

# PRO TRAINER

**NRHA** 

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL REINING TRAINERS SPRING 2021

## **TIME TO MOVE**

3 Pros' Tips For Relocating  
Your Business  
Plus Advice For Finding A Realtor

## **CATCH-RIDE CONNECTION**

Could Catch-Riding Help  
Your Business?

## **HACKED!**

What To Do When Your  
Social Media Is Pirated

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## **PLUS**

- Spring Marketing Calendar
- Making Good Hiring Decisions
- Classic Equine Green Reiner Info





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ON THE COVER: Photo by Jennifer Paulson

# PRO TRAINER NEWS

PEOPLE, REPORTS, EVENTS

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## Green on Green

HELPING YOUR CUSTOMERS NAVIGATE THE CLASSIC EQUINE GREEN REINER PROGRAM CAN HELP THEM BECOME LONG-TERM REINERS AND CUSTOMERS.

BY LINDSAY HUMPHREY

If you've been an NRHA Professional for long, you know how important the Classic Equine Green Reiner program is to perpetuating the sport. The riders in the class possibly showed horses 30 years ago, or this is truly their first go at competing in the show pen. Regardless, helping them navigate this premier entry-level program allows them to experience the thrill of reining that you already know and love. Here are some helpful tips to ensure that your green reiners have a successful, enjoyable experience.

### Where to Start

After a few lessons, you and your client determine they're ready to hit the show pen. First things first, they'll need an NRHA membership. If they only plan on showing in category 10 and/or club classes, then an associate membership is all they need. At only \$40, it's an appealing prospect for a first-time reiner. If your client intends to show outside category 10, they'll need a standard NRHA membership along with a non pro declaration. The non pro declaration isn't



PHOTO BY LINDSAY HUMPHREY

*The Classic Equine Green Reiner program brings new reiners into your barn and gets them hooked on the sport. Follow these tips to make the most of the program for your new customers.*

required if your client only purchases an associate membership.

Your client is eligible for Green Reiner 1 if they've earned less than \$200 in categories 1–8 and fewer than 75 youth points. Once they earn more than 200 green points, or money-/point-out in another category, they graduate from this level after December 31 of that year. After that, they can move on to Green Reiner 2 and start aiming for their buckle.

Green Reiner 2 riders are eligible for this class if they have fewer than 175 youth points and have earned less than \$350 in categories 1–8.

### How to get the Buckle

A rider winning their first buckle is a big deal and part of the incentive of the Green Reiner program. But earning the Green Reiner 2 buckle can be tricky. Your client needs to accumulate 350 green reiner points to receive one of the coveted Montana Silversmiths belt buckles. However, keep in mind that once they've earned 350 or more green reiner points, they'll no longer be eligible for green reiner classes after December 31 of that year. We recommend that you don't enter your client in classes outside category 10 if their main goal is to earn the buckle. They can jeopardize their eligibility for the buckle if they win money in other categories. Keep in mind, points are calculated based on the number of riders who enter the class, and they differ from dollars earned. If a rider has earned \$350, that does not equate to earning 350 points and a buckle.

If your client wants to enter other categories simply to school, knowing they'll zero during the class, then their eligibility for the buckle will be safe. They can also enter as many club classes as they want because they don't count toward their NRHA Lifetime Earnings (LTE). If your client is a youth member, please note that they can also level out of the Green Reiner program by earning 175 youth points for Green Reiner 2 and 75 for Green Reiner 1.



### How Does the Class Work?

- Uses NRHA Patterns 1–13
- Rider can choose to ride with one hand or two, no matter the horse's bit
- Rider can perform simple or flying lead changes
- Points are based on number of entries that actually compete
- Standard NRHA rules for tack and attire apply, other than riding one- or two-handed

### Why Enter Green Reiner?

The Classic Equine Green Reiner Program was designed specifically for the entry-level reiner. The point cap ensures a level playing field so competitors can develop their skills and confidence in the arena. Green reiner classes are a logical first step for brand-new reiners or those returning to a show career after a hiatus.

The program is set up from an educational perspective. Competitors may talk to the judges at the conclusion of their class to learn about their run, areas for improvement, and encouragement. There's no other level of NRHA competition where this is allowed. This unique feature encourages these competitors to continuously improve.

If you have more questions about the Classic Equine Green Reiner program, contact Sara Honegger at [shonegger@nrha.com](mailto:shonegger@nrha.com). ■

# ENGAGEMENT

ADVICE FOR THE CUSTOMER JOURNEY

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## Making the Pitch

PRESENTATION IS EVERYTHING WHEN SELLING IDEAS TO OWNERS.

BY JENNIFER PAULSON

**H**ave you ever felt compelled to take horses to a new, large event that's outside your normal competitive calendar but felt uncertain that your owners would agree? Or have you found a horse that would fit perfectly into your program and aligns with your goals, but you're not sure you can convince one of your customers that buying the horse is in their best interest, too? What about working with your sponsors—have you had ideas to share that you want to be part of to build their brand?

More than likely, you answered yes to at least one of those questions. The answer to solving those problems and others like them lies in your pitch. Just like a creative director pitches ideas to brands, you're in charge of pitching your needs to your customers to gain their support.

Pitching can be nerve-wracking. It can feel uncomfortable and intimidating. However, when the outcome is in the best interest of all parties (yours, your customers', and their horses'), it feels more natural, authentic, and relatable.

Here are six tips to improve your pitches to your customers. They might seem out of the ordinary for your business as usual, but if you're pitching something new, trying new tactics might be in order to achieve your desired results.

