

How The Racing Industry Affects The Pleasure Horse Industry in Maryland OR

Let's Talk About The Elephant in the Living Room



Recently overheard at Horse World Expo: "Racing doesn't really affect us [the pleasure and sporting horse industry]."

Racing may not directly affect our daily lives, as horse people living in Maryland, but to say that racing does not affect us at all is to overlook the huge impact that racing has had on our pleasure/sport horse world in Maryland. And that's the equivalent of ignoring that big elephant in the middle of the living room.

But let's clarify some terms first. When we refer to racing in Maryland, it includes the Thoroughbred flat track and the Standardbred trotters and pacers. However, when most Marylanders refer to racing, they mean Thoroughbred racing.

Thoroughbred racing is inextricably linked with Maryland's history: the first race in the colonies was held in Annapolis, the first jockey club was the Maryland Jockey Club, our Thoroughbred breeding farms rivaled those of Kentucky's famed stud farms, and of course we host the second jewel, the Preakness, of the Triple Crown.

And Thoroughbreds still dominate in Maryland. The state's first official equine census, just released, shows that Thoroughbreds represent 33% of Maryland's equine population. Together with Standardbreds, racing breeds account for nearly half of Maryland's equine population. This does not include Thoroughbred or Standardbred crosses or any Thoroughbreds or Standardbreds falling in the "unknown," "other" or crossbred categories. Next closest is the Quarter Horse, with only 14%, Arabs or Anglo-Arabs 5% (note that Anglo Arabs are Thoroughbred crosses; note also that because we do not have either Quarter Horse or Arab racing in Maryland, neither are considered "racing" breeds in this survey).

The census also shows Maryland's 2002 equine related expenditures totaled nearly \$766 million. These were direct horse-related expenses. Earlier studies show that Maryland's equestrian industry has an economic impact of nearly \$1.6 billion—an impact indicating the ripple effect of our direct expenditures, and including other costs (such as gas, food, and travel)

which are not considered direct expenditures. The same study showed that the economic impact was divided fairly evenly between the race (both flat track and harness track) and pleasure horse segments of the industry.

Critical Mass & Its Ripple Effect

What this means for you and me on a daily basis is that we enjoy lower prices overall, because we have such a huge horse industry. As a entity, we have tremendous buying power, enabling a huge "buy in bulk" program in Maryland.

In Central Maryland, we trip over tack and feed stores. Don't like the selection at one tack store? It's only 20 minutes to the next, and until one gets to the farthest reaches of the state, this is standard in Maryland, but unheard of in other states.

This critical mass ensures we pay less for just about everything, from boarding to farrier fees to hay.

And the state's stall rates? Since *The Equiery* was founded 13 years ago, boarding rates have hardly budged, even as the cost of living has gone up considerably, along with the cost of everything else in the horse industry. And despite demographics that make this geographic area one of the most expensive in the U.S., we have some of the most affordable boarding rates (see sidebar).

Their Coal, Our Diamonds

But Maryland also offers something most other states do not: a plethora of lesson stables. Check out any of our sister publications in neighboring states, and the list of lesson stables pales in comparison to ours (the last page of any *Equiery* features over 500 stables).

Lesson stables are pivotal for a thriving equine industry, as they are the gateway through which future horse owners will usually travel. Lesson stables make interaction with horses an enjoyable, everyday reality for thousands of suburbanite families.

Lesson stables thrive in suburban settings, but inexpensive horses are the fuel that drives them, and it's the proverbial "race track rejects" that have popu-

lated Maryland lesson programs. With Maryland's many flat tracks and our scores of mid-range training stables (we're not talking about the likes of trainer-to-the-stars Bob Baffert, with sheiks for clients and million-dollar yearlings, but the average working trainer, usually with locals—your friends or neighbors—as clients, eking out a respectable, but not fabulously wealthy, living), until recently, it's been easy for barn owners for pick up sound Thoroughbreds which, for a variety of reasons, didn't make it on the track.

