

PRO TRAINER

NRHA 

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL REINING TRAINERS FALL 2021

SAY THE RIGHT THING

Be Ready When The Cameras Roll

INTEL IN THE NUMBERS

Results From The NRHA Pros' Survey

YOUR BUSINESS MODEL

Is Your Structure Right For You?

PLUS

- Sales & Commissions
- Build Loyalty
- Personal Insurance
- Your Fall Marketing Calendar

Fall/21



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PRO TRAINER
NRHA  FALL 2021

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PRO TRAINER NEWS

PEOPLE, REPORTS, EVENTS

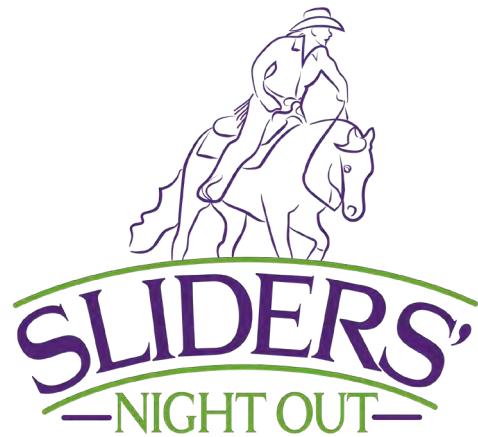
It All Adds Up

NRHA PROFESSIONALS CAN GIVE BACK TO THE REINING COMMUNITY IN A VARIETY OF WAYS VIA THE REINING HORSE FOUNDATION.

BY LESLIE BAKER, RHF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Attending Sliders' Night Out is just one way to share camaraderie and support RHF.



As the Reining Horse Foundation marks its 20th year, NRHA Professionals are a vital part of its success now and for the future. There are multiple ways NRHA Professionals can support RHF at varying levels, three of which are discussed here. Additionally, the volunteer-led RHF Board of Directors always includes NRHA Professionals. Longtime board member Ben Balow's term concludes December 31. Other NRHA Pros on the Board include Billy Williams of Texas and Patrick Flaherty of Arizona.

In 2020, the NRHA Professionals Committee approved a "check-off" style option to donate to RHF with all new and renewed memberships, and members are participating. From January through mid-August 2021, 258 NRHA Professionals have chosen to give \$20 or more

to RHF when renewing or purchasing their memberships, including 47 international NRHA Professionals. The small amounts add up, in this case totaling nearly \$6,000, and are earmarked specifically for the Dale Wilkinson Memorial Crisis Fund. This is a fitting cause, as more than 75% of Crisis Fund grants generally go to NRHA Professionals, and in 2020, it was 100%. The fund often stands in the gap for reiners who don't always have safety nets when they can't work due to injury, illness, or disaster.

The Buy-A-Pro Auction benefits the youth program, providing NRHyA members leadership development opportunities and scholarships. In addition to engaging young people today, the programs are cultivating reiners for the future—those who stay engaged with or return to the sport. NRHA Professionals donate two lessons of their time, and through a virtual auction these

are offered to riders of any age. It's also good way for NRHA Professionals to grow awareness and gain new clients.

Sliders' Night Out, Presented by Toyon Ranch, is the foundation's largest annual fundraiser, and NRHA Professionals turn out for this can't-miss event on reining's social calendar. Bidding on auction items, making pledges for unrestricted donations to the Reiners Club, and honoring the

sport's legends all happens here. Even though this charitable event has a higher price for admission than everyday gatherings, NRHA Professionals can encourage clients to get involved or recruit a party of reiners to share a table.

RHF has as its mission: We care for and honor our reining community. It's no surprise that NRHA Professionals have a heart for this mission and find ways to get involved. ■

Fall/Winter Calendar

Calendar is subject to change. Please visit nrha.com and **ReinerSuite™** for the most updated information.

Oct. 1

Final 2021 NRHA Futurity payment due

Oct. 1

2021 NRHA Futurity rider designations due

Riders and divisions may be changed through close of business Nov. 1 with no penalty.

Oct. 27–31

2021 NRHA European Derby
Lyon, France

Open to NRHA-nominated horses ages 5, 6, 7, and 8 in 2021.

Oct. 29–31

Judges' School
Oklahoma City, OK

Hosted at the Embassy Suites Airport. For more information, contact Kristen Liesman at kliesman@nrha.com.

Nov. 5

2021 NRHA Futurity stall reservations due

Nov. 15–22

2021 NRHA European Futurity
Cremona, Italy

Open to NRHA-nominated horses age 4 in 2021.

Nov. 25–Dec. 4

NRHA Futurity & Adequan® North American Affiliate Championships
Oklahoma City, OK

Dec. 1

Sliders' Night Out,
Presented by Toyon Ranch
Oklahoma City, OK

Donor opportunities are now open. Email Leslie Baker at lbaker@nrha.com.

Dec. 2

NRHA Markel Futurity Sales
Oklahoma City, OK

This one-day super sale will feature the NRHyA stallion auction and four sessions of consigned horses. For more information, visit nrha.com/sales.

Affiliate Regional Championships

Dates are subject to change.

Northwest

Oct. 2–9

Nampa, ID

Southwest

Oct. 5–8

Scottsdale, AZ

North Central

Oct. 14–17

Lincoln, NE

Mexico

Oct. 22–24

Southeast

Oct. 28–31

Jacksonville, FL

East Central

Oct. 27–31

Cloverdale, IN

DOLLARS & SENSE

AHP Industry Survey Results

TAP IN TO VALUABLE SURVEY RESULTS FROM THE 2021 AMERICAN HORSE PUBLICATIONS HORSE INDUSTRY SURVEY.

Every few years, American Horse Publications (AHP, a non-profit professional membership association that promotes excellence in equine media and is dedicated to excellence in equine media through education and communication) conducts an industry-wide survey of horse owners in the U.S. The audience crosses all disciplines and breeds, but aims to achieve three goals: 1) gauge participation trends and management practices in the U.S. equine industry; 2) identify critical issues facing the equine industry as perceived by those who own or manage horses; and 3) better understand approaches to horse health care.

Why does this matter to you? Because it can give you insights into the industry as a whole to apply to your own business and marketing tactics.

First up: Demographics.

- Age
 - o 18–24: 2.7% (down from 5.5% in 2018 and 10% in 2015)
 - o 45+: 76% (up from 70% in 2018 and 42% in 2015)
 - o 65+: 29.9% (up from 19.1% in 2018 and 11.1% in 2015)
- Sex
 - o 92.5% of respondents are female

Takeaway: The horse industry as a whole continues to age and is still strongly female, according to this survey.



What does the future of the horse industry look like? Find out in these notes from the AHP Horse Industry Survey.

Next: Geography.

- The largest number of responses (15.8%) came from the West Coast, plus Alaska and Hawaii.
- The far Northeast had the fewest survey participants (6.6%).

The good stuff: Horse Ownership and Participation.

