

horse



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HORSE CAPITAL DIGEST • 2024 WINTER SPECIAL EDITION

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Largest County Spectator Event is World Class Horse Experience

Live Oak International is the largest international-level combined driving and the CSI-W 4* Longines FEI World Cup show jumping tournament in the country. Live Oak International welcomes the leading drivers, riders, trainers, coaches and owners from Europe and North America March 14 through 17 at Live Oak Stud in Ocala, also a renowned Thoroughbred racehorse

breeding farm. Admission runs from \$10 to \$10,000 for VIP experiences.

"We're very excited to welcome back our competitors, sponsors, and spectators to the largest spectator event in Marion County," said Chester Weber, co-president.

For more information, visit [here](#).



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CEO Englehart Impacts HITS Experience in First Year

In 2022, HITS (Horse Shows in the Sun) was purchased by Traub Capital Partners out of Kingston, N.Y. to revitalize the legacy of the company with a renewed focus on the customer experience thanks to a 35 professional, full-time staff with experience and a dedication to superior horse show execution. Peter Englehart joined Traub Capital Partners as CEO of HITS in March 2022

“For example, in Ocala we really want to showcase who we are—a beautiful place for equestrians and horsemen,” said Englehart. “From the fencing, to the rolling hills, to the big trees sprawled about the property.”

to further build HITS as the country’s largest owner/operator of equestrian events.

Englehart is a leader in successful sports media, enthusiast events and entertainment businesses. From his role as a publicist for the Professional Bowlers Association to his leadership in TEN, the Enthusiast Network, and VStar Entertainment, he uses entrepreneurial, managerial and strategic visions to be at the forefront of some of America’s most distinguished consumer brands, sporting organizations and television networks, including ABC Sports, ESPN and the NBC Sports Channel.

“We really want to nurture better, deep rooted connections with the local community. By having relationships with them and hosting events on the show grounds, people will have more access to equine sports,” Englehart said.

“We’re creating a family environment here. This is a place where we are trying to welcome everyone.”

HITS LLC is a special events management company,



founded more than 40 years ago by Thomas G. Struzzi, primarily focused on producing hunter/jumper horse shows. Based in upstate New York in the village of Saugerties, HITS produced its first horse show circuit in Gainesville, Fla. in 1982 before moving the show 45 minutes south to Ocala’s Post Time Farm in 2002. Since then, HITS has grown into a nationwide company with world-class hunter/jumper circuits in Florida, New York, Illinois, Vermont and Virginia and produces three of the richest grand prix in the world including the Great American \$1 Million Grand Prix in Ocala.

Mortimer Singer of The Safari podcast, interviewed Englehart in 2023 on the topic of being an events aficionado. The podcast is available on the Horse Capital TV YouTube page [here](#).

The 2024 season runs Jan. 6 through March 24.





Run Ride and Roll Event Set for March

Florida State Parks, Marion Runs, Sun Country Trail Blazers Inc, and the Ocala Mountain Biking Association are hosting a Run Ride Roll event on March 23 from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. beginning at the Marjorie Harris Carr Cross Florida Greenway's Shangri-La Trailhead and Campground at 12788 SW 69th Ct, Ocala, Fla. 34473.

Teams of three include a runner going 3.5 miles, an equestrian trail riding five miles and a biker covering eight miles in a relay handing off an electronic timing transponder at each exchange. Camping is available and additional family friendly activities are planned. For information, email RRR.Relay.Ocala@gmail.com or to register a team, go to www.RunSignUp.com. Donations are accepted to fund tools and equipment for Greenway volunteers to maintain 304 miles of the trail system.



WEC Hosts Huge Equine Trade Show

The All for the Horses Expo, an all-equine industry tradeshow, will be held on March 22-24, at World Equestrian Center – Ocala. In its second year, the All for the Horses Expo expects an expanded schedule of events and a larger selection of equestrian and lifestyle vendors. General admission and parking for the Expo will be free for all attendees.

The All for the Horses Expo will be held during the final week of the 2024 Winter Spectacular Show Series, which hosts thousands of horses and riders in the hunter, jumper and equitation disciplines.

