

# THE LEADING REIN

*A UGA Extension Agents' Newsletter for Horse Owners and Professionals*



## WELCOME, SUMMER!

*By Ashley Best*

The summertime is unequivocally a busy time for horse owners, whether it is with horse shows, trail rides or rodeos—you name it. This Summer edition of The Leading Rein is designed to ensure the summer riding season is safe. Learn about heat stress, proper tying of a rope halter, and how to control those pesky flies. This issue will give you some management practices to consider when moving forward with breeding your favorite mare. Common myths and mistakes are addressed about pastures and forages, as well as tips for choosing to supplement your horse or not. By keeping these summer season safety tips in mind, your horse will be ready to tackle any adventure you have planned.



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
**EXTENSION**

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# PASTURE AND FORAGE MYTH BUSTERS

*By Brooklyne Wassel*

Yes, admittedly I do love the show, but that's not what I wanted to discuss today. In the horse world, we tend to readily share our thoughts, opinions, experiences, and anything else that comes to mind. In many cases, this is one of the best parts of our equine community, but it can also be our downfall. This game of telephone is how rumors get spread and horse myths become legends. I'm here to put a couple of them back in their place.

**Myth: Spreading manure out on the pasture increases parasite load.**

See?! I started with one that already has you boiling a little. I start with this one because of the wonderful season we are in, SUMMER! If you are experiencing some extremely hot days that are too high THI for you and your horse to enjoy together, think about flinging some poo or getting the drag up and going. These temperatures can act as an ally and "cook" those pesky parasite eggs deposited on the pasture. Exposing them to extreme temperatures can help stop their life cycle and decrease overall parasite load on the pasture. Be careful! This is only effective if the temperatures are over 90 F, so don't wait until a nice cool day or you will in fact be spreading the parasite love.

**Myth: Bahiagrass should not be utilized for horses due to low nutrient quality.**

This is one of my favorites because it's simply not true. Bahiagrass does inherently have lower nutrient quality as a whole when compared to forages such as tall fescue or even bermudagrass. However, nutrient quality of bahia can be improved by cultivar choice and pasture management all while sparing your pocket book when compared to some of the alternatives. Another added benefit of bahia is its ability to establish from seed. Just in case that didn't sell you on it, the lower nutrient profile can be a major plus when you have easy keepers or those prone to metabolic diseases.

**"Parasitic worms such as Strongyles are the target of many deworming protocols. Pasture management techniques can help to decrease parasite loads on farm."**





# PASTURE AND FORAGE MYTH BUSTERS

*Continued*

**Myth: You should not have clover in your horse pasture.**

Moderation is key! Doesn't it seem like that should be a bumper sticker? Clover, such as white clover, is a legume that fixes nitrogen in the soil. This gives a nice soil quality boost to your pasture just by existing. Clover can also help to extend some grazing seasons. It can cause some unpleasant effects in horses such as slobbers and false lactation, so yes, it's best to not plant the entire pasture in clover, but having some to benefit the soil and even pollinators is not a bad idea. Shoot for no more than 25% of the grazable pasture to be clover. And yes, horses tend to think it is delicious!

**Myth: If it is a toxic plant, horses will not eat it.**

You guessed it, this is also a myth. Thankfully some horses do leave toxic plants alone. However, some get curious and just have to have a taste... Horses can nibble out of boredom or by accident. Young horses learn their environment through putting it in their mouths much like humans, so do not take this one for granted. It might be on accident or because they were curious or even because that was the only plant they could reach from their stall door. Keep all toxic plants out of reach of horses.

**Myth: Color is an accurate measure of a hay's quality.**

Unfortunately, it seems we all become connoisseurs of the fine art of hay guessing when it comes to our horses. In reality, the only way to truly determine the quality of forage is to test. Keep in mind certain forages have their own unique characteristics that like to throw off our typical feed store measures such as perennial peanut hay rivaling alfalfa in quality yet largely being brown in color. Simple "field tests" such as smelling a flake and scouting for insects is valuable to inspect for blister beetles and mold, but nothing replaces forage testing and the quality that comes from analysis.

Next time you are sharing bits of wisdom that have been handed down from generation to generation of horseman and women, take a moment to consider if it is based in experience or scientific fact. If you ever have questions or want to separate fact from myth, all you have to do is ask your local Extension Agent. If they don't know, we have a wonderful team of State Equine Specialists who are knowledgeable in multitudes of equine topics who can help answer your questions. In a world where everyone is an expert, remember there are real experts who unbiased and ready to help you and your horses succeed.