- On average, survey participants own or manage six horses! However, that's down from 2018, and two of those horses are idle or retired.
- 75% of respondents indicate they manage the same number of horses as in 2020, which

Fall Marketing Calendar

It's championship season, which means you're busier than ever, but it also affords a great opportunity to put all eyes on your success. Here are a few thought-starters to get you going for all of your marketing needs during this hectic-yet-rewarding time of year.

is a big relief following the pandemic panic.

- The leading activity with horses is pleasure/trail riding (64%). The next most common activity is lessons/training (29.4%). This can add up to big gains for NRHA Professionals. As the trail-riding and lesson-getting riders continue to watch shows like *Yellowstone* and *The Last Cowboy* and gain interest in high-profile reining events, they can be primed to become your next customers at various levels of participation. When capitalized upon, this can be an advantage for local-level NRHA Pros as well as those who participate on a larger scale.
- Expectations to participate in events is down slightly from 2018 (4.3 events now compared to 5 in 2018), but this could be a hangover from COVID caution.

Finally: A Marketing Tidbit.

- 78.9% of respondents use internet searches to gain information. This means your website is a critical part of reaching these potential new reiners! Social media pales in comparison at only 41.5%.

Want access to the entire survey and more benefits? Join AHP by visiting [AmericanHorsePubs.com](https://www.americanhorsepubs.com). You can learn all about the benefits of membership for your business under the "About" tab, or email AHP Board Member Jennifer Paulson at jenpaulsoncreative@gmail.com for more details. ■

Share Your Travel. People get excited when heading to these major events of the fall. Share videos and photos of your trip along the way, especially if it involves long-distance travel or is a special trip to a big event for the first time.

Post Travel Tips. DIY riders want to know how you get your horses safely to the next show. Create videos or post blogs on your website detailing every step you take when it comes to travel prep and being on the road, from washing the trailer to stopping on the way to bedding down at the event.

Go Behind the Scenes. Horse fans who aren't at the event love to see what's going on around the show. Post images from the wash racks, your stalls, the warm-up arenas, etc. to give the flavor of the event to those who can't attend in person.

Don't Forget Your Sponsors. Before you get elbows deep in the busy season, meet with your sponsors to figure out ways to collaborate on social media and learn how you can be a valuable team member to support your endorsement.

Show Some Trends. Shopping is often a highlight at these big events. If it's your thing (or your partner's), show some trends from the show including everything from new clothing and hat styles to saddle pads and tack. This is also a great way to highlight sponsors and their offerings.

Highlight Your Dogs. It sounds silly, but people love horse-show dogs. Make your dogs the star of your Instagram stories for a day, showing the dog's activities and adding humor, music, and attitude to fit your brand.

Share Key Learnings. We can't win them all, and learning moments come from loss. Keep your social feeds real by sharing what you learned from mistakes in the pen. Humanizing yourself and sharing real insight equals big engagement potential.

Keep It Positive. You'll read about tips for interacting with the media on page 15, but remember to keep your social media positive. It shines a positive light on the reining industry and the entire horse world when we can highlight the best of what we have to share. ■

Build Barn (and Brand) Loyalty

KEEP YOUR CUSTOMERS HOOKED.

You probably think about using your social media channels to attract new customers. But they're also key to keeping current ones. Be sure to consider each of these tips when developing your social media strategy and plan or when you speak with your social media manager about your goals and needs.

1. Show Your Customers as Heroes.

Featuring your customers and/or their horses makes them feel like essential components of your business. It really shows that success is shared between all of you and you understand your clients' goals. This doesn't have to be via win photos. It can be shown by highlighting mini goals met at the barn, riding a new horse for the first time, or helping around your place. Showing customers' journeys highlights their hard work and makes them feel like they're part of your team and that you're proud of them.

Side Benefit: By highlighting these journeys, potential customers see your results-driven process and want to join in.

2. Give Thanks. Take time to thank your customers—individually or as a group—on your social media. Showing gratitude goes a long way, especially when you shout it from the rooftops of Facebook and Instagram.

Side Benefit: Outsiders see your gratitude and emulate it by integrating it into their routines, which elevates the entire industry to a more mindful, grateful place.



Loyalty goes a long way in building—and keeping—your business strong and profitable.

3. Highlight Your Help. Your help plays a huge role in your business, whether it's day-to-day at home or on the road at events. Highlight the hard work they put in and express your appreciation for their effort.

Side Benefit: This effort increases employee engagement, as discussed in the [Summer 2021 NRHA Pro Trainer](#).

4. Start a Friendly Contest. Challenge your riders to a contest, and highlight their participation. Keep it fun, light, and easy so everyone is comfortable. It can be as simple as a contest for decorating stall fronts or a bareback riding challenge.

Side Benefit: These efforts build camaraderie between everyone in your barn and makes them feel like family.

5. Support a Cause. Get everyone to put effort into supporting a common cause. This can be something reining-related, such as the Reining Horse Foundation, or something in your barn's community, such as joining an effort to build a playground or work for Habitat for Humanity. *Side Benefit:* Non-clients see that you prioritize efforts outside your barn that bring value to others and to your community. ■

Don't overlook insuring your own health and well-being. You're the key to keeping your business going, and you can't do that when you're out of commission.

Take Care of You

USE YOUR RESOURCES TO FIND HEALTH INSURANCE.

Chances are, many of the horses in your barn are insured. Your business and property are covered, too. But are you insuring the most important asset in your business? That's you—the one with the talent, skill, and vision to create your operation, manage the day-to-day work, and plan for a successful future.

Without you, there is no reining horse business bearing your name.

How can you cover this priceless commodity? There are a few ways you can take steps to prepare for an accident.

ASK AROUND. There are a few thousand NRHA Professionals just like you around the world. Ask those who you know what kind of coverage they use, how they got it, and if it works

for them. A reference from a peer can be the easiest first step to take.

OPEN A SAVINGS ACCOUNT. It's not the quickest way to build funds, but it's easy, especially if you come into money and need to sock it away for the future.

LOOK INTO ACCIDENT INSURANCE. In return for paying a periodic premium, you'll receive a payout when you have an injury. The payout is based on how severely you're injured.

CONSIDER DISABILITY INSURANCE. This type of policy attempts to protect your income if you can't work due to illness or injury. It covers a percentage of your usual salary, usually around 60%.

EXPLORE MAJOR MEDICAL. You're probably looking at a very high-deductible policy, but it will cover catastrophic events like a heart attack or major accident.

LEARN ABOUT FAITH-BASED EXPENSE-SHARING OPTIONS. These can be tricky and have many requirements and considerations, but often involve a group of like-minded individuals who pay into a program. Each member has a predetermined minimum cost to themselves, and then the rest is paid out by the group's contributions. ■

Resources

[PolicyGenius.com](https://www.policygenius.com)

[AllState.com](https://www.allstate.com)

[LibertyHealthShare.org](https://www.libertyhealthshare.org)

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



2021 NRHA Professionals' Survey Results

A SPRING SURVEY OF NRHA PROFESSIONALS SHONE LIGHT ON OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION AND GROWTH.

SURVEY ANALYSIS COMPLETED BY EDWARD L. BLACH, DVM, MS, MBA

In April 2021, each NRHA Professional received a link to an important survey regarding business practices. The main goal was to begin to identify what the most profitable training business model looks like by gathering baseline data.

