5 F

Pulse



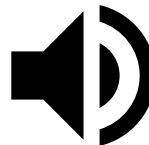
20 - 40
Beats/min

Respiration



8 - 16
Breaths/min

Gut Sounds



Every 30 sec
Left & right side

Capillary Refill



1 - 2 sec
Pink & moist

Mark Your Calendar

10/15

Equine Webinar: Old Horse Care

12:00-1:00 pm | Zoom | Pre-register by 10/13

Newton County Extension continues their Equine Webinar series with the second program focusing on old horse care. This topic is timely as we enter the tricky winter season with these horses that require a little more care.

11/17

Equine Webinar: All about Ulcers

6:00-7:00 pm | Zoom | Email uge2217@uga.edu

Newton County Extension continues their Equine Webinar series with the third program focusing on ulcers. Ulcers affect horses in all disciplines and warrant special attention for horse care providers.

12/17

Equine Webinar: Nutrition

12:00-1:00 pm | Zoom | Email uge2217@uga.edu

Newton County Extension continues their Equine Webinar series with the third program focusing on nutrition. You are what you eat, and horses are no exception! Discover the do's and don't's of equine nutrition.

Thurs

UGA Forages

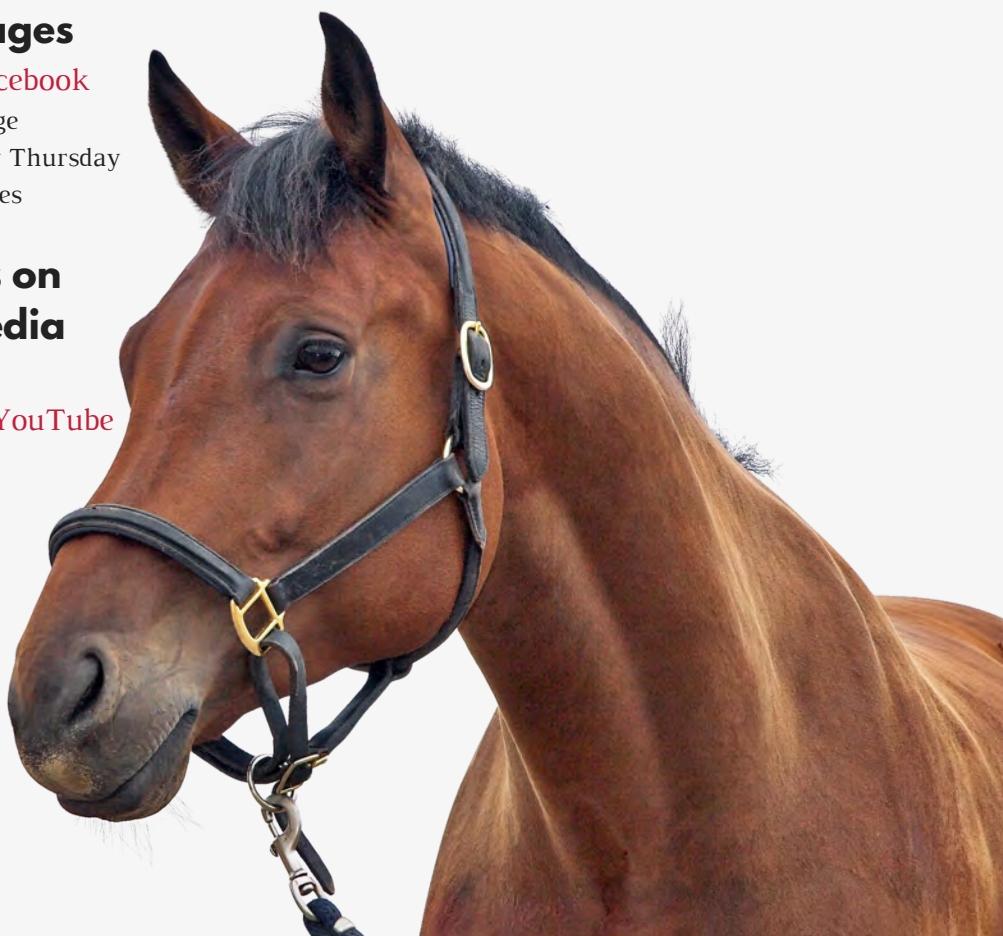
7:00 pm | Facebook

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THE LEADING REIN

Meet the Team

Ashley Best

UGA Extension County Agent - Newton County
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Ashley received her BS in Agricultural Education from UGA and her MS in Agriculture Communications, Leadership and Education from University of Missouri. She enjoys teaching and presenting equine topics, barrel racing, and other equine endeavors. She has two horses, Dally (APH) and Dino (AQH), as well as a miniature donkey. She has been a lifetime equine enthusiast and loves all equine disciplines.



Brooklyne Wassel

UGA Extension County Agent - Pike County
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Brooklyne grew up surrounded by horses in Gainesville, GA. She received her BS and MS in Animal Science from Auburn University where she focused on non-structural carbohydrates and hay soaking. She enjoys educating the public on numerous agricultural topics, spending time with her family and taking care of Catalina (AQH) and Yankee (AMH).



Caitlin Jackson

UGA Extension County Agent - Monroe County
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From Paso Finos to Hunters and everything in-between Caitlin has done “a little bit of everything” when it comes to horses. Caitlin earned a BS in Agricultural Economics from Clemson University and Master’s in Agriculture from Colorado State University. Caitlin, her husband Brennan and their daughter Teagan Rose live on a small horse farm in Jones County with their eclectic small herd of horses.



THE LEADING REIN

Meet the Team

Brenda Jackson

UGA Extension County Agent - Murray County
bljack@uga.edu

Brenda Jackson is the County Extension Coordinator, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for Murray County Extension. Brenda is a graduate of Berry College with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science and Equine Science. Her Master's degree is also in Animal Science, from University of Georgia. Prior to coming to UGA, she was the assistant breeding manager on an Arabian farm.



From The Leading Rein team: Thank you for reading!

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