

THE FRONT PAGE

News & Views You Can Use

Herpes Confirmed at Pimlico

The Maryland Jockey Club has quarantined Baltimore's Pimlico Race Course due to an outbreak of equine herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) that, as of press time, had prompted the euthanization of three horses and the placement of three barns there under an Investigational Animal Hold Order.

On Jan. 26, Maryland State Veterinarian Guy Hohenhaus placed an additional Hold Order on a private Kent County farm used for off-track conditioning by a Pimlico-based trainer. Although test results were pending at this writing, one horse there had reportedly been euthanized and another was showing possible symptoms of the virus.

In an earlier development, Hohenhaus announced on Jan. 25 that an outrider's pony at Pimlico's sister track, Laurel Park, had also tested positive for EHV-1. At this writing, the pony – who was isolated at Pimlico for further testing – had not shown any symptoms of the disease, so it was unclear whether it was contagious, Hohenhaus said.

Equiery readers will recall from last year's coverage of the Columbia Horse Center outbreak that EHV-1 (also known as "rhino") causes upper respiratory infection, but can also cause neurological disease – with sometimes deadly results. As Hohenhaus confirmed, up to 80 percent of horses are believed to carry the virus, which, like the human cold sore virus, can lay dormant.

The Pimlico outbreak started on Jan. 2, when News Reporter, a 5-year-old gelding stabled in Barn 5, was reportedly found paralyzed in his stall. He was euthanized, and tests confirmed that he'd been carrying the virus.

On Jan. 6, Pimlico officials isolated horses showing signs of the virus in the Detention Barn (Barn 8) and put a precautionary Hold Order on Barn 5. All six of the isolated horses tested positive in the Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, which screens for direct evidence of the virus in the blood.

On Jan. 13, Barn 6 received a Hold Order after one of its residents, the 3-year-old filly Kalli Calling, showed symptoms similar to those of News Reporter. She was subsequently euthanized, and, according to Pimlico officials, tested PCR positive.

Six days later, the Maryland Department of Agriculture placed a Hold Order on Pimlico's Barn A – located on the opposite side of the track from Barns 5 and 6 – after a horse there showed signs of EHV-1. The horse, 3-year-old General Strike, tested positive, and was euthanized on Jan. 25.

According to Maryland Jockey Club officials, the Jan. 21 decision to quarantine Pimlico was spurred in part by the news that a horse stabled at Pennsylvania's Penn National, who had run at Laurel the same day as the ill-fated Kalli Calling, had since tested positive for EHV-1. "We felt we had to take some kind of action, albeit drastic, to deal with it," said Lou Raffetto, chief operating officer of the Maryland Jockey Club.

As of press time, a total of 11 horses at Pimlico had tested positive for the virus.

Meanwhile, the nearly 110 horses affected by the Hold Orders were being allowed to train after the track's other approximately 400 horses had trained.

The quarantine – combined with related restrictions on the movements of racehorses in and

out of Maryland – has caused a shortage of entries and cutbacks in live racing at Laurel Park. Pimlico's racing season begins in mid-April and includes The Preakness Stakes, the middle leg of the Triple Crown, in May.

As for the unidentified Kent County farm, the MDA reported it had received a horse from Pimlico on Jan. 10, before track officials quarantined the facility. "This new occurrence is extremely unfortunate, and we are working closely with everyone involved and using the best science available in the equine research community to prevent any possible spread of illness," said Hohenhaus. "It is believed that this incident is not a distinctly new case. We encourage horse owners with concerns to contact their private veterinarian to determine if a vaccination or booster is recommended for their horses at this time."

According to the MDA, there is currently no known method to reliably prevent the neurologic form of EHV-1 infection. However, it is recommended that horse owners observe the appropriate vaccination procedures in an attempt to reduce the incidence of the respiratory form of EHV-1 infection, which may help prevent the neurologic form. Transmission of the virus is believed to occur via coughing or sneezing, as well as by direct contact with infected horses, feed and equipment. Initial signs of the illness commonly include an unexplained fever and mild to severe ataxia or unsteady balance.

Private veterinarians with questions or suspected cases of EHV-1 are asked to call the

MDA Animal Health office at 410-841-5810. The MDA says there is no reason to believe that human health is at risk from this virus.

For additional updates on the herpes outbreak, please visit www.equiery.com.

Pittman on Horse Park: Skeptic No More!

*by Stewart Pittman
Dodon Farm, Davidsonville*

Plans for the Maryland Horse Park at the Navy Dairy Farm in Gambrills are coming together in a very big way. I was a skeptic at first, wondering why the taxpayers of Maryland should back the bonds to pay for our playground. Now that I have seen the scope of the project and been educated a little about economic development, I truly believe that this thing will work, not just for the Maryland horse industry, but also for the state's economy. It's a perfect site and a fantastic design.

To get a vision of the scope of this project, you should start by looking at the site drawing, blowing it up on your computer and imagining the atmosphere of the place. It is at www.maryland-horsepark.com. Gralla Architects did the design, and they are probably the world's #1 designer of equestrian venues.

There will be 860 permanent stalls, a 2500-seat indoor arena, an attached sales pavilion to rival Keeneland's, 15 outdoor warm-up and competition arenas, a huge Grand Prix field with stadium seating, a 1-mile turf

steeplechase track, a 5/8-mile training track for the Thoroughbred sales, a horse museum, an agriculture education center to honor the

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history of the Navy Dairy Farm, a tack and a feed store, a great cafe to hang out in, and some of the best cross-country terrain anywhere, with not only gently rolling hills, but also outstanding spectator viewing vistas. The site is 865 acres.

