

2008 Annual Report, Wyoming Horse Council

Well, the Wyoming Horse Council has been up and running for a year and three months, and thanks to the hard work of a lot of people I think it has been an unqualified success.

There is no doubt that the two most important things that got us off to a great start were the help of the Wyoming Livestock Board and the Wyoming Business Council.

The Livestock Board provided encouragement and support from day one, and they have kept us up to date on a number of equine health issues as well as the State's Brand Inspection program. Special thanks go to Dr Cook, Dr. Logan, Dr. Emerich, Lee Romsa and Jim Schwartz. They have attended all our meetings and provided us with invaluable information. The horse industry in Wyoming is affected every day by the actions of the Livestock Board, and until now there has really been no formal method for them to receive input from horse people. It is to their credit that they have encouraged us at every step and are actively seeking input.

We could not have accomplished anything without the help and encouragement of Cindy Garretson-Weibel and her staff at the Business Council. They provided us with a \$1,500 seed money grant to get organized and up and running, and we would still be struggling to accomplish anything at all without their help. They also provided us with assistance in developing a display booth for trade shows and designed and printed a membership brochure for us.

Our first big effort was to set up a booth at the 2007 joint Stock Growers, Wool Growers, Conservation District Mega-Convention, and this gave us a chance to begin to let people know that the Horse Council existed and what our goals were. We also had a booth at both the 2007 and 2008 State Fairs, which gave us the opportunity to talk to a lot of people about the Horse Council.

One of our primary goals was to have a visible presence at the 2008 Legislative session; we testified on two bills which both passed, we had a display for a week in the tunnel between the Herschler Building and the Capitol Building, and we co-hosted a Legislative reception with The Wyoming Stock Growers Association.

The most important bill that we supported provided financial assistance to help new large animal veterinarians pay off student loans. As you may know there is a nation wide shortage of large animal vets and the problem is especially acute in Wyoming. The bill passed and I understand that a number of new young vets were able to take advantage of the program this fall and begin practicing in Wyoming.

Our Legislative reception was a real success and I had a number of comments from legislators that they were really glad to see the Wyoming Horse industry represented at

the session. We received financial help from the Wyoming all Breeds Racing Association and the American Quarter Horse Association to host the reception, and without their help we could not have been as successful in Cheyenne.

One of our initial goals was to re-establish an equine program at the University of Wyoming, and while I am hesitant to take all the credit, (there were a number of individuals who worked hard on this issue) we succeeded beyond our wildest dreams. The Extension Service has reassigned Gary Grubb to work full time with the 4-H horse program, and the Animal Science Department is in the process of hiring a new faculty member to teach equine classes. We had hoped to get one individual to do both jobs, so we are very excited to see this level of support for the equine industry at the University of Wyoming. Thanks go to Dr. Hixon of the Animal Science Department, Dr. Whipple of the Extension Service as well as Dean Galey for all their help.

I do need to extend a special thanks to Teresa Craig in Gillette for developing and supporting our web site at www.wyominghorsecouncil.com. She has done an excellent job on a completely volunteer basis to develop our site, and she deserves a big round of applause.

Our last big project was to co-host the Equine Expo in Casper in November. Our partner was the Wyoming Business Council and Scott Keith of the Business Council along with Milt Green of the Extension Service did a tremendous amount of work to make it a success. Judy Horton and Jack Settlemire represented the Horse Council and also worked very hard to make it all come off without a hitch. Special thanks needs to go to our clinicians, Bill Smith, Peter Campbell and Bruce Laird, who each did really superb presentations working with young horses. Jack Settlemire and Steve McDonald conducted an excellent seminar on Equine forage and Robert Smoot gave a very well attended seminar on what a AQHA judge looks for. We also had a very good stallion review and I have heard through the grapevine that people who exhibited were able to generate some bookings directly from the review. Special thanks also need to be extended to all of the people and firms that brought displays to the trade show, it is a lot of work to set up and man a booth, and we really appreciate their participation. We had excellent attendance for our first year and we are already beginning to plan next year's Expo.

On the national level the horse slaughter issue is still being discussed, and there was a bill introduced last year in the US House that would have prohibited the transportation of equines to slaughter. We did write a letter to Representative Cubin on this issue and she was very supportive of our position. This bill did not go anywhere this year but it is very likely it will come back again next year.

Our work plan for 2009 includes the following items.

- 1) We will have a strong legislative presence in January and February in Cheyenne and we have already scheduled our Legislative Reception on the evening of January 20th. Any and all interested horse people are welcome and encouraged to attend, just give me a call at 307 634-1743 if you can get to Cheyenne on the 20th, we need all the people we can get.
- 2) We are planning on having a second Equine Expo in 2009.
- 3) We will continue to monitor legislation at the federal level.
- 4) We will work hard to build membership so we can be more effective in 2009.
- 5) We will work directly with the federal land management agencies to make sure that there are no further restrictions placed on equine access to federal lands.
- 6) We will have display booths at State Fair and other locations to promote the Wyoming horse industry.

Submitted by;

Bill Gentle

President, Wyoming Horse Council