# BREEDING MANAGEMENT OF YOUR MARE

*By Brenda Jackson*

Spring is here and we often think about breeding season as new life pops up everywhere. The first question to ask isn't, "Will my mare breed?" but "Should my mare be bred?" It's possible you would be happier with adopting or rescuing an unwanted horse that you can ride now rather than breeding and waiting for that foal to grow before riding. Next it is important to start with the overall health of the brood mare and then get a breeding soundness exam, both of which should be done the winter prior to a planned breeding.

When you are discussing a general physical examination with your veterinarian, consider the following:

- 1** Is she in good body condition, is she too heavy or too thin?
- 2** Is she current on her vaccinations? Which ones does she still need?
- 3** Check her parasite load – what are the current fecal egg counts?
- 4** Are her hooves in good condition?
- 5** Does she have a current negative Coggins?
- 6** Are there any conformation defects or genetic abnormalities that could potentially be passed to offspring?
- 7** Is she too young? Is she too old? Is she prone to producing twins? Does she have a history of abortion?

Once all these questions have been answered satisfactorily, you can move on to a breeding soundness exam. This is especially important with older mares and those that have had problems getting pregnant in the past. Your veterinarian will start with a physical examination of the reproductive anatomy – are there any conformational issues with the perineum (rectal and vulva region).

They will do a rectal palpation to assess any potential abnormalities in the ovaries, uterus, cervix, vagina or bladder and estimate where the mare is in her estrous cycle. Depending on discoveries in one or more of these areas, the veterinarian or stallion owner may request samples be collected for laboratory analysis, a uterine culture or cytology to check for pathogens or inflammation and/or a biopsy to evaluate the uterine tissue, in order to predict the mare's ability to become pregnant and carry a foal to term.





# BREEDING MANAGEMENT OF YOUR MARE

## *Continued*

If the physical and breeding soundness exams give a healthy result, then it is time to establish your mare's estrous cycle. It will tend to average 21 days but she will only be receptive the first week or so of the cycle. It is helpful to have the mare palpated to determine follicle size so you can estimate time of ovulation. You can also use a tease stallion to determine when (if) your mare is in heat. Signs of heat to watch for are winking of the vulva, tail raising, frequent urination and squatting into a breeding position. If the mare pins her ears back, clamps her tail down or acts aggressively toward the stallion then she is not receptive (not in heat).

Once you understand the estrous cycle of your mare, decide when and how to breed. Do you want to breed on the first heat or catch the next one? Do you want to breed by live cover or artificial insemination (AI)? If by AI, will you be using fresh, cooled or frozen semen? What is the collection schedule for the stallion you are using? Do they ship overnight or counter to counter? Fresh semen often has the highest viability (fertility) but isn't always convenient if the stallion isn't on or near the farm. Cooled semen should be viable for 36-48 hours but that can depend on the stallion used. Frozen semen is sometimes more complicated to manage because insemination must take place within 6 hours pre- or post-ovulation. When breeding by AI, induce ovulation by using a commercial hormone injection and timing insemination around that injection to ensure a successful ovulation. You can have a veterinarian do an ultrasound in about two weeks to confirm pregnancy or whether a second breeding cycle should occur. Individual mares will have their own gestation idiosyncrasies but the average gestation period can range from 320-360 days.

### Daily Nutrient Requirements (1,100 pound mare)

Nutrients Required	Early to Mid-gestation	Late Gestation	Lactating Mare
CP (pounds)	1.4	11.7	3.0
DE (Mcal)	16	18	28
Ca (g)	20	35	56
P (g)	14	26	36
Vit. A (1,000 IU's)	15	30	30