"Oh, we all had our sources," explains Chrissy Keys Heard, owner of Oatland Stables in Olney, "a trainer near Laurel or Charlestown who you knew you could go to to get a good sound horse." Chrissy estimates that out of the 54 horses in her barn, at least 20 are Thoroughbreds.

Jane Seigler explained that when she started EquiShare and the Reddemeade lesson program, the Timonium Mixed Sales (Thoroughbred horses of all ages, sexes and uses) were a primary source. Of her 30 lesson and EquiShare horses, at least 11 are Thoroughbreds, and at least 12 of the 34 boarders are Thoroughbreds. Holly Gilmore reports that 21 of the 37 in the riding program at Tranquility Manor are Thoroughbreds.

Farrier Tim Streaker calculates that at least a third of his clients are non-racing Thoroughbreds, and vet Mike Erskine estimates that at least a third, possibly as high as one half, of all his equine patients are Thoroughbreds.

Maryland has also traditionally been "the best kept secret" of dealers throughout the U.S. as a great source of cheap Thoroughbreds. Dealers travel to Maryland, buy a trailer load of Thoroughbreds, then return to Virginia or Montana or Wyoming and sell them for two or three times as much as their purchase price.

Is this a coincidence? No. In any given state, the most popular breeds tend to be those in which there are state-funded

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Maryland: A Great—Affordable—Place To Board Your Horse

The following information is based on informal research done via publishing colleagues.

Los Angeles

In Los Angeles, California, basic 12 x 12 box stalls run between \$425 and \$500 with twice daily alfalfa or hay cubes and no other amenities—no indoor arena, wash stall, trails, meds, blanketing, holding for vet or farrier, not even turn out. If you do pay the extra for turnout, that usually means 20 minutes in modest sized paddock. In general, there is no 12 hour turnout like what we are used to: there's no land for that. It's just too expensive. (And although this lack of turnout begs for a discussion on stall vices and equine health and fitness, it will not be pursued in this article, but our LA correspondent does concede that these can be issues).

With the lack of land, there are no trails. Field board is not a common concept. Indoor arenas are not common.

Another option around LA are "pipe corrals," which are usually about 12 x 24, and sometimes are partially shaded, and allow for horses to move around more, see and interact with their neighbors.

The most inexpensive stall board rate in the LA area is \$275, which included stall mats, daily cleaning and hay twice daily. This price does not include bedding, which is about \$6 per bale of shavings, taking about 5 to fill the stall.

San Francisco

Stall board with an indoor averages \$300–\$350 and is for basic care (food, water, and stall cleaning) and does not include any other services such as blanketing, turnout, meds, supplements, vet assistance, farrier assistance, etc., and, writes our San Francisco correspondent, a displaced Marylander, "in many cases, these services are not even available, so if your horse needs

Shoeing

According to survey conducted by the American Farriers Journal, Maryland (which falls in their large "southeast" category) farrier fees fall middle of the road, but still less than in comparable demographic areas:

	Trim, Set 4 keg shoes	Trim, Make, Set 1 Pair Bar Shoes	Repair Typical Hoof Crack
Northeast	\$88.44	\$87.52	\$39.62
Southeast (includes Maryland)	\$82.42	\$91.98	\$37.96
Far West (West Coast plus Colorado)	\$80.59	\$93.20	\$41.57

Please folks, do not use this as a billy club to beat up your farrier; the study also showed that rates for services such as the trim, set 4 keg shoes can vacillate from \$25 to \$260. A good farrier is worth his weight in gold. Also interesting from this study: 21% of the northeastern farriers, and 23% of the far west farriers charge for mileage; only 16% of our farriers do.

meds or supplements, you're the one feeding them as needed." Turnout is virtually nonexistent, so it's not unusual to get a very small paddock attached to the box stall. The paddock is generally no larger than 10x10.

