

# Equine Program News



DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL SCIENCES

*Equine Science*

## Greetings from the Loveliest Village on the Plains!

We are proud to present this first edition of the AU Equine Program News. Based out of the Department of Animal Sciences, the equine program includes several departments and units within Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Our goal with this newsletter is to keep our friends and supporters up to date with news from our undergraduate program, upcoming outreach and Extension activities, and related organizations and groups.

The undergraduate program has grown by leaps and bounds over the years. What started with a few horse classes in the 1980's is now a bachelor's degree program known as Animal Sciences – Equine Science Option. From a handful of students when the program launched in 2007 we now have over 65 students in the equine curriculum, representing almost 15% of the undergraduate enrollment in Animal Sciences.

Our focus has been on preparing students for careers in the horse industry with an emphasis on understanding the science behind the management decisions. The program also prepares students for application to veterinary, professional, or graduate school depending on their career goals.

Outside of the classroom our faculty and staff continue to be involved with Extension and outreach programming both here in Auburn and across Alabama. Work includes 4-H and FFA horse programs at a state level, Extension publications and invited talks, and other educational programming for youth and adults.

I hope you find this newsletter to be enjoyable and informative. -BW



## Program Leaders

**Dr. Betsy Wagner**  
Associate Professor  
334.844.7503  
elw0001@auburn.edu

**Dr. Cindy McCall**  
Professor  
334.844.1556  
mccalca@auburn.edu

**Angela Chandler**  
Horse Center Manager  
334.844.1570  
asc0007@auburn.edu

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

# Facility News



The Auburn University Horse Center is home to the equine teaching, research, extension and performance activities in the Department of Animal Sciences. Several undergraduate courses in the equine and general animal sciences program utilize the facility for class. The Auburn University NCAA women's equestrian team calls the Horse Center home for daily practices and competitions. The center also hosts the annual FFA Horse Judging clinic and contest as well as other outreach programs.

With all of these demands there have been some changes to the facilities. The stallion runs and isolation paddocks were renovated in 2008 which allowed for the addition of a third arena. New pasture run-in sheds have been installed in the last year and the fences are currently being replaced.

Bigger changes are just around the corner to accommodate the growth of the various programs. A campaign is underway to build a new \$7 million facility at the Horse Center. Plans include a new barn with more room for the day-to-day horse care and additional space for teaching the equine science laboratories. An indoor arena complex will include classroom space, locker and training room areas for the equestrian team, and a stabling area with tack rooms, grooming bays, and indoor wash racks.

Presently we are working with an architect to finalize the building plans and begin the construction bidding process. We are half-way to the \$3 million mark needed to break ground on the project. Our goal is to begin construction on the first phase this spring with a completion date in summer of 2014.

Dr. Wayne Greene ([wgreene@auburn.edu](mailto:wgreene@auburn.edu)), Head of the Department of Animal Sciences, is the point of contact for the project. Grace Smith ([smitmgr@auburn.edu](mailto:smitmgr@auburn.edu)), Development Officer for the College of Agriculture, has been assigned to lead the fundraising efforts.

We look forward to sharing updates with you as the project progresses.



# Spotlight on – program alum

## Diane (Weatherly) Calhoun



Diane Calhoun was among the first graduates with a degree in Animal Sciences – Equine Science Option, graduating in December, 2007. Diane is the owner/manager of Southern Cross Ranch, a family-owned horse facility in Headland, AL ([www.thesoutherncrossranch.com](http://www.thesoutherncrossranch.com)). Diane married Gregory Calhoun in December 2009, and the couple welcomed their first child, Philip, on January 9, 2013.

### **What services and activities does Southern Cross Ranch offer?**

Southern Cross Ranch is primarily a boarding facility, but we also have equine events. We currently have 31 horses boarding. Started in just the past few months is our 4-H program, which is managed by my barn manager, Joy Brigham, and current trainer, Carolyn Smith. We also host a variety of events in our indoor arena. The latest events have been Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association mounted shoots, Southeast Stock Horse Association shows, and open shows. In the past we have had bull riding, team roping, barrel racing, and trail competitions. We also rent out the arenas for clinics, and other events.

### **Why did you choose to major in Animal Sciences - Equine Science Option when you were at Auburn University?**

When I started attending Auburn in fall 2004 my major was Animal Sciences/Pre-Vet. The next year I realized that vet school was no longer an aspiration of mine. I was involved with a local hunter/jumper barn and my family, back at home, had purchased several brood mares with babies by their side. Also Southern Cross Ranch was in the very beginning construction phase. I realized I had rediscovered my passion for horses and riding. Fortunately for me, Auburn had just started their equine program offering classes that appealed to me and were beneficial for my future in the equine industry. So naturally, I changed my major to Animal Sciences - Equine Science Option.

### **How has your degree helped your career and business?**

Having an Equine Science degree from Auburn has given me access to many useful resources. I always refer back to my notes and textbooks as references. Also, everything I learned in the equine classes has been useful to me at some point in my career. It gives horse owners reassurance that I have the knowledge to properly take care of their horses. In my opinion, there is no amount of college classes that can really prepare you for the real world. However, without the education I got from those classes I would not be where I am today.