“We wanted to get our feet on the ground and figure out what variables we’re working with first,” shared Dr. Ed Blach, survey analyst. “We’re learning a little at each step, and then we can identify other questions we’d like answered to get the additional data we need.”

Overall, Blach was pleased with the data the respondents provided.

“The willingness among members to share feedback and appetite for results is encouraging,” he said. “That positive reception is the brightest spot. Then the professionals can learn what’s working and learn from each other. A rising tide floats all boats.”

Here’s a basic overview of the findings from this

survey. Be on the lookout for future opportunities to share more information to further hone these key learnings and help NRHA Pros everywhere.

Basic Participant Info

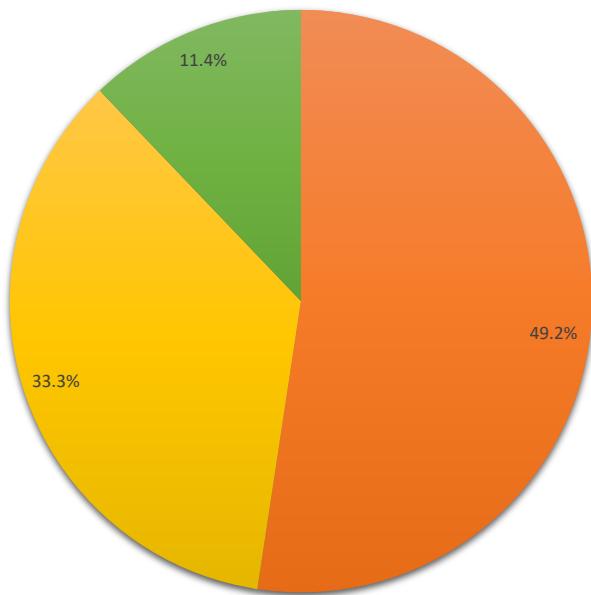
Participants were from 33 states of the U.S., five Canadian provinces, six Western European countries, Australia, Brazil, Israel, Japan, Mexico, and South Africa. Of those respondents, 40% have been training horses more than 21 years, and 24% have been in business more than 25 years. Median NRHA Lifetime Earnings of a participant were around \$20,000, and 63% of participants can complete in Level 1. Business focus weighs heavier for ancillary and non pro horses, with 75% of respondents selecting that as the core of their business. About 57% include aged-event horses in their business. Of other disciplines noted, 9% include ranch riding in their repertoire. →

The Business of It All

The following charts indicate answers to business-related questions. Some key findings are noted throughout these graphics.

Facilities

■ Own Facilities ■ Lease Facilities ■ Some Mix of Both



Flat or Itemized Rates

■ Flat Rate ■ Itemized Rate

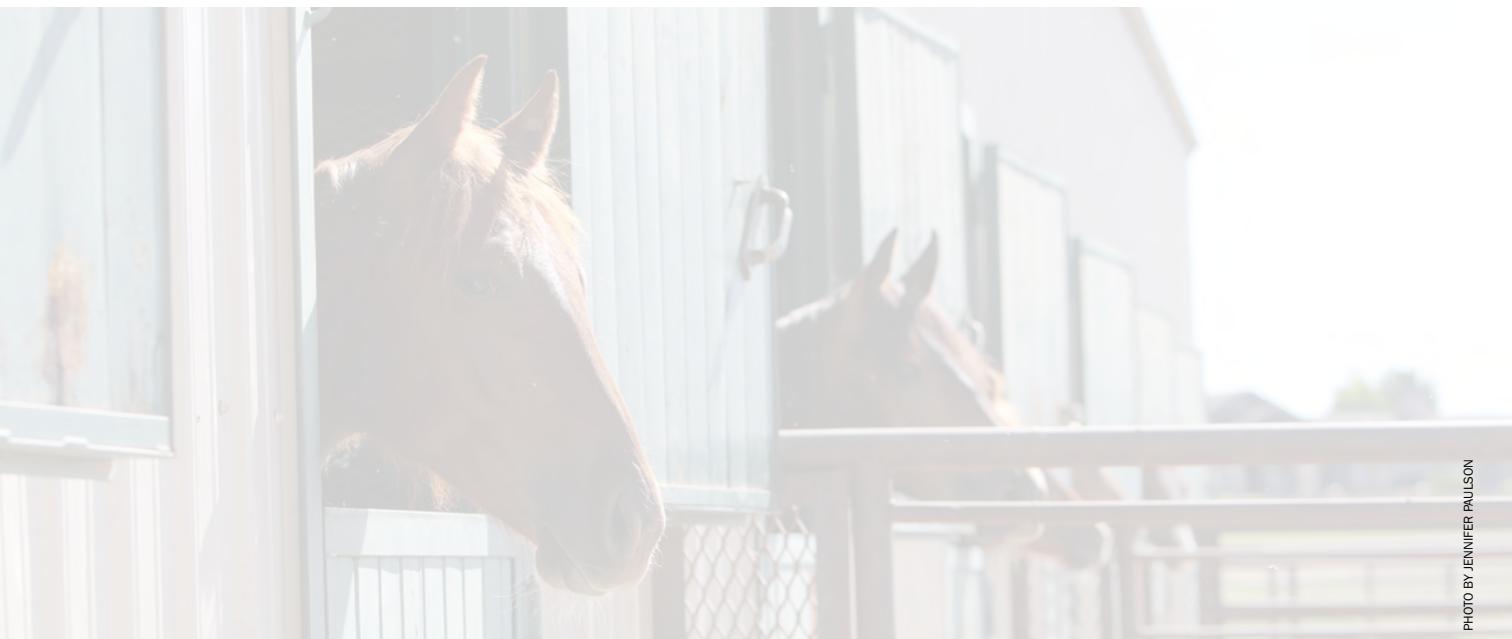
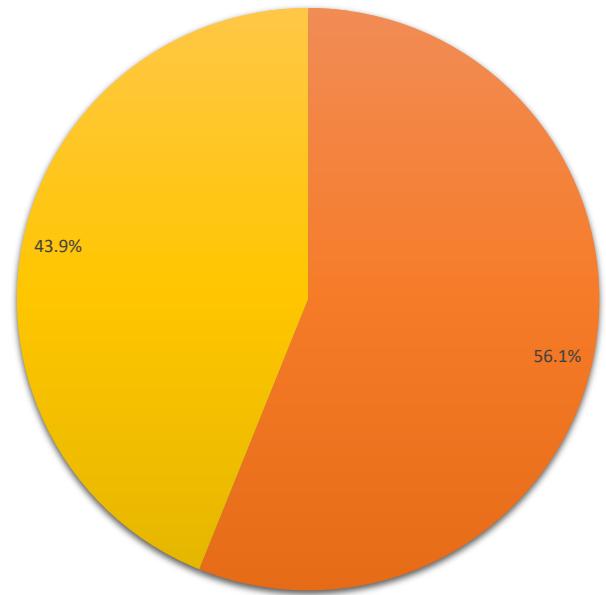
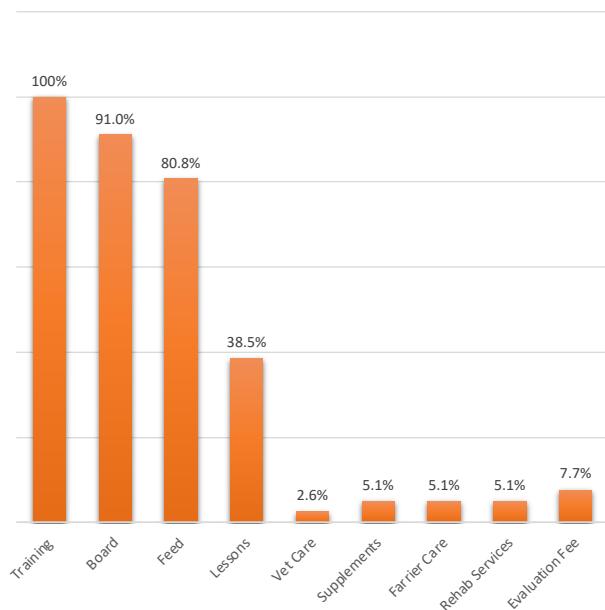
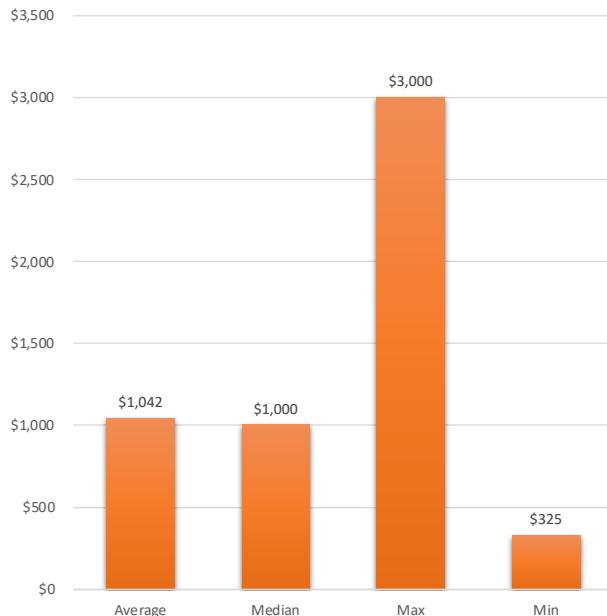


