



U of M Horse Newsletter

Providing research-based information to Minnesota Horse Owners

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Research Update: Grazing Muzzle Use in Ponies

To prevent obesity in grazing horses, it is important to control pasture intake. The use of a grazing muzzle may help to achieve this goal. The objective of this study, conducted in England, was to determine the efficacy of grazing muzzles in controlling the bodyweight of grazing ponies.

Five, non-obese, adult ponies were pastured for 23 hours daily and either grazed freely (without a grazing muzzle) or were fitted with a grazing muzzle for 10 hours. Ponies were acclimatized to grazing and drinking through their muzzles before the trial. Ponies were weighed, and the daily average bodyweight was determined.

Average daily changes in percent bodyweight for four of the ponies when grazing without a muzzle was 0.3% compared to a slight loss in bodyweight (-0.04%) when fitted with a grazing muzzle.

Daily change in percent bodyweight for the fifth pony while muzzled averaged 0.3%. Because of the rapid weight gain observed while muzzled, this pony was removed from the trial and was not allowed to graze without a muzzle.

There was an apparent learning phase during the first week of grazing with a muzzle. Percent change in bodyweight increased throughout the study as the ponies learned to graze with a muzzle. Pasture intakes for ponies with a grazing muzzle were fairly constant throughout the trial period.

Based on this research, it appears the use of a grazing muzzle for 10 hours per day generally reduced the rate of weight gain in most, but not all, ponies on pasture.

For more information on this research, click [here](#). Summarized by Krishona Martinson, PhD, University of Minnesota

Ask the Expert: Carcass Disposal Options

Question: I am concerned I will have to euthanize my old mare before next spring/summer. What are the options for horse disposal in Minnesota, especially during the winter?

Response: Minnesota horse owners have options for disposal of a carcass. The State of Minnesota regulates these options and involves the Departments of Agriculture, Natural Resources, Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), and Board of Animal Health (MBAH).

The legal options for disposing of horse carcasses in Minnesota include burial, composting, incineration, and rendering.

Carcasses must be buried 5 feet above the season-high water table and not in soils that are within 10 feet of bedrock. When composting, the carcass must be

completely covered by a carbon source (i.e. sawdust) and monitored for temperature, oxygen level and moisture. With incineration, carcasses must be incinerated in a MPCA approved incinerator. Vehicles that haul carcasses for rendering services need to be inspected and permitted by the MBAH.

During the winter months, burial is a difficult option in Minnesota because of frozen ground. However, large equipment can break through the frost to make burial possible and an area can be tented and heated to remove frost and make burial easier in the winter months.

For more information on carcass disposal in MN, visit the [Minnesota Board of Animal Health's website](#).

By: Krishona Martinson, PhD, University of Minnesota

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Upcoming Events

The University of Minnesota Extension Horse Team is offering three 6-week online certificate courses, including: Growing and Feeding Horse Hay, Basic Horse Nutrition, and Horse Pasture Establishment and Management.

Courses start the week of January 8, 2018. The cost for each course is \$75 and online registration is required by 11:59 pm on Sunday, January 7, 2018.

To earn a certificate, participants must earn ≥70% on three 10-point multiple choice quizzes and participate in three course discussions.

Courses are recommended for adult learners, but are open to everyone, and will not result in college credit.

For more information and to register, click [here](#).

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Understanding Minnesota's Equine Liability Statute

This article begins a series on legal issues facing the Minnesota horse industry. We begin the series by discussing Minnesota's Equine Liability Statute.

Much of the equine world operates under the pretense that we are automatically protected from liability by Minnesota's equine liability statute, Minn. Stat. § 604A.12. However, the statute is NOT a "zero liability" law. Categories of individuals and entities are not protected, and a number of exceptions exist to deny liability protections in particular situations. It is therefore essential to understand who is afforded the liability protections, what activities are covered and not covered by the statute, the applicable liability protection exceptions, and the warning sign posting required under the statute before the liability protections apply.

Who is protected? The statute provides immunity to nonprofits, as well as those donating services, livestock (which includes horses and ponies), facilities or equipment for the use of a nonprofit. If you are operating a "for profit" business, you may not be protected by the statute.

What does the immunity protect against? The immunity protects against liability for the death or injury of a person directly and intentionally engaged in livestock activities. "Livestock activities" include such things as transporting livestock; shows, fairs, competitions, performances, races, rodeos, or parades; training or teaching activities; boarding, shoeing, or grooming; and riding or inspecting livestock or equipment.

Spectators in authorized areas are expressly excluded from the statute, which means that if you are sued for a spectator injury or death, the immunity will not apply.

What activities fall within the immunity? The immunity applies where the death or injury of a participant results from the "inherent risks of livestock activities," which are dangers or conditions integral to the maintenance or use of livestock, provided the activity is *not* for profit. The "inherent risks of livestock activities" include livestock's propensity to kick, bite, buck, or charge; a livestock's unpredictable reaction to things like sound, sudden movement, or unfamiliar objects, persons, or other animals; natural hazards such as surface or subsurface conditions; and collisions with others.

What are the exceptions to immunity? The immunity does not apply if you provide livestock for a participant, but fail to reasonably determine his/her ability to safely engage in the activity, or his/her ability to safely manage the particular livestock; you provide faulty tack; you own or lease the land and fail to use reasonable care to protect the participant from a dangerous man-made hidden condition; you are a "livestock activity sponsor" (a person who sponsors, organizes, or provides facilities for a livestock activity open to the general public), but fail to comply with the statute's notice requirement; or you are willful or negligent.

What are the notice requirements that apply to activity sponsors? The statute requires a

"livestock activity sponsor" to post plainly visible signs at one or more prominent locations in the premises where the livestock activity takes place that include a warning of the inherent risks of livestock activity and the limitation of liability under the statute.

Next month we will discuss how to limit your equine liability exposure where either the statute does not apply or the exceptions apply and no liability is afforded under the statute. In addition, practical tips will be provided to expand the immunity provided by the statute itself.

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Suzanne Jones and Yvonne Ocrant are partners with the law firm Hinshaw & Culbertson LLP. The information in this article is intended for informational purposes only and is not for the purpose of providing legal advice.