In its opening year of 2023, the All for the Horses Expo welcomed more than 150 vendors and 2,500 attendees at Exposition Center 1, along with live music entertaining the crowds. Vendors with wares including equine tack, jewelry, furniture, horse treats and barn builders among others will be in attendance.

Vendors interested in attending in 2024 are encouraged to apply asap. Vendors from every aspect and discipline of the equestrian industry are welcome. For pre-registration, vendor application or additional information, [click here](#).



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AHC Releases National Economic Impact Results

By Tammy A Gantt

The American Horse Council released the latest AHC Foundation's Equine Economic Impact Study of the U.S. Horse Industry, that showcases trends related to economic impact, contributions to employment and the amount of acreage preserved in horse operations.

The total economic impact of equines in the U.S. increased by 45% from \$122 billion in 2017 to \$177 billion in 2022. Equine activities have significant impact beyond agriculture, encompassing tourism, entertainment, sports and recreation.

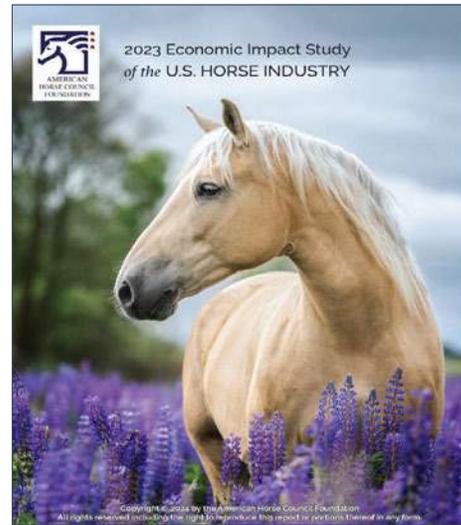
The industry's total employment impact increased by 33% from 1.7 million jobs to 2.2 million jobs over the five-year period.

The total population of horses declined from 7.2 million to 6.6 million, about an 8.5% decrease. To put this in perspective, in 1960 equines totaled about 3 million, the result of a steady decline after the turn of

the century when their use as transportation and farm labor diminished. Since the 1960s, the equine population steadily grew due to increased interest in Thoroughbred racing and in Quarter Horses being used as recreational mounts.

The AHC states the purpose of the survey is to demonstrate the value of the equine industry in national and state economies by analyzing the direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts of horse ownership, recreation, and equine-related services. The data collected informs public and private investments in equine-related businesses, equine health care, education, land use decisions, tax policy, tourism, employment incentives, etc.

"The Economic Impact Study is the most effective tool in our advocacy quiver," AHC president Julie Broadway said. "When the industry needs to take aim at an issue, this data is invaluable in helping us paint the picture of the contributions the industry makes and the breadth



and depth of its composition."

The American Horse Council Foundation also provided state and county level reporting, commissioned on a state by state or county by county basis. The Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association funded reports for all equines, and specifically Thoroughbreds, within the state with a drilldown to the county level for Marion County, Fla. The results of these reports will be released in upcoming weeks.

For more information on the study, [click here](#).



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Florida-breds Shine at Florida Cup



A premium Florida-bred racing event, the Florida Cup Day will be at Tampa Bay Downs racetrack on Sunday, March 24. Through a progressive partnership of Tampa Bay Downs, the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association (FTBOA), and HBPA, the finest Florida-breds in competition run for an estimated \$750,000 in purses. Gates open at 11 a.m. and the first race post time is 12:15 p.m. Races include the NYRABets Sprint for 4-year-olds and older at six furlongs, the Stonehedge Farm South Sophomore Fillies for 3-year-old fillies going seven furlongs, the Pleasant Acres Stallions Distaff Turf for fillies and mares 3-year-old and older going a mile-and-a-sixteenth, the Ocala Breeders' Sales Sophomore for 3-year-olds going seven furlongs, the Equistaff Sophomore Turf for 3-year-olds going a mile-and-a-sixteenth, and the Esmark Turf Classic for 4-year-olds going a mile-and-an-eighth.

The FTBOA also hosts their annual membership day. Membership is available to non-horse owners at ftboa.com. New members who join before March 15 can attend the event for free. Members receive complimentary admission, a buffet luncheon, refreshments and a racing program and can bring a guest. Children under 12 admitted free, additional adult tickets \$15 each.