PHOTO BY JENNIFER PAULSON

Flat Rate Includes



Total Flat Rate



Itemized Fees

	Board	Training	Feed	Veterinary Care	Lessons	Supplements	Farrier Care	Rehab Services	Evaluation Fee
Avg	\$538	\$587	\$86	\$28	\$64	\$41	\$140	\$223	\$59
Median	\$550	\$525	\$50	-	\$50	\$38	\$150	\$150	\$50
Max	\$1,000	\$1,200	\$300	\$250	\$650	\$150	\$250	\$795	\$250
Min	\$250	\$330	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Board

Avg	\$534
Median	\$513
Max	\$1,400
Min	\$450

Training

Avg	\$614
Median	\$550
Max	\$2,000
Min	\$300

Other Income

87.8% of respondents charge a day fee at shows.

Day Fee

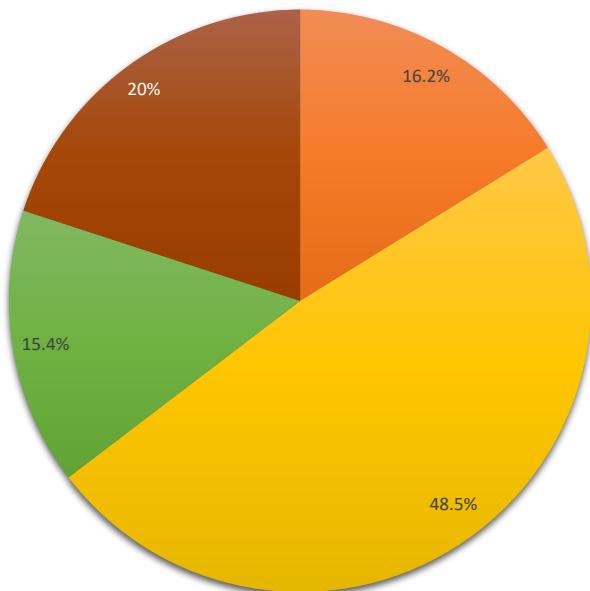
Avg	\$52
Median	\$50
Max	\$250

Lessons

Avg	\$64
Median	\$50
Max	\$500
Min	\$25

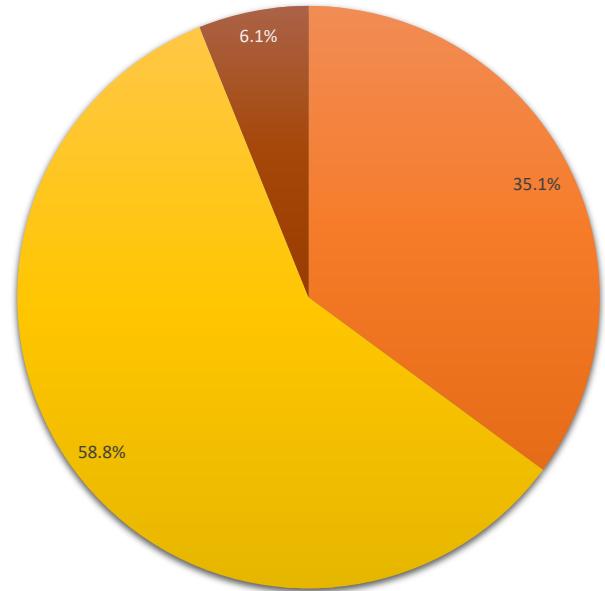
Show Winnings

50/50 50/50 After Entry Fee 60/40, to the Owner Other



Commissions

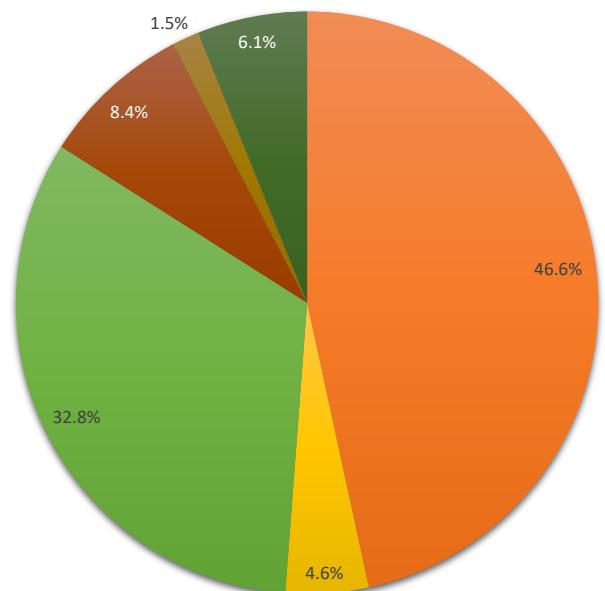
5% 10% Other



Business Model

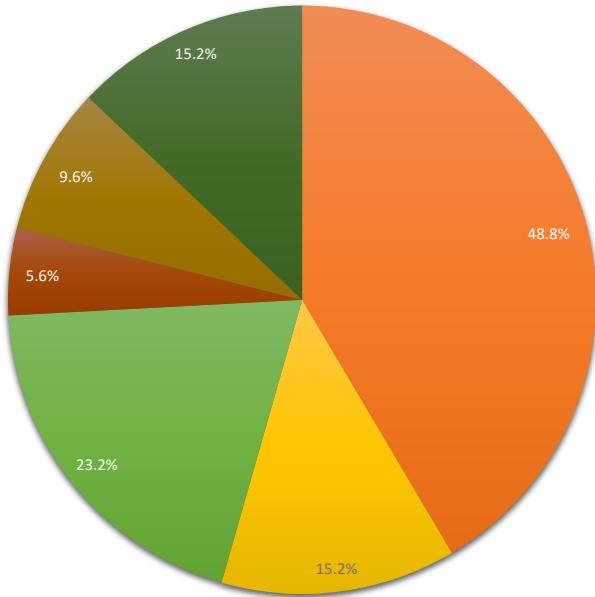
What is your business structure?

Sole Proprietor Partnership LLC S Corp C Corp Other



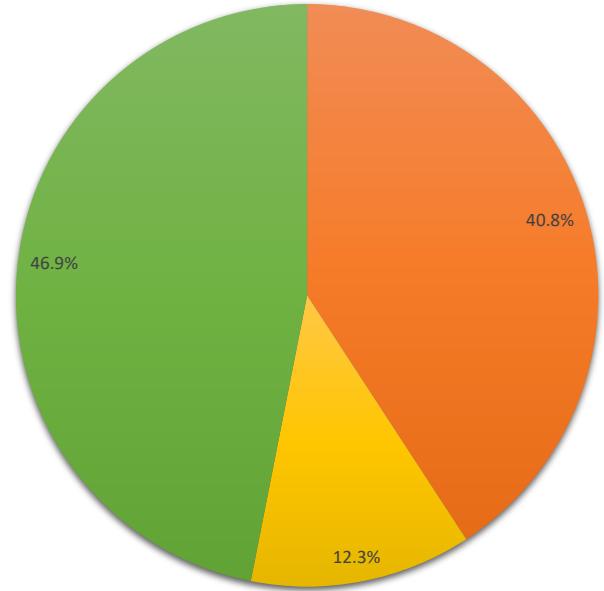
How Do You Pay Yourself?

Salary Dividends Percent of What's Produced Rent Benefits Other



