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## Saddle Winners at State 4-H Horse Show

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

The Arkansas 4-H State Horse Show took place on July 9-12 in Searcy at the White County Fairgrounds. There were approximately 900 entries in a total of 44 classes, educational events and a 4D Barrel Race. Twenty-nine counties were represented at the show.

This was the first year we offered the Ranch Horse Division, which included the Ranch Pleasure, Ranch Trail, Ranch Reining, Ranch Cutting and Confirmation classes. It was a big hit, with 140 total entries.

Here is a breakdown of the High Point Saddle winners:

### Junior Speed

Justice Pullin - Ashley County  
Aspen Thornton - Garland County

### Senior Speed

Caitlin Beckwith - Grant County

### Junior Performance

Cameron Jones - Crawford County

### Senior Performance

Hailey Henderson - Benton County

### Ranch Horse

Avery Hodges - Baxter County



Approximately 900 4-H'ers participated in the Arkansas State 4-H Horse Show. Shown are Katelyn Danzy (top photo) and Megan Crawford (bottom photo).

## 2013 Southern Regionals Wrap-Up: Arkansas Results

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

### Stock Mares

10th Place: Samantha Faulkner,  
Jefferson County

### Trail

4th Place: Katlynn Burchfield, White County  
10th Place: Lensey Watson, Benton County

### Working Cowhorse

9th Place: Dillon Cox, Independence County

### Western Pleasure

7th Place: Hailey Henderson, Benton County  
10th Place: Bailee Burchfield, White County  
*(Continued)*

## 2013 Southern Regionals Wrap-Up: Arkansas Results (Cont.)

### Western Riding

9th Place: Lexi Haynie, Faulkner County  
10th Place: Lee Thomas, White County

### Reining

3rd Place: Katlynn Burchfield, White County  
8th Place: Sarah Beth Bates, Hot Spring County

### Pole Bending

1st Place: Aspen Thornton, Garland County

### Barrel Racing

2nd Place: Aspen Thornton, Garland County  
10th Place: Bailee Burchfield, White County

### Stake Race

5th Place: Aspen Thornton, Garland County  
8th Place: Bailee Burchfield, White County

### Individual Demonstration

2nd Place: McKinzie Hummel, Benton County  
5th Place: Abby Trammell, Dallas County

### Horse Judging

7th Place: Maggie Fancher, Washington County

## Care and Storage of Tack During the Off-Season

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine

By now, most horse owners in Arkansas are winding down their season of shows, trail rides and other events or functions across the state. With the exception of a few trail riders and those who are still showing occasionally, most riders are done for awhile. With organized events also slowing considerably for the next few months, horse owners are finding themselves having some extra time on Saturdays and weekday evenings. One of the most important things we can do during this time is to properly clean our tack and store it.

Tack (saddles, bridles, halters, etc.) represents a large investment for most horse owners. For many of us, it has taken years for us to accumulate, and we take pride in our collection. Proper care can prolong the useful life and appearance of tack and can prevent injuries resulting from broken or poorly fitting tack. Dr. Cindy McCall of Auburn University lays out some tips to follow when preparing for time away from riding.

1. Saddles, bridles, halters and blankets should be checked for fit in the fall (and periodically throughout the year) because the horse's body shape and size will change as it gets older or as its level of fitness changes. A thorough safety check should be made on all tack, especially before use. Areas where leather meets metal, such as around metal buckles or fasteners, and stress points, such as girths, cinches, stirrups and reins, should be inspected closely. Worn, cracked or rotten areas and broken or weak stitching are definite signs that the tack needs to be repaired or replaced. While it is often most convenient to hang a halter on the gate to the pasture, this can also cause the material (that it is made of) to weaken and/or get stiff.
2. Before storage, leather tack should be thoroughly cleaned and conditioned to prevent damage from dirt, sweat, mildew or dryness. To properly clean leather, use a glycerin-based soap or a saddle soap that is at least 50 percent fat. Because dampness damages leather, use a minimum of water for cleaning.
3. Squeeze all excess water out of the sponge or cleaning rag, wipe it over the soap without working up a lather and apply the soap to the tack. Work the soap into the leather, paying particular attention to sweaty and dirty areas. The small, greasy dirt globules that form on tack (called jockeys) may have to be gently scraped off with a knife or fingernail. Allow tack to dry naturally. Applying heat or setting the saddle in the sun draws oils from the leather, resulting in cracking and breaking of the leather fibers. After the leather has dried, apply a conditioner. Conditioners should be rubbed into the leather until a shine comes to the surface of the leather. Conditioners should be mostly animal fats, such as lanolin. Petroleum-based products can damage vegetable-tanned leather and weaken the stitching on the tack. Neatsfoot oil is a traditional conditioner made from the bones and hooves of cattle, but it will darken the leather. There are many conditioners on the market that will not darken tack if lighter-colored leather is desirable.
4. After conditioning, leather should be covered with a fabric cover so it can breathe and stored in a dry, cool environment. Attics are generally too hot and basements are generally too damp for ideal leather storage. The storage area should also be relatively free of insects and rodents, which often chew on leather. If leather is going to be stored for a long time, it should

be periodically checked and reconditioned. Leather strapping such as stirrup leathers, bridles and reins should be unassembled and stored flat if possible. Saddles should be stored on a saddle rack so they maintain their original shape.