Sara Powell-Fennessy Promoted at Horse Farms Forever

Horse Farms Forever Press Release

Horse Farms Forever president, Bernie Little, announced the promotion of Sara Powell-Fennessy to executive director on Jan. 1, 2024.

"Sara brings energy and enthusiasm for the organization's mission that assures its future success. Sara is a powerful voice for protecting and preserving the farmland that is foundational to the equestrian industry in Marion County. Sara serves as a role model for others seeking to impact their communities. On a personal level, people like Sara give me such great confidence in the future of this community," Little said.

A fifth-generation horsewoman, Sara has a lifelong family history focused primarily on the Thoroughbred and show-horse sectors. Her parents and grandparents owned and trained racehorses and Saddlebreds. Sara's grandfather was a successful jockey on the West Coast, and her father is a lifelong member of the Thoroughbred world and an industry executive, Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' & Owners' Association's CEO Lonny Powell.

Fennessy grew up in an equine-centric household. A lifelong horse show and racing enthusiast, she was a devoted hunter-jumper competitor while attending

school in Lexington, Ky. During her 12 years in Marion County, Fla, she has devoted herself to a career of outreach, communication, management, and promotion in the local community and equine industry. Today, she owns and rides hunter jumpers. Her educational background is in paralegal studies while an honor graduate at the College of Central Florida.

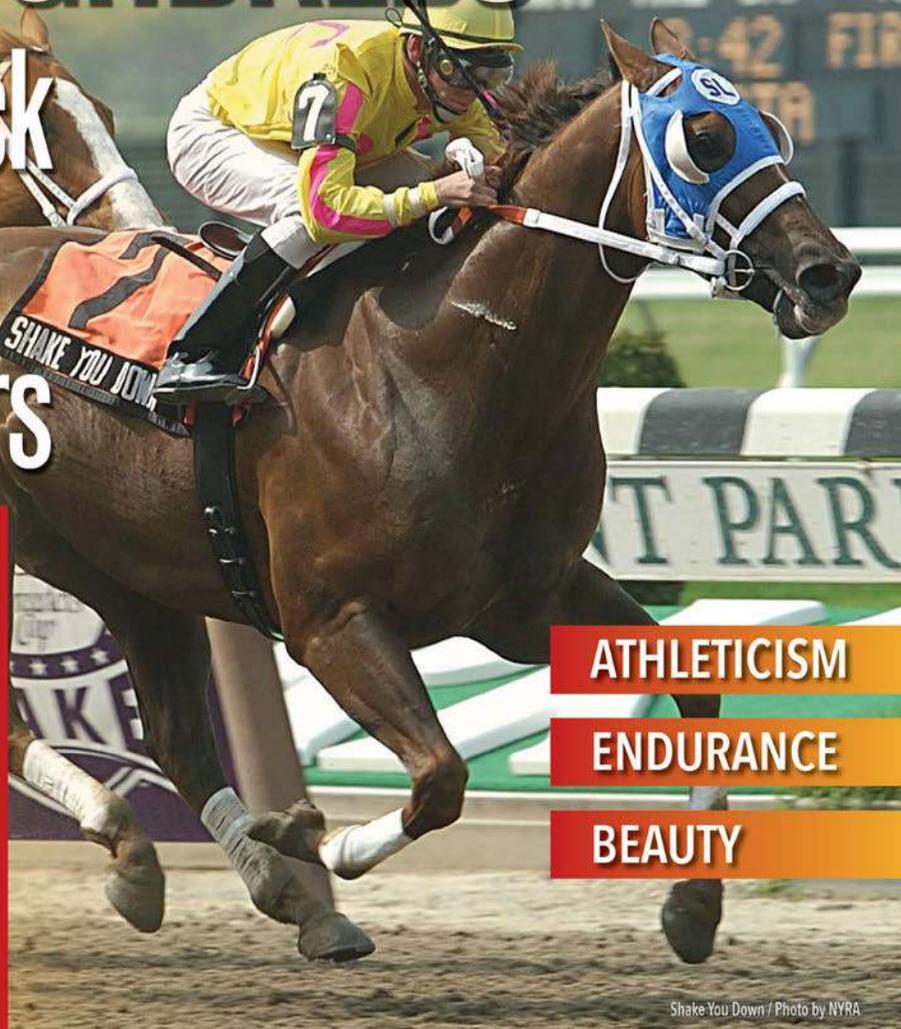
"My parents had me in the saddle before I could even walk," said Fennessy. "My most valuable life lessons came from my time on the back of a horse. I am a firm believer that horses instill a sense of responsibility, patience and a work ethic that cannot be replicated.

