

League of Agricultural and Equine Centers
October 2012 E-news

Welcome to our second edition of the League E-news! Our first issue was well received, and we're chock full of ideas for future issues. This month, we'll learn about Jennifer Bexley, Director of the amazing Georgia International Horse Park. We also have a highly informative article about bio-security and an update on the summer footing seminar. Read on, and if you have comments or suggestions for future newsletters, please contact [George Chatigny](#).

Member Profile: Jennifer Bexley
Director, Georgia International Horse Park

Jennifer Bexley brings many strengths to her role as director of the Georgia International Horse Park, but two of them really stand out: her propensity for crunching numbers and her love of horses. Her life with horses got off to a good start growing up on her family's Arabian horse farm in Conyers, Georgia. "I got my first horse at age two," she recalls. "I think it was a given that I would always have horses in my life. Raising and showing horses was how I was raised."

Going off to college curtailed Jennifer's equine pursuits, although her mother maintained the family farm and horses. Jennifer studied accounting at Emory University and became a CPA. "It's been an unusual road to where I am now," she recalls. "I was working for the Georgia State Government and came to work for the city of Conyers as the director of Public Relations and Marketing, and I was there for two years. At one point, the city manager was aware of my equestrian background and thought I would be a good fit for an opening at the Georgia International Horse Park, and I've been there since 2003. It was so nice when I came to the horse park, because I was able to get back into the horse industry, just in a different way. I don't ride anymore, but I get my fix of horses at work."

As anyone who runs a large facility knows, there are ups and downs, but most agree it's well worth it. "There are so many rewarding aspects of this job," Jennifer shares. "I love seeing people enjoy themselves at the events. The most challenging part is being able to coordinate such a large variety of events and the different groups of people involved in each one. If someone wants to do a concert here, we have to make sure it won't affect a horse show going on that same day. Thanks to the way the facility is laid out, we can--and often do--have as many as eight events running at the same time. We've even had three horse shows running concurrently."

Jennifer wears many hats in her role as director of the horse park, but she has the tools she needs to keep them all in place. "I credit it all to the fact that we have a wonderful staff," she says. "Everyone is very dedicated. The success of our events is very important to our entire staff, so they do everything they can to make it work. For my own part, my management and accounting experience helps a lot to allow me to look at things from a business perspective, and knowledge of the equestrian industry is helpful."

Clearly, Jennifer's background has set her up for success, and she continues to enjoy her fulfilling role as director of the Georgia International Horse Park.

About the Georgia International Horse Park

The Georgia International Horse Park officially opened in 1995 and was built to host the 1996 Olympic Equestrian Events, the first ever Mountain Biking Competition, and the final two events of the Modern Pentathlon. The Park prides itself on being the only venue from the 1996 Olympic Games that still operates for its original purpose. The 1400 acre, \$100 million facility includes six barns, 690 stalls, the Grand Prix Stadium, a covered arena, 10 outdoor arenas, a 30,000 square foot Exhibition Center, meeting facilities and special event fields. The Park has 85 permanent RV spaces and can accommodate as many as 215 RVs with power and water. Since the original construction in 1995, the Park has added a new barn, an Exhibition Center, expanded the RV area and built the Big Haynes Creek Nature Center.

In the 15 years since the Horse Park's opening, Conyers continues to embrace a legacy of the Olympic Games: tourism. The Georgia International Horse Park is open year-round and hosts approximately 200 events annually, including equine events, fairs, festivals, concerts, road races, rodeos, corporate outings, meetings, parties, and car shows. However, equine events continue to be the main revenue source. Some of the Park's larger events include the Spring, Summer and Fall Classic Hunter Jumper Shows, the Georgia Quarter Horse Association Big A and Stars and Stripes shows, and the award winning Conyers Cherry Blossom Festival. The Park has also been a popular setting for filming movies and TV shows such as "Sweet Home Alabama," "Teen Wolf," and "The Vampire Diaries."

Visit www.georgiahorsepark.com to learn more about the facility.

League Footing Academy® and Symposium

The Dirt on Dirt, Summer 2012

Mark Darsey, Operations Manager, The Lone Star Convention & Expo Center

The League Footing Academy this summer at Will Rogers Memorial Center in Fort Worth (TX) once again exceeded my expectations. Spending time with Bob and Jim Kiser, as always, sheds more insight on the proper maintenance and upkeep of the footing of my arenas. Being able to spend time with staff from different facilities helps my staff and me work through different situations that may arise during shows at our facility.

I want to thank Chris Harmon and his staff at Will Rogers Memorial Center for their hospitality and allowing us to hold this event at their facility. It was a great pleasure to spend time with them and learn what they have to do in their daily routines to maintain the level of service to which their clients have become accustomed.

A big thank you to Bob and Jim Kiser for allowing us to pick their brains. Without their knowledge and expertise, dirt would still just be dirt. To our sponsors from Priefert for supporting our organization and providing our lunches, thank you! Without their support and generosity, events like the League Footing Academy would not be possible.

Anyone who has staff that works their arena footing and has never been to a footing academy really needs to attend one. The knowledge that can be gained from attending this academy about proper construction and maintenance of their arenas will go a long way toward better shows and the safety of the animals participating in them.