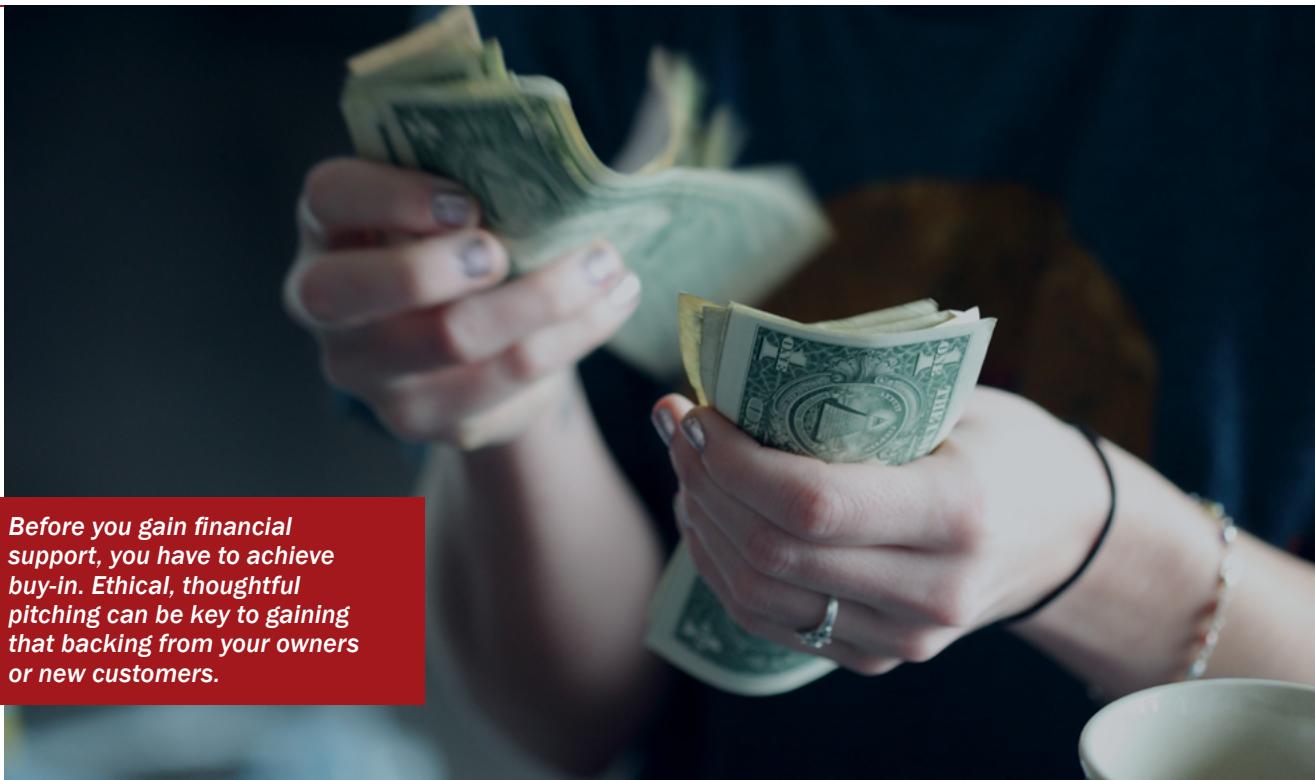
**1** ■ **Understand Your Customer.** As a solid, reliable professional, you know your customers and what makes them tick. You understand their goals with their horses, their aspirations, and their limitations.

Bring all of those insights together to align your wants and needs with theirs.

For example, if you know they want to expand promotion of their stud across the country, it's a great opportunity to pitch taking offspring to a show on the other coast to reap big rewards in the long term. Or if you anticipate they caught "futura fever," nurture that new interest by showing them prospects that fit your goals and their ideals. Using a teamwork, service-oriented approach can be key to leading a customer in a direction you want to take them.

**2** ■ **Tell a Moving Story.** If you have a long-term relationship with your customer, draw on memories built together to outline the natural trajectory of their horse life. Build the story around your relationships with the owners and their horses—you started here, together you achieved this, and now the next step together is your pitch. Making the idea personal and compelling makes a pitch hard to decline.

**3** ■ **Practice Makes Perfect.** It sounds strange and uncomfortable, but practice your approach to your conversation with your spouse, a trusted friend, or a business partner. Let the other person play devil's advocate and ask tough questions your customers might bring up. This isn't a time to be sensitive—constructive criticism can help elevate your pitch to being nearly bullet-proof. It should



*Before you gain financial support, you have to achieve buy-in. Ethical, thoughtful pitching can be key to gaining that backing from your owners or new customers.*

be so strong that your customers say, “Why didn’t I think of that?” or even start to believe that it’s their own excellent idea.

## 4. **Rehearse and Record.**

Yes, it sounds a bit bonkers. But, hear this one out. When you record yourself, as cringe-worthy as it might be to listen to your own voice, you can identify weaknesses in your tone or word choices that might not sit well with your customer. You can ensure that every word and phrase is chosen specifically for the situation at hand. Once you’ve identified all the key phrases and how to use your voice, you can record again to fine-tune and make it sound less manufactured and more organic.

## 5. **Time and Trim.**

A pitch that’s too long can seem more like a hard sell than a friendly collaboration. It can also lead you to jumble your thoughts and stumble over your words. As you listen back to your recorded efforts, think about what you can leave out. Does your pitch

go off track? Do your words create unanswered questions that need to be resolved? Include the necessary details, but don’t draw things out any longer than necessary.

## 6. **Be Ready for Questions.**

No matter how prepared you are, be ready for your customer to bring up concerns or questions you haven’t considered. Take a deep breath, consider their concerns, and answer honestly. The basis of your relationship with your customer is honesty, integrity, and shared goals. Their questions might uncover a side you hadn’t considered or even lead to a bigger opportunity than you expected. Keeping honesty and integrity at the core helps their business in the short and long term. ■

## Resources

**Entrepreneur.com**  
[13 Tips on How to Deliver a Pitch Investors Can’t Turn Down](#)

**Forbes.com**  
[22 Mistakes Entrepreneurs Make When Pitching to Investors](#)

PHOTO BY SHARON MCCUTCHEON ON UNSPLASH

# DOLLARS & SENSE

## Hiring the Unicorn

CLEAR CRITERIA CAN HELP YOU FIND THE RIGHT NEW EMPLOYEE AND ESTABLISH THE NEW HIRE'S ROLE. AND IF YOU'RE A NEW HIRE, KNOWING THESE KEY SKILLS MAKES YOU A PRICELESS EMPLOYEE.

**E**mployment relationships can be tricky in this business. One main component to hiring good help is having a clear list of what you want—and what you don't want—in assistants, grooms, and barn help. Furthermore, demonstrating these traits and leading by example attracts the right people to your barn who'll fit in your professional culture.

### **Horse Sense**

 This one seems obvious, but it can lead to missed opportunities. Think about where you want the horse sense to come from. Does the person have to be a Western rider, or could they come from another part of the horse world? Also consider the level of horse knowledge. Someone cleaning stalls needs less skill than someone actually working with horses.

