

PRO TRAINER

NRHA 

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL REINING TRAINERS WINTER 2024

KEEP YOUR BARN SAFE
PREVENT ABUSE IN YOUR BUSINESS

PLUS:

- Build Your 2024 Budget
- Leverage Awards
- Develop an Employee Handbook



WINTER/24



CONTENTS

13 TOGETHER, WE CAN ALLEVIATE MISCONDUCT

By Carrie Kehring • Help the horse community alleviate sexual misconduct by taking the lead in recognizing and preventing the problem.

18 BUDGETING BASICS

By Kristin Pitzer • Building a budget for your business might sound scary; but operating without one can lead to consequences.

AND MUCH MORE:

3 PRO TRAINER NEWS

Sliders' Night Out; NRHA Event Calendar.

6 LEGAL ACTION

Make It Official.

8 ENGAGEMENT

Recognition Gets You Recognized.

10 DOLLARS & SENSE

Rebranding Tips; Coaching for Your Business; Winter Marketing Tips; Stay Connected With NRHA.

22 FINANCIAL TRAINER

State of Reining Sales.

24 NRHA PROFESSIONAL CODE OF ETHICS

ON THE COVER: Photo by Carolyn Simancik

PRO TRAINER

NRHA

WINTER 2024

EDITOR/PUBLISHER

Jennifer Paulson

jenpaulsoncreative@gmail.com

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Sandy Cochran

NRHA COMMISSIONER

Billy Smith

NRHA ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER

Christa Morris-Stone

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING; MANAGER OF YOUTH & AFFILIATE PROGRAMS

Sara Honegger

NRHA PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Jordan Larson

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & JUDGES; NRHA PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE STAFF LIAISON

Patti Carter

NRHA PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Matt Palmer, Kaci O'Rourke, Trevor Dare, Jason Vanlandingham, Gunny Mathison, Casey Hinton, Matt McAuslan, Josh Crawley, Robin Schoeller, Kole Price

NRHA

3021 West Reno Ave.

Oklahoma City, OK 73107-6125

(405) 946-7400 / nrha.com

For NRHA Pro Trainer submissions or story ideas, email

jenpaulsoncreative@gmail.com.

NRHA Pro Trainer is published by NRHA. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part of any article without prior written permission from NRHA is strictly prohibited. NRHA cannot accept any responsibility for any error or omission which might occur. Receiving this publication does not confirm or imply that your NRHA Professionals membership is current, and NRHA accepts no liability for anyone competing with an expired membership.

PRO TRAINER NEWS

PEOPLE, REPORTS, EVENTS

Sliders' Night Out Raises Record Dollars for RHF

BY LESLIE BAKER

The 2023 NRHA Futurity and Adequan® North American Affiliate Championship filled the Oklahoma City Fairgrounds with record-setting competition, but on November 29, 2023, it was the historical Centennial Building that was the place to be. Stakeholders across all segments of reining came together at Sliders' Night Out, presented by Toyon Ranch. The event pays homage to the sport's history makers, and patrons build a stronger financial future for the Reining Horse Foundation (RHF), the charitable arm of NRHA.

The special night held a mix of glitz, glamour, camaraderie, and energy that culminated in memorable awards and support to fuel RHF core programs, such as the Dale Wilkinson Memorial Crisis Fund, youth leadership development and scholarship, and celebration of the sport's history. The live auction and campaign appeal generated a record \$300,000 from the event.

Longtime NRHA trainer Dell Hendricks



2023 NRHA Hall of Fame inductee Dell Hendricks receives his medallion from RHF President Tim Anderson.

was inducted into the NRHA Hall of Fame, celebrating a reining career that was notable in the arena and for leadership on the NRHA

Board of Directors, including his term as NRHA President in 2006. Other inductees included \$11 million sire Gunnatrashya, owned by Arcese Quarter Horses USA, and the late Bob McDonnell, "Bob Mac," a competitor and innovator who left his mark on reining in multiple ways.

Many NRHA



NRHA Professional Shawn Florida, Jeff Oswood, Cam Essick, Leonardo Arcese, and Frank Costantini celebrate the NRHA Hall of Fame induction of Gunnatrashya, owned by Arcese Quarter Horses USA.

NRHA MEMBERSHIP

RENEW TODAY!

visit ReinerSuite.NRHA.com

NRHA 
RESPECT THE HORSE. RESPECT THE SPORT.
(405) 946-7400 • NRHA.COM

DON'T MISS THESE NRHA Professional Membership Benefits:

- NRHA Reiner Subscription
- Professional Resources
- NRHA ReinerSuite™ Portal
- Corporate Partner Discounts
- RHF Crisis Fund
- Voting Privileges
- Services Listed on NRHA.com



NRHA Dale Wilkinson Lifetime Achievement Award recipients Dave Belson, Jenifer Reynolds, and Chris Cook.

Professionals joined the event, which enjoys underwriting from donors at the platinum, gold, silver, and Hall of Fame levels, making it possible to host NRHA Hall of Fame inductees as special guests. During the five years in its present format, the event has become an exciting opportunity to connect with clients and peers outside the show pen.

Receiving the NRHA Dale Wilkinson Lifetime Achievement Awards were Jenifer Reynolds and Chris Cook, well known to reiners as the duo responsible for elevating reining through video storytelling and a consistent television presence since the early 2000s. Dave Belson of Arizona was recognized for wearing many hats—ranch owner, breeder, non pro, and judge—and helping the careers of several professionals.

Save the date for December 4, 2024, when Sliders' Night Out will draw the reining community together again to celebrate the sport. ■

NRHA Pro Trainer

NRHA Event Calendar

Please visit nrha.com and ReinerSuite™ for the most updated information.

January 31

Late nomination deadline

Futurity nominations for weanlings and yearlings received Jan. 11–31 will incur a late fee. For more information, visit nrha.com/nomination or email emilyr@nrha.com.

January 31

NRHA affiliate renewals due

To renew an NRHA affiliate, contact shonegger@nrha.com.

