

**Success Story: January 23, 2020**

## **Successful Women Managing Horses Program**

**By Peggy Auwerda and Madeline Schultz**

No doubt about it, women are the majority owners and caretakers of horses, with some studies putting women horse ownership at 90 percent compared to men, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association. The American Horse Council Federation in conjunction with the Innovation Group (2017), reported the equine industry contributes \$122 billion to the U.S. economy, employing 1.74 million people. In Iowa, horse ownership is big business, with 55,000 horses, mules or donkeys owned or sold, generating sales revenue of \$19.7 million, according to the 2017 U.S. Census of Agriculture. As horse owners and business managers, women make important decisions about the equine in their care. Educational opportunities that present relevant information on industry issues and foster engagement between producers, owners, and allied industry members, are needed and can help contribute to the success of the industry.

Response:

“It seems that because horse owners often have a part-time horse business, they are not as comfortable asking questions,” commented Peggy Auwerda, Iowa State University Department of Animal Science Extension and Outreach Equine Specialist. She wants to provide educational opportunities for an underserved audience. When Auwerda previously taught the business side of horses in some of her university courses and extension programs, she found people wanted to know more about management. Those experiences and learning about the Annie’s Project farm business management courses inspired Auwerda to develop a multi-session business-focused course for women horse owners in Iowa.

Recognizing the value of Iowa’s equine, and the majority of horse owners being women, Auwerda worked with a group of Iowa State University educators and private industry professionals to hold a twelve-hour course called Women Managing Horses. The first course was co-facilitated with Sarah Zwiefel, Wright County Outreach and Marketing Specialist, in Clarion, IA beginning November 14, 2019. A live webinar offered virtual attendance of the course. Women Managing Horses offered women an opportunity to learn more about Iowa’s equine industry from a business and production perspective. Women Managing Horses was sponsored in part by ISU Extension and Outreach Women in Ag Program, Iowa Horse Council, Farm Credit Services of America and the USDA Risk Management Agency.

Auwerda collaborated with Kelvin Leibold, ISU Department of Economics Farm Management Specialist, and Lee Schulz, ISU Department of Economics Associate Professor, on an Equine Enterprise Budget for use with the course. Leibold presented the financial management topics for the new course. “Kelvin answered a lot of questions the women had,” stated Auwerda. The women wanted to know more about business planning and taxes than they could cover in the first course. Auwerda would like to build in more time for these topics in the next course she offers.

Another management tool Auwerda introduced course participants to was Feed XL. A useful component of this online spreadsheet is the informative reports it generates to explain the feed analysis and recommendations.

Whether women just wanted to learn more about Iowa's equine industry, or needed to find more profitability from their equine business, the course offered something for everyone. Sessions covered financial documentation and breakeven analysis, equine insurance, annual horse health care plans, evaluation of feed rations, marketing an equine business, facilities and environmental management, and land use decisions. A variety of resources were provided to help women consider important management decisions. Every participant received a completion certificate at the end of the course.

People attending face-to-face and online came consistently. "Everyone picked up something from the course and that made me feel good," said Auwerda. Participants brought a mix of personal experiences from those owning one horse to those managing full-time horse businesses. Overall, people were interested in the course topics and enjoyed the program. "There was always good interaction and the women learned a lot from each other and the speakers," said Auwerda. Overall, the first Women Managing Horses program was successful.

#### Outcomes:

The first Women Managing Horses course was attended by 18 women; most were from Iowa (88%), while the other 12% were from other states. Thirty-five percent attended the face-to-face course and 65% participated via online sessions. Each session was recorded, and all participants were provided access to the recordings slides and resources.

Participants completed 15 pre-course assessments using an online Qualtrics response system. At the end of the course, 8 individuals completed a post-course assessment. Responses indicated interacting with others in the industry, learning from first-hand experiences of the speakers, and increasing general knowledge on the topics presented were valuable in their roles within the horse industry. Other feedback from attendees indicated the speakers and topics were well suited to addressing the needs of the audience, and the information presented was valuable.

The respondents shared the following goals for using the information they learned:

Protect my farm from liabilities by better understanding options available.