Upper end stall board with training is about \$1,500, which generally involves membership in a riding club, complete with initiation fees. Dues start at about \$300 a year at smaller clubs all the way to Flintridge Riding Academy in LA that charges \$10,000 initiation fee, \$500 per month club dues, has a \$300 per month minimum restaurant/bar fee, all this in addition to the \$1,500 month board.

San Diego

Pipe corrals or corral runs start at \$175 to \$225 per month average. "Indoor" stalls start at \$300 per month, with a "high end" stall being defined an indoor stall that provides bedding, which would start at \$700. The closer to the coast or intercity the higher the price.

Florida

Average monthly board rates, with marginal turnout and mucking, feeding and bedding, runs between \$450 and \$750 per month. At a high end facility, during the winter show season, rates can go up to \$1000 per month, or in a facility adjacent to the show grounds, almost \$4,000 for the entire season (Jan. 1–March 15), per stall, with no feed, no bedding and no labor.

And We Think Hay Is Expensive!

In Los Angeles, a mixed bale hay is anywhere from \$12.00 to \$14.00. "Isn't it crazy?," writes our correspondent, an equine publishing editor based in LA, "We grow hay only 75 miles away, and it's that expensive."

Our San Francisco correspondent found Timothy or Orchard Grass going for about \$12–\$15 per bale.

San Diego reports anywhere from \$10 to \$17.95 for a bale of mixed hay.

Alfalfa seems to be the norm, in California, with prices ranging from \$2.75–\$4.25 per bale depending on the time of year.

In Florida no matter whether it's timothy or alfalfa, it is all imported into the state, and it all sells at about \$10 per bale.

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breed incentive programs. These are usually tied in somehow with racing—which is always categorized as a for-profit business. In California and Texas, the Quarter Horse dominates. In Maryland, it's the Thoroughbred. Precious few people breed Thoroughbreds as pleasure prospects; the preponderance breed their Thoroughbreds with the hope that one day those animals will earn a living—indeed, make it to the winner's circle—on the track.

When race horses prove uninterested or unsuitable for racing, the vast majority (both Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds) find second careers as sport/pleasure horses, and thus race track coal becomes a pleasure horse diamond.

A Rising Tide Lifts All Boats

Wither the racing industry goes, so goes our bountiful source of inexpensive horses. It is already beginning to happen: trainers have quietly been relocating their operations to other states, closer to the tracks where they race most often: the tracks (Delaware, West Virginia) offering bigger purses. Once the trainers move, sources of inexpensive, sound "race track rejects" dry up.

And the effect is already being felt: both Chrissy Keys and Jane Seigler note that their barns were once filled with a higher proportion of Thoroughbreds than they are today. "It used to be that you could buy [off the track] a decent five year old which still had all its wheels," for a few thousand dollars, explains Chrissy. "Now, you can not find a good, sound, solid five year old for that cheap. There is starting to be a real scarcity of horses." When the cost of purchasing a lesson horse goes up, so do the costs of lessons and lease horses—making riding a more expensive prospect for all concerned.

Finding ways to make the purses at Maryland tracks competitive with those in surrounding states will help to ensure that trainers base and keep their operations in Maryland. More flat-track trainers in Maryland mean more benefits for "our" community, the pleasure/sport horse world benefits such as the advantage of that economic ripple effect of more products and more service for lower prices, and in the form of inexpensive horses to populate our lesson and boarding stables.

Making purses competitive may or may not mean the addition of slots at the race tracks, but the correlation between attractive purses and an abundant thriving pleasure/sport horse industry is clear. Yes, the racing industry in Maryland most certainly affects the pleasure horse industry—for the better. ■

Howard County-Iron Bridge Race Meet

Meriwether Farm, Roxbury Rd., Glenelg, MD • Saturday, March 22, 2003, Post Time 12:30 P.M.

TAILGATE CONTEST: Judging commences promptly at noon. A trophy will be presented to winner.

