

THE LEADING REIN

A UGA Extension Agents' Newsletter for Horse Owners and Professionals



WINTERINZING YOUR HORSE

By Ashley Best

Mud, cold rain, layers of jackets and hay everywhere sums up the Winter season for an equine owner. Explore how to combat your own stress with tips and tricks from a FACS agent and The Leading Rein. As foals are hitting the ground, consider the tips in this issue for foal training. Learn about the sassy miniature horse and how to properly manage miniature equine. Be sure to mark your calendar for upcoming events!



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

FOAL TRAINING

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THE NEW FOAL- YEAR 1

By Brenda Jackson

Human handling early in a foal's life, when done carefully & responsibly, can save a lot of stress for that foal later. Have you ever heard of imprinting? This is where you have the opportunity to create a human-foal bond in the first few hours after birth, establishing a trust that can last throughout their life. You start by handling the foal right after birth, rubbing them dry and allowing them to get used to humans being around. However, don't interfere with the dam/foal bond that also needs to develop. Instead, join the pairing so they both know that humans are there to help, not hinder. Then get that foal accustomed to outside stimuli, every day, so they are less fearful of new introductions – handling, halters & saddles, clipper noise, hoof trimming, etc. The biggest mistake people make is to not repeat the activities often enough to completely desensitize the foal. Dr. Robert Miller, author of *Imprint Training of the Newborn Foal*, recommends 30-100 repetitions for each activity in order to habituate the foal. By using the foal's natural curiosity to explore his/her new world, they learn to accept new stimuli with confidence instead of fear. Start by showing the halter to the new foal, let them sniff, nibble if they feel the need and rub it across their cheek and neck. Very gently slip it over their head but be aware it may take a few tries before you get it over their ears. Be patient and don't let it turn into a battle – don't get the foal over excited where the fight/flight response kicks in. Once you get it over their head, reward the foal with pets and scratches then take it off. Continue in this way, leaving it on for longer periods each day.



Once they are used to the halter, you can start teaching the foal to lead. Never let this part turn into a tug of war. Instead, have a long lead rope with one end attached to the halter and the other in a loop around the rump. Pull on the halter rope at the same time as using the rump rope, along with a soft, firm “Walk” command, to encourage the foal to move forward. They may jump in the beginning so be sure you are standing to the side and not in front. After a few steps, stop the forward motion with a tug down on the lead rope and a “Whoa” command. Getting them used to these verbal commands early will be handy when you start with longeing and riding later. As soon as they start responding to the lead rope pressure with no trouble, you can stop using the rump rope.



THE NEW FOAL- YEAR 1

Continued



First Year Foal Activities

1. Imprinting
2. Haltering
3. Leading
4. Standing Tied
5. Handling Feet
6. Grooming
7. Mild Exercise

Once they are used to the halter and leading, start teaching them to tie and standing quietly. You can also use this quiet time to continue handling their feet but with a purpose. Run your hands over their body and down the backs of their legs. They will usually pick up their feet just with that stimuli but you might need to tap down around their fetlock and then pick up the foot if they don't. Hold the foot up for a short period and then put it back down; doing this with all four feet. This will help them learn balance as well, by standing on just three feet. Don't let them get in the habit of leaning on you, gently push their weight back on to their feet if they start leaning into your shoulder. Your farrier won't thank you for a horse that leans on them the whole time they are working. Have a hoof pick handy and run it across the bottom of the foot and around the frog to desensitize them. Once you've done this with all four feet, get the grooming tools handy. Curry them and then brush them along the whole body, use a soft brush for the face and a wide tooth comb for the mane and tail. Also handle the ears gently so they don't pop their head out of reach and get used to being touched all over. Do these activities quickly and quietly without a lot of fuss so they easily accept your touch without a battle.

At what point should training turn to exercise? Mild exercise early in life, like with all young, be they human or animal, is important to build strong bones and muscle. However, a heavy exercise program designed to build muscle mass before the bones are ready to handle the stress is not a good idea. Too much muscle on an immature frame can cause future problems – developmental orthopedic disease (DOD), arthritis, and/or the inability to flex properly. It is best to allow your foal to be with his/her dam and other foals the first year. While running and playing in the field, he/she learns balance while running on uneven ground and naturally builds their musculoskeletal system as they grow. You as the owner/trainer can use this time to start basic training techniques. A short period each day will be sufficient to help them overcome fear and learn new skills.

