



### **MARE Center seminar topics of much interest to equine community**

By: Donna M. McDonald

**Middleburg, Va., October 27, 2008** – A record crowd turned out for the Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center's (MARE Center) 4<sup>th</sup> annual day-long equine educational seminar, entitled, "Keeping Horses Happy, Healthy, and Whole: Advances in Equine Health Care Management." Seminar participants were enthusiastic and inquisitive, which was evident through a comment made by one of them, "This is the best event yet and I've attended all of them here. I've learned so much!"

Six invited speakers, all of whom are veterinarians, shared information regarding their specialties with the attentive audience. Exhibits and hands-on demonstrations were presented by speakers on their respective topics, such as Dr. Jana Froeling's presentation on chiropractic and acupuncture for horses.

Dr. Jana Froeling, with Full Circle Equine Service – [www.fullserviceequinecenter.com](http://www.fullserviceequinecenter.com) - in Amissville, Va., talked about the importance of equine chiropractic and acupuncture services, which she demonstrated on "Tess," one of the MARE center's research mares. An equine chiropractic evaluation involves not only asking the owner for a detailed history of the animal, but also includes using palpations to examine the horse by means of touch. Chiropractic can improve performance in many horses and can contribute to a longer, healthier life. Equine acupuncture involves manipulating the nervous system to produce therapeutic effects and is one of five tenets of traditional Chinese medicine. She stated that one lesson she hoped participants would take away from her lecture was that "chiropractic and acupuncture can be used anytime in keeping the horse healthy."

Foot care in the horse is paramount to the horse's performance and longevity. The term "foot" refers to the hoof and all of the structures within it. Dr. Scott Pleasant, a veterinarian and professor with the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine – [www.vetmed.vt.edu](http://www.vetmed.vt.edu) - in Blacksburg, Va., gave a comprehensive presentation on equine foot care. Pleasant stated, "The key to strong, healthy feet are good conformation and proper foot care." He discussed with the audience topics such as foot conformation, when

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and why to shoe horses, trimming techniques, and how environmental factors affect foot care. Throughout his talk, Pleasant used actual horse hooves and lower limbs to point out the anatomy of the foot and to show the audience how feet on the horse looks when affected by different ailments. The audience asked Pleasant many questions about the angle of the hoof. Hoof angle is a term used to describe the alignment from the hoof in relation to pastern bones, which lead from the horse's "ankle" to the hoof. Proper angle is important for blood flow to the hoof and to reduce strain tendons in the lower leg. During lunch break, Bill Johnson, who attended the seminar, said, "I'm going to remember this business about the angles. I got a much clearer picture and I liked the models Dr. Pleasant presented."

Dr. Mark V. Crisman, a veterinarian and professor with the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine in Blacksburg, Va., spoke on new vaccines for horses. He also reviewed and updated general vaccinations programs, including when, why, and what type of vaccines should be used to keep horses healthy. Crisman explained that these factors can help horse owners decide which vaccines to use and depends on how much exposure the horse has to a given infectious/contagious disease. For example, the horse that stays at home in the pasture will not need some of the vaccines, such as for influenza, that a horse that travels frequently for racing or showing needs. Pam Wisor, who attended the seminar stated, "I'm glad to find out from Dr. Crisman that some vaccinations are not necessary for my horses, if they were not previously exposed to certain diseases. I think I vaccinate out of habit, but maybe I don't have to do so much of it now."

"Like kids, start your horse at the dentist early", was the opening remark from Dr. Claudia True, a veterinarian at Woodside Equine Clinic, in Ashburn, Va., - [www.woodsidgeequineclinic.com](http://www.woodsidgeequineclinic.com). Using an equine skull, complete with a removable tooth, True talked about the structure and diseases of the teeth and mouth in horses. She explained, using the removable tooth, how long horse teeth actually are and how important knowing the anatomy of the horse's mouth is for the owner. Poor dental care in the horse may result in weight loss, dropping feed, or chewing "funny". If not properly cared for these issues can result in poor performance because tooth pain may cause the horse not to handle properly while riding and further complicate the horse's overall health. Joan Jernigan, a client of True's and a seminar participant said, "I didn't realize the teeth went back so far. Dr. True did dental surgery on one of my horses. This was after several attempts with other vets to correct a problem. Her work is top quality." Eighty percent of True's patients at Woodside Equine Clinic require equine dentistry care.



Dr. Martin Furr, a veterinarian and professor for the Marion duPont Equine Medical Center – [www.equinemedicalcenter.net](http://www.equinemedicalcenter.net) – spoke to the audience regarding the importance of biosecurity which are processes and procedures that ensure people and horses are protected from acquiring an infectious disease, or transmitting it to another. Furr talked about equine herpesvirus (EHV), a common virus that appears in 70 percent of adult horses yet these horses may never become symptomatic. Using such biosecurity measures as identifying and isolating infectious horses, limiting horse movement, routine cleaning with soap and hot water of buckets, trailers, etc. is sufficient to kill EHV, which lives only a few days in most environments. A disinfectant is necessary if dealing with an animal known to be infected. Andrea Donaghy, a vendor at the seminar representing Virginia Equine Research said, “While I was already aware of horse-to-horse contamination, I need to focus more time on washing of buckets and stalls and how to prevent de-contamination to the horse feed.”

Dr. Harold McKenzie, also a veterinarian and professor at Marion duPont Scott Equine Medical Center, covered the topic of equine intestinal parasites and how to control them. McKenzie explained horse owners need to know about equine parasites, as they can impair feed digestion and absorption, alter intestinal function, damage the intestine, impair blood supply to the intestine, and cause substantial blood loss and anemia. McKenzie spoke about the importance of de-worming and the types of medications that should be used to control specific parasites in the horse. Current research on equine intestinal parasites proves that we cannot continue to use the same methods of parasitic control that we have been using for the past thirty years, as some parasites are becoming resistant to drugs that are most commonly used. According to McKenzie, “Effective parasite control will require assessing and monitoring the actual parasite problem on farms and how we are dealing with the problems on an individual basis.”

Jill Gordon-Moore, who owns Corner Farm in Clarke County mentioned that she had gained a great deal of information from the seminar. She said, “I really like the variety of topics. I’m happy to hear Dr. McKenzie speak on de-worming and parasite control because the horse community in Clarke County is having problems with equine parasites that seem a more than just the norm.”

The seminar luncheon was catered by Rodney Lillard, owner and operator of Mill Valley Barbeques in Graves Mill, Va. – [www.millvalleybbq.com](http://www.millvalleybbq.com). In a nutshell, one participant said it best, “The food was yummy and the seminar excellent!”

For more information on the MARE Center’s research and Extension programs, please visit [www.vaes.vt.edu/middleburg](http://www.vaes.vt.edu/middleburg) or e-mail [MAREC@vt.edu](mailto:MAREC@vt.edu). The center plans to provide another seminar in 2009.

Virginia Tech’s Middleburg Agricultural Research and Extension Center’s mission is to advance the health and well-being of the horse through graduate education for equine professionals, nutritional and pasture management research, and community educational programs. Located in Middleburg, Va., the center is one of

13 Agricultural Research and Extension Centers located across the state that help serve the commonwealth's agricultural needs.

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