### **Resilience**

 Life around a training operation can be unpredictable, so you need employees who can go with the flow but also know when to stick to the plan. Ask potential employees what they'd do in hypothetical situations or how they'd handle a problem you've experienced in the past. See how their plan of action aligns with yours.

### **Humility**

 Some barn owners are more tolerant than others of confidence—or arrogance. Seeing a potential employee in action is probably the best



*Make hiring new employees easier with a specific list of criteria.*

way to evaluate this trait, but you can also notice how they talk about themselves versus their team in an interview or other interactions.

### **Curiosity**

 The willingness to learn is innate in most riders. On a different level, a curiosity about solving problems, the why behind a philosophy, and an interest in the nitty gritty of the job makes a potential new hire stand out. Encourage an interviewee to ask questions about your training program or about your ways of doing business. They might surprise you with what they ask and even help you reconsider any shortcomings you might identify in the process. →

### Initiative

✓ When you work 12-hour-plus days in the barn, you can't micromanage your employees. Look for signs of initiative. That might be that the hire finishes one task and intuitively figures out what's next or takes the initiative to go straighten up the tack room or clean the wash rack without being asked.

### Drama-Free

✓ This business is tough in that personal lives bleed into professional situations. However, the most valuable employees know the value of separating their professional and personal lives. They also know that causing drama in the workplace is unacceptable and leads to the downfall of the entire team.

### Patience

✓ A little patience goes a long way, whether it's with a challenging barn customer, an overwhelmed boss, or horses that test limits. Any hire you make should know that horse-showing and barn life are games of hurry up and wait, and ample patience is required to survive.

### Work Ethic

✓ Work ethic is pretty easy to evaluate if you see someone in action. It's not as easy to identify if you don't know the potential hire. No matter your connection to the person, demonstrating a strong work ethic yourself is easily mirrored by most employees. When they see you giving all you have, no matter the task, they're more likely to follow your lead.

### Communication

✓ Do text messages or calls to a potential employee get answered in a timely fashion or are they forgotten and never returned? These first interactions can tell you what you need to know about a potential employee's communication skills. No matter the case, when you hire someone, establish expectations for communication so everyone is on the same page. ■



Hear your peers on In Our Tracks.

## Pros on the NRHA Podcast

HEAR STORIES AND LEARN TIPS AND TRICKS FROM YOUR FELLOW PROS ON NRHA'S OFFICIAL PODCAST.

Are you listening to *In Our Tracks*, NRHA's official podcast? If not, give it a shot the next time you're on the road to a show or when you have 30 minutes to spare. The last Friday of each month, you'll hear from NRHA members from all corners of the sport, including NRHA Professionals. Past interviews include pros Tim and Colleen McQuay, Bob Avila, Craig Schmersal, Ryan Rushing, Dick Pieper, Kari Klingenberg, Kole Price, and Trevor Dare. In each episode, you'll learn how the riders got where they are today, roadblocks they overcame, things they learned from their mentors, and best practices for running their businesses.

Subscribe anywhere you listen to podcasts, or find each episode at [nrha.com/podcast](http://nrha.com/podcast). Want to be featured? Reach out to host Jennifer Paulson at [jenpaulsoncreative@gmail.com](mailto:jenpaulsoncreative@gmail.com) for details. ■

# Spring Marketing Calendar

SPRING/21

With spring comes a virtual trailer full of new content ideas for your social media pages and your website. Here's a handful of thought-starters to get you going in the right direction promoting your business this spring.

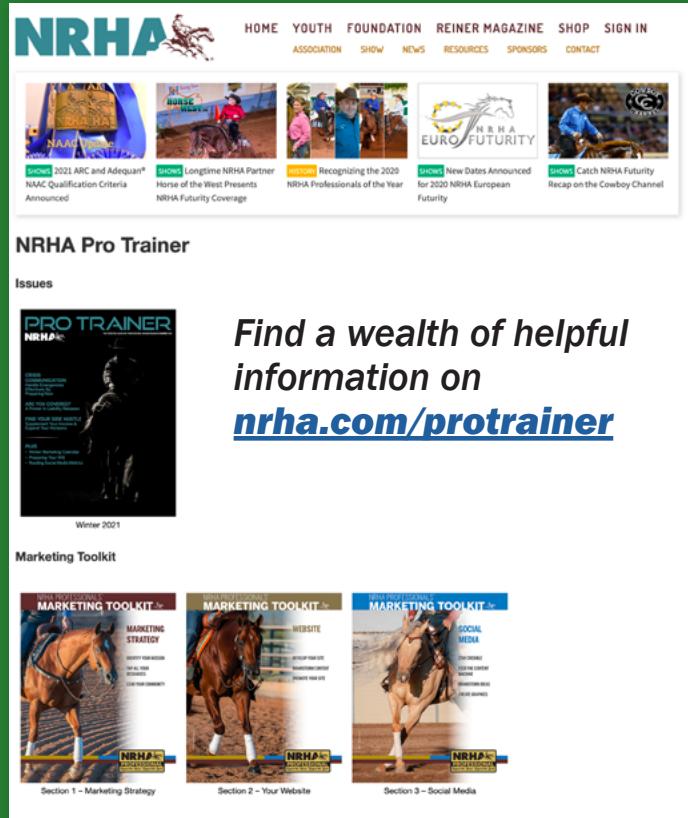
**Babies!** Share those beautiful foals, ask your followers to share photos of theirs, and have fun with the foal name game on social media. You can also create a blog post detailing the history of each foal, including bloodlines, stories about the sire and dam, and each foal's budding personality traits.

**Spring Grooming Tips.** Your horses are probably slick and shiny from spending all winter under the lights and bundled up in blankets. But many of your followers might not be as fortunate. Share your best spring grooming hacks, and ask your fans to share their results with you. Bonus: It's a good way to incorporate any of your sponsors who offer grooming products.

**Horse-Shopping Hints.** As your customers buy new horses and you announce new partnerships, offer some service to your audience by sharing a hint about finding the right horse. Adding a service element to a post that might be largely self-serving can boost audience engagement and give a reason to care and continue interacting with your posts.

**Spring Cleaning.** When you tidy up your barn and tack room this spring, share those activities on social media, especially Instagram Stories. This is another way to include your sponsors in your content as you share favorite bits, bridles, saddles, and pads from manufacturers with which you partner.

