Greetings from the Loveliest Village on the Plains!

Spring semester was a bit unusual to say the least. Record low temperatures and periods of ice and snow made for cancelled classes and creative scheduling. Some students in the Horse Production and Biomechanics courses got a rude introduction to the realities of horse care when their first lab sessions met at the Horse Center despite the rain, cold, and a lack of a covered work area. Several of the pre-vet students that take our equine courses have never been around livestock, let alone horses, before coming to Auburn.

Spring means it’s also time to say good bye to familiar faces. Seven students are expected to graduate this May with degrees in Animal Sciences – Equine Science Option. Graduate student Lynlee Powell successfully defended her thesis, earning her M.S. degree under the direction of Dr. Cindy McCall. Finally, Dr. McCall has retired from Auburn University at the end of May. We will have more details about her retirement and future plans in the next issue of the newsletter.

On a happier note, we have lots of updates and news to share in this issue of the Equine Program Newsletter. Our Spotlight section features Mary Atkins Hunt, president of the newly-formed Auburn Eventing Club. Organization Updates includes information from the Horseman’s Club, Stock Horse Club, and Auburn’s NCAA Equestrian Team. The page on the ground breaking for the new covered arena includes pictures from the event back in March. Finally, we have exciting news to share about the re-launch of our breeding program.

We hope you enjoy our latest issue of the newsletter!

-BW
Spotlight on – Mary Atkins Hunt & the Auburn Eventing Club

Mary Atkins Hunt is a Pre-Pharmacy major, from Mobile, AL, and current president of the Auburn Eventing Club. It is a new campus organization for students interested in the sport of eventing. Eventing is considered by some to be the triathlon of horse sports as it incorporates dressage, cross-country, and stadium jumping into one competition. Mary Atkins took some time to answer questions about this sport and the recent development of collegiate events.

*How did you become involved in eventing? How long have you been competing?*

I became involved in eventing because the trainer I grew up riding with had a background in eventing. She taught us to love jumping, dressage and just really enjoy the sport of eventing in general. I have been riding horses since I was 6 or 7 and I have been showing competitively for about 8 years.

*How did the Auburn Eventing Club come about?*

I had met eventers from different places while competing in high school, and many of them attended Auburn University. The Auburn Eventing Club started because we all wanted to be able to attend shows together and represent Auburn. Several other colleges around the Southeast were also beginning to form eventing teams so we wanted to be able to include Auburn in collegiate team challenges.

*How do college eventing competitions work? Who is your governing body?*

Collegiate Eventing competitions are still a very new concept in the eventing community so there have not been that many events to date. In general, each college team sends members riding at any level to compete in a United States Eventing Association recognized event. The members of each college team are divided into teams of four, and the scores of each rider on the teams are weighted depending on the level that they are competing. The team with the lowest overall score is the winner. The rules that govern the collegiate team challenges are the same that govern USEA recognized events.

*Who can join the Auburn Eventing Club? Do you have to have a horse to participate?*

Anyone who is interested in the sport of Three Day Eventing is welcome to join the Auburn Eventing Club and you do not need to have a horse to participate. The clinics we host are great opportunities for those who want to learn more about eventing.
Horseman’s Club

The club had a busy meeting schedule this spring including a horse dentistry demonstration by Dr. Dee Jones, a tour of the AU vet school’s equine reproduction center with Dr. Robyn Wilborn, and a talk by Dr. Debra Taylor on equine podiatry. In addition, the club had a station at the Get Ag-tive program for local Boys & Girls Clubs as part of the College of Agriculture’s Ag Week program.

The Spring Saddle Up for St. Jude Trail Ride was held March 22 at Heart of Dixie in Troy, AL. A new addition to the day’s program included a BBQ lunch catered by the AU Collegiate Cattlemen and Cattlewomen. Fifty-one people participated, raising over $1300 for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital. Dates for the fall trail ride will be announced in late summer.

Stock Horse Club

The Stock Horse Club started off the semester with a Southeaster Stock Horse Association show at Southern Cross Ranch in Headland, AL. While there was not a formal collegiate competition at the show, three Auburn students were entered. Club member Kati Mosteller finished second in both the Novice Pleasure and Novice Trail divisions in her very first stock horse show.

The Stock Horse and Horseman’s Clubs joined forces to host a riding clinic on March 29 at the Auburn Covered Arena on Hwy 280. Stephen Freeman, a local trainer and approved judge with the American Stock Horse Association, lead the clinic with help from his wife, Kristen. About a dozen members of the clubs participated in the all-day event which focused on basic horsemanship skills.

For more information about the AU Stock Horse Club contact club president Katie Hill, ekh0013@auburn.edu.

http://www.ag.auburn.edu/ansc/
Equestrian Team

Auburn University’s Equestrian Team finished out the regular season with a record of 9-4. At the SEC Championship in Blythewood, SC, they fell to Georgia in the opening round but beat Texas A&M to finish third. Auburn had the #4 seed going into the National Collegiate Equestrian Association (NCEA) championships.