WINTER WARNINGS STILL STAND

By Brooklyn Wassel

Winter weather doesn't seem to be ready to let us enjoy the sunshine just yet. With that in mind, we aren't quite ready to let go of our winter warnings and considerations. Two real concerns like to rear their heads in the winter, colic and water consumption. Are they one in the same? Are they two separate issues? Is it the chicken and the egg all over again? Yes, no, yes, no, yes... sometimes...

As most horse owners know, hay is often a vital part of a feeding program to keep horses healthy and meeting dietary requirements through the winter months. Likewise, water is always a vital part of a horse's day. (It is the number one essential nutrient after all!) So what really happens in winter to upset the apple cart and lead something seemingly so simple into chaos?

Just like most things in life, normally it is multiple factors and not simply one cause or culprit, but we are going to try to tease apart each in an effort to decrease the likelihood of running into these issues in our barns.

NOT ALL HAY IS CREATED EQUAL.



I said it. We all know it. Yes, alfalfa inherently has a higher nutritional value when compared with something like a bahiagrass hay. Several factors affect the quality of the hay: cultivar, maturity at cutting, storage, fertilization, and the list goes on. So yes, from farm to farm and cutting to cutting, hay quality may vary. These differences in quality can often lead to digestive issues if you are not aware or check quality before feeding.

What is the one hay most Georgia horse owners stay away from to prevent the dreaded 'C' word? *Coastal bermudagrass*... Let's start by setting the record straight: Coastal bermudagrass is not unsafe or nutritionally inadequate for your horse given it is forage tested and appropriately fed. So why does it get such a horrible reputation for colic among horse owners? It is finer stemmed when compared to some forage options which can result in impaction, it is a dry forage which requires adequate water intake and it is one of the most commonly fed hay types. The most common hay type fed to the most horses naturally means this will be the number one forage for colic just because of the numbers alone.

WINTER WARNINGS STILL STAND

Continued

As long as the nutritive value is satisfactory to the classification of horse as determined by a forage test conducted through your local Extension office, you should be able to safely feed it with proper management.

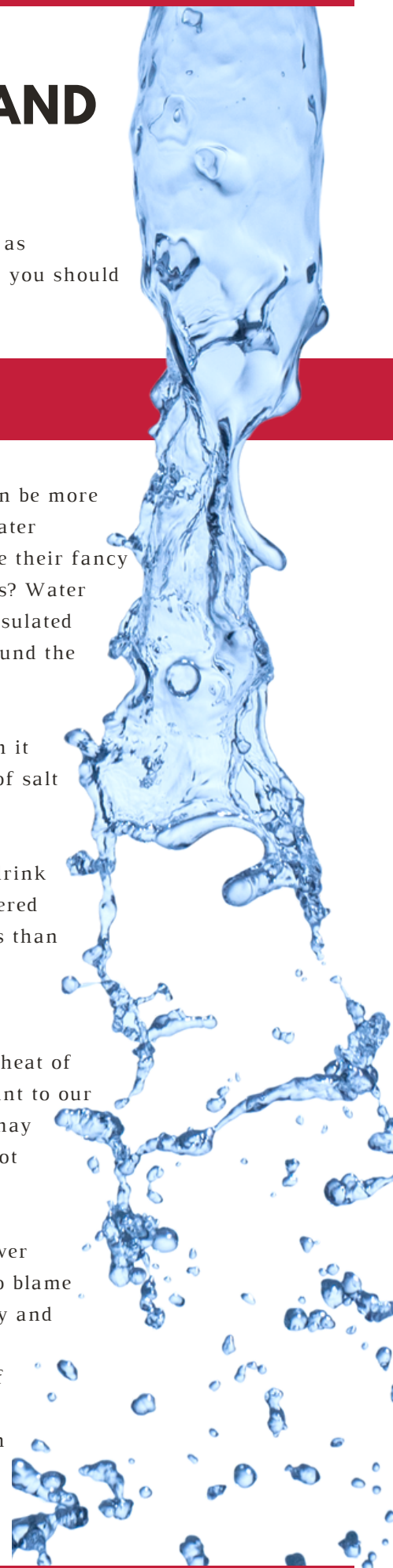
WATER IS ESSENTIAL.

That shouldn't be national news or something new, but in the winter, it can be more difficult to prioritize. Some horses may be more opinionated about their water intake during the colder months. Some decide ice water does not quite suite their fancy during blanket weather. Can you really blame them? What are your options? Water heaters can be utilized but can pose hazards that many choose to avoid. Insulated buckets and troughs can be created rather easily from materials found around the barn such as towels, hay or foam.