Horsemen who ride throughout the year will not need to worry about storing their tack for the winter. However, they still need to make routine fit and safety checks on their tack, and they should clean and condition it periodically. Purists recommend cleaning tack after each use, but many horse owners simply do not have the time. A tip for busy riders is to use a combination cleaner-conditioner for tack for frequent cleanings and then use the traditional

cleaning and conditioning procedure for major cleanups. There are several combination leather cleaner-conditioners on the market, or it is easy to make one. Melt a bar of glycerin saddle soap in a saucepan over low heat on the stove, then add approximately one pint of a leather conditioner and one to two tablespoons of vegetable oil. Mix these ingredients thoroughly and pour into a plastic container with a tight-fitting lid. As the mixture cools, it will solidify into a soap-like consistency. It is applied to the leather with a damp sponge or cloth as you would apply saddle soap.

Thank you to Dr. Cindy McCall of Auburn University for her recommendations.

## Feeding the Easy Keeper

Mark Russell, Assistant Professor - Equine



If you're fortunate enough to ever own an "easy keeper," consider yourself one of the lucky horse owners. Most horses do not fall into this category. Easy keepers are horses that usually maintain or gain weight on a minimum amount of feeding and require less management from horse owners.

But there is a downside to owning or caring for the easy keeper. The easy keeper has potential for obesity, laminitis and metabolic issues. Overfeeding an easy keeper can:

- be hard on his musculoskeletal system.
- decrease his athletic stamina.
- interfere with heat dissipation and can contribute to metabolic syndrome.
- cause insulin resistance.
- cause laminitis.

There are various aspects of feeding the easy keeper that horse owners should think about that can aid in management.

1. Owners of easy keepers should routinely perform body condition scoring (BCS) and modify feeding regimens to ensure these horses maintain a healthy body weight.

Horses at an appropriate body weight should have rib and hip bones that are not visible but are easily felt. In contrast, a horse is considered overweight if:

- His ribs are difficult to feel with firm digital pressure.
  - He has a "cresty" neck.
  - His withers are rounded and covered in fat.
  - The saddle and girth make indents in his fat when positioned.
  - His shoulder blades are not easily seen.
  - The area surrounding his tailhead is bulging or feels soft.
  - His inner thighs are in contact more than a quarter of the way down the inner thigh region when he is standing square.
2. Offer free-range mineral blocks in the pasture or stall. This should be both salt and mineral blocks. There are also "all-in-one" blocks available.
  3. Many times, an easy keeper may need forage alone to meet all dietary requirements. Thus, concentrates can possibly be eliminated.
    - A horse owner can offer forage either free-choice or as a daily ration, although as a daily ration there will be less wasted and the bale of hay will be maximized fully.
    - A healthy adult horse requires 1.5 to 2.5 percent of his body weight in hay per day. Easy keepers generally require only 1.5 percent of their body weight in hay each day. Thus, an average 1,000-pound easy keeper only needs 15 pounds of hay daily. This can be fed in either square or round bale form. While round bales are more difficult to move, they are a cheaper form of feeding. Hay should be weighed prior to making any

change. Simply estimating weight will not provide complete accuracy.

- This amount also varies greatly on quality and quantity of grazing in pasture or turnout area.
  - The quality of hay is also an important factor in determining nutritional requirements for horses. The most reliable way to determine nutrient content is to have your hay tested. Contact your county extension agent to learn more about this option.
  - Keep any and all hay feeding changes gradual. Start with a handful during the first feedings and increase slowly. You can also mix with existing hay.
4. Easy keepers who are overweight are also susceptible to developing equine metabolic syndrome (EMS) and/or insulin resistance (IR). EMS is associated with obesity, abnormal fat deposits and chronic insulin resistance. IR is a condition in which an increased production of insulin is required in order to maintain (or attempt to maintain) circulating blood sugar levels within normal limits. Horses with EMS/IR have a higher chance of developing laminitis than other non-EMS/IR horses.
- Rather than controlling EMS/IR through pharmaceutical drugs, it should be controlled through the horse's diet, as well as adding exercise into the horse's daily routine.
5. Speaking of diet, the easy keeper's pasture access should be somewhat limited.
- Turnout time during the spring and fall should be restricted to just a few hours a day if possible.
  - Also, the grass length should be 3 to 4 inches tall (fully mature, lower calorie content).
  - Grazing muzzles can also be used. However, they should only be used in an environment where they are not likely to get caught on something.

- Low sugar content hay is recommended. Have hay tested to ensure levels are 10 to 12 percent.
  - If sugar levels are high, the hay can be soaked in water for approximately 60 minutes.

6. Exercise should be part of the easy keeper's daily routine. It can be in the form of:

- Lounging
- Hand-walking
- Riding
- Ponying
- Hot walker
- Driving

Though all these factors of having an easy keeper are important, there is no substitute for a good working relationship with your veterinarian. When purchasing a horse, weigh all factors that are part of responsible ownership.

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