

Equine Guelph's education vision: A bold investment in your future

Lifelong learning
 about horses.
 Anywhere. Any time.

If you don't know where you are going, all roads lead there. Equine Guelph's education committee knows exactly where it wants to go. And, in only two years, the committee has made significant strides.

Working with industry leaders, the committee has developed an education vision focused on a lifelong learning pathway, or pyramid (see page 3), that represents an investment in the future of the equine industry.

The First Level: Building a Foundation for Tomorrow

The foundation of any program must be deeply rooted in educating our youth: the future employees and leaders of the equine industry.

The first phase, EquiMania! is a program designed for youth aged eight to 16 years. It endeavours to encourage and empower young people to begin their own pathway of learning, and continue to work their way up the levels of the pyramid.

The program consists of an interactive web site (www.equimania.ca) that offers educational activities.

The second phase of the youth



Equine Guelph's educational programs are designed to nurture our passion for horses with lifelong learning for recreational riders and industry professionals.

- Photo by Dave Landry

program is the EquiMania! Challenge, an event that invites participants to test their knowledge of horse-related care and health topics.

Given consistent support, this event will be held at the Can-Am Equine Exposition in London each March.

This year's inaugural EquiMania! Challenge attracted a capacity crowd. More than 240 completed the challenge quiz and all went home with exceptional participation packages.

Start-up funding for this program was received from the Horsemen's Benevolent and Protective Association

of Ontario, Standardbred Canada, Ontario Harness Horse Association, Ontario Equestrian Federation and private donors. Corporate support is welcomed and needed for this program to continue to thrive and grow.

Where does such a successful program go from here?

"We would like to develop this program to reach a wider audience of children," says Gayle Ecker, Equine Guelph's senior manager.

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THE THREE PILLARS OF EQUINE GUELPH:

Research

Equine Guelph has invested approximately \$340,000 in research for 2005-2006, supporting 19 projects related to equine health. Of the 19 projects, 10 are new with the balance receiving second-year funding.

One new project that received support will investigate the response of young racehorses to handling and housing by examining trainability and behaviour.

Investigators will explore prevalence and risk factors for behaviour problems, specifically stereotypies and aggression, in racehorses.

This work will hopefully identify opportunities for improvement to decrease the incidence of these problems.

To learn more about it, and to read about our current and past research projects, visit the Equine Guelph website at www.equineguelph.ca.

Performance

During the past year the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) facility at U of G's Ontario Veterinary College has been assisting with both clinical cases and research investigations.

One recently funded project will produce the first atlas of MRI anatomy of the equine cervical spine and also develop MRI criteria for diagnosing wobbler syndrome in horses.

Wobbler syndrome or Cervical Stenotic Myelopathy (CSM) causing spinal cord compression is a common and devastating disease affecting horses, especially young Thoroughbreds and Standardbreds. It causes progressive ataxia, or loss of muscle co-ordination, which often results in a career ending prognosis.

The importance of this study is the increased accuracy of diagnosis of CSM and increased knowledge about the development and progression of this debilitating disease.

Education

The National Award of Excellence has been bestowed upon the Equine Science Certificate (ESC), a partnership program between Equine Guelph and the U of G's Office of Open Learning. The Canadian Association of University Continuing Education (CAUCE) recognizes excellence in university continuing education programs and the concept of scholarship of practice for non-degree programs.

"The Equine Science Certificate program is an excellent example of collaboration amongst students, instructors, industry and the University of Guelph, creating synergies to help horse enthusiasts and professionals to improve equine health and well-being, both nationally and internationally," says Virginia Gray, Director, Office of Open Learning.

This is the second award for the ESC program acknowledging its innovative use of technology to enhance learning for adults in the equine industry.

Addressing a critical need for skills

Education, continued from Page 1

"The logical next step is the development of curriculum units that are appropriate for schools, a *Horses in the Classroom* program. This would involve the creation of learning activities, tailored to the Ontario curriculum, using care and health of the horse as the platform to achieve those learning objectives."

Moving to the Second Level: The Industry Skills Program

The industry has identified a critical need for an increased number of qualified and skilled grooms, particularly for the racing industry.

Equine Guelph is working with industry to develop the Industry Skills

Program that will focus on the development of skills, safety and health knowledge for entry into the industry. The recently launched pilot program, the Groom's Course, is focused on the racing sector but can be developed for application to the wider industry.

This program consists of four phases. The orientation phase includes two days of hands-on training in handling, safety and daily management routines. This is followed by a work term, where students are assisted in their job search.

The third phase runs at the same time as their work term. While they are working and earning, they complete supportive educational units complemented by computer activities, online discussions and presentations with industry mentors.

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The new Groom's Course is one way that Equine Guelph helps meet the need for skilled people in the industry.

Photo by Dave Landry

Staying a step ahead of trends in the industry

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Students receive their certificate by completing the fourth phase, the learning assessment, that will give the students an opportunity to demonstrate their skills and knowledge.