University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension EC95-272-B

# BREEDING MANAGEMENT OF YOUR MARE

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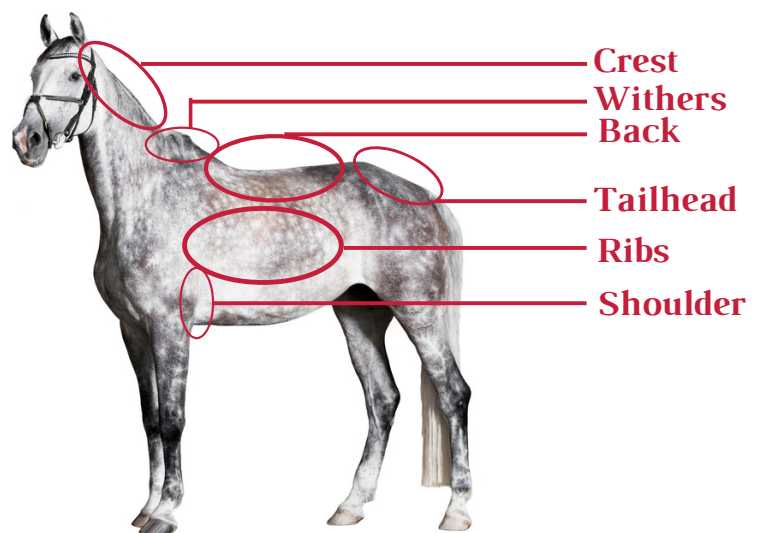
You should always be aware of your horse's body condition but it's especially important in the pregnant and lactating mare. Mares in marginal condition (thin to poor, <5) seldom have enough fat stored to reproduce efficiently, support the embryo full term and/or produce milk efficiently if they deliver a viable foal. Mares in the obese range of 8-9 won't necessarily have foaling problems or difficulty rebreeding but it won't provide you with any reproductive advantages either. It's also possible that a mare with a heavy crested neck or bulging fat pads could have an insulin issue or other systemic illness that may negatively affect reproduction. Ideally, maintain your mare in the 5-7 range (moderate to fleshy) using a proper ration for her breeding/activity stage in order to meet her daily nutrient requirements. In the last trimester, her nutrient requirement will increase a great deal because the foal is growing faster and she has to meet her own needs as well as that of the foal. The mare won't necessarily need more total feed but the concentration of protein (CP), energy (DE), calcium (Ca), phosphorus (P), and vitamin A should increase. By this point the mare should be getting 1.5-2% of her body weight in feed per day, through concentrated feedstuffs as well as good quality hay.

A horse which scores a BCS 5 is the industry standard and baseline for which most recommendations are made. This horse's ribs are not visible but are easily palpable upon inspection. This horse has a blended appearance and smooth lines are created by fat cover. This horse's back is level and does not peak at spinal processes.

A horse with a BCS 6 is considered fleshy. This horse may start to develop a crease along its back due to fat deposits along the spine. Fat deposits covering the ribs, along the withers and behind the shoulder will feel spongy.

A horse with a BCS 7 is very fleshy with fat deposits that start to interfere with palpating structures. Fat will feel spongy in all areas. Individual ribs may be difficult to feel at a BCS 7. The horse's back will likely develop a crease due to fat deposits along the spine.

## Body Condition Score Reminder




When it's time for your mare to foal, ensure she has a clean, dry, safe place to do it. Ideally a foaling stall bedded with straw that is 12 x 18 feet should give plenty of room; outside is ok too as long as the weather cooperates. A spring foal rarely waits for our convenience, plan ahead so you don't have to stay up all night for days on end. See the March 2021 Leading Rein newsletter for the stages of foaling and how to care for your new foal.




# TOO MANY SUPPLEMENTS!


*By Caitlin Jackson*




The six basic equine nutrient categories are simple: carbohydrates, protein, fat, vitamins, minerals, and water. Water intake is self-regulated and horses on average drink 5-15 (or more) gallons of water per day depending on temperature, humidity, and activity level. That leaves the horse owner being responsible for ensuring a balanced diet based off the other five nutrient categories through feeding hay, forages, commercial feed, and supplements. Majority of mature horses will do well on commercial feed ration that is comprised of 8-12% protein with 4-6% fat, throw in some hay or pasture time and their carbohydrates will be met. Of course it's not always that easy; we have our "easy-keepers" that get fat on air and on the opposite side of the spectrum we have the "hard-keepers" that make us cringe when we look at our feed bill. So what do we do when we feel like our feed or hay is not enough? We purchase supplements!



Supplements are the key to everything right? Horse's hooves are starting to crack a little; hoof supplement! Horse just turned 20; joint supplement! Angry mare; calming supplement! It does seem like all these supplements have a little magic in them, but can you overdo it? The simple answer is...YES! Over-supplementing is costly, and in some cases can be toxic. A quick search on supplements on SmartPak resulted in 427 products!



With so many products, it can be difficult to decide on which product you should purchase. In order to understand what nutrients are missing, if any, you need to know what you are currently feeding and what your horse's needs are based on weight, age, physiological condition (pregnant or lactating) and activity level. All commercial feeds are required to have a tag that lists ingredients and minimum percentages of nutrients including vitamins and minerals. To get the best nutritional snap shot you should also have a forage analysis of your hay that lists vitamins and minerals to best understand where your horse could be lacking. Blood analysis can be utilized, but I would only recommend that if your horse is really struggling due to cost and variability of results. Hair analysis is not a reliable source to evaluate the horse's nutritional status due to extreme variability of results.