February 4–6

Winter Meeting

Oklahoma City, OK

This event will be hosted at the Omni Oklahoma City Hotel. For more information, visit nrha.com/wintermeeting.

March 1

RHF Scholarship Applications Deadline

Applications for 2024 Reining Horse Foundation scholarships due by this date. More details are available at nrhya.com/scholarships.

March 4–19

NRHyA Buy-A-Pro Auction

For more information, contact youth@nrha.com. Visit 32auctions.com/2024BuyAPro to bid.

March 13–14

Judge Applicants' Seminar

Oklahoma City, OK

Invitation by the Judges Committee is required to test at the applicant seminar. Auditors are welcome. For more information, contact Patti Carter at pcarter@nrha.com.

March 15–17

NRHA Judges' School

Oklahoma City, OK

This event will be hosted at the NRHA office, and pre-registration is required. For more information, contact Patti Carter at pcarter@nrha.com.

March 17

NRHA New Show Stewards' School (After Judges' School morning testing)

Oklahoma City, OK

This event will be hosted at the NRHA office, and pre-registration is required. For more information, contact Patti Carter at pcarter@nrha.com.

April 1

Second NRHA Futurity payment due

LEGAL ACTION

INSIGHTS TO KEEP YOUR BUSINESS SAFE

Make It Official

MANY DEALS ARE DONE ON A WORD AND A HANDSHAKE IN THE HORSE INDUSTRY. BUT WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR JOB, IT'S IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THAT EVERYTHING IS DOWN ON PAPER.

BY KRISTIN PITZER

Decisions in the corporate world require multiple signatures, printed contracts, and legalese. The horse industry is quite different. Deals are made and circumstances are agreed upon verbally, with the expectation that someone will always be true to their word.

That might hold up in a perfect world, but people can find themselves being taken advantage of if there's not a written agreement in place, especially in an employment setting. According to attorney Jordan Willette, who is based in Phoenix and San Francisco, employee manuals and/or barn operations guides are easy ways to communicate employment terms and expectations for both employer and employee, protecting both parties in the event a discrepancy or problem arises.

Put Your Expectations in Writing

Most businesses lay out employee duties, salary, schedules, and time-off procedures in employee contracts or manuals, which are prepared according to their state's laws. In the equine world, where many employees are hired as independent contractors and the scope of employment can change regularly, it's often easier to create a handbook that explains a barn's practices.

"At the barns I've been involved with throughout my life, duties for people within the industry can change so much, even on a day-to-day basis," Willette said. "One day, you may be grooming and saddling horses and turning them out; then



While a formal handbook might seem like a stretch for your small business, it eases tension around who does what, the expectations of each employee, and how to manage problems such as employee conflicts.

another, you might be asked to warm up a horse. It's not like traditional businesses where they have strict parameters of what's expected and can easily make an employment contract."

An employee manual or operations manual can give you a place to start outlining basic job expectations, benefits, schedules, and human resources-related requests. It might describe responsibilities in the event of an emergency that's outside work hours, and also give time-off procedures. It can also outline how to handle problems with coworkers, including who to report to and any expectations of privacy.

"The key things you want to get on paper include the typical hours an employee will be expected to work, with the understanding that it may change because a horse could colic in the middle of the night," Willette said. "If you're going to have a set schedule, there could be the inclusion of a paragraph or a section that states, 'This is what happens when it's foaling season,' or 'this is what happens during and after a horse show.'"

Because horses don't take time off from needing care, a manual should address sick leave and

whether it's considered paid time off, Willette added. This can get complicated depending on in which state the worker lives, and it also depends on whether they're considered an hourly employee, a salaried employee, or an independent contractor. Even if an employee was hired as an independent contractor, though, it's possible they might be considered an employee under certain states' laws.

"Every trainer/business owner should look at whether his or her employees are actually considered independent contractors or employees under that state's laws," Willette said. "While there are tax benefits of having independent contractors, and it can be more economical for a business, at the end of the day, they may still be considered your employees based on the employment relationship. This is determined by your state's laws, so it's worth looking into."

Prepare a Printed Back-Up Plan

A barn order of operations guide differs from an employee manual in that it provides the day-to-day instructions of how to run your stable. It's a good thing to fall back on in the event you can't be reached so that employees know how to proceed with daily events or certain emergencies.

Include daily protocols like feeding, blanketing, and turnout schedules in the barn operations guide. If there's a rotating schedule, that should be mentioned as well so that it's clearly marked who's responsible for each day.

The operations guide should also have plans in place for different emergencies, especially if you're not around. While no one can plan for every emergency, certain situations can be thought out ahead of time.

"It could state something like, 'If the head trainer is not in town or is unavailable, call this follow-up person,'" Willette said. "It might also include the procedures for if a horse casts itself in a stall or colics—what do you do? You'll want to go through different scenarios and have a list of who to call first when something happens, alongside a list of all emergency contacts, as well as instructions for

your duties for certain situations."

Even something that seems simple, like a schedule showing who's responsible for sweeping and keeping aisles clean on which days, can be useful in an operations guide. That way, all expectations are fully transparent for both employer and employees.

Employee paperwork in the horse industry doesn't have to be official, but it's always good to have more than a verbal contract, especially when it comes to salary, job duties, employer obligations, and procedures. Even if it's a digital document, it can be useful should any questions or disagreements arise.

"From either an employer or employee's point of view, it's always good to get at least the big overarching issues in writing, or even an email confirmation saying, 'In the interview, we discussed X, Y, and Z'—just a general email that summarizes what was agreed to," Willette said. "Including, of course, a disclaimer at the bottom saying this is the horse industry, and this is subject to change."

For any questions about employment practices, manuals, or contracts, consult a lawyer in your state for the most up-to-date, reliable information. ■

Meet the Expert

Jordan Willette, an attorney at Gordon Rees Scully Mansukhani, LLP, focuses her practice in civil litigation, including equine law, products liability, and business disputes. When she's not in the court

room, Willette enjoys riding and is the fundraising chairman for Horses Help, a therapeutic riding organization for children with disabilities. A reiner for 16 years, Willette still owns her youth horse, Whizin In The Dirt.