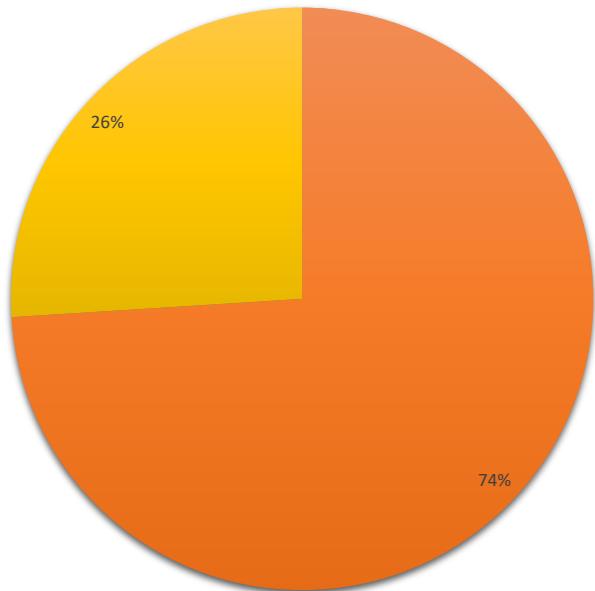
Do You Operate At...

Profit Loss Breakeven



Do You Have a Training Contract?

Yes No



Based upon some additional splits in the data, Blach observed that a higher percentage of individuals who operate at a profit compared to those who don't are also those who itemize their fees rather than charging a flat rate. ■

Your Voice Matters

As an NRHA Professional, you're an integral part of all aspects of your association, and your input has value. Periodically, NRHA sends links to surveys or other opportunities to share your opinions and experiences, and it's vital that you participate. Please take time to respond to requests for input, information, and ideas. It's one of the best ways you can advocate for yourself and your fellow pros.

SAY THE RIGHT THING



You're ready for the big win. But are you ready for all that comes after it? Be prepared for the spotlight with this crash course in media training.

WHEN FACED WITH VOICE RECORDERS AND CAMERAS, IT CAN BE TOUGH TO GET THE WORDS OUT RIGHT. BUT IT'S CRITICAL TO SHOW RESPECT FOR YOUR HORSE AND THE SPORT OF REINING EVERY TIME YOU'RE IN THE MEDIA SPOTLIGHT.