If ice water is not the issue but your horse's water intake seems lower than it should, consider adding small amounts (we are talking sprinkles to start) of salt or supplement to daily feeding to naturally encourage water consumption. Following a trick of the trade from many competitors in various equine disciplines, you can offer electrolyte water (think of your favorite sports drink which offers an electrolyte boost). Just be sure to always offer fresh unaltered water simultaneously to allow your horse to not consume more electrolytes than necessary. If more drastic measures become needed, you can administer electrolyte paste to get your horse to desire a refreshing drink.

The bottom line is simple. We think about water intake all the time in the heat of the summer, but the importance of water never wanes, it is just as important to our horses in the winter. What happens when water intake decreases and dry hay consumption increases? Often the result is impaction colic. There just is not water moving the forage through the system.

When lower quality hay or even large quantities of hay is coupled with lower water intake, impaction colic can swiftly follow. Many may be too hasty to blame solely the hay or hay producer when in reality, it was hay, feeding strategy and water intake that all likely played a part in creating the problem. So as we continue to dip into lower temperatures and feed the remaining portions of hay in the barns before spring grass appears, remember to keep the hay quality high, water intake constant and always consult with a veterinarian or equine nutritionist to ensure colic isn't lurking around the corner.



Fun Size Equine

By Dr. Kylee Jo Duberstein

Miniature horses are horses of diminutive size that are the result of selective breeding programs over hundreds of years. Depending on the breed organization, miniature horses are recognized as horses that stand under 34-38 inches in height. Miniature horses are frequently shown in hand and also may drive, but many also may be purchased by novice horse owners due to their cute and cuddly appearance. It is important that owners recognize that a miniature horse is still a horse, and it should be treated in a manner that reflects good horsemanship rather than as a dog or other pet. Miniature horses also have some unique health concerns that new owners should be aware of.

First and foremost, nutrition is a big factor in owning a miniature horse. Minis, like all horses, are designed to eat a forage based diet, meaning that their primary source of food should be fresh pasture or hay. Grain may or may not be necessary – many adult minis do not need an additional grain source if they are provided with reasonable quality forage. More information on forages can be found on the [Animal and Dairy Science Youtube page](#) or at: <https://equine.caes.uga.edu/>

MAJOR MINI CONSIDERATIONS

Nutrition
Obesity
Genetic Conformational Faults
Breeding



Additionally, it is important to recognize that obesity can be a major health concern for miniature horses. Mature minis are often easy-keepers, meaning that they do not need to consume many calories to maintain the appropriate weight. Obesity can lead to health problems such as insulin resistance and laminitis, so it is very important to stay on top of weight control. Optimal intake levels for horses are approximately 1.5-2% of their body weight in dry matter daily. For a 300 pound mini, this would be approximately 5-6 pounds of hay per day. If minis are being housed on pasture, which is great from a mental and physical standpoint, they may need to be muzzled to prevent them from overeating. It is important to monitor their body condition to make decisions on feeding them. There are many online tools to assist you in determining your horse's body condition, but a quick summary is that a horse in optimal condition would have ribs that are easily felt but not visible, with little fat accumulation in the crest of the neck or around the tail head. If your mini is a little on the fatter side, it is recommended to house them on a dry lot or stall where you can control the amount of hay you feed, and muzzle them when they are out on fresh pasture to restrict intake.

Fun Size Equine

Continued

Other problems that minis are prone to include a genetic predisposition to certain conformational faults such as dwarfism, limb deformities, issues with stifle locking, as well as issues with jaw conformation. Some of these problems can be corrected with surgery and management, while others can be severe problems that inhibit the animal's ability to move and eat normally. If you are considering purchasing a miniature horse, and you do not have the experience to recognize conformational defects, consider taking an experienced horseman with you to evaluate the horse or getting a veterinarian to do a pre-purchase exam. Minis can also be prone to dental problems such as overcrowding of the teeth and potentially associated sinus issues. A veterinarian can help you evaluate the horse for these types of problems before you buy it. If you own a miniature horse, annual dental exams by a veterinarian are recommended.

