



Maryland  
HORSE INDUSTRY BOARD



## Equi-Tourism *Tapping into your horse business' potential*

by **J. Robert Burk**  
*Executive Director*

If you've read the newspaper, listened to the radio, followed legislative updates, or watched T.V. over the last year, you've probably noticed the abundance of media attention focused on the Maryland horse industry. The good news is that most of the media attention has focused on the successes of the horse industry including our new image as a viable agricultural industry. Convincing legislators, members of agricultural/statewide industries, and the general public about our much-deserved position as one of the top ag industries in Maryland didn't happen overnight—and most may say it hasn't happened fast enough. Many add that we still need more publicity and more visibility for the Maryland horse industry. MHIB agrees.

Overlooked in all this recent media hype about the horse industry is our contribution to tourism in Maryland. In fact, we tend to over look equi-tourism ourselves, as well.

That's right, equi-tourism. We've all been to at least one horse event in Maryland and found ourselves in awe at the sheer numbers that have come out to enjoy the horse and spend their hard earned dough. In a study conducted by the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development in 1990, it was found that horse racing alone was the largest spectator sport, bringing more than 3.9 million spectators each year. But aside from race tracks, the Maryland Hunt Cup, Horse World Expo, and Fair Hill International draw in thousands of spectators, competitors, vendors and sponsors each year. Not to be overlooked are the less high profile but equally prolific events such as Tuckahoe Outlaw Days, Columbia Classic, Capital Challenge and many more.

What all these activities translate into are millions—perhaps billions—of dollars spent on Maryland equi-tourism each year. But, horse business owners have yet to truly tap this potential. Maryland offers Bed & Breakfasts with trail riding or nightly boarding of your own horse. We offer rental stables with rides through some of the most breathtaking countryside in the nation. Many of our top

[www.equiere.com](http://www.equiere.com) | 800-244-9580

breeding farms offer tours. The importance of the horse industry tapping into its equi-tourism potential is to not only increase the size of our wallets but also to solidify our industry and its viability in today's economy.

And tapping into tourism is really quite easy—but horse people and owners of horse businesses must be willing to take that first step, to get active. The Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development (Office of Tourism Development), and the Maryland Department of Agriculture (Marketing & Consumer Services) will assist in making your business or event more visible. The Office of Tourism and Development puts out publications each year regarding field trips within Maryland as well as vacation guides which have recently featured horse farms as part of their driving tours. Moreover, Agritourism is a division of the MDA and there are individuals whose jobs are dedicated to strengthening the promotion of this industry. Second, the Maryland Horse Industry Board is assisting with events such as the 2003 Pan Am Games (Eventing Championship) to be held at Fair Hill to promote the image of Maryland as a true horse state. Finally, operators of farms and events within Maryland need to make sure that their facility/event is one which the public is drawn to, and feels welcome to attend.

The question for the Maryland Horse Industry in the future is, "How do we develop and promote Maryland?" What can we do, as members of the Maryland Horse Industry, to make the general public go home thinking, "Wow, Maryland is a Great Horse State!"

The Maryland Horse Council and the Maryland Horse Industry Board have begun to try to answer these questions, but it's going to take the full support of the members of Maryland horse industry—i.e. horse people and business owners—to truly make equi-tourism in Maryland reach its full potential. If you know of equi-tourism sites, events, or businesses in Maryland make them known to the State Agencies whose job it is to promote them. If you are not yet a member of the Maryland Horse Council, join now! Your knowledge and information could be the foundation of a billion dollar future.

### RESOURCES

Maryland Horse Industry Board  
410-841-5861  
[www.marylandhorseindustry.org](http://www.marylandhorseindustry.org)

Maryland Department of Agriculture,  
Agritourism: 410-841-5762  
[www.mda.state.md.us](http://www.mda.state.md.us)

Maryland Horse Council  
410-489-7827 • [www.mdhorsecouncil.org](http://www.mdhorsecouncil.org)

Maryland Office of Tourism Development  
877-209-5883 • [www.mdwelcome.org](http://www.mdwelcome.org)

[www.marylandhorseindustry.org](http://www.marylandhorseindustry.org)

# Maryland Horse Industry Board

## Working for you