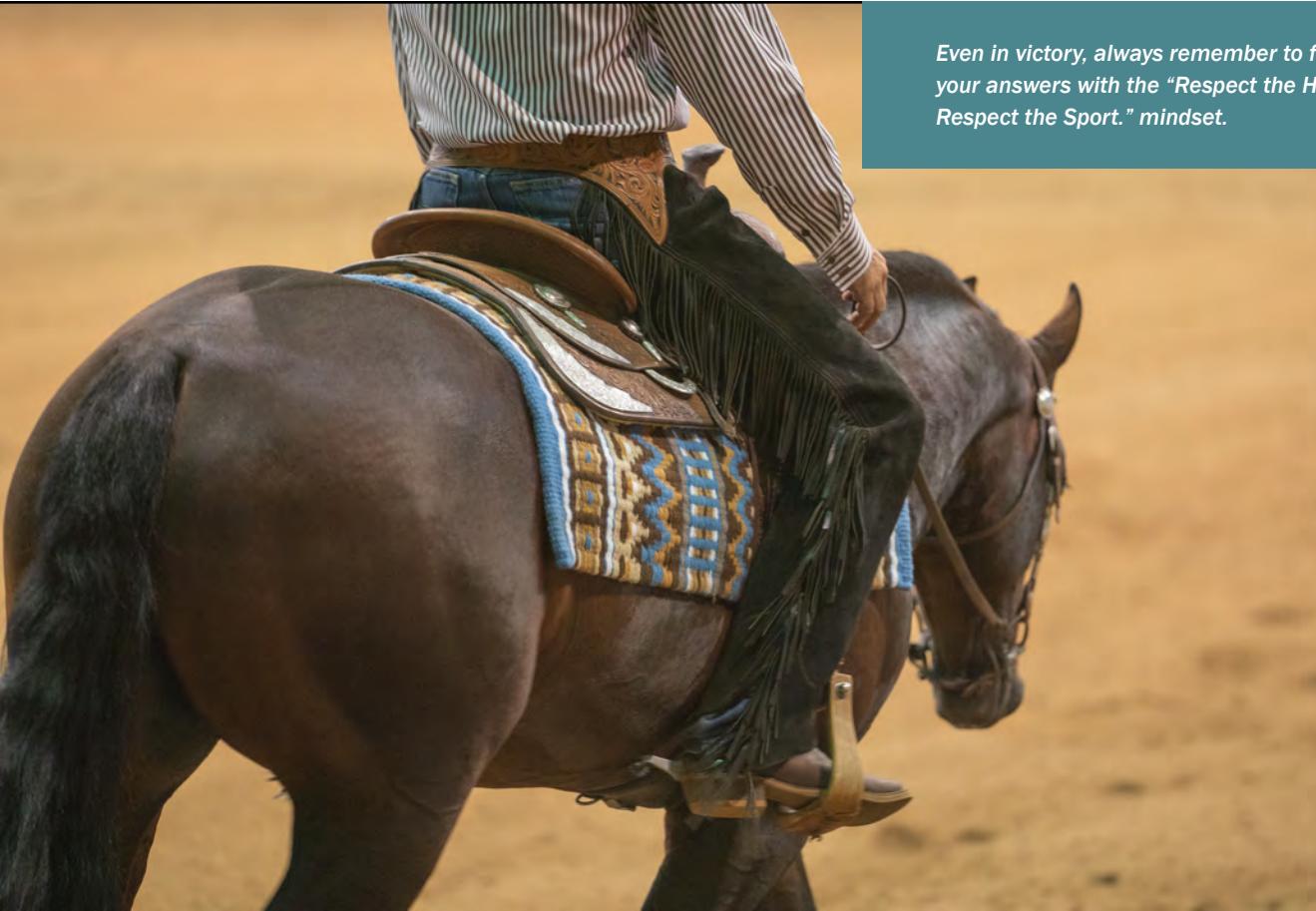
BY JENNIFER PAULSON

You did it! You won a major or large event. The hard work, time, and effort have paid off, and you and your horse are in the spotlight being showered with applause and awards. After the win photo comes the interviews—voice recorders pop up all around you, cameras focus on you, and the microphone is front and center. It's an easy time to get wrapped up in the adrenaline and say whatever comes to your mind first. But when you're in the limelight, carefully choosing your words can make a world of difference for your career, your business, your horse, and your sport.

With fall's championship season upon us, from the the All American Quarter Horse Congress to the NRHA European Derby and

Futurity to the NRHA Futurity & Adequan® North American Affiliate Championships, these next few months host some of the biggest stages reining finds itself on throughout the year, all around the world. This also means media will be present and excited to talk to you about your horse, the training process that got you there, and how your horse performed—including any possible pitfalls, unexpected problems, and health issues that could've kept you out of the winner's circle.

Read through these tips to prepare for when you're under pressure to answer tough questions from the media. Thinking ahead can mean the difference in highlighting your program and the sport and seeing opportunities disappear right in front of your eyes. →



Even in victory, always remember to frame your answers with the “Respect the Horse. Respect the Sport.” mindset.

Why Media Matters

Your time in the media spotlight—whether it comes after a win, by offering training tips, or by sharing your opinions about industry issues—sets the tone for how everyone in the horse industry sees you. Additionally, when non-horse people look into joining the reining community, their research for a professional can unearth all kinds of media coverage of you and form their opinions without even meeting you.

The bottom line is: Media matters. It matters to your reputation, your business’s standing, and the perception of your sport.

This likely isn’t news to you, but that doesn’t mean you enjoy the media process. However, accepting that media and interviews are part of your career as an NRHA Professional makes it easier for you, a better experience for everyone, and a positive opportunity to highlight reining.

Respect the Horse. Respect the Sport.

First things first: Consider everything you say in an interview through the “Respect the Horse. Respect the Sport.” lens. This NRHA initiative gained steam in 2019 after a membership survey revealed that a concern among members was horse welfare. By highlighting all the positive ways NRHA Professionals and members in general care for, train, and show their reining horses in a way that respects the animals and the sport, it promotes that positivity and becomes the norm for the entire community.

Remember this in the words you use—for example, saying your horse is well-trained as opposed to broke is easier for a general audience to understand and isn’t as off-putting to those who don’t understand industry lingo. Furthermore, consider how you explain situations leading up to the event. When talking to a friend you might say

your horse was sick, had a bad day, or was sore. But when speaking with the media, choose your words carefully, opting for phrases like, “he felt a little off, but the vet looked at him and we felt good about showing him.”

Do Some Prep

You wouldn't think about showing a horse without preparing. So, it's probably a good idea to plan some time to prepare how you'll handle an interview. Ask your spouse, partner, or associate to pepper you with questions about your horses

as you get closer to showing. You can also use the opportunity to speak with your horses' owners about their horses as preparation for interviews. You might be surprised at the level of comfort it provides having already worked out some of the kinks in your storytelling.

Remember as Much as You Can

After a big win, it can be tough to remember all the places a horse has been, everything he's accomplished, and how far he's come. But by providing the interviewer with as much background information as possible, you open the door to tell more stories about the horse, his lineage, and those who trained him along the way. For example, if you know who started the horse, give that professional credit. If you know the horse is from a stud or mare's first crop, share that information.

Veterinarians, farriers, and other care providers can also play key roles, and it can be important for your relationships to acknowledge their work in media interviews.

Get Specific

Talk about your runs in detail. A simple, “He was really good today,” might be easiest for you, but it doesn't give the media professional much to work with. If something about your run surprised you, share that. Maybe the horse's turns were even better than expected, or perhaps he improved a maneuver from the preliminary run. The person interviewing you can tell the story in much greater detail and share so much more about your horse and your performance if you're able to feed them the information and give your perspective.

Mind the Time

When they're not at an event or if they want to use you as a resource for a non-event article, a



Especially when you're on camera, think about your appearance and how you represent your business, your brand, and your sport.

media rep will call or text you to set a time for an interview. Equine media pros understand that horse trainers' schedules are hectic and unpredictable. They'll often schedule to speak with you at your convenience, forgoing their usual office hours. They're even understanding of the need to reschedule—a couple times.

In return, do your best to respond quickly to an interview request, stick to the agreed-upon time, and don't blow it off or ghost the media rep. Pushing interviews off to later times reduces the interviewer's time to produce the final product and can reduce the time you have in the end to approve the piece—or can eliminate that opportunity altogether.

Best Foot Forward

When a journalist schedules a time to work with you at your barn or at a show, do your best to be ready on time, with your place clean and prepared (moving equipment away from the arena, preparing your ground, etc.) and your horse bathed and saddled—even warmed up, if possible. Once you're in the saddle, remember it's not a schooling session. The photographer/journalist is there to cover predetermined topics. They can accommodate do-overs and retakes, but they don't want to wear out your horse any more than you do.

Keep in mind that an overly sweaty horse or one that's getting impatient doesn't look good in the arena nor in photos that'll appear in major magazines or digital spaces.