ENGAGEMENT

ADVICE FOR THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Recognition Gets You Recognized

THINK AWARDS ARE SILLY? THINK AGAIN—THEY CAN INTRODUCE YOU TO A WHOLE NEW CUSTOMER BASE.

BY JENNIFER PAULSON

It's easy to focus on show-pen success as the No. 1 driver of gaining notoriety that helps build your business. Those high-profile wins get a lot of media attention in all corners of the horse world. But perhaps you're not at that phase of your career, or maybe your business model isn't focused on the aged events that get the spotlight. There are still many opportunities for you to achieve recognition that leads to an increased reach for your marketing efforts and elevated engagement on your social media platforms. One example: recognition via awards, whether they're the NRHA Professional of the Year awards or those from other media brands.

This fall, NRHA Professional and judge Linde von Koeding earned the *Horse&Rider* Trainer of the Year award, and the recognition went well beyond the walls of her barn.

"We created the Trainer of the Year program to celebrate the horse trainers who are leaving a positive impact in the industry and are dedicating their time to helping riders reach their riding goals in life—whether that be competing at a major event, or just heading to a local horse show to compete for the first time ever," shared *Horse&Rider* editor Nichole Chirico. "We frequently hear about the trainers who are winning the open-level major events, but there are so many other trainers deserving of recognition for all the hard work they've put into building their training businesses. By having a

program like this, we're able to honor the trainers who are doing great things inside and outside of the show pen and share all the positive ways they've helped others within this industry."

Award Dividends

A plaque is nice, but recognition that comes with ongoing, marketable deliverables can be a trainer's best friend for establishing name recognition, building it, or maintaining momentum from other successes.

Once named the recipient of the *Horse&Rider* award, von Koeding's name became attached to the *Horse&Rider* brand, which has been a respected voice in the Western horse world for 60-plus years and has featured legacy horsemen and horsewomen who readers come to trust. The NRHA Professionals awards hold similar clout. When you rank with pros who hold themselves to a high standard, others see you in the same light.

Additional recognition for von Koeding's award came in the form of a podcast episode on the brand's podcast, *The Ride*, which has a solid reach in the Western industry. *Horse&Rider* also promoted her accolade to its audiences in print, on social media, and via press releases sent to various equine-based groups. All of these placements expose the recipient to other media professionals who then could approach von Koeding to create content for their brands in the future, allowing further promotion.



Linde von Koeding, an NRHA Professional and judge, received the 2023 Horse&Rider Trainer of the Year. Awards like these can boost your business in a variety of ways.

How to Achieve Recognition

The foundation of any award lies in being a reputable business owner, trainer, and horseman. From there, the sky is the limit to achieving recognition. But it doesn't come without a little work and a lot of attention to opportunities around you.

In von Koeding's case, her customers knew about the award and nominated her without her knowledge. Her glowing entry read as follows.

"I am nominating Linde to be trainer of the year. If you have met Linde, you would see her passion and care for her riders and horses and know undoubtedly that she deserves this title a million times over. But that's not the only quality making her trainer of the year worthy, Linde always makes time for you and makes sure to teach you right with a smile on her face (even if it takes all day

long to learn a lead change). Linde will show up every time and make learning fun no matter what. It takes a great trainer to not only make such well-rounded and happy horses, but riders too. She has cultivated a love for reining with many people, and she is a great example of good discipline, hard work, and an exceptional horsewoman."

The entry caught the selection committee's eye and catapulted von Koeding to the next round, which included submitting a video. While a customer doing the legwork for you is ideal, you can initiate the process for achieving recognition, too, with a little effort.

"If you see an opportunity, ask your customers to nominate you," von Koeding shared. "They might not know about the award—many of my customers aren't on social media, so they wouldn't have seen this opportunity. There's nothing wrong with pointing it out, and they'll be happy to support you."

Follow Through

Once you're nominated, be sure to follow through. You'd be amazed how many nominees don't complete the entire process to receive an award, whether that's something as simple as sending a photo or more involved like creating a video. The great part is, when you develop these materials, you can use them in many different ways in your other marketing efforts. For example, take your filming day, and turn it into an opportunity to gain footage for Reels and TikToks, or even use it to create a promotional video for your business to use at events.

When you receive the award, it's also your job to leverage the opportunity. Share all the posts the brand shares on social media, promote an interview in every way possible, and work with the group giving the award to identify further opportunities. The more you work together, the better it is for everyone involved. ■

DOLLARS & SENSE

Time for a New Look?

If you've been in this business any length of time, you can't deny that the industry is always evolving. That means your business should also keep moving forward, including how you present your business to the public. Here are a few things to think about.

Logo Design

When you set out on your own, you created a logo to represent your business. As graphic capabilities evolve, an older logo can look outdated if it features an out-of-style font, hard-to-see details, or a vibe that doesn't go with who you are today. Take a hard look at your logo, ask others for feedback, and then work with a professional to update it, if needed. Remember to update it everywhere your brand is represented.

Key Tip: Think timeless fonts, colors, and designs so you don't need to revisit this branding element in the near future.

Brand Colors

Colors go in and out of style. Consider your brand's colors. Look around you at horse shows. Which color schemes are a little too common for your liking? How can you make a color combination all your own? Which palettes will stand the test of time while still making your business stand out?

Resources

Rebranding: What It Is, Why It's Important, Strategies, and Examples, crowdspring.com

Six Common Mistakes to Avoid When Rebranding a Small Business, brandsonify.com



When you've been in business for a while, it's important to evaluate if the look and feel of your branding—the outward visual you show the world—truly represent who you are and what your business provides.

Key Tip: Think about universally repeatable colors. If you choose a particular shade of blue, can you replicate that across all of your marketing, stall fronts, and swag? Consistency is key for successful branding.

Simplify

Revamping your brand doesn't have to be overwhelming. How can you keep things simple—and cost-effective? A simpler logo might be less expensive to embroider on caps and jackets. Common colors can be easier to find across your needs. Talk to the business that does your caps, jackets, stall curtains, and more for their tips to keep things simple but effective and modern.