Once you have determined a nutritional base line of where your horse is; now you can determine what supplements are needed to round out your horse's diet. When supplement shopping be sure that you always read label ingredients and percentages. Most websites have a "compare" button that will allow you to easily compare similar products to determine what will suit your horse's needs. Be cautious on going for the single ingredient supplements, as frequently your horse will not need that much of a specific nutrient. Always follow label directions and recommendations and as always be sure to make diet changes slowly as to not upset your horse's digestion.

Overall, adding supplements to your horse's diet can bring nutrients that they are lacking in feed and forages. However, be cautious with over supplementing as that can become expensive and lead to overconsumption resulting in toxicity. For more help in balancing your horse's diet you can consult with your feed company's equine nutritionist or your veterinarian.



Photos by Nancy C. Hinkle, PhD

# Vexation from Stable Flies

By Dr. Nancy C. Hinkle, PhD

The most common fly on horses is the stable fly. This bloodsucking fly looks like a house fly – it's the same size and coloration – and has even been called the “biting house fly.” But, of course, house flies can't bite. If you look closely, you'll see the mouthpart projecting from the front of the stable fly's head, looking like a bayonet. Imagine the pain inflicted when the stable fly jabs your horse with that device. No wonder the poor animal tries to get away from them.

Because stable flies feed on blood and only on blood, they spend a lot of time in close proximity to horses (they also feed on cattle). Stable flies prefer to feed on the legs, so you may notice the horse stomping, kicking, swishing its tail, licking at its legs, trying to dislodge stable flies and alleviate the discomfort.

So how can you protect your horse from stable flies? You can't. There is no repellent that will deter them. Stable flies don't spend enough time on the animal to pick up a lethal dose of insecticide. Plus, when insecticide is applied to the horse's legs, tall grass quickly rubs it off.

But go back in time. Why don't we prevent stable flies? We know stable fly larvae (maggots) develop mainly in rotting hay and wet decomposing straw. Got any of that in the neighborhood? Spraying insecticide on the hay ring will not kill maggots; the organic material binds the insecticide and the moisture dilutes it, so the insecticide will never get down to the maggots. Instead, let's get rid of the habitat so stable flies can't live on our property. The damp hay and straw need to be hauled off – far off. Or we can dry it out so it can't support maggots. The sun on a hot day can dry it out (of course, any subsequent rain can make it a maggot nursery again), but it must be spread very thin so that it dries all the way, not just creating a dry thatch on top. And stable flies can fly over a mile looking for a horse to bite, so rotting hay needs to be transported far enough that the adult flies won't find their way back.

I know, I know, prevention is so much more work than just spraying something. But if you had found a surefire product to protect your horse from stable flies, you wouldn't be reading this.

While the insecticides available for use on horses are not very effective against stable flies, every little bit helps. So spray down your horse's legs with whatever works best for you when you head out on a trail ride, just don't be surprised when you still see stable flies.

Because stable flies do not develop in manure, feed-through products are not effective against them. Feed-throughs are useful only against house fly maggots. Stable flies are bloodsuckers, so bait traps don't work for them. The most useful traps for stable flies are constructed with adhesive on vanes so that stable flies are attracted to them and stick to the glue. Of course, placement is critical in order for the traps to intercept the flies before they get to the horses, but the trap must be placed outside the reach of mischievous horses that are determined to inspect the traps (or maul them).

There are many more biting flies that attack horses – horse flies, deer flies, black flies, biting midges, etc. – and perhaps we'll address them in future articles. Meanwhile, the stable flies are already out and tormenting our horses, so do what you can to protect our equine friends.



# FEEL THE HEAT

*By Ashley Best*

You're dripping sweat from cleaning stalls and it's only 8:30 a.m. Welcome to summertime in Georgia. As the sun gets higher, so does the temperature and we all know our horses begin hunting the trees and shade. Horses will often adjust on their own to the heat and rising temperatures, but owners still need to recognize and take precautions to prevent horses from overheating while working or at rest.