This year’s national championships featured a new format with schools facing off as a complete squad rather than dividing into western and hunter seat brackets as in past years. The defending national champion Auburn had a first-round bye and followed that up with a quarter-final win over Kansas State. Auburn lost to South Carolina in the semi-final round. The 2014 NCEA National Champion title eventually would go to the University of Georgia.

Auburn Eventing Club

One of the first activities for the new club was a clinic with Kyle Carter, a Canadian Olympic team member based out of Ocala, FL. The clinic was held at Flint Hill Farm near Opelika, AL. The two-day clinic featured individual flat work and group jumping lessons. Auburn’s Orange Team consisting of Kyndal Kruse, Lucia Menozi and Lydia Kennedy placed 7th and the Blue Team consisting of Sally Sundbeck, Leigh Higby and Michelle Florida placed 4th.

The club participated in their first Collegiate Eventing Team Challenge during the Chattahoochee Hills April Horse Trials near Newnan, GA. A total of nine teams participated representing Auburn University, Clemson University, University of Alabama, University of Georgia, and University of North Georgia.

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The ground breaking ceremony for the new covered arena was held March 8, 2014, prior to the last home meet of the year of the Auburn University equestrian team. The covered arena will be located at the Department of Animal Sciences’ Horse Center on Wire Road, home to Auburn’s NCAA women’s equestrian team and the equine science program in the Department of Animal Sciences.

The building project was made possible by a $1.5 million gift from an anonymous donor. It is a long-awaited step in the multi-phase redevelopment of the Horse Center. Once completed, the covered arena will provide a place for the equestrian team to practice and compete and a space for teaching and outreach activities for the equine science program in all weather conditions.

The equestrian team is a joint effort between the College of Agriculture and the Athletics Department at Auburn University. Since it’s elevation to varsity sport status, the team has won three overall national championships in 2006, 2011, and 2013. In addition to daily practices the equestrian team holds 4-6 home meets at the Horse Center each year and was the host of the inaugural Southeastern Conference Championships in 2013.

The equine science program focuses on teaching and outreach efforts related to Auburn University’s Land Grant mission. Currently there are 55 students majoring in Animal Sciences – Equine Science Option. About 50 students each semester utilize the Horse Center for equine science classes. Another 300 students per year use the facility for laboratories and other teaching activities in the Department of Animal Sciences. Student organizations within the department also make use of the facility for their meetings and activities. Outreach activities held at the Horse Center include the Alabama State FFA horse judging contest; the Horse Ownership Resources, Skills, & Education for Youth (HORSE U) program; and tours for various school and community groups.

Construction on the project began following the conclusion of the equestrian team spring practices, and is expected to be completed by the start of Fall semester.
The foaling project is a major portion of the senior capstone Horse Production class. Since 2008 we have relied on horse owners in the area to loan us pregnant mares during spring semester to accomplish this important class activity. While we have occasionally bred and foaled out one of our own mares, all of that is about to change. Beginning this spring we have re-started our own breeding program!

Based on our assessment of the market in this region of the country, our program will focus on producing warmbloods for the hunter, jumper, and eventing disciplines. The emphasis will be on temperament and trainability appealing to the amateur-owner. These goals complement the various teaching and outreach activities we do in the equine program.

Two mares have been retired from the equestrian team’s riding program and reassigned to the undergraduate teaching program in the last year. Perouska, a Dutch Warmblood and former Grand Prix-level jumper, and Charleen, a hunter-type Hanoverian, have quickly become favorites of the students. We also have two proven broodmares on lease from a local breeder to help get our program off the ground.

Our students will be involved in every step of the production process. Mares will be foaled out in the Horse Production class. Early pregnancy will be monitored by the Equine Reproductive Techniques students. Weanlings will be used by the Introduction to Horse Management and Training class. Students will prepare yearlings for evaluation at breed registry inspections or Future Event Horse competitions, with horses available for purchase in fall of their yearling year.

We thank Iron Spring Farm, Majestic Gaits, and Rock House Farm for donating breedings to us this season. Resulting foals will be eligible for registration as Dutch Warmbloods. Why Dutch? The registry regularly holds their keurings (studbook inspections) within reasonable driving distance of Auburn, and attending these keurings has been a regular part of our Equine Marketing class activities each fall. We appreciate the support and advice we have received from this group of breeders as we get started in this new direction.

The Equine Program Newsletter is published quarterly by the Department of Animal Sciences at Auburn University. Your comments and alumni updates are welcomed. Please forward future requests and additions to the mailing list to Candace Vann at cpv0002@auburn.edu

http://www.ag.auburn.edu/ansc/