Breeding miniature horses is not recommended for the average horse owner. They are prone to several genetic defects and are also predisposed to dystocia (difficulty giving birth). Breeding should be done only by those who have experience in selecting appropriate matings and handling foaling difficulties. Also, it is not recommended that miniature horses be ridden by anyone other than small children (if the mini is gentle enough). Horses should not carry more than 20% of their body weight, which is only 60 pounds for many full grown miniature horses. Minis can be trained to pull a buggy, and they can be shown in hand in a wide variety of classes. If you are keeping a mini as a pet, it is important to remember that they are not a dog. They have a much different gastrointestinal tract than other common pets, and they should not be fed random pet treats or foods that are not appropriate for horses. Additionally, they should receive proper hoof care which includes hoof trimming by a farrier every 6-8 weeks to keep hoof angles aligned properly and minimize stress to the legs, as well as to check for problems mentioned above, such as laminitis.



Conformational faults that minis are predisposed to are:

- **dwarfism**
- **limb deformities**
- **issues with stifle locking**
- **overcrowding teeth**
- **potential sinus issues**

In summary, it is important to remember that while miniature horses are sure to appeal to many people due to the cuteness of their size, they are still horses, and they require the same care that a full-sized horse needs. In addition to routine equine care, minis are genetically predisposed to certain conformational and physiological problems, and you need to be aware of this before jumping into miniature horse ownership. While mini horse ownership can be very rewarding and fun, make sure you are equipped with the right knowledge and professional veterinary and farrier help before investing in a mini as a pet or show animal.



Fun Size Equine

Continued

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Common Conformational Faults:

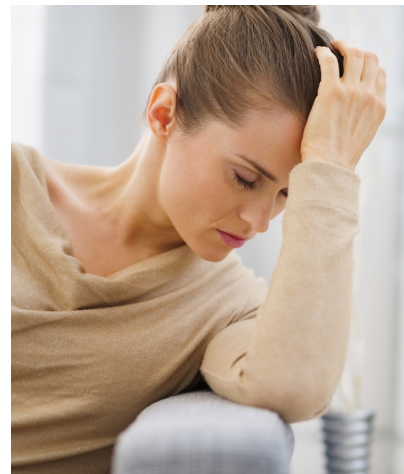
- **Dwarfism**
- **Limb deformities**
- **Stifle locking**
- **Overcrowding teeth**
- **Sinus issues**

In summary, it is important to remember that while miniature horses are sure to appeal to many people due to the cuteness of their size, they are still horses, and they require the same care that a full-sized horse needs. In addition to routine equine care, minis are genetically predisposed to certain conformational and physiological problems, and you need to be aware of this before jumping into miniature horse ownership. While mini horse ownership can be very rewarding and fun, make sure you are equipped with the right knowledge and professional veterinary and farrier help before investing in a mini as a pet or show animal.

EQUINE OWNER STRESS MANAGEMENT

By Ashley Best in collaboration with Victoria Presnal, FACS Agent Carrol County

Stress. We all talk about it, but it is a serious issue with lasting effects. Last edition, we discussed some measures to control the stress levels of our equine partners. In this issue, I would like to focus on the stress levels as equine owners and discuss ways to alleviate the stress. As we all know, owning horses can be very stressful. From unforeseen injuries to the everyday tasks at hand, working and owning horses are not for the faint at heart. With the shorter days and the cold weather, riding can be limited and that is a major stress reliever for me. Your stress can translate to your horses and riding abilities. When you are stressed, you have less patience, are often hurried about chores and tasks, and you may forget important things. I reached out to a dear friend, Victoria Presnal, who is the Family and Consumer Science Agent in Carrol County to gain an insight on general stress management.



Victoria writes:

Benjamin Franklin wrote, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” This is especially true when it comes to stress. Stress can affect our health, our relationships, our jobs, and our families. Stress can also affect your entire body, mentally as well as physically. Some common signs include: headaches, trouble sleeping, jaw pain, changes in appetite, difficulty concentrating, and feeling overwhelmed.

As we continue into a world of unknowns, coping with your own stress will make your barn time even more enjoyable. Utilizing a task list, I find that I have more time to spend at the barn and unplugging from the phone screens. I find simple joys in brushing my horses and the repetitiveness of cleaning stalls. When things seem to fall apart, it is important to start prioritizing yourself and keeping your mental health in check. Taking her advice, I translated it to owning horses. Here are 5 ways that you can manage your stress:

1 CREATE A "NO" PHRASE

Victoria: We all know that saying “no” can be a very difficult thing to do. Especially when the person or thing means so much to you. However, it is important to think ahead about the outcome when saying yes, and whether it will bring on unwanted stress. Saying no to some things gives you an opportunity to give your 100% to things you want to say yes to. Try not to stretch yourself thin to please everyone. Find a phrase you can say when you feel pressured to do something you do not want to do.