THE LINTON MILE

Flat race. About one mile. Minimum weight 155 lbs. Trophy to winning owner and rider. \$25 per entry.

THE \$5,000

HOWARD COUNTY HUNT CUP*

Open timber. About three miles over 3½-foot fences. Minimum weight 165 lbs. Ladies and gentlemen riders acceptable to the Committee. A perpetual trophy in memory of Katharine Lee Wainfield. \$25 per entry.

THE MERIWETHER

Flat race. About two miles (weather permitting; otherwise, one and one-quarter miles). Minimum weight 155 lbs. May be ridden in accordance with NAPPA conditions for NAPPA points. Trophy to winning owner and rider. \$25 per entry.

THE \$5,000-ADDED WAVERLY

Flat race. About two miles. Catch weights. Open to horses all ages and sexes, with controlling interest (51%) owned, for a minimum of 30 consecutive days prior to race, by a legal resident or landowner of Howard Co., or a member of HCIB Hounds. Entries acceptable to the Committee. Riders must be a minimum of 16 years old. \$500 entry fee.

THE \$1,500 ALDA CLARK PLATE*

Novice timber. About three miles over 3½-foot fences. Minimum weight 165 lbs. For non-winners over timber as of 1/1/02. For each win since 1/1/02, add 5 lbs. No allowances. May be ridden as Fox Hunter Steeplechase in accordance with NAPPA conditions for NAPPA points—must declare at entry. A perpetual trophy to winning rider. \$25 per entry.

THE CATTAIL RIVER PONY RACES*

Open to juniors who have not reached their 15th birthday as of 1/1/02. Trophy to winning rider. All ponies must be a minimum of 5 years old. Catch weights. Riders to follow Field Master

over a flagged course of approximately 1 mile with no more than 12 obstacles not to exceed 2'3". After the last obstacle, the Field Master will release the field to race for the finish; riders may be asked to circle or queue before being released. Small, medium and large ponies will run together but be awarded separately. **Small ponies:** 12.2 hands and under. **Medium ponies:** 13.2 hands and under. **Large ponies:** 14.2 hands and under. Ponies may be measured to confirm size. Decisions of the HC-IBH Race Committee are final. \$25 per entry. NAPPA qualifier.

THE JACK MOBBERLEY JUNIOR HORSE RACE*

Open to juniors who have not reached their 18th birthday as of 1/1/02. All horses must be a minimum of 5 years old. Catch weights. Riders to follow Field Master over a flagged course of approximately 1 mile with no more than 12 obstacles not to exceed 2'6". After the last obstacle, the Field Master will release the field to race for the finish; riders may be asked to circle or queue before being released. A perpetual trophy to the winning rider. \$25 per entry. NAPPA qualifier.

THE HUNTER CHASE TIMBER*

Timber race for fairly hunted horses. About three miles over 3½-foot fences. Minimum weight 175 lbs. For each sanctioned win over jumps by rider since 1/1/99, add 5 lbs; for each sanctioned timber win by horse since 1/1/99, add 5 lbs. Trophy to winning rider. \$25 per entry.

THE FOUNDERS' CUP

Timber race for foxchasers. About three miles over 3½-foot fences, to be ridden at a minimum weight of 155 lbs. and in formal hunting attire. This race is restricted to horses which have been fairly hunted by the rider at least six times during the past season (as certified by their Master or acceptable to the HC-IBH Race Committee) and which are not entered in any other race of the day. Riders who have ridden in an NSA or other professionally sanctioned race during the previous five years or who are entered in any other race of the day are ineligible for this

race. Riders will follow at hunting pace behind a fieldmaster and will be released to race for the finish, in accordance with NAPPA conditions. The Founders' Cup, a perpetual trophy, will be awarded to the winning rider. \$25 per entry.

Trophies will also be awarded to the winning gentleman rider, the winning lady rider, the winning junior rider, and the rider of the first run-Thoroughbred horse to finish (must be declared at time of entry). Riders may compete for all trophies except The Founders' Cup at catch weight.

