Careers with Horses

Developed by Mary Beth Bennett, MBBennett@ mail.wvu.edu

There are many career opportunities in the multibillion dollar equine industry. Some careers are very hands on like trainers, riding instructors, barn managers, and veterinarians while others are directed more towards horse industry sales such as feed, tack and drug related business or the media such as journalists, software design and market/promotion.

If you enjoy working directly with horses consider jobs with stables, becoming a jockey or exercise person, training horses or as a riding instructor. Become a horse owner, breeder, a farrier or a veterinarian.

Consider your area of skills and interest and then consider careers that can involve horses. You need to find out what the horse industry has to offer. It is good to have some experience working with horses in advance and sometimes you can gain experience by volunteering.

There are a wide variety of jobs in the equine industry depending on what you want to do. The area of equine nutrition is far reaching, because every horse must eat. A solid background in animal science and equine nutrition is important for a career in feed sales, nutritional research or consulting.

Many people with an interest in horses have an interest in becoming veterinarians. In addition to veterinarians, we need veterinary assistants, veterinary technicians, and veterinary technologists who all have important roles in health care for horses. All of these professions require education beyond a high school degree.

Many jobs in the horse industry do not involve direct contact with horses. There are many publications dedicated to horses. The American Horse Publications website lists 110 horse media members. If you are a horse person you may have subscribed to publications that might be possibilities for employment or careers. Many organizations like to have written materials available to their members or other interested people. The larger organizations often employ people to assist with development of magazines, websites and other written materials. These employees often have degrees in communication related fields and an interest in horses.

Television also offers the opportunity to be involved with horses either in front of the camera or behind the scenes training horses to do what is needed in the movies, recording documentaries about horses or educational videos or researching to present factual information. There might be opportunities to be a camera person at a wide variety of horse events including horse races as well as Olympic events, show jumping, dressage events, rodeo, etc.

Jobs in the Horse Racing Industry range from jockeys and horse trainers to hot walkers and the people that staff the racetrack, but have no direct contact with horses. When we see races like the Kentucky Derby we see some of the best race horses in the world. A lot of people ae involved in helping each horse get to the Derby.

Only a select group of individuals are able to meet the physical demands of being a jockey. Jockeys must carefully follow a diet and exercise program to maintain their weight within specific limits. Jockeys need to be five foot five or shorter and weigh between 100 and 115 pounds to meet weight assignments for their mounts. Major stake races have higher weight limits (for example the weight carried in the Kentucky Derby is 126 pounds for rider and equipment). Lead weights are inserted into the saddle to bring the weight up to the desired amount. Injuries are a constant cause of concern for jockeys. Proper use and maintenance of safety equipment, such as helmets and protective vests, is vital to minimize the occurrence and severity of injuries. Jockeys earn a per mount fee $30 to $100. The top three finishers in a race earn a percentage of the horse's winnings: 10% of the winning horses earnings, and 5% of the second or third place horse's earnings. If you would like to become a jockey check out the North American Racing Academy (NARA) founded in 2006 by famous rider Chris McCarron. It offers the only college degree earning opportunity for jockeys in the U.S. Students learn horsemanship and riding skills during the two year program centered in Lexington, KY.

Equine Management & Breeding

Large breeding farms employ many managers to oversee the various departments (broodmares, stallions, yearlings, etc.) Smaller operations may employ just a single farm manager that is responsible for overseeing all aspects of equine management. Additional options in the field of management and breeding include roles such as groom and pedigree analyst.

Procedure

Before starting this section of the unit ask students if they have recently seen a movie or program on horses. Explore the type of movie or program and have them think about the people involved with having the horse be a part of it.

For example: Was it a Western movie with an actor who rode a horse or a movie about the horse? If it was about the horse why was it done? Was it a famous horse known for doing something? What had the horse done to make it famous? What careers might be involved in helping make the horse famous?

Have students brainstorm to come up with careers related to horses. They can come up with lists individually or teams of 2 or more depending on how you want them to work.

I want to work with horses when I grow up but what can I do?

Objective: Students will research careers in the equine industry and conduct research to learn more about the jobs and requirements needed. Based on the student's research they will develop a list of questions to conduct and interview and share what they learned by writing an essay/

Materials needed: Interview questions and access to people in the equine industry

Introduction: Students will select a career within the equine industry (jockey, vet, trainer, breeders, etc.) and conduct research to learn more about the job. In addition, students will develop interview questions and conduct an interview (either in person or over the phone) with someone in the profession. Students will compile their research into a one - two page report.

Procedure: The teacher and students will brainstorm a list of equine-related careers, including, but not limited to jockey, trainer, breeder, veterinarian, farmer, stable hand, etc. Students will select one job and conduct research to find out more about the job (education required, job responsibilities, etc.) After their research, students will contact someone in the profession to conduct an interview.

Results: Students will use research and interview skills to learn about a career and will compile that information in an essay using proper spelling and grammar, etc.

Suggestions: Instead of having the students contacting people and talking about their equine jobs ask several people to come into the classroom so that all the students have the opportunity to hear what is being said. Then give students some time to have a one on one conversation with the individuals to collect more information that can be shared.

Use current events to help explore careers. Horses in the new or on tv.

Equine Career Investigation Worksheet

Possible Interview Questions

1. What is the name of your occupation?

2. What duties or responsibilities go along with your job?

3. What skills are needed for your job?

4. What type of personality is needed for your job?

5. What physical requirement or limitations are associated with your job?

6. What educational background is required?

7. What courses, especially in science, should be taken in high school and in college?

8. What is the best type of school to attend to attain the necessary skills?

9. What high school course should be taken to prepare for this position?

10. What are some positive aspects of this job?

11. What are some negative aspects of this job?

12. How does this profession help to better society?

13. What is the demand for people in this position like today?

14. What is the outlook for this job in the future?

15. What do you like most about your job?

16. What do you like least about your job?

17. Is there anything else you think I should know about your job?

Make sure to say Thank you to the person you interview.