Key Tip: Look at other small businesses, even those outside the horse industry, for inspiration on simple logos, universal colors, and impactful branding.

Final Takeaways

Rebranding doesn't have to be a huge undertaking, but it's one you should approach thoughtfully and with a plan to ensure that it's beneficial for the long haul. Done hastily and without a plan, it can be a waste of resources and something you'll have to visit again sooner than later. ■

Have You Considered Coaching?

As an NRHA Professional, you're the go-to person for your customers, from teaching youth riders to coaching non pros to training their open horses. You're the expert in those relationships. But there are always ways to learn more about yourself, your training, and your business, and a coach might be just the thing that pushes you to the next level.

Coach Type #1: Financial Coaching

No one likes to talk about money—unless they're getting a windfall of cash. It's a tough topic, but one that must be addressed, and a financial coach can help you address the tough topics and set you up for success. You can find one for your personal and professional finances to help you achieve your goals. They'll walk you through setting up a financial plan, identifying problem areas, and helping you develop better financial understanding to keep you moving forward.

Coach Type #2: Mental Coaching

There's no doubt that the top riders in the industry are as sharp at training horses as they are in their mental game. All athletes hit peaks and valleys in their self-confidence and mental preparedness to compete. A coach specializing in sports psychology can help you overcome tough times, capitalize on good times, and keep you sharp for competition. If one-on-one coaching doesn't appeal to you or fit your needs, even subscribing to a podcast that discusses sports psychology can be beneficial and offer insightful tips.

Coach Type #3: Business Coach

A financial coach focuses on your money; a

NRHA Pro Trainer



Coaching can change many aspects of your business for the better.

business coach helps your entrepreneurship go to the next level. They'll help you identify opportunities, provide motivation, and help you develop a vision for your business that keeps it growing toward your goals.

Coach Type #4: Training Coach

The rise of the coach for horse trainers has made a mark on all aspects of the Western performance horse industry. Relying on a well-trained eye to help see holes in your training can elevate your program to new levels. Chances are you know legendary NRHA Professionals who provide this type of service, but asking your peers who they use and how the process works can help you identify the best coach for your program, in terms of coaching style, availability, pricing, and more.

Coach Type #5: Fitness Coach

As a professional horse trainer, you live an active lifestyle. But achieving a higher level of physical fitness can help with all aspects of your personal life and your business. Making time for a personal trainer and committing to an exercise program outside riding horses and doing barn chores pushes you physically and mentally, which sharpens your presence every time you compete. ■

Winter Marketing Tips

As you kick-off another year in your business, take time to make a skeleton plan—or a more detailed one—for your marketing efforts.

Take a Look Back. One of the best ways to plan for the future is to look at your history in terms of what worked and what didn't. What provided the expected return on investment? Which efforts fell short? Did anything exceed your expectations that should be repeated this year? Take a hard look at what worked and what didn't before you start moving forward.

Use the Pro Trainer Marketing Toolkits. Visit nrha.com/protrainer, and scroll to the bottom to find the three-part marketing toolkit designed especially for you, an NRHA Professional. The booklets cover marketing strategy, your website, and social media. Additionally, on that same website, you'll find a partial archive of past *NRHA Pro Trainer* magazines that hold a wealth of information you can use in your planning and marketing.

Set Your Goals. Besides winning the NRHA Futurity...what do you want to accomplish this year? Focus on your business goals just as much as you do when setting your riding/competition goals. Then bring the two lists together and see how they complement each other and if there are ways you can streamline your efforts to achieve them.

Make a Budget. The feature that begins on page 18 of this issue covers the ins and outs of budget development, and now's as good a time as any to get yours shaped up so you start the New Year on solid footing, including your marketing budget. Do you need new photos? What about video? Have you considered updating your presence at shows in terms of your stall fronts of your sponsorship of awards and classes? Get these ideas in place now so you don't have to worry about them in the future.

Talk to Your Customers. Ask your riders if there's anything they'd like to see evolve about your business in 2024. Do they have input on your communication? Have they noticed new opportunities to promote your business? Take their experiences to heart as you make your big plans for 2024. ■

Stay Connected

Are you connected with your NRHA Professionals peers and the association? Be sure you stay in touch with the following communication outlets so you don't miss any news, discussions, requests for input, and opportunities to volunteer.

JOIN THE FACEBOOK GROUP. It's super-easy to join. Get on Facebook, and search “NRHA Professionals” or click this [link](#). Request to join the group, and Sara Honegger will approve your entry if you have a current Professional membership. This group can be a terrific resource for many things. Post when you're looking to find shared lodging for help at a show, hiring new help, have questions for the group, and even to get access to the digital *NRHA Pro Trainer* each quarter.

JOIN THE TEXT LINE. Join the NRHA Professionals text line by clicking this [link](#). Here you'll get notifications of important meetings, information from the association, and receive a link to the digital *NRHA Pro Trainer* each quarter.

UPDATE YOUR PROFILE. Go to ReinerSuite™ and click on “Trainer Profile” to update your phone number, address, focus of your business, logo, accolades, and more to help new customers find you when they use the Find A Pro button to locate a professional. ■



There are three easy ways you can stay in communication with your association and your professionals' group.

PHOTO BY MIKE MEYERS ON UNSPLASH



**SPEAK UP
FOR ATHLETES**

**AND ENSURE THEIR
SAFETY AND WELL-BEING**

NRHA Professionals can come together to help support the safety of their riders in many ways. The #WeRideTogether initiative offers insight into how.

TOGETHER, WE CAN ALLEVIATE MISCONDUCT

A NATIONWIDE INITIATIVE AIMS TO HELP THE HORSE COMMUNITY ALLEVIATE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, WITH PROFESSIONAL TRAINERS TAKING THE LEAD IN RECOGNIZING AND PREVENTING THE PROBLEM.