"My work with Horse Farms Forever over the past 5 years has been deeply fulfilling on so many levels," she explained. "Like so many others here in Marion County, the horse industry is my family's livelihood and legacy. Advocating for the very thing that makes Ocala/Marion County so unique and special means everything to me."

"I feel incredibly blessed to have the opportunity to serve alongside the accomplished staff and dedicated Board of Directors as we work to preserve our global brand as Horse Capital of the World®. I am overflowing with excitement for what lies ahead on the horizon for this incredible organization," she said.

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Central Florida is Horse Capital of the World®

In 1997, Ocala/Marion County Horse Capital of the World® and Horse Capital of the World® were trademarked by the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association. Ever since, the marks have become synonymous with the FTBOA and its Association services. While others periodically try its use, by trademark and literally, Marion county is the Horse Capital with more horses and ponies than any other in the U.S. and Florida ranks third as a state in horse population.

FTBOA trademarked the phrase to create a brand

Florida Racing's Annual Impact

- \$1.5 billion in direct economic impact and \$2.7 billion overall
- \$400,000+ in payroll taxes
- 20,000+ thoroughbreds engaged in racing
- 23,000+ jobs

Source: AHC

identity for the area and the services it promotes related to equines. The diversity of breeds and disciplines make the area an ideal setting for any horse fanatic, casual horse lover or for services catering to the horse world.

Horses in Florida are more than pretty scenery in a pasture. They are economic drivers for our county and state. The concentration of equine – particularly the Thoroughbred breeding, training and sales industry in Central Florida – is strongly supported by a network of equine services, such as specialized veterinarians, feed and tack retailers, blacksmith, equine dentists, feed mills and major horse transportation companies by land and by air.

This makes Ocala a great place to enjoy equines with its opportunities to attend world-class horse shows and events, equine venues, recreational activities and farm tours at a variety of venues, farms and showgrounds. Visitors have the chance to go on a farm tour, take a trail ride through our numerous parks and national forest, enjoy a carriage ride, learn polo, visit an equine museum or gallery, attend the world's leading two-year-olds-in-training Thoroughbred sales, watch a horse train at Ocala Breeders' Sales or wager on simulcast horse races from the state's tracks and from across the country. The choices are limitless and local citizens are a daily part of the one-of-a-kind experience that only the Horse Capital of the World® can bring.



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Marion County's Equine Impact

- Equines are 18% of the county GDP
- A top breeding region in the world for thoroughbreds
- Thoroughbreds sold at Ocala Breeders' Sales in the past decade valued at more than \$1.3 billion
- OBS buyers come from 49 states and 2 territories and more than 42 countries

Source: AHC

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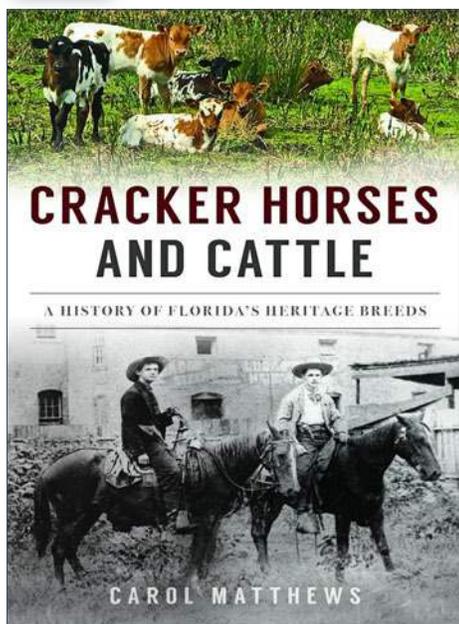
The Farmland Preservation Area in Ocala/Marion County is an important part of the equation for Horse Capital of the World®.