Ashley: “Sorry, I have to feed and care for my horse. I don’t alter their feeding schedules.” You could also say, “I don’t skip barn time and caring for my animals.” By saying “I don’t” it allows you to own the affirmation and solidify the time you have set aside for your horses and yourself. You could always offer to do the task at another time or date but ensuring you set boundaries and are keeping time for yourself will allow you to work more effectively in other areas of your life.



EQUINE OWNER STRESS MANAGEMENT

Continued

2 GET MOVING!

Victoria: Many people find being active is a great way to manage stress. Try using physical activity as a way to manage your stress. It does not have to be anything vigorous. Just a simple outdoor walk will boost your mood and energy levels. You could also schedule some time to bike or join a local dance class. Whatever you do, make sure it's fun! Exercising daily produces endorphins which is a stress relief hormone.

Ashley: We expect our horses to stay in tip top shape through longeing and exercise, so we should expect the same from ourselves. Some activities around the barn to get you moving include cleaning stalls quickly, carrying water buckets and stacking hay. To ensure a more satisfying way to elevate your heart rate, consider creating a barn tailored workout program. Horse Illustrated has a great "[Barn Aisle Workout](#)."



By creating the tasks lists for other areas in our lives, we can ensure we are staying on target so we can get to the barn and have those special relaxing times.



3 MANAGE YOUR TIME.

Victoria: Prioritizing your daily activities can help you use your time well. Make a to-do list or write out a schedule to help you accomplish everything on your list that day. This will help you feel not so overwhelmed by deadlines or everyday tasks.

Ashley: By creating the tasks lists for other areas in our lives, we can ensure we are staying on target so we can get to the barn and have those special relaxing times. Be realistic about what you can accomplish in the allotted time and remain focused. Prioritize your list. Is it a want or is it a need? You may want to reorganize the tack room, but you need to visit with your friends at a much needed dinner date. If organizing the tack room will lower your stress levels, then that becomes a need.

EQUINE OWNER STRESS MANAGEMENT

Continued

4 EAT WELL

Victoria: Eating foods that are unprocessed like: whole grains, fruits, and vegetables is the foundation for a healthy body. Building a healthy food prep habit into your daily or weekly routine can greatly improve your overall diet, and eventually lead to reduced stress levels.

Ashley: We spend so much time analyzing the best feed and supplements for our equine family. We feed them the best we can and have high quality hay. If we spent half the effort of feeding our horses on ourselves, eating better would be easy. We carefully monitor the water intake for our horses in the winter, and we should monitor our own water. Eating the correct amount for calories and proper nutrients, our energy levels will increase to do more of the activities that bring us joy.



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5 LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Victoria: Consider adding time in your day that does not involve social media or screen time. Taking time to unplug and disconnect from your device will help you be more mindful and present where you are. This could look like taking a walk outdoors, spending some time with your family, or finding a hobby that brings you joy in the present moment.

Ashley: It's easy to get sucked into scrolling on social media while you wait for the water trough to fill or chat on the phone while cleaning stalls. Remove yourself and disconnect a bit. Try to keep the barn time just that, barn time only. Keep your phone handy for safety measures, but break those habits of checking it or looking at your smart watch. Spend more time in the quiet and bond with your horse. Horses will thank you for taking the time to brush them while the water trough fills up rather than scrolling Instagram.

Tack Corner

By Ashley Best

HOOF CARE ESSENTIAL TOOLS

No hoof, no horse. We have all heard that saying and it is especially true. Your horse's hooves play a huge role in circulation of blood throughout the body. The hooves also act as a shock absorber and cushion as the horse walks. A good quality hoof begins with a good quality hay and feed program. Proper nutrition ensures your horse has what it needs to grow a great hoof. It is also essential to have your horse on a regular hoof trimming/ shoeing schedule with a reputable farrier.

LET'S TALK ABOUT THE TOOLS TO HAVE ON HAND FOR BASIC HOOF CARE.

1. HOOF PICK WITH A BRUSH



It is essential to pick your horses feet often and every time you ride. It removes rocks, dirt and debris that becomes trapped around the frog. You can identify wounds, thrush or other issues and prevent lameness. The brush can help you quickly remove dirt and mud.

2. HORSESHOE PULLING TOOLS – IF YOUR HORSE HAS SHOES

If your horses are anything like mine, they can twist shoes and pull out nails just being out in the pasture. Learn how to effectively pull shoes if you don't have quick access to your farrier. You will need: a shoe puller/ pincer, a crease nail puller, clinch cutter and a mallet.