BY CARRIE KEHRING, PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF #WERIDETOGETHER

As the parent of a survivor of sexual abuse, It's shocking and appalling that these behaviors continue to occur, making sport an unhealthy environment for everyone. Sexual abuse of children is illegal. It's time to end the

denial and resistance, and we must let go of outdated practices and assumptions. Yet, there has been so much push back over implementing changes that would solve the problem. Instead, the focus has been over SafeSport and how

#WeRideTogether

prosecution works rather than on how to prevent the abuse in the first place.

What's the solution? It's proactive prevention, a practice that we see implemented in other industries already. Whether it's in our schools or in our offices, nearly every other environment that has a potential for power imbalance has put in place a culture and set of operating policies to protect all participants—be it the teacher and student, or the manager and employee. The sporting environment should be treated just the same, with safeguards between coach and athlete.

I understand firsthand that being an equestrian is a way of life. As an equestrian and a veteran horse show mom myself, I know it's not uncommon for us to spend more time with our barn mates and coaches than many people spend with their families. We rely heavily on each other for guidance, training, animal care, and friendship. Because of this, it's easy for this sport to spill over into our personal lives. I also have learned that because of the close and often intense nature of these relationships, it becomes easy for boundaries between coaches and riders to get blurry.

When this happens, violations of trust, misconduct and abuse are more likely to occur. Just as we have barn safety rules everyone knows and follows, we need clear standards for relationship dynamics to keep everyone safe. Transparency and accountability are the cornerstones of misconduct prevention. Everyone—coaches, athletes, and parents—plays a role in eliminating sexual misconduct in sport.

The following best practices help create clear and firm boundaries that we can use to keep athletes, coaches, and our sport safe. I challenge everyone in the equestrian community to embrace the ideas laid out here and help

eliminate sexual misconduct in our sport. The digital issue has clickable links, but if you're reading in print, all of this information can be found at weridetogogether.today.

1 ■ Take the Coach Athlete Pledge

The [Coach Athlete Pledge](#), a commitment to maintaining healthy training environments, summarizes 10 best practices to ensure that future generations of athletes have safe and positive experiences. Similar to a new-client liability waiver, the pledge can serve as a valuable onboarding document that helps ensure everyone—riders, parents, and coaches—understands the expected standards of behavior.

2 ■ Post and Adhere to Conduct Rules at the Barn and at Horse Shows

It's not enough to simply map out rules of conduct. These rules must be easy to understand, widely distributed, and consistently enforced. Just as riding rules are posted outside the arena, behavioral rules and code of conduct requirements should be prominently displayed in high-visibility areas so that everyone is working from the same playbook.

#WeRideTogether offers Code of Conduct signs outlining the 10 best practices laid out in the Coach Athlete Pledge free of charge. Order one for your facility by emailing info@weridetogogether.today.

3 ■ Implement "The Window Rule" to Keep Everyone Safe



Riding horses becomes a way of life for many young people, and their coaches become trusted confidants. Proactive prevention of inappropriate relationships keeps young riders safe and protects our sport's reputation.

We tend to think of misconduct as something that happens in dark rooms, after hours, but boundaries can also be crossed in broad daylight. That's why areas where riders prepare, practice, and compete should always be accessible to supervision. Every adult's interaction with a rider should be observable and easy to interrupt. If a conversation with a minor must be private, the "rule of three" requires that a third person must be present. This applies to online and phone communications, including text messages.

Does this mean a coach can't watch a class in the stands alone with their student? Of course not. This is a prime example of an interaction that is observable and easy to interrupt. A coach and young athlete having a private conversation in a tack room with a closed door and no windows, on the other hand, is neither easily observed nor interrupted. In this case the "rule of three" applies.

Empower yourself and others by learning how to create and maintain transparent (and safe)

Consider Your Employees

Your assistant trainers and barn help play a role in this effort, too. First of all, they should be empowered to observe and report any conduct they witness that makes them uncomfortable. Second, they should feel that the same level of respect a coach provides a rider applies to the employer/employee relationship. Consider making this code and these tips part of your employee handbook, as discussed on page 6. It helps level the playing field to ensure that everyone in your barn shares mutual respect for each other and their boundaries.

environments by **watching this PSA about “The Window Rule”** [here](#). →

4. Learn About Power Imbalances

It's not appropriate for a coach to enter a love and/or sexual relationship with an athlete they train because of the inherent power imbalance that exists. A power imbalance occurs when one person in the relationship holds authority over the other. For example, coaches often have sole determination over whether a rider competes at a certain level, rides certain horses, or participates in certain events. Having power over an athlete and their competitive future impacts that athlete's capability and comfort in saying no. Consent is never possible when an athlete, regardless of age, doesn't feel they have a choice.

5. Call the Courage First Athlete Helpline

The [Courage First Athlete Helpline](https://www.athlethelpline.org) [link: <https://www.athlethelpline.org>] is a free, confidential resource for athletes of all ages, former athletes, parents, coaches, administrators, and anyone tangentially related to a sport community. Their counselors are former athletes who've been trained by sports abuse researchers to offer support and guidance on emotional, sexual, or physical abuse in sport.

If you have witnessed or suspect abuse, you're in the unique position to intervene and prevent further harm. Silence is an abuser's best friend. It's in everyone's best interests to err on the side of caution and talk through any concerns you may have. Whether you seek the courage to make a call for yourself, help another, or continue healing as a survivor, counselors are available to support your journey every step of the way.

6. Explore the #WeRideTogether Blog

There's no direct path to recovery for a survivor of sexual abuse. Everyone is different, and it can be difficult to understand and navigate the systems, the resources, and the fallout.

The [#WeRideTogether Blog](#) is intended to be a repository of information where someone who is coming through a sexual abuse or misconduct situation can read and explore to better understand all the systems at play, as well as a source of news and expert opinion. This blog represents the voices of counselors, prosecutorial law enforcement professionals, attorneys, public health professionals, child

protection specialists, victim advocates, parents, survivors, and other experts in all the areas of sexual misconduct and abuse.

7 ■ Take Time to Think About Your Personal Boundaries

Consider your personal boundaries and who you consider to be trusted individuals in your life who you could go to if misconduct or abuse happened. It can be helpful to visualize situations ahead of time, determine your boundaries, and make a plan for how you may handle such events. This means considering what language, touch, and interactions are OK with you and not ok with you. Anyone crossing your boundaries without your consent is not acceptable. We've all rehearsed "stop, drop, and roll" and mapping escape routes and meet-up locations in the event of a fire. We can also plan for these types of uncomfortable, tricky situations.