Next League Event

League Footing Academy® January 18-19, 2013
Symposium January 20-23, 2013
Hosted by [AgriCenter](#) Show Place Arena, Memphis, TN.
Registration form and other details are listed on the League [website](#).

Is Your Facility Bio-secure?

Biological threats in the form of disease are threats to every facility, no matter how cleanly and responsibly we operate them. The ways diseases sneak in are many-fold. We try our very best to block them, but when the barriers fail, we have to also be ready to manage them and prevent them from spreading to the entire population.

Bill Allen, Vice President of [Fair Park](#) in Oklahoma City and Brandi Hemdon, Agribusiness Manager at [Expo Square](#) in Tulsa, both had to make changes at their facilities because of the EHV-1 scare in 2011, so they have first-hand experience with managing biological hazards to equine and agricultural facilities. As a result of that incident, they have both enacted thorough and effective techniques for preventing the spread of disease.

Develop a Plan

"If a facility doesn't have any procedures in place, the first thing they need to do is develop a written plan," Brandi explains. "The time to do that is now, before the emergency happens, not in the middle of it. You never know when something like this will hit you—without a written protocol in place to handle it, you will be scrambling at the last minute and delay containment."

When preparing a plan, you must keep in mind that there are three enemies in the cross-contamination battle: people, animals, and bugs. Though people are not subject to most of the diseases that horses get, they are adept carriers of disease from stall to stall and facility to facility. All staff, especially those who work at multiple facilities like veterinarians, feed and bedding delivery personnel, farriers, show staff, etc., must be made aware of any disease outbreak and the appropriate methods for containing it. Washing hands, wearing disposable barrier clothing, and removing all manure and other organic materials before leaving the quarantine area are a must. At Fair Park, around the grounds Bill installed numerous hand sanitizer stations and signs encouraging people to wash their hands.

Sanitation is a Must

The next step that all facilities should consider is enacting a sanitation policy. Spend some time researching the best system for your facility. This information is readily available, both on the internet and from providers of sanitation services and products. Talk to other facilities in your area to see what they are doing, and you may find it to be a simpler solution than you suspect. The process is usually quite simple, but managing the labor and resources to go into it can be a different story. "We went from sanitizing once a quarter to full-scale sanitation after every show," Brandi recalls. "It became a top priority for us after the EHV-1 scare. We use SynBioNt Ag Wash."

"One Stroke Environ is a commercially available product we use to sanitize our facility," Bill explained. "It was recommended by one of the vets who frequently works our shows. It is commercially available, but it is expensive. Bleach is cheaper, but organic matter renders bleach ineffective, so you have to clean very thoroughly before you use it. EHV-1 brought the need for sanitation to the forefront. Of course, it has always been an issue, but it became a major concern. Fair Park was the first place to have cutting horses after the EHV-1 outbreak. That was preceded by many conference calls with breed associations, the Department of Agriculture, show producers and many veterinarians to help us make our facility safe, and we took all recommendations seriously. The trainers and everyone else involved wanted to get back to business, of course, but we all wanted to be safe."

Minimize Cross Contamination

There are several other practices that can improve the health of animals in general and minimize the likelihood of cross contamination of viruses and disease. Simple steps like keeping waste bins covered and keeping the air moving are huge steps. "Changing the air and keeping it moving is very important," Bill adds. "Our facility was redesigned a few years ago with plenty of natural and forced ventilation. We continuously suck the old air out with exhaust fans and blow fresh air in. We have 25 Big Ass Fans keeping the air moving all the time—more circulation means less chance of transmission. All organic waste is placed in covered bins at a transfer station on the far side of the property until it is hauled off site."

Having a quarantine area for affected animals is also necessary, along with posted precautions to ensure that organic material is not transferred to a non-quarantined area and equipment is not shared between horses.

Educate the Public

While training the staff and implementing safety protocols are primary to the prevention of spreading disease, this can only go so far when your facility is used each week by hundreds or thousands of people and their animals. Educating them is vitally important.

"At Expo Square, we put together a best practices sheet that we distribute to people when they come into the barn office," Brandi says. "It is a list of friendly reminders of things they can do to minimize risk, and it encourages them to do their part. It reminds them to keep clean and sanitized. Many associations now encourage people to sanitize equipment before they go to an event, especially if they are traveling from show to show as a lot of them do." These associations

offer reminders to not transport filth with them when avoidable—it is theoretically possible for a single trailer to infect a huge swath of shows in a single trip.

For more information on bio-security procedures, check with your State Veterinarian or Department of Agriculture. League members are also a great source of practical information on this topic and others. [Bill](#) or [Brandi](#) welcome your questions or requests to view their bio-security plans.

Sidebar:

10 Ways to Make Your Facility More Bio-secure

1. Prepare a written bio-security plan and train staff
2. Implement a sanitation program for stalls and equipment
3. Create educational materials for people using your facility
4. Set aside a quarantine area and secure it
5. Create waste management program that keeps organic waste away from animals
6. Remove all common water troughs
7. Improve ventilation in barns
8. Post bio-security reminders around facility in English and Spanish
9. Stock barrier clothing to use in quarantine and outbreak situations
10. Improve vermin control