**Training Tactics.** Training content is evergreen—meaning it's viable just about any time of year. Critique rides, have your assistant film you while working with a horse, or just stand up facing the camera to talk about a philosophy. This content is gold because you can upload it directly to Facebook as well as to your website for future use. ■



The screenshot shows the NRHA Pro Trainer website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for HOME, YOUTH, FOUNDATION, REINER MAGAZINE, SHOP, and SIGN IN. Below the navigation bar, there are several featured articles with images and titles: '2021 ARC and Adequan<sup>®</sup> NAAC Qualification Criteria Announced', 'Longtime NRHA Partner Horse of the West Presents NRHA Futurity Coverage', 'Recognizing the 2020 NRHA Professionals of the Year', 'New Dates Announced for 2020 NRHA European Futurity', and 'Catch NRHA Futurity Recap on the Cowboy Channel'. Below the articles, there's a section titled 'NRHA Pro Trainer' with a sub-section 'Issues' showing a cover of the 'PRO TRAINER' magazine for Winter 2021. To the right of the magazine cover, there's a call to action: 'Find a wealth of helpful information on [nrha.com/protrainer](http://nrha.com/protrainer)'. Below the magazine cover, there's a 'Marketing Toolkit' section with three sub-sections: 'Section 1 - Marketing Strategy', 'Section 2 - Your Website', and 'Section 3 - Social Media', each with a corresponding image of a horse and rider.

## Your Online Library

FIND ALL YOUR PAST *PRO TRAINER* MAGAZINES AND OTHER RESOURCES IN ONE HANDY WEBSITE!

**P**icture it: You're waiting at the tire shop or vet clinic with nothing to do. Your automatic response might be to open a game on your phone. Instead, open your web browser and visit [nrha.com/protrainer](http://nrha.com/protrainer) to find a complete library of five years' worth of *NRHA Pro Trainer* magazines and the entire NRHA Professionals' Marketing Kit. Make the most of your down time by browsing helpful articles that can amplify your business and help you grow your clientele. ■



*By the end of 2020, NRHA Professionals collectively contributed \$6,200 as part of a new voluntary program to support the RHF Dale Wilkinson Memorial Crisis Fund. Past NRHA Professionals Committee chair Patrick Flaherty (right) presented a check symbolizing the contributions to RHF President Tim Anderson (left) during the 2020 NRHA Futurity.*

## Pros Support Crisis Fund

**A**n NRHA Professional with cancer was worried about keeping horses fed at home while hospitalized. A grant from the Reining Horse Foundation (RHF) Dale Wilkinson Memorial Crisis Fund provided relief and hope. This is just one example of how the Crisis Fund stands in the gap when NRHA members around the world endure a personal crisis.

Arguably the most well-known RHF core program, the Crisis Fund has helped reiners since shortly after RHF was established as a nonprofit in 2001. Donations from members across the reining community support the Crisis Fund. Most grants are made to NRHA Professionals.

To better support this important safety net, the NRHA Professionals Committee voted unanimously that, beginning in 2020, NRHA Professionals would be encouraged to actively support the Crisis Fund when purchasing or renewing an NRHA membership. There's a voluntary option to make a minimum donation

of \$20 per year through the convenience of NRHA's ReinerSuite™. This checkoff style fundraiser proved substantial in its first year, with 270 professionals making donations of \$6,200. There is hope that participation levels will increase in 2021.

The RHF Crisis Fund fielded an above-average number of applications in 2021 and awarded \$20,000. Coincidentally, 100% of last year's grants were made to NRHA Professionals. Stronger financial support is making it possible for RHF to meet its mission of caring for the reining community in larger ways. The RHF Board recently approved a 20% increase in Crisis Fund grant maximums for medical, accident, and disaster applications. ■



Third-party apps can include those that help you schedule your social media. (Check out the [NRHA Professionals' Marketing Kit](#), part 3, for more details.) While they're helpful, they can leave you open to a hack attack.

### You'll Know When...

For most users, a hack is obvious when it happens. You'll see a string of posts that you—or your social media manager—didn't create and post. Alternately, you might get an email alerting you that your password has been changed even though you didn't instigate a change. This is why it's critical to actively check your email and your online presences on a regular—daily, if possible—basis. Then you can quickly identify a potential hack and get to work saving your accounts and your online identity.

### Where to Start

Begin with changing your passwords on any account that might be compromised. If you use the same email/password combination on multiple sites, be prepared to change all of those logins.

Additionally, alert your audience, customers, and sponsors that your account might be compromised so they don't think the hack posts are coming from you. You might not be able to post from your business account, so use your personal account and other social media platforms to spread the word.

Flag all posts made by the scammers to help protect your friends, family, and customers who might see them. You can do this by clicking the three dots in the upper-right corner of any post. Choose "Find support or report this post" to alert the platform that illegitimate posts are coming from your account. You can also ask all of your followers to do the same.

If you can, delete the hacker posts from your account after taking screenshots.

### Cover Yourself

Some hackers are relentless. They'll continue

changing your password immediately after you've already updated your credentials. What can you do that a hacker can't? Go live. Show your face, which your audience will likely recognize, and ask your followers to flag all fraudulent posts and tell them not to click on anything.

While you're at it, take screenshots of fraudulent posts to show authorities from the platform. The evidence might never see the light of day, but it's better to have it on hand in case you need it.

### Report, and Be Patient

Immediately report any hack to the platform for resolution. The help center should direct you through the most recently developed process to alert the platform that your account has been hijacked. When you do make the report, be persistent but also patient. It can take at least 24 hours to hear back, which can seem like an eternity when someone has hijacked your social media. ■

## 'Why Do I Need a Website?'

Professionals often ask, "What's the point of having a website when social media seems to be the go-to for information?" In instances of stolen identity or hacked social media, your website can be the only means you have to communicate with your audience.

You don't "own" your social media pages—the platforms do. However, in the case of your website, you do own that property and all the information shared there. If your Facebook account was hacked and couldn't be returned to you, you'd be forced to rebuild that audience and all of the content lost in the hack. You'll have to prove your identity to win back your fans and followers. It takes a lot more work to do all of that than it does to keep a tidy, updated website. See the [NRHA Professionals' Marketing Toolkit](#), section 2, for more information.

Crystal McNutt (horseback) and Martin Muehlstaetter (second from right, purple shirt) have a strong professional relationship that makes catch riding a great option for both NRHA Professionals.