ADELAIDE RIGGS PERPETUAL CUP*

Hunt Club Challenge Relay Race. About three miles with some natural hunting fences, maximum 3'6"; three members per team, each team member to ride one lap (approximately 1 mile each) and pass baton to the next member. Team members must be members of the Hunt Club for which they are riding, and cannot ride in any other race of the day except for junior races. Horses must be fairly hunted and acceptable to the race committee. To be ridden in formal hunting attire, with hunting tack; catch weights. Baton provided at meet. Open to Maryland clubs participating in the Governor's Cup Series. Teams must be nominated by the club, with horses and riders approved by the Masters. Each team member pays \$25 entry fee; winning team receives 50% of total team entries.

**NO POST ENTRIES
ENTRIES CLOSE NOON
MONDAY, MARCH 17
RACE DATE: MARCH 23, 2003
Rain Date: March 23, 2003
FOR ALL ENTRIES CALL
CENTRAL ENTRY
(703) 777-2575**

All owners, riders and horses must be acceptable to race committee. For information, call the Racing Secretary: Bill Reightler (410) 692-6290. If bad weather prevails for both race date and rain date, the race meet will not be rescheduled. If there is any question regarding the weather, please call the HC-IBH monitor (301) 829-5630.

*Points awarded for the Maryland Governor's Cup Series.

Slots: Dangling Dollars For The Pleasure Horse Industry *There is something in this bill for everyone*

During January's Horse World Expo, an interview ran in the general media in which a pleasure horse person was quoted as saying that slots would not really have a direct affect on the lives of non-racing horse people.

All Maryland horse people who believe that need to check out section 9.3-420 (C) of Senate Bill 322, in which the racing commission is authorized to allocate up to 1% of its slots funds to the Maryland Horse Industry Board, the University of Maryland Animal Science Department and Equine Studies, and the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society.

Later sections provide for funding for the Fair Hill steeplechases and Shawan Downs.

What that could mean for the average Expo goer is better facilities, as it is the Maryland State Fair Board which makes the improvements in the Cow Palace and other buildings. In fact, this year, one

Expo-vendor was thrilled with the improvements in the bathrooms (see the "Letters" section in this issue of The Equiery). With more funding, the Fair Board could make even better upgrades to the State Fair grounds!

What this also means is more much-needed funding for the University of Maryland's burgeoning equine programs - something which has been on the wish list of Maryland horse people for years. And it could mean more money for science and health research, expansion of the stable management program, and so much more.

How much money could the University expect to see? According to Maryland Jockey Club Vice President Tim Capps, the final number could be as low as \$150,000 or as high as \$1 million, but probably realistic estimates would be somewhere in between.

Additionally, slots would provide a secure funding source for the Maryland Horse Industry Board. The Board itself is another wish-come-true for many Maryland horse people, who have for de-

acades said that the State "oughta" do more to promote horses and horse-related activities in Maryland. This funding would help ensure that the non-racing aspects of Maryland's horse world also received top billing, everything from promoting riding lessons to marketing horse shows as spectator sports.

Additionally, the Maryland Horse Industry Board has been responsible for distributing over \$50,000 to date in grant monies to all types of non-profit horse organizations in Maryland, including therapeutic programs, 4-H and other youth related programs.

Granted, in the large scheme of slots dollars, these are but mere crumbs. However, these dollars are crumbs that could go quite far in the Maryland sport horse community, as we have never before enjoyed any direct support. But even without the 'crumbs', Maryland's pleasure horse equestrian community stands to benefit immeasurably from a healthy, viable Maryland race horse industry. ■

The Governor's Slots Bill includes provisions for the allocation of slots revenue to the University of Maryland Equine Studies and for the Maryland Horse Industry Board, which distributes grants to numerous Maryland equine organizations, including therapeutic riding, 4-H and more.