3. THRUSH TREATMENT



With Georgia weather during wet and humid, thrush is inevitable with horses turned out in the pasture. Cracks and splits create the perfect habitat for thrush bacterial infections in the hoof. Every hoof care box should have an anti-thrush product.



HORSE CLUB ACTIVITY

PICKING HOOVES

The safety in knowing how to properly pick out your horses feet is irreplaceable. Regular hoof cleaning can help identify issues like thrush, loose shoes or bruising and keep the hooves healthy.

Horse clubs can offer programs about how to properly clean a horses hoof safely for youth.

Examples:

- List the steps on note cards and arrange them in the proper order
- Demonstrate and have students repeat the steps on a live safe horse



4. ABSCESS KIT



Every horse owner will encounter an abscess at one point or another. By being prepared up front, you can ensure your horse get on the road to recovery quickly after consulting with your vet.

- Epsom Salt and soaking bucket
- Easy-to-apply poultices such as Animalintex
- Vet wrap and Duct tape
- Gauze pads or size 2 diapers
- Scissors

5. HOOF SUPPLEMENTS

Research shows poor quality hooves can benefit from commercially available hoof care products that contain:

- Biotin (20 milligrams per day)
- Iodine (1 milligram per day)
- Methionine (2500 milligrams per day)
- Zinc (175 to 250 milligrams per day)



HOOF DRESSINGS??



Some owners swear by these, but the research fails to support the claims of most topical hoof dressings. Climate largely effects the horse's hooves. Their hooves are very much like human fingernails and moisture makes them weak. Hooves can become softer and more brittle in the winter. Make sure your horse has a dry place to stand in like a run-in or open stall.

By keeping your best hoof forward and staying on top of hoof care, you can prevent lameness and have a healthier horse. For more information about the equine hoof, watch the archive of the 2021 Elevated Equine series about the equine hoof from Dr. Jarrod Younkin of Piedmont Equine Associates. The archives can be found at the [Newton Extension ANR Blog](#).



Extension Equine Programming

ELEVATED EQUINE

Newton County Extension currently has an online equine programming series with guest speakers like veterinarians, farriers, and other equine professionals. Check it out here:

WEST GEORGIA EQUINE SYMPOSIUM

This yearly one day equine symposium offers horse owners the opportunity to explore various topics brought to you by Carroll and Coweta Extension. [Click here for more info.](#)



4-H HORSE CLUBS

Where positive people, opportunities, and educational resources come together for the Georgia 4-Hers aspiring to excel in the Horse projects! [Click here for the Georgia 4-H horse programs Facebook page.](#)

Mark Your Calendar

3/19

West Georgia Equine Symposium

8:30 am- 4:00pm| [Coweta County Extension Office](#)| Call 770-254-2620

Topics to be covered are: fencing, horse breaking and training, hoof care and horse nutrition myths. Registration is \$30 per person. Deadline to Register is March 11. [More Info Here](#)

4/2

State 4-H Horse Judging and Hippology Contest

| [UGA- Athens](#) | [Contact your local extension office](#)

4-H members from across the state will compete by judging halter and performance classes of equine. They will also test their equine knowledge during the Hippology Contest. To join a team call your local office or for more information [click here](#).

4/26

Elevated Equine: Costly Colic

6:30 pm | [Virtual](#) | [Register Here](#)

Colic in horses can be very costly and tragic. Prevention is the key. This Elevated Equine program will cover the causes, symptoms and treatment of colic. Email abest22@uga.edu for more info.

4/30

Troup County Equine Field Day

9:00am-3:00pm [Troup County Extension Office](#) | Email dx63125@uga.edu

This field day will focus on equine and best practices when working with horses. Contact the Troup County Extension office for more information. 706-883-1675

5/10

Elevated Equine: Heat Stress

6:30 pm | [Virtual](#) | [Register Here](#)

Summer in Georgia is not only hot but it is humid. Ashley Best, Newton ANR Agent, will discuss the ways you can manage heat stress in the pasture as well as at shows and during performance. Email abest22@uga.edu for more information.

5/24

Ocmulgee Region 4-H Horse Club

6:45 pm- 8:30pm| [Monroe County](#)

The FIRST Multi-County 4-H Horse Club in Georgia!



Follow us on Social Media

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Click to follow each event registration [underlined in red](#)



THE LEADING REIN

Meet the Team

Ashley Best

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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 (MH).



Brenda Jackson

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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.



THE LEADING REIN

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