# Catch-Riding:

## A Win-Win

CATCH-RIDING MIGHT BE AN OVERLOOKED OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU TO BUILD YOUR REPUTATION, IMAGE, AND BUSINESS, NOT TO MENTION EARN SOME EXTRA INCOME. IF YOU HAVE MORE HORSES THAN YOU CAN SHOW, IT CAN CREATE OPPORTUNITIES, TOO.

**BY JENNIFER PAULSON**

**P**icture this: A major event is approaching. You'd planned to have two or three horses to show, but either they were sold or just aren't ready to be shown on that stage. You might let disappointment creep in, but then one of your peers approaches you with an opportunity to show a horse from their barn that didn't make the main string or would be more suited to the levels in which you compete.

Another scenario: You want to compete abroad to increase your name recognition and

exposure while also possibly supplementing your income. You happen to have connections in Europe whom you can approach and discuss options for showing horses from their barn internationally.

One more situation: A major breed show is approaching—maybe an Arab or Paint show—but you don't have any Arabians or Paints in your barn. Is there an opportunity for you to promote your business by showing a peer's extra horses there? →

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If you pay attention to the show results, it seems like catch-riding is getting more and more visible at major NRHA and breed events. We checked in with two riders who've recently catch-roded their ways to the pay window, as well as a professional who regularly uses catch riders to get her entire string shown at major events. Here you'll learn about five ways catch-riding can benefit you professionally, both as the catch-rider and as the person hiring someone to help show your stock.

### **Benefit #1: Relationship-Building**

For Martin Muehlstaetter, catch-riding is largely about relationships—ones that can help build your career for the long term. He's ridden a few horses for Crystal McNutt at the Scottsdale Arabian Horse Show because of their professional connection. Just this year, Muehlstaetter was reserve champion and tied for fourth on McNutt-trained horses in the 2021 Half Arabian Futurity.

"Crystal is so easy to work with, and her barn is close to mine," he shared. "Because of our ongoing relationship, I go and try a few of her horses and we see how we fit. I ask her for training tips, because I don't want to re-train her horses; I just try to get along with them and find the buttons. Her horses are trained really well, which helps."

McNutt agrees.

"Having a relationship with the person you're doing business with is so important," she shared. "I'd trust my own horses with Martin. Our history allows us to keep things very black-and-white. My clients talk to the catch-riders, and I trust that there won't be any problems."

Muehlstaetter says working your network is the most surefire way to let people know you're interested in catch-riding opportunities.

"Use your network and talk to people," he said. "Find people with multiple aged-event horses and talk to them. Don't be pushy, but you can put it



*NRHA Million Dollar Rider Martin Muehlstaetter works with his network of fellow NRHA Professionals to identify catch-riding opportunities. He's found success in his catch-riding experiences, both in the competitive arena and for building his own business.*

out there, and a lot of people might consider it."

Patrick Flaherty seconds the idea of networking. His connections are how he ended up showing three horses in the 2020 NRHA Futurity, earning reserve champion in the L2 and L3 on one horse, placing in the top 15 on another, and making the L2 finals on the third.

"I made jokes all year that I didn't have any 3-year-olds and could show in the L2," Flaherty said. "I did good catch-riding for Craig Schmersal in 2019, too. Matt Mills, Arno Honstetter, and I had talked about the possibility of me showing some of their horses in passing, and after the 2020 Best of the West show, they asked how serious I was." →

The relationships led to wins all around—Flaherty gained NRHA Lifetime Earnings, the horses’ owners had their horses shown—and place—in a major event, and the main trainers were able to have more horses they’d prepared on the big stage.



*Patrick Flaherty has had a few high-profile catch-rides, including at the 2020 NRHA Futurity. No matter the results, he always learns from the horses and from their main trainers, which helps him hone his training abilities.*

“The guys I’ve ridden for, we know each other pretty well,” Flaherty said. “We all watch each other’s horses and have everyone’s best interests in mind and help each other out.”

### **Benefit #2: Education**

As a professional, you understand that every horse you swing a leg over offers opportunities for you to learn. Flaherty likens it to being the main trainer’s “non pro” in many ways.

“Every time I catch-ride, I learn something from it,” he said. “You have to be open to being the ‘non pro’ in some ways—being coached. I learn from those horses and the way they’re trained, and I can use what I learn in my own program. In my case, I showed three catch rides at the 2020 NRHA Futurity, so I learned a lot about preparing three horses, their different care programs, and how to handle that situation. You have to go into it with an open mind, because if you’re not getting paid a lot to do it or you don’t win a check, you have to gain something from the experience, which is often the fact that you learned something.”

### **Benefit #3: Name Recognition**

Whether you’re an up-and-comer or a longtime professional, name recognition can be key to obtaining new customers. When you show horses in circumstances where you might not have otherwise—different breeds than usual, or distant states or even countries—a whole new audience is exposed to you and your business. They see how you prepare and show a horse, your demeanor around the show grounds, and how you interact with other exhibitors.

International exposure is on the table, too, with catch-riding. Muehlstaetter is from Austria and since moving to the U.S. has returned to Europe to successfully catch-ride a handful of horses at various FEI events. →

“I’ve shown horses in Sweden, Germany, Austria, Switzerland—I never would’ve had those opportunities if I wasn’t catch-riding for someone. I got some business out of it, too—sold horses, offered clinics, got horses in training that came from Europe. It can be very beneficial in that respect.”

#### **Benefit #4: Showing Your Entire String**

If you’re a pro with a barn full of horses and multiple aged-event options, it can be in your best interest to seek a catch-rider to help exhibit all your horses that are ready to be shown in major events. Additionally, you can seek out the right level of rider to suit a horse’s capabilities.

“Here in Scottsdale (Arizona), I’m lucky to have access to a lot of qualified professionals,” McNutt said. “I get to see how different riders work and what kinds of horses work best with them. If the rider really wants to do it and do well, they buy in. It’s great to have an outlet for horses that you’d planned to show—they don’t lose an opportunity to compete.”

McNutt’s use of catch-riders started because she owns a few of her own aged-event horses, and her family has horses in training with her.

“I want to avoid any perceived conflict of interest,” she said. “I don’t want my customers to feel like I put my own or my family’s horses ahead of theirs. It’s just good for business.”

#### **Benefit #5: Extra Income**

There are quite a few ways to experience a boost in your income from catch-riding. Obviously, there’s the split of the earnings (if any). But you can also work out show-fee agreements and bring the horse into your barn to prepare for the event and be paid for board and riding time. It’s all dependent on the situation, the relationship, and the agreement.