I attend equine educational events to increase my knowledge and then take back to my 4-H kids.

I am hoping to take the knowledge and information I learned from the Women Managing Horses program and use it in my day to day operations as Barn Manager!

Maintain or improve the quality of life for my equine and look at efficient and financially effective changes that may reduce long term costs

The most important thing I took from this course was about insurance policies, what to look for, what to have coverage for, etc.

I learned how to use FeedXL and that has helped me answer some feed questions.

I will be comparing more products as we go forward in our business (sawdust bags, feed, etc.)

Will be using many of the references for benchmarks and to improve current practices

#### Participant Stories:

Robin Ballantyne is in her 26th year of managing a full-time horse business with riding lessons

in Linn County, Iowa. “It’s great to have more programs for horse people to learn from,” she commented. Robin made the drive to Wright County for the four-session course. “I like to feel the energy in the air and it gave me a chance to get away and connect with other horse owners,” Robin stated.

Robin especially appreciated learning more about horse facilities. She enjoyed the ‘What’s Wrong with this Picture?’ activity led by Kapil Arora, ISU Extension and Outreach Agricultural Engineering Specialist. “I own my facilities and am always looking for something new or better,” shared Robin. She gained some new information about rubber mats and stall cleaning that was helpful to her.

Her favorite guest speaker was Dr. Loretta Berkland, VMD, Sibley Veterinary Clinic. “She was just awesome. Dr. Berkland gave us updates on bio security, vaccinations, and deworming. Things always change,” commented Robin. She was also interested to learn more about USDA Farm Service Agency loans and analyzing the top five biggest expenses to save money.

Robin is excited about future extension programs for horse owners. She explains that many horses are raised on small-scale farms and women are interested in learning how to make their businesses more profitable and environmentally friendly. “We need specifics like how to compost manure and who will want the end product,” she explained. “Greenbriar Riding Academy is a safe alternative to owning your own horse,” explains Robin. She believes there are many personal growth benefits from interacting with horses, “I want to keep horses accessible for everyone,” Robin commented, “Tell Iowa State to keep bringing these programs to us.”

Judi Nelson, who resides with her horses in Blackhawk County has provided horse therapy for ten years as a certified instructor of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International. “I really wanted to go [to the Women Managing Horses class] because of the topics,” shared Judi. She was ready to drive the 90 minutes to class, but was delighted when the ‘live’ on-line option opened up. “I loved this format, it worked really well. The Extension staff grabbed my questions right away. There was a lot of networking going on in the background for me.”

Judi previously participated in the ISU Master Equine Management program. She describes herself as a lifelong learner. “By keeping in front of the information, you will know what you need to do when a situation comes up,” she explains. Recently, her horse had an injury near an ear. Judi knew what to do and saved herself an extra veterinary expense. Judi says it’s always good to get a veterinarian in front of horse owners. She enjoyed the session with Dr. Loretta Berkland, VMD, Sibley Veterinary Clinic. “It was a good reminder we need an accurate weight for the horse to determine the correct dosage of some dewormers to prevent injury, especially for the mini’s,” recalled Judi.

Her favorite speaker was Wade Ellerbroek, Ellerbroek and Associates, Sibley, IA, spoke on insurance. “A lot of people get scared about the costs of insurance, so we need to have some examples,” stated Judi. On another topic, Judi noted, “Feed XL is cool. I’ve used it before and it’s very helpful. You still need to monitor your horses to feed for good condition.”

One of the best things about the Women Managing Horses course was the networking. “People can have different opinions and give explanations as to why they think that way,” said Judi. That was very interesting to her. She also enjoyed learning from her classmates experiences. “Somebody else had the same issue, and they told you how they fixed it, and you can try that too,” explained Judi.

**Impact:**

Judi hopes ISU Extension will keep offering programs for horse owners. She feels even busy people can fit in on-line courses and the on-line format can help keep the costs manageable, too. “I would love to see sessions on careers in the equine industry,” she added. Judi is passionate about keeping the horse industry affordable and doable for everybody. “Sharing examples of successful horse businesses is important to maintaining the horse industry in Iowa and nationally,” she added.

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