Giving the best impression also lies in how you present yourself. If you're seated, sit up straight, exude approachable confidence, and focus on your interview. Take deep breaths when you need to, pause to collect your thoughts, and don't rush. Finally, ditch the gum, chewing tobacco, or cigarettes before the interview—especially if you're on camera. ■

Tough Questions

Sometimes an interviewer will inquire about topics you don't know the answers to or simply aren't comfortable discussing. Here are a few ways to work around tenuous topics and reframe the interview in a way with which you're comfortable.

"I can't answer that, but I do know..."

"What I really want you to know is..."

"One thing I want to be sure to convey is..."

"The most important thing for everyone to know is..."

Some interviewers like to string questions together. Use preparation to think about how you'll tackle those types of questions and try answers like the following.

"You've given me a lot to address; let me start with..."

"Does that answer your first question? Can you restate the next one?"

And if you feel like you've made a mistake or said something incorrectly, you can always backtrack.

"I'm sorry, I misspoke; let me rephrase that..."

"Sorry—I'm a bit excited. Let me start over..."

Most of all, skip "No comment." It comes off defensive and isn't the impression you want to leave on the interviewer, the audience, or your sport.



Selling horses is a major source of income for many NRHA Professionals. Here, an NRHA non pro offers his best advice for lucrative, ongoing sales to supplement your business.

BALANCING

Commissions and Professionalism

SALES CAN BE A VERY DELICATE BALANCING ACT FOR NRHA PROFESSIONALS.

ARTICLE BY MEGAN ARSZMAN

PHOTOS BY BAR H PHOTOGRAPHY

It can be challenging for a client to put the sale of his horse in another's hands. In fact, most times a horse owner would rather do the selling on their own, but veteran sales consignor and preparer—and NRHA Non Pro—Jake Dahl says it's best when an owner can trust their trainer or a sales consignor to do the work.

“If a sale doesn't go well, it's most often because there's too much emotion,” Dahl says. “To the owners, this horse is their pride and joy—they foaled him, fed him, and cared for him. If someone offers a price that isn't up to the owner's standards, they may be offended, and that can kill the sale.”

Prior to taking over operations of Royal Vista Equine in Fort Collins, Colorado, Dahl worked as the general manager of the business for past

owners Vaughn and Jill Cook. Upon the Cooks' retirement in 2011, Dahl and Stephanie Webb took over ownership of the operation. Building on the facility's rich history, Vista Equine continues to focus on reproduction and sales preparation for not only racing Quarter Horses, but now reining horses.

Dahl has been active in the training, preparation, and selling of horses since his time in college at Colorado State University. And now with Vista Equine, the business model focuses on selling at the five major Quarter Horse racing sales between Oklahoma, New Mexico, and California, as well as the sales during the NRHA Futurity. He relies on his experience in not only studying pedigrees for breeding, but also evaluating a horse's conformation. It's

with this background that he provides honest and constructive evaluations of a client's horse.

Open and Honest

The NRHA Market Futurity Sales are divided into two different sales levels: The Elite Sale (formerly the Select Sale) and the Premier Sale (formerly the Marketplace Sale). These adjectives are used to describe the level of breeding and abilities amongst the horses consigned to either sale. While one sounds more impressive to be a part of, Dahl knows that it's important to choose which the sale to consign to wisely.

"I firmly believe that you want your yearlings to be in at least the top 20% of the sale entered if you can—that's where you're going to get the most money," Dahl advises. "If he looks like he's the best in that sale, that's where you're going to get biggest bang for your buck."

Dahl is open and honest with his clients when it comes to placing them in a particular sale. Careful not to hurt feelings, he'll explain why a horse might not fit in one sale but fit better in another. For example, there may be a yearling that's by a popular stallion; however, the mare's side isn't as strong or well-known, and the mare hasn't produced very much, if at all.

"That's when you look at the individual," Dahl shares. "I'd place that yearling in the Premier Sale. The yearlings in the Elite Sale are the top in the country, and because of his dam's still-growing produce record, he's going to be at the bottom of that consignment."

Dahl's own Vista Equine isn't immune to the strict evaluation. One year they were looking to sell a yearling with a strong sire side, but not a very strong dam side. However, the yearling was gorgeous to look at.

"He was black with lots of roaning at his flanks and a fantastic mover," Dahl recalls.

Even with the impressive looks, Dahl knew that



Jake Dahl is an NRHA non pro, but a consummate professional when it comes to selling horses privately or at auction. He prioritizes honesty, transparency, and communication in all sale endeavors.

because of lack of strength on the dam's side, he wasn't going to be a top seller in the Select Sale.

"I knew we needed to put him in the Marketplace Sale because he had the ability to be the best yearling in the sale," Dahl says. "He ended up being the second-highest-seller in the Marketplace Sale that year."

Of course, it's easy to approach this type of evaluation with yourself, if you're comfortable with blunt honesty, but what about handling clients?

Growing a Solid Reputation

Dahl says, in the long run, openness and honesty have helped his business grow because his reputation expanded as an honest evaluator and reputable salesman.

Research, statistics, and experience helped Dahl show potential clients how horses with similar produce records sold at particular sales compared to their own horses. Stacks of sales catalogs from

racing and reining sales fill his office, along with notes and sale prices.

Because Vista Equine breeds and sells its own stock, Dahl is cognizant that clients might have some concern as to the equality of representation of their horses compared to Vista Equine's. While it has yet to happen to him, it's something that's in the back of his mind.

"When we're at the sales, I tell my crew that each horse is treated the same; I don't care who owns it," Dahl reveals. "We try to sell every horse and promote every horse the same. I'm always very conscious of that—that we're not trying to sell my horse over a client's horse."

After years of working with buyers, he knows what types of horses a client will like and what horses a client won't like. So, when he's approached by a buyer, he's ready when that buyer says, "Show me the horses I need to see."

"And that might be my horse, or it might be a client's horse," Dahl says. "Selling horses is all based on reputation. I have my own ethics that I adhere to, and my employees know:

1. We represent that horse—good, bad, or indifferent.
2. If a buyer asks us a question, we answer it to the best of our knowledge.
3. We make sure we have X-rays on the horses so buyers can look at them.
4. If they ask us a question, we answer it completely, 100% honest.

"I tell clients it's saving you as a seller and saving me as an agent—we're going to build that reputation of being honest," he continues. "Consequently, it ends up being good for everybody because people will come and buy from us with confidence."

Dealing With Issues

As any horseman knows, not every day is an easy day in the horse business: Paperwork is lost, horses

get injured, truck tires are blown. As a consignor, there's an added stress that a client has trusted you to care for and prepare their horse to the best of your ability to garner the most money. It means the difference between a steak dinner or a value meal after the sale.

Dahl keeps constant communication with sales directors as deadlines near. He'll doublecheck that all paperwork has been signed and submitted.

"I'll then get with those clients to make sure we have everything ready to go," he says. "Communication between all sides is vital to a successful sales program."

Handling hundreds of young horses can create another level of stress. "Horses are going to get hurt and get themselves in trouble," Dahl says.

As soon as something happens to a client's horse, Dahl is on the phone with the client, explaining everything that happened, how it'll be fixed, and what the game plan is from that point on. Dahl prioritizes being upfront and honest with clients and being prepared to fix whatever issue has popped up.