8 ■ Believe, Listen to, and Support Yourself

It's important to listen to your body and trust your gut. This means recognizing and responding to sensations in your body. When something feels not quite right, your body tells you. For example, some people experience tightness in the chest, trouble taking deep breaths, headaches, an upset stomach, extra sweating, and/or shakiness. Sometimes these feelings mean you're excited or that you are physically ill, but they can also mean that something isn't OK with you socially, emotionally, and/or with your environment—so much so, that you experience discomfort.

9 ■ Support Others If You Observe Misconduct

Make a positive impact by sticking up for others if you observe misconduct or abuse. This is called being an active bystander. Bystanders play roles in supporting survivors by directly or indirectly intervening when something inappropriate occurs. Serving as an active bystander, instead of showing indifference via inaction or passive permission, contributes to upholding a safe environment for everyone. If something you observe doesn't sit quite right with you, there's often a reason why.

Learn more about how we can work together to stop sexual misconduct from happening to the athletes in your life at weridetgether.today. ■

Meet the Expert

After a decade of working in human resources, with tech start-ups and nonprofits, Carrie Kehring has spent the past 12 years driving up and down the West Coast attending horse shows with her daughters. She lives

in California with her family and an abundance of horses, dogs, and various other farm animals, including a pig named Waddles. Carrie is intimately acquainted with the enormous and multi-faceted difficulties faced by survivors and the personal toll sexual abuse takes on their loved ones. A passionate advocate for change, Carrie is committed to ending sexual misconduct in all youth sports via awareness, education, and transparent discussion.



Budgeting can hit more than a few nerves and cause anxiety. Arm yourself with knowledge—and the ability to ask for help—so you can set up your business for success.



Budgeting **BASICS**

BUILDING A BUDGET FOR YOUR BUSINESS MIGHT SOUND SCARY; BUT OPERATING WITHOUT ONE CAN LEAD TO EVEN MORE FRIGHTENING CONSEQUENCES.

BY KRISTIN PITZER

It's no secret that most people who train horses for a living do it for the love of the animal and the partnership. These individuals are often patient, hardworking, and creative at problem-solving, and they're usually said to "have a way with" horses. If horse training businesses could run on all those qualities, trainers would be set.

Unfortunately, having a love for animals and a desire to work hard isn't all you need to set up a profitable and successful business. It also takes some business sense, especially the ability to set up and follow a budget. Without that, businesses can hemorrhage money, and trainers can find themselves in lots of debt very quickly.

Callee Miller, a National Reined Cow Horse Association (NRCHA) professional horsewoman with a strong accounting background, and Gene Spagnola, a former businessman-turned-all-around professional trainer, offered some tips for building a budget for a horse training business.

Start With Expenses

When starting up a training business, some people seem to believe if you just put your head down, work hard, and ride your horses, success will inevitably come. That mindset may have worked 20 years ago, Miller said, but these days, it takes planning and careful monitoring of money coming in and going out to keep a training business afloat.

"You have to have a guideline," Miller said. "If you have no guideline, in any business, you're going to be lost and you're not going to have structure. It's no different than personal budgeting. Managing your money will help you manage your business, allow you freedom, and allow you to make better business decisions in the future, too."

The first step, both Miller and Spagnola agreed, is to start by accumulating a list of the expenses you have each month. If you already

have a business up and running, you should have an idea of the amount of money you pay out for your various costs. If you're trying to get a business started up, though, it doesn't hurt to ask somebody who's already established for a list of their common horsekeeping expenses.

"You don't necessarily need what their actual expense amounts are, but just knowing what the actual categories are is helpful," Spagnola said. "You want to make sure that you have all the expenses covered. If you don't compare it to some other businesses, it's easy to miss something. It's the not obvious things you have to make sure you hit."

There are programs, like QuickBooks, that can help you track your expenses, or you can find apps on your phone that are useful for equestrian businesses. Excel spreadsheets are also handy, but if you're not tech-savvy, you can always just grab a pencil and paper.

"There are so many different ways, and everybody has a way that works best for them," Miller said. "I have a planner in my barn, and I write things down. Then, at the end of the month, I cross-reference everything, make sure I get everything billed, and move on."

It's useful to separate expenses out into different categories. The first and often biggest to take into consideration is the cost of your facility, whether you lease it or pay a mortgage. The next biggest will likely be the cost of caring for the horses. Under this umbrella you should include things like feed, hay, shavings, and any paid labor like stall cleaners.

Another category could be utilities. This consists of obvious things like water, electricity, and garbage or manure removal, but you might also choose to include your time and equipment costs for your business. Trucks and trailers could also be allocated here or put under a

PHOTO BY ADOBE STOCK



Many elements compose your budget. It's crucial to consider every single expense your business incurs—expected and unexpected—when building your budget. This sets you on a path for financial success instead of falling short.



It's easy to remember your obvious costs—such as feed, supplements, and hay or hay cubes—but think hard to recall those less common or hidden expenses.

separate heading.

Be sure that somewhere on your budget spreadsheet you include lines for retirement, health insurance, and unexpected expenses. For the former, this could be an automatic withdrawal into an IRA or investing with the help of a financial advisor. For the latter, riding accidents and broken barn equipment are always a possibility with horses—and usually seem to happen at the worst times—so make sure to budget some money to go into savings each month that can mitigate those costs.

“If you own a facility, you have to factor in repairs, and you have to be realistic,” Spagnola said. “Horses break a lot of stuff, so factor those expenses in. They’re going to happen whether you want them to or not.”

Reverse-Engineer Your Budget

Once you have a list of your expenses, separate your fixed costs, such as mortgage, taxes, and insurance, from your variable costs, like hay, grain, and bedding. Total up your fixed costs, and that will identify your breakeven, or the amount you must make just to cover your expenses. Your work doesn’t stop there. While some people believe that breaking even is the goal, that doesn’t work very well when your training business is supposed to be your income source.