Any horse is susceptible to heat stress, but horses that are out of shape or overweight are at a higher risk. Other factors that contribute to heat stress and overheating are: high ambient temperatures, high humidity, lack of access to water, traveling long distances, poor conditioning. Horses that are suffering from mild heat stress may not show symptoms. Some signs to be aware of are:



**Evaluate...**



**Distressed appearance**



**Labored breathing**



**Profuse sweating or no sweating at all**



**High rectal temperature (>103F) that does not decrease**



**Rapid heart rate**



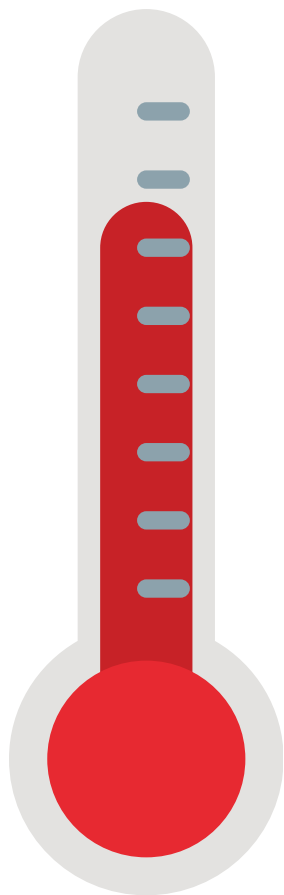
**Weak and lethargic**

**PROVIDE FRESH WATER:** Horses sweat to cool down rapidly. The sweat evaporates and the heat is removed from the body to decrease the core temperature. As horses sweat water is lost from the body and must be replaced. A horse that is working hard in a hot environment can lose 2 to 4 gallons of sweat per hour. The number one thing to prevent heat stress is to provide fresh clean water at all times. Also increase water consumption by having salt blocks or adding salt supplements to increase thirst. Speak with your veterinarian about adding electrolytes into your program if you have a horse that is in heavy work during the summer months. You can add electrolytes to your feed or to the water, but some horses prefer to have plain water as well to drink.

**ADJUST WORK LOAD:** Horses are at a higher risk for heat stress when exerting energy during high temperatures. When exercising your horse, consider the temperature-humidity index (THI). For example if it is 78 degrees Fahrenheit and the relative humidity is 80% then the THI is 158. Add the temperature with the humidity and that is the THI. Any THI above 150, horses will have difficulty cooling off and will require you to properly cool your horse down after. To properly cool your horse, make sure you are walking for the last 10-15 minutes of your ride. Once you have offered your horse water after untacking, rinse them off starting at the feet and work your way up. Rinsing and scraping the excess water helps cool them down and gets the dirt and sweat off of them. Working horses over a THI of 180 is unsafe and dangerous to the health of you and the animal.

# FEEL THE HEAT

*Continued*



## Understanding the Temperature-Humidity Index

THI = Temperature in Fahrenheit + Percentage Humidity

**180 AND ABOVE** - These conditions may be fatal for the horse.

**150-180** - The cooling efficiency is greatly reduced and you may need to shorten the ride time and keep it light work only. Also properly cool the horse down after work to prevent heat stress.

**120-150** - The horse will sweat with work. Be sure to allow the horse to rest and cool over the course of longer training or riding sessions.

**120 OR LESS** - Your horse will cool effectively and you are safe to do all training with little to no worry of overheating.

\*Riders should calculate THI for the hottest part of their riding time before beginning to ride. Remember that these are guidelines to help keep both you and your equine partner safe in the sun.

**STAY COOL:** Provide turnout during cooler times of the day (early morning, late at night or overnight). Provide shade like trees, buildings or even shade cloths to relieve the heat from the sun. Watch out for sunburn as well on light skinned horses. Use fans in your barn to increase airflow. Be sure to keep cords away from mischievous horses. Consider clipping horses with long hair coats, like horses with Cushing's, to increase cooling. Don't transport horses during the hottest part of the day. Trailers should be well ventilated and never park in direct sunlight and leave the horses on the trailer for extended periods. Watch your horse for anhidrosis (the inability to sweat). Consult with your vet if your horse doesn't sweat properly.