The Third Level: A Challenging Opportunity

Designed for industry participants who are looking to challenge their knowledge at the next level, the Equine Science Certificate offers an award-winning method for expanding the expertise of the horse owner.

The objective of this innovative online program is to enable horse enthusiasts and practitioners to acquire the skills and knowledge to progress in the industry. It also helps owners to improve equine welfare and health through continuing education delivered in a flexible and accessible venue.

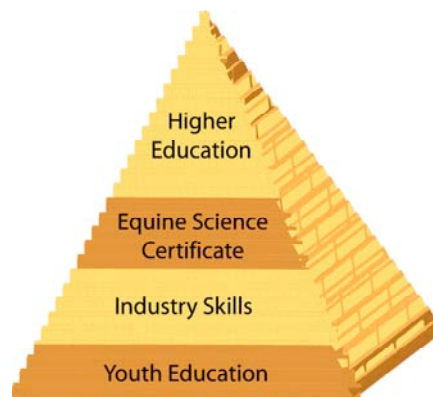
Almost 550 students from around the world have joined this unique online learning community in the first three years of the program. New and evidence-based information is included in the courses that stress practical application. Instructors and guest speakers include university faculty and industry experts from Canada, the U.S. and elsewhere.

What's Next for the Equine Science Certificate program?

"There has been tremendous interest and demand from our graduates and current students for new courses," Ecker says. "In answer to those wishes, we are developing an equine business course



Pyramid of Learning



A Pyramid of Learning is pivotal to the education vision. This provides a continuous pathway for progressive learning from youth to adult, from generalist to specialist all contributing to *The Virtual Horse*.

Graphic by Sean Marak

Mentors wanted

Mentors and instructors are needed to fully develop the Industry Skills Program.

Interested members please contact Gayle Ecker for more information at: gecker@uoguelph.ca

with the first offering scheduled for 2006. There is enthusiastic support for an equine behaviour course, which is now under development with an expected offering in late 2006 or early 2007. Other ideas include equine genetics and specialized nutrition courses. We want to keep our courses flexible, relevant and responsive, based on industry needs and input."

"The Equine Science Certificate is making a profound change to the way many in the industry are managing their horses and equine business," says Moira Gunn, DVM, owner of Paradox Farms and co-chair of Equine Guelph. "I would consider a graduate of this program first over others for employment due to the

knowledge and dedication that is shown by the graduates."

The Fourth Level: Higher Education

The fourth level includes certificate programs as well as the possibility of diploma or degree programs for those looking to become professionals in the industry. For example, U of G's Kemptville College offers an equine diploma program. Discussions are ongoing aimed at establishing an applied degree program in equine science and a specialized MBA program for the industry.

"Equine veterinarians not only need to be able to prevent, diagnose and treat diseases, they also must understand the needs of the industry. Equine Guelph can provide unique and diverse opportunities for our equine-oriented students to do this," says Dr. Elizabeth Stone, Dean, OVC.

The Virtual Horse

As the levels of the Learning Pyramid are developed, it is important to keep an eye on the future. In the short-term, Equine Guelph is creating programs to help fulfill today's need for skilled and knowledgeable people in the industry. In the future, the industry will be changing, as all industries do, and future programs must be flexible to accommodate those changes. Enter the "virtual horse."

The virtual horse will be a digital encyclopedia, developed alongside the educational programs as a virtual library. It will provide the horse owner with searchable functions for just-in-time learning.

"Picture a computer on every shed row and in every tack room," says John Walzak, chief operations officer of the Ontario Harness Horse Association and co-chair of Equine Guelph's education committee. "The virtual horse can provide a much needed and valuable resource for the horse owner of the future. It is vital that the industry support and invest in this important initiative."



Many thanks



Equine Guelph thanks departing Advisory Council members, Sue Burns and John Rumble, for their tireless efforts, especially in the area of advancement.

Equimania! growing and travelling

EquiMania! continues to grow from its inaugural event at the Can-Am Equine Expo in London last March. An interactive educational display was developed with the support of the Woodbine Entertainment Group for their summer family area, and EquiMania!

will trot out new material at the OEF's educational seminar, East Meets West, on Nov. 27 (www.horse.on.ca).

EquiMania! will return to the Can-Am Equine Expo in London on March 18. Check www.equimania.ca for updates.



About Equine Guelph

Equine Guelph is the horse owner and caregiver's centre at the University of Guelph. We are dedicated to improving the health and well-being of horses through the provision and promotion of research, performance and education.

We welcome your views and encourage you to contact us with your comments or suggestions. Anyone wishing to excerpt *Equine Guelph Update* should contact:

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Equine Guelph also publishes a bi-monthly e-newsletter, *Horses@Guelph*. To subscribe to the e-newsletter, please visit www.equineguelph.ca

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Area of Greatest Need Research Performance Education

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