All of it is laid out brilliantly, with thousands of trees planted where you need them, turnout paddocks next to barns, parking tucked into all the right places where it is hardly noticed, and storm water collection ponds that look natural. It is what they call a "green design," and it takes a piece of land that is now plowed up for crops and fertilized by chicken manure and restores it to grass, trees, water, and permeable parking surfaces. Property values for neighbors will definitely go up.

OK, so it's fancy – but it's also expensive. Where will \$100 million come from to build this thing? Well, it comes from the people who visit the park to compete and to spectate. Some of it is facility rental, but most of it is taxes generated every time one of these folks sits down at a restaurant, rents a hotel room, or goes on a shopping spree. That's direct revenue into the state and county treasuries, and according to the state's own Department of Business and Economic Development, that kind of money will more than pay back the bonds used for development. These guys only support projects that they think will make money for the state, and they are big supporters of the Horse Park.

How can we be sure that the park will attract these lucrative national and international competitions? Part of the answer is the quality of the facility, but our ace in the hole is the location. Other venues of this size are in remote areas. Gambrills is surrounded by Annapolis, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. It is 10 minutes from BWI airport, [the possible site of a future] horse import/export facility, and it is minutes from 9,000 hotel rooms, tons of shopping, golf, and water sports. The location provides a local population of potential spectators, and is a market where companies want to advertise. That opens the door for competition organizers to attract the sponsorship and media coverage that they all so desperately need.

Imagine for a minute what Maryland will become if every household gets peppered with ads about horse events, and if our [mainstream] press starts covering the competitions. Horse sports are great entertainment. In Europe, they are all over the press, and crowds pack the stands at major competitions. Maryland can be that way, and it should be that way. It does our society good to connect to our rural heritage and to nature through horses.

The aspect of the Horse Park that I have not covered – because to me, it is so obvious – is the use that Marylanders can make of it. The Stadium Authority has polled local equestrian organizations extensively, and depends on them to fill the calendar. Pony Club, 4-H, collegiate equestrians, and the associations representing all of our varied horse sports have expressed a desire to use the facility. The next version of the site map will include a network of trails that will be open for public use. This will be "our" Horse Park, as well a destination for outsiders.

Hopefully, you are convinced that this thing is worth fighting for, because we need the help of every horse person in the state to make it happen. In politics, there is always opposition and there is always misinformation. We need to get a bill introduced and passed in the General Assembly to back the bonds to move forward. They [went] into session in mid-January, and they are done three months later.

The governor wants this and prominent Democrats want it, but this is an election year, and everyone is nervous. They will only support what their constituents demand that they support. They are listening to us.

There is a small but vocal opposition that supports the Navy Dairy Farm's most recent temporary tenant, a farmer who grows crops organically (chicken manure as a nitrogen source). Unlike their wiser neighbors, who see the Horse Park as the only viable way to protect the land from Pentagon pressure to sell to the highest bidder, these opponents have a way of scaring off local politicians. Again, we need to be vocal in our support.

Here is what you can do:

1. Go to www.annearundelhorses.org or www.mdhorsepark.info and log in to show your support, adding the reasons why you support the proposal and anything you might be able to do to help.

2. Contact your delegates to the Maryland General Assembly and the governor. You can do this through the websites as well.

3. If you live in Anne Arundel County, contact the County Executive and your County Council reps. annearundelhorses.org has contact information.

4. Print whatever documents you find useful from the websites and take them to some organizations that you are connected with to get them to write letters. Make sure that you get copies to the website contact person. Don't limit this to horse organizations. Think farmers, environmentalists, business people, open space advocates.

Every phone call, e-mail, and meeting has a big impact in this case. Tip the scales our way and let's make this thing happen.

Let it be known that Maryland is horse country!

AMERICAN HORSE COUNCIL UPDATES

Immigration Reform

Congress is expected to make immigration reform a key issue in the upcoming months. Last December, Congressman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) introduced H.R. 4437, "The Border and Immigration Enforcement Act of 2005." The American Horse Council supports border security, but it is concerned that the "enforcement-only" approach may overwhelm the attempt at needed reform.

The issue of comprehensive immigration and guest worker reform is important to the horse industry. The AHC encourages horse people to contact their senators and representatives about the importance of reform that includes a practical foreign-worker policy. You can find their contact information at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov. For additional information, visit www.horsecouncil.org.

**State Necropsy,
Cremation &
Disposal Fees
on the Rise –
See March Equiery
for Details**

Animal Enterprise Terrorism

In 1992, Congress passed the "Animal Enterprise Protection Act." This act made it a federal crime to steal animals, damage property or generally disrupt activities involving animals, which includes rodeos, horse shows and other lawful equine competitive events. The AHC was a major supporter of the legislation.

Last October, Sen. James Inhofe introduced the "Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act of 2005" (S.1926), which amends and updates the 1992 law. Rep. Tom Petri introduced companion legislation (H.R. 4239) in the House in November.

In the new legislation, the property of a person or entity that is connected in some way with an animal enterprise (not just the enterprise itself) would now be protected from intentional damage by animal rights terrorists. In addition, it would prohibit threats to individuals and their families due to their relationship with an animal enterprise and increase penalties for intentionally causing a person harm, either through economics, injury or threats. It also expands the definition of an animal enterprise to include commercial enterprises that use or sell animals or animal products for profit, including animal shelters, breeders, pet stores and furriers.

CLARIFICATION: In the December Front Page, on p. 8, second paragraph, the first and second sentences should have read: "Losey found it inspiring to watch her mare Val warm to strangers; she was never too keen on them before the trip, something which Losey attributes to possible abuse of the mare in the past." *The Equiery* regrets any misunderstanding.

(continued on page 104)