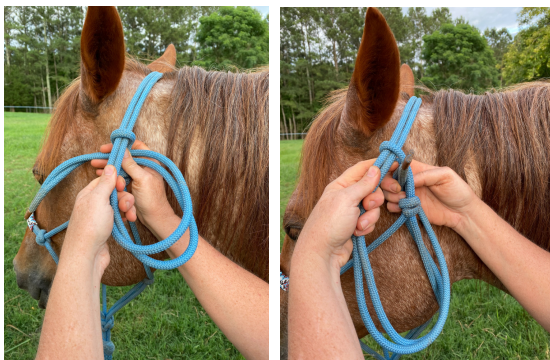
If your horse does overheat, you can help by:

- Removing all tack and find a shaded area
- Cold hosing by starting at the feet and legs and moving up to the major vein areas Jugular veins, cephalic veins and femoral veins will provide maximum cooling effect.
- Use a fan to increase evaporative cooling
- Allow the horse access to fresh water of ambient temperature (not cold)
- Call your vet if rectal temperatures do not drop below 103 degrees Fahrenheit



# Tack Corner

By Ashley Best



- 1** Slip the halter over the nose of the horse.
- 2** Pull the rope end over the horse's poll and behind the ears.
- 3** Pull rope end through the loophole.
- 4** Pull the rope snug to fit the halter to the horse. Make sure horse can still move jaw comfortably.
- 5** With the end of the rope through the loophole being held in your right hand, place your left thumb on the loophole.
- 6** Run the tail end behind the loop towards your horse's eye. Make sure the end of the rope is **BELOW** the loop. If the knot is above the loop, you may not be able to untie it especially if the horse sets back.
- 7** Take the end of the rope and run it through the new loop you have created.
- 8** Pull the tail through towards your horse's rump and away from the eye.
- 9** Admire your properly tied rope halter.



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## HORSE CLUB ACTIVITY

### HALTER TIME

Does it get more basic horsemanship than safely haltering a horse? Probably not, yet this portion is often glazed over to "get to the good stuff." Spend some time in club discussing the importance of safely approaching and catching a horse. Demonstrate the different types of halters and their pressure points. A rope halter has its differences when compared to a foal halter or breakaway halter.

Round up some different halter types and have students match the halters to pictures/ descriptions of horses. Discuss why these different halter types would be appropriate in different situations.

Examples:

- Foal halter with foal
- Rope halter with ranch horse
- Stud halter with stallion
- Breakaway halter with naughty, difficult to catch pony or horse needed a grazing muzzle

# Mark Your Calendar

7/17

## West Georgia Equine Symposium

8:30 am- 4:15 pm | Carroll County Ag Center | Email [pjburke@uga.edu](mailto:pjburke@uga.edu)

Carroll, Coweta and Haralson County UGA Extension offices will be hosting the [West Georgia Equine Symposium](#) on July 17, 2021. Topics will include hay, pasture and weed management, barn safety and an onsite farm visit. Registration closes July 7th.

7/20

## Forage & Pasture Series: Hay Production

6:00 pm | Virtual | Email [Sarah.Cranston@uga.edu](mailto:Sarah.Cranston@uga.edu)

Join us to hear UGA Extension Forage team members discuss hay production in forages. Please register by July 19th so you can be sent the zoom link to attend online as well as post-session materials. [Join this webinar.](#)

7/29

## Elevated Equine: Beat the Heat

6:30 pm | Newton County Ag Center and Virtual | Email [abest22@uga.edu](mailto:abest22@uga.edu)

Learn how to recognize heat stress in your equine partners and practice some hands-on strategies to keep you and your horse cool while training this summer. This presentation will be in person, but there will be an option to view virtually. [Register here.](#)

7/28

-8/1

## Southern Regional 4-H Horse Show

8:00 am | Perry, GA | Email Your Local Extension Office

Qualifiers from the Southern States compete in the 4-H Regional Horse Show. Classes range from Barrel racing, Roping, Western Pleasure, Halter and Jumping.

1/14

## 4-H New Year Showdown Horse Show

9:00 am | Madison, GA | Email [crbenn@uga.edu](mailto:crbenn@uga.edu)

New year, new 4-H horse opportunities! [4-H New Year Showdown](#) will take place January 14-16, 2022 rain or shine and begin at 9 am each day of show. Come practice before State Show or come see what 4-H horse project is all about!

Thurs

## UGA Forages

7:00 pm | Facebook

Join UGA Forage Specialist every Thursday @GeorgiaForages



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# THE LEADING REIN

## *Meet the Team*

### **Ashley Best**

UGA Extension County Agent - Newton County  
[abest22@uga.edu](mailto:abest22@uga.edu)

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  
[brooklyne.wassel@uga.edu](mailto:brooklyne.wassel@uga.edu)

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 (MH).



### **Caitlin Jackson**

UGA Extension County Agent - Monroe County  
[crbenn@uga.edu](mailto:crbenn@uga.edu)

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](mailto: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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