For the two horses Muehlstaetter showed for McNutt, one came to his barn for 30 days before the show, and one for 10 days. Flaherty drove daily to ride one of the horses he showed at the 2020 Futurity, and one came to his barn in November and stayed until they left for Oklahoma City to compete in NRHA’s biggest event, the NRHA Futurity. ■

## **Making It Work**

The success of a catch-riding situation lies in the agreement between parties. Sometimes a formal contract is requested; other professionals rely on a handshake and their word. Every agreement is different, depending on who’s involved, the logistics, and the possible winnings at a particular event. Things to consider covering in an agreement include the following.

- **Logistics of training and board.**  
Will the horse stay in training with and be boarded at the main trainer’s facility or move to the catch-rider’s facility? How much will the catch rider charge to keep the horse in their barn?
- **Time commitment.**  
How long before the show will the catch-rider start working with the horse? What are expectations for riding and timing of those rides?
- **Care at the show.**  
What’s the catch-rider’s responsibility at the show, other than preparing the horse to compete and showing in the class?
- **Additional expenses.**  
Who covers costs of travel, lodging, food, etc. for the catch-rider? Does a day fee make the most sense?
- **Money and awards.**  
What percentage of any winnings will the catch-rider get? Are there any other compensation expectations, such as photos or prizes?

No matter what the final agreement entails, being up front and honest from the start of the discussion keeps everyone—main trainer, owners, and catch-rider—on the same page and manages all expectations.

“Be clear and straightforward about the agreement from the beginning,” Flaherty said. “Look each other in the eye and decide how the arrangement will work. You don’t want to go win \$50,000 and not know how it’s going to be split. Decide at the beginning so no one has any questions.”



*Moving your business is a huge undertaking. Learn the best tips from three NRHA Professionals here.*

# Make the Move

RELOCATING YOUR BUSINESS IS A BIG DECISION. THREE NRHA PROS GIVE THEIR BEST ADVICE FOR MOVING YOUR OPERATION.

BY JENNIFER PAULSON

Everyone hates moving. The ups and downs of buying and selling property can cause more indigestion than the biggest roller coasters. The intensity of buying and selling property in an unprecedented market leads to many sleepless nights. And the packing—so much packing, especially if your move includes relocating your family to a new home.

But there are many exciting elements of moving, too. Hopefully the move signifies a new phase of your career—perhaps you're buying your own place for the first time or upgrading to a larger facility with more amenities for your customers.

We spoke with three NRHA Professionals who recently relocated under different circumstances, but to the same area—North Central Texas.

Situations vary from region to region, but their key takeaways and advice could help you when it's time to take your career down a new path at a different facility.

## Long-Distance Relocation

When the owner of the facility Peter Defreitas trained reiners and coached customers from in North Carolina changed her business model, he and his wife, Erin, explored all their options for relocation and seized the opportunity to make the best move for their business.

“We kicked around ideas about Florida and Georgia, maybe even staying in North Carolina,” he shared. “The best opportunity for us—for our training business and our financial future—was in Texas because equine property is pretty much always sellable. If we invested, we'd be able to sell it in the future, probably for more than we put in it. In some of the other areas we explored, that might not always be the case.”

But running his own training facility wasn't part of Defreitas' plan. He was looking to buy a personal piece of property where he and his wife could keep their broodmares and young horses

before they went into full training or were sold. He stuck with his business model of leasing stalls for his horses in training, and they found the perfect situation—with their property across the highway from where Defreitas runs his training business.

“Be sure you have a really good realtor,” he advised. “Ours was amazing, and we still call her with questions now. She was extremely instrumental in us being able to find this place and buy it. We came and looked at property after the 2020 NRHA Derby. After that, we did everything over the phone or computer. She also hooked us up with our lender.”

Defreitas kept his customers as in the loop as reasonable throughout the process to keep their trust and their business. He and his wife spent the first 45 to 60 days after learning about the changes in North Carolina to figure out their options. Once they established a plan, he spoke with his customers to tell them what was happening, share the information they had from the owners of the facility, and explain their plans. They committed to staying in North Carolina until the end of 2020 to give everyone plenty of time to explore their

own options and move forward on the best path for their situation.

“I’ve always tried to be up front with people,” he shared. “There are some customers who might get upset at first, but then I can go about things with a clear conscience that everyone knew what was happening. The horse world is small, and I didn’t want them finding out from anyone other than us.”

Once the Defreitases found their Texas property, they were fortunate in that they didn’t have to hurry to move. They were able to lease the property back to the former owner while she prepared to move. This kind of flexibility can allow everyone involved to take a breath instead of feeling rushed.

The one hiccup Defreitas encountered that serves as a cautionary tale involved the movers hired to relocate their belongings. A bid that seemed too good to be true turned out to be just that when the movers arrived to load the trucks.

“We had the best-laid plans,” he said. “I think that using a moving company is good and I’d do it again, but it was definitely a learning experience.”

The Defreitases continue to settle into their new place, and their connections to other NRHA



*Owning your own facility comes with great rewards and huge responsibilities, but it can pay off in terms of pride in your work and growing your business.*



*Even if you're making a short-distance move, take time to purge and sort through equipment, tack, gear, and other items that accumulate in a barn.*

Professionals in the area help immensely with finding essentials such as where to buy hay and feed, who to go to for truck maintenance, and other needs.

### **Moving on Up**

Bud Lyon bought his property in Tioga, Texas, in 2011 as an investment property that turned into his own facility.

“It was built to be a hobby farm,” Lyon shared. “It wasn’t setup for what we want in a reining facility. But I was able to lease it to an all-around trainer because it fit his needs better. We were content to continue leasing stalls at a different facility nearby for the time being.”

But after a few years, Lyon found himself without a tenant. After carefully examining the costs to continue renting stalls and considering the lapse while finding a new tenant, Lyon moved his business to Tioga. This year, he purchased a larger facility with more amenities in Whitesboro, Texas.

“A few years ago, we realized my business wasn’t going to be able to reach its full potential if we stayed in Tioga,” he said. “We’d turned away business because we couldn’t accommodate as many horses. So, we explored all kinds of options—investing in the Tioga property to better fit our needs, building from scratch, even selling it all and going back to leasing stalls. Ultimately, the opportunity came to purchase the property in Whitesboro, and it was right for us. It was an opportunity that doesn’t come along every day, and we were fortunate to be in the position to make the transition.”

