

Wyoming Horse Council News

Update on the Equine Science Program at the University of Wyoming

By Amy K. McLean, Equine Lecturer/ Equine Extension Specialist

In October 2008, the University of Wyoming began searching for an academic professional to fill the role of an equine lecturer and extension specialist. For years, the University's has been well known for its success with the collegiate rodeo team coached by Dr. George Howard. He has led the team to 7 national all around girl championships. In addition, to a well-respected rodeo program, the university also offered an ISHA Equestrian team coached by Cari Randall. Interestingly, the school was home to many students with an equine interest but no program for say was offered for these students to expand their equine science knowledge. However, the scenario at the University of Wyoming is changing at rapid speed!

I was very fortunate to be selected and hired in January 2009 for this position. Just to provide you with some background information, I am originally from Madison, Georgia where I grew up on a mule and donkey farm. I graduated from the University of Georgia with my B.S. in Animal Science with equine emphasis and a second major in dairy science and a minor in agribusiness. I went on to complete my Masters of Science at Georgia in Animal Science. After working in the industry for a few years in the feed industry and showing mules for our family's farm, I decided to return to school and pursue my Ph.D. In August, I moved to Laramie, WY from East Lansing, MI (where I was completing my Ph.D. in Equine Sciences at Michigan State University). Since my official start date and tremendous support from Dr. Doug Hixon, the Department Head of the Animal Science program, the equine science program has grown from an idea to a new program! Due to student demand, the first week I was on the job, we added two new courses, ANSC 3555 Introduction to Equine Evaluation and Selection (being taught this spring) and ANSC 3560 Advanced Equine Evaluation and Selection (will be taught Fall 2010). About two weeks after my starting date I was asked to be the advisor for the newly formed University of Wyoming Polo Team (whose men's team just recently competed at the Regional tournament in Santa Barbara, CA).

And a few weeks' later horses were added to the ANSC Livestock Showing and Fitting class. This class allowed students to learn more about handling, training, grooming and preparing horses to show for Showmanship. It was the first time in many years horses were a part of the Little International Livestock Show. Since, the University of Wyoming is not currently raising horses, we were very fortunate to be able to use 7 ranch horses that were privately owned by University employees (Travis Smith, Dave Moore and Jason Moore). Yet, the demand for more horse courses, experience and organizations did not stop there!

In November, I was responsible for helping students start a new student organization, the Collegiate Horsemen's Association. This is a "horseless horse group" meaning the students have an equine interest and want to learn more about the equine industry in terms of careers, science, technology, etc. as well as offer programs and events that give back to the equine community. The group currently has over 20 members. They attended the National Collegiate Horsemen's Association Convention in Denver, CO this past January. In addition, they have organized and put on their first fundraiser, a 4-D Barrel Race. The group hopes to host and organize more equestrian events in the near future.

In addition, to advising the Polo team and the Horsemen's association, I am also teaching two courses this semester, ANSC 1030 Equine Management and ANSC 3555 Introduction to Equine Evaluation and Selection. The Equine Management class has close to 40 students mostly freshmen and sophomores. This course has attracted many students from different majors across campus. In addition, many of the students are members of the different equestrian groups such as the rodeo team, equestrian team, polo team and the horsemen's association. We were delighted to host one of the University of Wyoming's board of Trustee's Dr. Myron Haynes. He seemed to thoroughly enjoy the course and supported our efforts in teaching equine science. I have tried to incorporate a lab in this class and include as many hands on opportunities as possible for these students. Once again, we have mainly relied on the ranch horses used at the Beef Unit for class labs. These 4 horses have been very willing participants in the labs and allowed the students to gain additional hands on experience. We have also worked with the Vet Science program and Dr. Jonathan Fox, who recently did a fantastic gross anatomy lab for the students. The students had a chance to actually see and identify different anatomical parts of a horse such as the lower front limbs, digestive tract, and cranial anatomy.

The ANSC 3555 Introduction to Equine Evaluation and Selection course has close to 35 students enrolled. The student demographics are very similar to the management course. In this course students learn how to analyze and select equine based on form to function. This April 9 students from this class will travel to Katy and Fort Worth, Texas to attend two horse-judging competitions, 1- The National Reining Horse Breeder's Classic in Katy, and 2- The American Paint Horse Sweepstakes Contest in Fort Worth, TX. To my knowledge this is the first time the University of Wyoming will be represented at intercollegiate horse judging contests. The students are currently practicing each week after class in preparation for the contests. These students will also have the chance to visit several premier horse training and breeding operations such as McQuay Farms in Tioga, TX once home to Hollywood Dun It and the first rider to win \$2 Million, Mr. Tim McQuay.

When I was interviewing for this position one thing I really wanted to help implement was an equine internship program. Internship programs offer students the chance to learn practical and in depth knowledge on how the industry works as well as hands on experience that cannot be replicated in the classroom. Several students will be interning around the country in the next year at places such as the Lazy E, McQuay Farms, Kaeson Farms, and with the Ky Equine Internship Management Program. In addition, to helping find suitable farms and ranches for these students to gain industry experience, I have hopes of one day developing an international equine study aboard program. Much of my Ph.D. research was conducted in West Africa and I hope we can develop such a program in the near future that will expose students to the aspects of the global equine industry and market.

In addition to teaching these two courses, I'm a member of an active group of faculty members that are working on developing an Equine Option at the University. Adding an Equine option means adding more equine science courses such as Equine Behavior, Equine Reproduction, Equine Health and Management, Equine Business, and Equine Production and Management. We are currently looking into allowing some of the equine science credits earned at junior colleges to count towards the option. In the past many credits received at junior colleges

unfortunately were not accepted. We hope the administration will approve the new option and the new courses will hopefully be in place in the near future.

On the extension side of things, I'm currently trying to help up-date and edit the 4-H Horse Program rulebook (new rule changes and up dates were submitted in September 2009 still waiting approval), implement a new 4-H event, Hippology (a contest that includes several phases that ultimately improves and helps increase equine science knowledge) as well as help with as many county riding and judging clinics as possible. I strongly believe the youth are our future and some of my best students come from a 4-H background. I have also had the chance to get out in the state and speak with several counties. I look forward to doing more seminars and helping with the 4-H program!

If you have any questions about the University of Wyoming Equine Program please do not hesitate to contact me at amclean1@uwyo.edu or 307-766-4373. Also, please keep in mind we are currently seeking donations in terms of tack, equine, as well as monetary support for the Horse Judging Team and the Equine Science Program. Thank you again for all the wonderful support from the industry, extension and the University of Wyoming!

Happy Trails!

Amy