“The biggest thing I see is people are trying

to break even,” Miller said. “If you’re trying to break even, it’s not a business. It’s straight up a hobby. In my opinion, you need at least a 35% to 40% margin there so that you can take something home to live on. If it’s a business and you’re self-employed, you’re supposed to pay yourself a salary.”

With your breakeven amount in mind, you can start working backward to determine what you should charge per horse in your program. Start by looking at the number of stalls you have available, but don’t make the mistake of assuming they will all be filled every single month, Spagnola cautioned.

“I always like to use an 80% occupancy, so you build your revenue base and your expenses based on 80% capacity,” Spagnola said. “You have to set your training and lesson prices based on what your breakeven is, then you can look around and see what others are charging.

“Hypothetically, let’s say I have 25 stalls and 17 of them are filled,” he continued. “I might have to charge \$850 per horse to break even. Then I ask myself, ‘What’s the average charge in my area and in my discipline?’ If training in my area is \$1,250, then my profit is going to be the difference between \$1,250 and \$850, times 17 horses. Then I’ll know how much I can generate.”

Even after you’ve figured out your numbers, you’ll still want to check in periodically to ensure that you’re covering your costs. Miller used to recommend reviewing budgets twice a year, but due to the market fluctuations that have occurred since Covid-19, she now suggests quarterly assessments of your revenue and expenses.

“You can rapidly lose a lot of money by not paying attention to that,” Miller cautioned. “Do your bookkeeping every month, and you’ll know where you are. You’ll get very practiced at

it even if you hate doing it.”

Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help

If you know you're not good with math, or if your head is spinning just thinking about trying to set up a budget for your business, you're not alone—most trainers would rather be in the saddle than in an office chair crunching numbers. Fortunately, even though the horse industry is small, it's full of a variety of people, and you likely already know someone that would be willing to help.

“If someone is really struggling and is completely lost, ask around because there's probably a trainer whose spouse is really good at it or can give you some ideas,” Miller said. “Be open to different ideas. Horse trainers can be very prideful people, and so admitting that they aren't very good with money can be difficult for them. But it's OK if you're not.”

Don't wait until it's too late and your business is going under to look for guidance. By that point, it will be much more difficult to salvage your finances, and you may end up actually spending more money to save your business.

“Seek help right away,” Spagnola said. “Get some financial advice from somebody who understands the industry, whether it's a friend or family member—somebody who can look at your business objectively.”

If you can afford it, a professional CPA or financial advisor who's well-versed in the horse world will be invaluable. These experts usually have insight into different things, especially tax-wise, that people outside the industry don't know are available. If you don't know anybody personally, Spagnola recommended checking with your local Farm Bureau.

Building a budget might seem like a stressful, difficult process. If you have the right people and practices in your corner, though, it can

completely change your business for the better and open it up for expansion in the future. Don't be scared to ask for help, but do your research and be sure the person assisting you is credible and trustworthy.

“Many trainers are good at training horses but are not good at managing a business or managing their money,” Miller said. “The biggest trouble I see in their businesses is a lack of budgeting and not knowing how to ask for help. If you're uncertain from Day One, just be honest with yourself. Know what you're good at, stay with what you're good at, and then get some help.” ■

About Gene Spagnola

Based in Harwinton, Connecticut, Gene Spagnola trains all-around horses. Before becoming a full-time horse trainer 23 years ago, Spagnola was a big-city businessman and part-time trainer. He started out working for an accounting firm in New York City, then became controller for a company on Long Island before moving up to CFO of a company in Greenwich. He was the 2020 American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA) Most Valuable Professional and is currently the chair of the AQHA Show Committee. Spagnola is the manager and co-owner of Powderbrook Farm.

About Callee Miller

National Reined Cow Horse Association professional horsewoman Callee Miller, of Caldwell, Idaho, initially went to college with the intention of pursuing a degree in accounting. Miller paid her way through school by working for other trainers and soon decided to become a horse trainer herself. She rolled the knowledge she gained from her finance coursework into starting up her business, Mill Iron 7 Performance Horses, in 2003. Miller has a passion for helping other trainers with budgeting and accounting tasks, especially young trainers just getting started.

FINANCIAL TRAINER

TIPS AND INSIGHTS TO PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE

The State of the Reining Sales Industry Is Bright

A WRAP-UP OF THE FALL AND WINTER REINING SALES.

BY MEGAN ARSZMAN
PHOTOS BY BAR H PHOTOGRAPHY

The reining industry has seen immense growth in many areas, including awareness, futurity entries, and even in the sales ring. In 2023, the pressure to find the next Million Dollar mount means more buyers and more bids at the industry's largest sales like the Legacy Sale and the NRHA Markel Futurity Sales held during the NRHA Futurity.

NRHA Markel Futurity Sales

Consolidating the Futurity sales from multiple days to just one brings a multitude of buyers ready to buy in one spot. The four sales included were the Performance Horse Sale, Elite Yearling Sale, Preferred Breeders Sale, and Premier Sale.

More than 220 horses were sold during the Futurity sales. The complete day brought in a total of \$5,765,500, marking the sales average \$25,739.

An eye-catching gray colt by Tricked Out Spook and out of Dontquestionthischic brought one of the highest prices ever seen during the Futurity Sales, with a bid of \$189,000. (The highest was the \$300,000 purchase of Mr Magnum Dun It in 2013.) Consigned by Cooper Smith and purchased by Anne Tourney, the colt



The NRHA Markel Futurity Premier Sale high seller, an eye-catching gray colt by Tricked Out Spook and out of Dontquestionthischic, brought \$189,000.

was hip #517 in the Premier Sale. The Premier Sale saw a total of 104 horses sell for a total of \$2,296,000—an average of \$22,077.

The **Performance Horse Sale** sold four of the six horses offered, bringing the total gross for the sale to \$315,000—an average of \$78,750 per horse. Dunit With An Iceman (SG Frozen Enterprise x Pale Dancer Nic) was the highest seller of the Performance Horse Sale, bringing the hammer down at \$150,000 for consignor Chappell-Mathison Partnership of Tioga, Texas, and buyer NRHA Million Dollar Owner Robert Santagata.