As soon as a horse comes in for sales preparation, Dahl and his team evaluate every angle of the horse's conformation. Horses that come in with less-than-perfect conformation or slight imperfections to their appearance are documented, and Dahl's team creates a game plan to present to the owner.

"Many times, an owner doesn't realize that their horse toes in or is club-footed or sometimes even a cryptorchid," he says. "I'll call and check with the owner if they knew about the issue or not, and then I'll have to explain how it can influence the final sales price that horse will garner. I'm not saying their horse is a bad horse; there's just something that needs to be addressed."

For example, a ridgling colt might come in with the prospect of earning \$10,000 in the sale, but upon discovery that he'll need to be gelded,



Placing your sale horse in the correct venue is essential to success. The 2021 NRHA Market Futurity Sales are being rebranded as the Elite Sale (formerly the Select Sale) and the Premier Sale (formerly the Marketplace Sale).

the cost of the operation is taken out from the prospective overall price.

“It’s better to talk to the owner ahead of the sale about those issues, rather than wait until the day of the sale,” Dahl says. “It’s still a blow, but if you prepare the owner beforehand, it softens the blow.”

Vista Equine sends videos to owners showing the progress of their horses to keep them apprised of how the horse looks physically and how he’s progressing as he’s prepared to sell.

“I want my clients to be open with me about the condition of their horse,” he says. “If the client isn’t happy about how his yearlings are looking, I want him to tell me in the weeks or months prior to the sale, not at the sale.”

Commissions and Integrity

Dahl approaches payment differently than some consignors. A commission is given mostly through private sales. Public sales garner a flat fee to cover hotel rooms, plus a daily fee for routine care of the horses during the event. He explains that while some consignors charge a certain percentage or set price (whichever is greater) at a sale, he does not

have extra commission charges on top of the sale’s commission. Payment is part of Dahl’s contract that every seller signs, no matter how long they’ve been with Vista Equine nor how many horses being consigned.

“Contracts are essential in anything anymore,” he says. “Buyers need to sign a contract showing what their responsibility is and the seller needs to sign to show what his responsibility is.”

Persistence and Patience

The sales industry is not for the faint of heart, Dahl says. It’s a portion of the horse industry that requires complete honesty, never-ending persistence, a long streak of patience, and a healthy dose of humility.

“You’re not going to hit a home run at every sale,” he says. “The market is completely out of your control. Sometimes it might take a dive. You have your horses looking as good as they can, but the money just isn’t there.”

That’s when having a strong reputation built upon transparency and knowledge can help you come out of any sales situation on the plus side. ■

FINANCIAL TRAINER

TIPS AND INSIGHTS TO PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE

Your Business Structure Matters



Business Model

HAVE YOU CHOSEN THE BEST BUSINESS ENTITY FOR YOUR OPERATION?

BY JENNIFER PAULSON

The NRHA Professionals' Survey (discussed on page 10) pointed out that a large number of NRHA Pros operate as sole proprietors. While there are many models under which you can conduct business, the two most common in the survey were LLCs (limited liability corporations) and sole proprietorships. These are also the two most common models for small businesses, no matter the industry. Here are the pros and cons of each so you can consider if you're doing business in the most efficient manner possible.

This article is not presented as financial advice, but as a starting point to gather information. Please consult your business advisors for the most up-to-date and accurate information regarding your state and business.

What's the Difference?

Any business owner can form an LLC under their state's guidelines. It's owned by one or more members and can appoint a manager to handle daily operations, but this isn't required. The key is the LLC's "members" (owners) are not personally responsible for business debts and liabilities. The LLC carries that burden.

A sole proprietorship is an unincorporated business owned and ran by one person—you call all the shots and are truly the single boss. It's a simple setup, and the owner is entitled to all the business' profits. However, the owner is also responsible for all liabilities.

Activation

Forming an LLC requires a bit more effort

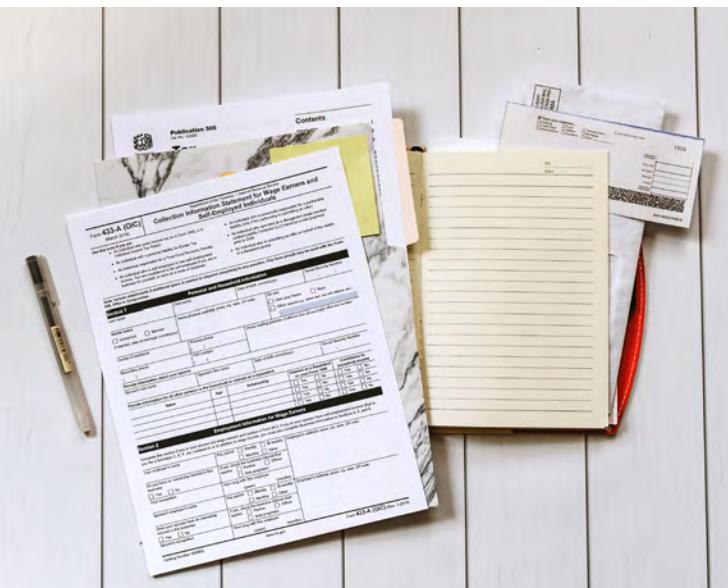
and financial investment at the outset. You'll be required to file documents with your state that vary depending on your location. You also might be required to pay an initial filing fee that can range from \$50 to \$500, depending on your state.

A sole proprietorship requires no formal action, unless you'll do business under a name that's not your own. Then you'll need to file a "doing business as" or DBA.

Personal Liability Protection

An LLC protects your personal assets if you find your business under collections or have other claims against it, such as a lawsuit. In most cases, these creditors won't have access to your home, car, or personal bank accounts. This is a key benefit of an LLC!

This can be the downfall of the sole proprietorship. You're entitled to all the profits, but you're also responsible for all debts and can even be held responsible for issues caused by your employees. It's something to be keenly aware of if you choose this business model.



Various tax implications apply to both LLCs and sole proprietorships. Do your research to learn which model is best for the way you operate your business to gain the best benefits from your business model.

In Summary:

LLC =
Liability Protection + Flexibility

Sole Proprietorship = Less Formal +
Unlimited Control

Mixing Money

If you're a sole proprietor, comingling business and personal funds isn't a problem, from a legal standpoint. By law, your accounts are one and the same. But your business consultant will probably advise against mixing money for clean bookkeeping.

In an LLC, all business bank accounts and funds must be separate from your personal accounts. If you don't, you're at risk of losing your LLC protection.

Tax Time

One shared key benefit of an LLC and a sole proprietorship: pass-through taxation. This means all profits made are only taxed once and they pass through to your personal taxes.

Under an LLC, you can file your taxes as a sole proprietorship, a partnership, or a corporation. A sole proprietorship can't file as a corporation.

Finally, if you're a sole proprietor, you're not required to pay taxes on the full amount of your income, only the profit of the business. ■

Resources

[LegalZoom.com](https://www.legalzoom.com)

[IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov)

[SBA.gov](https://www.sba.gov)

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 Sara Honegger at shonegger@nrha.com.