Lyon learned a lot about what he wanted—and didn’t want—by having been in a variety of

situations with his business. His first piece of advice to anyone looking to venture out on their own, whether in a stall-leasing or facility-purchasing situation: Ask a lot of questions.

“There’s a lot to be learned,” he shared. “Home ownership and ranch ownership are great experiences and offer so many wonderful things, but anyone who tells you it’s easy isn’t being honest. When you’re leasing stalls, all you really have to worry about is your own stock. You don’t have to think about maintenance and upkeep—that’s all on the facility’s manager/owner. There’s a lot of value in being able to finish riding and leave; it offers a clearer separation in the life/work balance. When you make the big leap to being your own landlord, you must accept that change in dynamic. Now if a horse breaks a waterer and the stall floods, it’s your responsibility to fix it or pay someone to do it.

“All that said, at the end of the day, the benefits outweigh the drawbacks,” he continued. “Putting equity into something that’s ours (with wife Kim), pride of ownership, having skin in the game—it makes it worthwhile.”

When it came to moving, even just a short 15 minutes north, Lyon acknowledged the logistics of relocating a business and a home can be daunting. On one hand, they could easily zip up and down the highway, moving things from their home or barn. However, it didn’t give them the motivation to declutter their lives as much as a farther move might’ve required.

“It’s amazing what we can accumulate at home and in the barn after being in one place for an extended period,” Lyon shared. “Farm and ranch equipment, tools, blankets, barn furniture, home

furnishings. We also had accommodations for our staff on site in Tioga and had to move all of that. Had we been moving all at once, it would've made it much more logistically challenging. Moving the horses was the easy part. Collecting tack and tools and supplies probably gave us the most stress.”

When it came to their home, Lyon hired a moving company to handle the personal items.

“It’s not cheap, but if you can afford it, paying someone to move your house is money well spent,” he advised. “They come in and box everything, lift heavy furniture, deliver it, and unload it. That removes a lot of stress.”

Lyon also used a lease-back to allow his team to complete maintenance and renovations on the facility before fully moving into his new barn.

“We sold in Tioga and requested a 30-day lease-back,” he said. “This allowed us a month to complete deferred maintenance on the new property. We felt like it was easiest to do those projects with the fewest horses possible in those stalls. We underestimated the time it would take—whatever time you think you need to make your move and improvements, double or triple it. When you’re at the mercy of contractors’ schedules and weather, nothing seems to go exactly to plan or on schedule.”

## Move Now for the Future

Sebastian Petroll and his wife, Melanie, had been training horses and leasing stalls for 10 years in Whitesboro, Texas. Their decision to purchase their own facility in the same area sparked from the desire to plan for their future.

“The only reason we relocated was our portfolio needed real estate,” Petroll said. “We looked at options of buying land and rental houses—real estate is so hot around here. We chose to buy a facility not because it’ll be hugely profitable for us, but it will have high resale value in the future. That gives us something to bank on while continuing our business.”

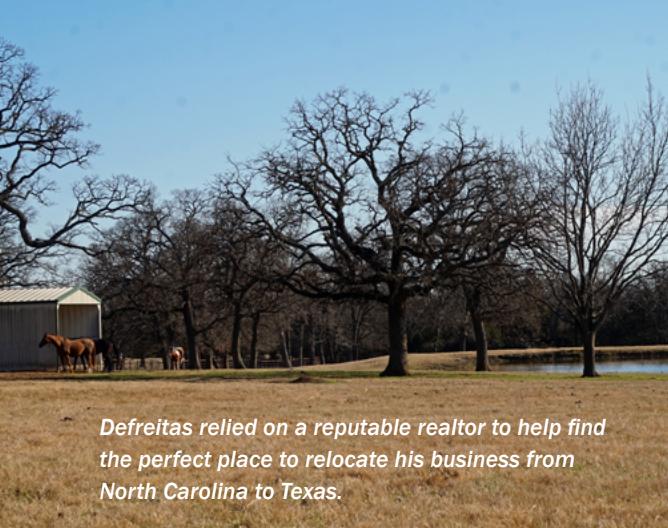
Finding the right opportunity requires patience. Buying just to buy won’t meet your long-term goals.

“Patience and looking around is really important,” he said. “We looked for a long time and explored every option, from building from the ground up to established facilities. This place wasn’t even on the MLS [multiple listing service]. We just knocked on doors, which isn’t everyone’s cup of tea and you get turned down a lot. But being patient and finding the right place is essential.”

Petroll agreed with Lyon that sorting and purging are key when moving, and he also wished he’d done



*Instead of purchasing an entire training facility, Peter Defreitas purchased a property where he could keep his young horses and later sell as an investment property.*



*Defreitas relied on a reputable realtor to help find the perfect place to relocate his business from North Carolina to Texas.*

more of that. He continues to open boxes and wonder why the contents got packed and moved. He also seconds that the actual move took longer than they expected, even with moving in close proximity. When it came to upgrades and repairs, Petroll repeated his first piece of advice: be patient.

“I rolled in here and started a list of five pages of things to fix and upgrade,” he shared. “I put too much on the list and ran through money quickly. As I’m here longer, I’m learning to be more patient and realize some issues don’t need immediate attention and some do. I wish I’d waited so I could’ve planned and prioritized. It takes so much to get up and running. You can easily start five projects, run out of money, and have five unfinished projects.”

With a move within the same town, word travels fast when trainers start making moves to relocate. Petroll worked with his customers to give them the information they needed but played it close to the vest until everything was on a sure path to closing.