The **Elite Yearling Sale** saw a total of 68 yearlings go through the sale, with 57 selling for a gross total of \$1,807,500, for an average of \$31,711. The highest seller was a buckskin

yearling colt by NRHA Million Dollar Sire Colonels Shining Gun and out of Snip O Chex, consigned by Cooper Smith of Whitesboro, Texas, and purchased by Jamie Walters of Laguna Beach, California, for \$82,000.

The **Preferred Breeders Sale** gave a glimpse at the future of the reining arena, with many young horses going through the ring. A weanling colt consigned by M13 Equine of Ogden, Utah, was the highest price at \$110,000. The colt by NRHA Three Million Dollar Sire Pale Face Dunnit and out of Electric Cha Ching was purchased by Haras Bellini, Inc., from Rancho Santa Fe, California.

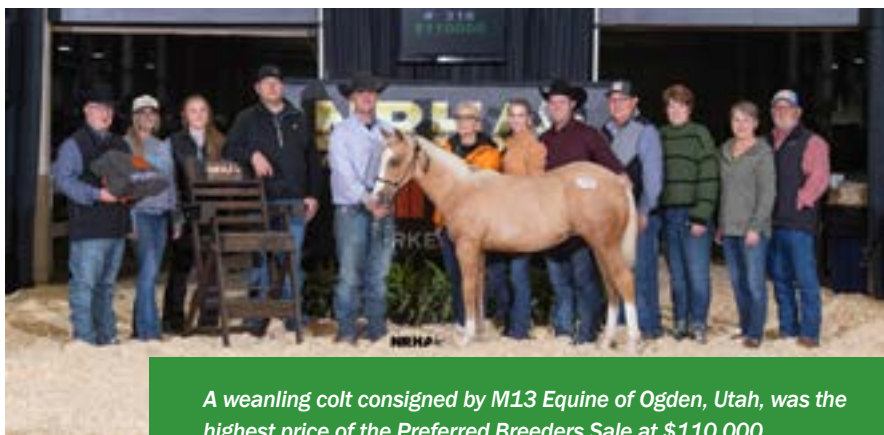
“Everyone works hard to make the NRHA Markel Futurity Sale a success—from the consignors who spend months, or even years, on their horses to the sales staff and crew that put it all together,” says Angie Honeywell, Director of ReinerSuite and Sales for the NRHA in an online post.

The Legacy Reining Breeders Sale

September is the unofficial kickoff of the fall sales season, with the Legacy Reining Breeders Sale held at the Cardinal Training Center in Aubrey, Texas. Horses ranging from broodmares



In the Performance Horse Sale during the NRHA Markel Futurity Sales, Dunit With An Iceman (SG Frozen Enterprise x Pale Dancer Nic) was the highest seller at \$150,000.



A weanling colt consigned by M13 Equine of Ogden, Utah, was the highest price of the Preferred Breeders Sale at \$110,000.



The highest seller of the Elite Yearling Sale was a buckskin colt by NRHA Million Dollar Sire Colonels Shining Gun and out of Snip O Chex, consigned by Cooper Smith of Whitesboro, Texas. The colt sold for \$82,000.

in foal to potential futurity horses were sold. During the annual sale, 114 horses sold for a total gross of \$2,513,500 and an average of \$21,083.

The highest seller was a yearling filly by NRHA Ten Million Dollar Stallion Magnum Chic Dream and out of Dun It For Chex, consigned by Cardinal Reining Horses and purchased by Rick Clark for \$87,000. ■

NRHA Professional Code of Ethics

We, the members of the National Reining Horse Association Professionals, in carrying out our role of providing service to the reining horse industry, recognize the need to do so in a professional manner, and to represent the sport of reining in a professional manner with the highest degree of integrity.

Therefore, we have set forth the following code of ethics, which shall govern our endeavors in the industry. By signing this application, I agree to be bound by the rules of the NRHA Professional Code of Ethics. To participate in this program, I concede to maintaining a continuous individual membership with NRHA.

As a member of the NRHA Professionals, I will:

- Adhere to the professional standards of the NRHA and work to further its goals and objectives.
- Ensure that the welfare of the reining horse is paramount and that every horse shall always be treated humanely and with dignity, respect, and compassion, regardless if the horse does not reside under my direct supervision.
- Positively influence all members to refrain from any perceived misconduct or inappropriate actions towards either horses or other members.
- Conduct my affairs in the sport of reining with integrity, sincerity, and accuracy in an honest, transparent, and forthright manner.
- Act with integrity in my dealings with reining clients, other NRHA members, and the public when representing the sport of reining. In this regard, any horse shown by my spouse, client, or child will be economically owned as prescribed by applicable NRHA rules.
- Handle my reining horse business, operations, and communications (including those through social media) in a manner, which promotes a positive image of the reining horse industry.

- To fully disclose to customers the actual sales price and commissions involved in the sale or purchase of a horse.
- To not charge or receive a monetary commission, or other remuneration constituting a commission, from both buyer and seller of a horse.
- Model the proper ideals of positive sportsmanship and fair competition, and show cordial courtesy to fellow competitors, members, and Judges.

The Professional Code of Ethics is intended as a general guideline for reining professionals' behavior and is not intended to be an exhaustive list of conduct for NRHA Professionals. NRHA Professionals' conduct is also governed by NRHA Rules. This Code is intended, however, to state basic standards, which should govern the conduct of all professionals and to provide guidance to assist professionals in establishing and maintaining high standards of conduct within the reining horse industry.

This Code of Ethics generally identifies the ethical obligations of NRHA Professionals and does not substitute for, nor is it intended to substitute for, or in any way alter or modify the NRHA rules.

The members of the NRHA Professionals Committee created the NRHA Professional Code of Ethics to further promote the humane treatment of reining horses and ethical business practices. If you have questions regarding this code, please reach out to Patti Carter at pcarter@nrha.com.