The FPA provides protection of our scenic pastureland vistas for our citizens to enjoy. The FPA ensures our limestone rich land and spring fed aquifers are held precious so horse breeders can grow strong horses to fulfill dreams of seeing them become champions.

Original oil painting by Bob Judy located in the Florida Thoroughbred museum in Horse Capital of the World®, Ocala, Fla.

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New Cracker Horses and Cattle Book Released

Teacher and author Carol Matthews steps back in time to share preservation efforts of the living links to Florida's past, Cracker horses and cattle. The first horses and cattle to set foot on the North American continent stepped onto Florida land, brought by Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon in 1521 just south of present-day Fort Myers. The animals were abandoned, formed wild herds and would be used by different

groups for food, work, trade and transportation for the next 500 years. Cattle ranching was born when Jesuit and Franciscan Friars, also known as missionaries, set up a system of missions across north and north-central Florida. The largest ranch was Rancho de la Chua, located on what is now Paynes Prairie in Alachua County. As a result of this increase in cattle production, Florida rancheros began to sell cattle to Cuba. This was the first industry to develop in the New World and would continue for the next 300 years. By the 1960s there were only a handful of pure cracker cattle and horses left. But herds were established on state lands, preserving a living link to Florida's past.

Carol Matthews taught elementary school for 40 years. A graduate of Ohio University, her love of history began at an early age when searching for arrowheads after the annual spring plowing of her father's cornfields. The last 17 years of her teaching career were spent in a small agricultural town in Florida called Indi-

antown in western Martin County, where she discovered an unlikely history mentor in the form of a spunky cattle rancher, well known in her circle throughout the state simply as "Miss Iris." Cracker Horses and Cattle is her third book on Florida history.



Racing Novice Class Offers Insider Look

Richard Dillon, is presenting 'Understanding the Racing Program at the Horse Track' as part of the Master the Possibilities programming on Thurs., March 7 from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. at the On Top of the World classrooms in Ocala.

Dillon asks, "Did you ever go to the race track with friends who know how to bet and understand the racing form or program?"

He answers this by providing information for the casual bettor that will help fans understand the racing program and the included past performances of the horses and jockeys.



A retired Thoroughbred trainer and owner from the Northeast, Dillon operated a public stable for 18 years working with mostly claiming horses of various levels. He also rode for two seasons as an amateur jump rider at hunt meets in Maryland and has served as an adjunct professor at Wilmington College in Delaware.

The course fee is \$3 for On Top of the World residents and \$8 for the general public. Register online [here](#) or call 352-861-9751 for more information.

Master the Possibilities, Inc. is a 501 (C) (3) not-for-

profit public charity, fulfilling its educational purpose as a lifelong learning center. The center provides quality instruction and learning experiences for adult students throughout Marion County and beyond. MTB inspires students to explore their interests, uncover their passions, and leverage their talents to make positive changes within themselves and their communities. It is located at 8415 SW 80th Street, Suite 2, Ocala, FL 34481.

Upcoming Equine Classes

Thoroughbreds of Marion County
March 7, April 11, June 6
Instructor Thomas Sweeney

Thoroughbreds Farm Tour
March 12, April 16, June 11
Instructor Thomas Sweeney

**The Hartford Hurricane:
My Life as a Thoroughbred Jockey**
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ADMINISTRATIVE/MEMBERSHIP ASSISTANT

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Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association

Executive Office – 801 SW 60th Avenue Ocala, Florida 34474

(352) 629-2160 • Fax: (352) 629-3603 • e-mail: info@ftboa.com • www.ftboa.com

Office Hours: Monday - Friday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm.

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**ASSISTANT EDITOR -
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Steve Koch

**CONTRIBUTING EDITOR -
SALES & INDUSTRY AFFAIRS**

Tammy A. Gantt

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT/ADVERTISING

Vicki Davis

SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Nancy Moffatt

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Cynthia M. Harper

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Florida Equine Communications, Inc.

A corporation owned by the Florida Thoroughbred Breeders' and Owners' Association

Executive Office – 801 SW 60th Avenue Ocala, Florida 34474

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