“Everyone was respectful about not pushing for information,” Petroll said. “We talked to most of our customers about what we were working toward. Once we got closer and it felt like it was actually going to happen, we provided more information. Then we sent an email with details about the move. We wanted people to feel like it’s business as usual or even better.” ■

## Key Takeaways

1. **Find your why.** What’s your goal for relocating? How will it further your career? Which situation—ranch owner or stall leaser—best fits your needs for this phase of your career? Before making a move, answer these questions to be sure you’re making the best choices for your business, horses, customers, and future.
2. **Ask a lot of questions.** Tap your network to get a variety of answers for different situations to deduce what advice applies to your situation. Trainers who’ve been there and done that can be excellent resources, but also talk to your peers about their experiences.
3. **Be patient.** Forcing a situation won’t net the results you desire. But also, be ready to move when the right opportunity arises.
4. **Find great help.** From your realtor to your lender to the moving company that packs up your home, find the best help you can acquire.
5. **Purge when you pack.** If you’ve been established in your career or lived in your home an extended time, you’ve accumulated clutter you don’t need to pack and move. Getting rid of what you don’t need saves you effort (and tossing more junk) at your new place.
6. **Pad your timeline.** The consensus of the professionals mentioned is that there’s never enough time to prepare, but the more prepared you can be and the more time you can get, the better for your transition.
7. **Communicate.** Whether you’re moving across the country or down the road, practice as open communication as possible with your customers. Your honesty and trustworthiness will pay off, even if they don’t make the move with you.
8. **Prioritize renovations.** It’s easy to spend your entire budget on only a few upgrades or repairs that you could’ve lived with for the short term. Make time to list all the repairs and renovations you plan, and then choose what must come first.
9. **Consider timing.** All three pros consulted relocated at the end of 2020 or beginning of 2021. The end of the year or beginning of a new year tends to be a “downtime” for reining professionals, so it makes sense. However, that’s not always possible. Consider a lease-back or other methods to make the transition fit into your calendar and disrupt your program as little as possible.
10. **Update your contact information.** Update your address as soon as possible, including on [nrha.com/findapro](https://www.nrha.com/findapro).

# FINANCIAL TRAINER

TIPS AND INSIGHTS TO PLAN FOR YOUR FUTURE

## Find Your Realtor

THE RIGHT REALTOR FOR YOUR NEEDS DEPENDS ON MANY FACTORS. AMY RUSHING, AN EXPERIENCED HORSE-PROPERTY REALTOR, SHARES HER TIPS.

BY JENNIFER PAULSON



*A deep understanding of the horse market and knowledge about the area in which you want to relocate are only two traits to look for in your realtor. Learn more in this article.*

**B**uying and selling horse property—or any real estate transaction—can be overwhelming without the right assistance from your realtor. We visited with Amy Rushing, who in her four years as a realtor has sold more than \$98 million in property, to find out what to look for when choosing a realtor.

### Five Basic Qualities

Your realtor is your advocate and partner when working through finding, buying, and selling property. Here are four general traits to seek.

**Communicator.** A commitment to communicating means your realtor will keep you informed, educate you about the ins and outs of the transaction, and make you feel at ease with the knowledge you have about the process. A great communicator will take the time to walk you through the contract and all parts of the process.

**Experience.** “Real estate is a ‘show me’ industry,” Rushing shared. “The more you do it, the more experience you gain. The more hurdles a realtor has experienced and overcome, the more they can handle. Just passing the realtor test doesn’t make you an expert in the field. Experience does.”

**Networker.** Anyone can look on the MLS (multiple listing services), but a realtor who’s

involved in the community where you’re looking to buy can uncover hidden gems that might be hitting the market soon. Rushing shared that this is especially important in today’s market with record lows of properties for sale and when they’re selling in under a month. “Someone who can open an opportunity is a huge asset, and that comes from experience and a great network,” Rushing said.

**Advocate.** Your agent must work on your behalf. Every state has different laws and standards when it comes to real estate, so how your agent represents you varies from state to state. Find someone who knows the ins and outs and will work for you toward the end goal.

### Horse-Property Questions

Horse properties require even deeper expertise and experience. If your realtor isn’t skilled in the ways of rural property purchases, you can find yourself in a mess that can cost a lot of money to

untangle. Here are just a few questions a horse-property-savvy realtor will answer or knows how to find answers for you.

**Do you need a survey?** Are the fencelines correct? Are there any easements you need to be aware of? What about soils tests you might need if you plan to build on the property?

**What's the water source?** Rushing warned that water is a huge consideration for livestock. She said your realtor should understand and share with you all the water shares, what they mean, and how much water you have access to. "The land might be cheap, and you can have horses and run a business, but if there's not a good water source, you need to know that," Rushing said.

**What's your access to utilities?** If you're buying in a rural or mountainous area, how will you access basic utilities like gas, electric, and phone/wifi? Knowing what to expect can save heartache.

**Are there permits on the property?** "Your realtor should know to research any permits held on the property so you don't inherit someone else's problem," Rushing said.

**What amount of title insurance do you need?** Title insurance is essential to cover any liens that aren't paid at closing or other instances when someone could make a claim to your property.

**What's the zoning?** "You have to know if you can run a business on the property," Rushing warned. Not all property is zoned for operating your training business.

## Finding Your Realtor

Your realtor should have a great network, but you also should lean on your network to find the right fit for your needs.

"We have doctors, lawyers, business people, and many realtors in the horse community," Rushing shared. "Reach out and ask people in the area where you want to move who they used, what their experience was like, and how it all went."

Rushing added, "Most agents can successfully

sell in a neighborhood. But representing buyers in a property transaction requires much more in-depth knowledge that not all realtors possess. Your realtor has to understand how you'll use the property and if it'll work for you for the best outcome of the process." ■

## NRHA Event Calendar

Due to frequently changing regulations caused by the spread of COVID-19, please visit [nrha.com](http://nrha.com) and [ReinerSuite™](http://ReinerSuite.com) for the most updated information.

### April 17–24

2020 NRHA European Futurity  
Cremona, Italy

*This event will be open to NRHA-nominated horses age 5 in 2021.*

### May 4

NRHA Executive Committee & Board of Directors  
virtual meetings

### May 13–16

2020 NRHA European Derby  
Wels, Austria

*This event will be open to NRHA-nominated horses ages 6, 7, 8, and 9 in 2021.*

### May 15

NRHA Derby entries due

*Entries are due in office by this date. They must be received in office by June 1 to be included in the regular draw. Visit [nrhaderby.com](http://nrhaderby.com) or email [events@nrha.com](mailto:events@nrha.com) for more information.*

### May 31

Memorial Day

*NRHA office is closed.*

### June 1

Third NRHA Futurity payment due

NRHA Hall of Fame nomination deadline

Dale Wilkinson Lifetime Achievement Award  
nomination deadline

Director nomination deadline

### June 19–27

NRHA Derby presented by Markel  
Oklahoma City, OK

*Forms and more information are available at [nrhaderby.com](http://nrhaderby.com). Email questions to [events@nrha.com](mailto:events@nrha.com).*

# 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](mailto:shonegger@nrha.com).*



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