### **What advice would you give to today's college students who are considering working for or running a business like your own after graduation?**

My advice for students considering a career in the equine industry would be to put the horses first. Your first and most important job is to take care of the horses. The clients are important as well, but if you keep the horses happy, you will (most of the time) keep their owners happy. Have policies and rules and stick to them from the very beginning, that way there will be no confusion later. Keep your facilities clean. Feed good quality feed and hay. Remember that money is not everything, but it does pay the bills. Treat everyone equally and with respect and you will get respect in return. Don't be afraid to apologize, mistakes happen. And always keep a smile on your face.

# Organization Updates



## Horseman's Club

The AU Horseman's Club first meeting of the year featured Horse Center manager Angela Chandler as the guest speaker. Other speakers scheduled for this semester include an equine ambulatory veterinarian, the director of a local horse rescue, and a farrier.

The spring Saddle Up for St. Jude Trail Ride will be on Sunday, April 14 at Tuskegee National Forest. The ride is open to the public. A \$15 minimum donation is required to participate, with money going to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The club is also selling t-shirts for \$15, with profits going to St. Jude. Contact St. Jude ride chair Sarah Hunter, [seh0035@auburn.edu](mailto:seh0035@auburn.edu), for more information.

## Equestrian Team

Auburn's NCAA women's equestrian team finished the fall semester with a 3-1 record and a No. 2 ranking in the National Collegiate Equestrian Association (NCEA) Coaches' Poll. Equestrian became a Southeastern Conference sport in 2012 when Texas A&M became the fourth school in the conference to field an equestrian team, joining Auburn, South Carolina and Georgia.

The next home meet will be Thursday, February 14 against South Carolina beginning at 1 p.m. Central Time. Meets are held at the Auburn University Horse Center on Wire Road, across from the AU Vet School. Admission is free. Auburn University also will play host to the inaugural Southeastern Conference equestrian championship March 29-30, 2013.

For more information on the equestrian team go to <http://www.auburntigers.com/sports/w-equest/aub-w-equest-body.html>.



# Organization Updates continued...



## ***Stock Horse Club***

New to Auburn this year is the Stock Horse Club. The American Stock Horse Association (ASHA) and the regional affiliate, the Alabama Stock Horse Association, emphasize the development of a well-broke all-around type horse that can do well in cow work, reining, pleasure, and ranch trail. Stock horse competitions have been gaining popularity around the state and several Auburn students have been competing in the youth and non-pro divisions. It was only natural that a group of students would get together and form their own club here on campus.

The club is open to all students regardless of their riding background. Local trainers Stephen Freeman and Carla Shoemaker have been volunteering their time and facilities for holding weekly practices. Students that do not have their own horses have been able to arrange leases through the trainers. Several club members will be attending their first competition this spring in Montgomery during the Southeastern Livestock Exposition Rodeo.

Collegiate competitions are held as a separate division within an ASHA-sanctioned show. Auburn University students will initially compete as individuals since there are not enough schools in the region for team competition at this time. Middle Tennessee State University is the only other school in the region to field a stock horse team.

Equine science junior Katie Hill has been leading the effort to get the club and competitive group organized. Contact Katie, [ekh0013@auburn.edu](mailto:ekh0013@auburn.edu), for more information.



# Auburn equine scientist recognized for outstanding teaching



*From Madeline McCurry-Schmidt, ASAS Communications*

Dr. Betsy Wagner, an associate professor at Auburn University, has received the 2013 Outstanding Young Animal Scientist in Education Award from the Southern Section of the American Society of Animal Science. Wagner's research and teaching has helped Auburn University build a strong equine science program.

Wagner grew up on a farm and was active in 4-H and FFA programs early on. Wagner thought a career in equine nutrition would be a good way to work with horses. As an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Wagner took a year off to be an FFA state officer. During that year, Wagner gave talks for students of all ages.

"There was one FFA advisor that said 'you're really good at this, you should go into teaching,'" Wagner said.

As a graduate student at Texas A&M University, Wagner combined her passion for horses and teaching. Wagner knew of the university's reputation for helping students land in teaching positions, so she became an Aggie and earned a PhD for her research into trace mineral nutrition.

Wagner still studies equine nutrition, but her main focus is her students at Auburn University. As an associate professor in the Department of Animal Sciences, she teaches equine science classes and organizes student events. Wagner also reaches out to the community. Wagner writes a regular column for *Alabama Cattleman* magazine and serves as an advisor for the Alabama Farmers Federation.

"When you work for a land grant institution, you do a little bit of everything," Wagner said.

Last year, Wagner invited about 100 kids and their parents to visit Auburn for the first-ever "Horse U." Wagner's students showed the visitors how to wrap horse legs, check vital signs and estimate body weight. It was a day of hands-on education for the whole community.

Wagner teaches different equine science classes each semester. She said she could not pick a favorite course to teach. Each semester comes with new lessons and a new group of students.

"I seem to fall in love with those classes all over again," Wagner said.

The ASAS Southern Section Outstanding Young Animal Scientist in Education Award is awarded yearly to recognize contributions by educators early in their careers. This year's award was sponsored by Alltech.



# What kind of job can I find after graduation?

This is a common question of our equine students. We know there are a wide variety of careers available in the horse industry. Most positions are with small businesses and are advertised through word of mouth, which means employers rarely participate in college career fairs, recruiting events and other mainstream education opportunities.

To help answer this question we are creating a data base of job shadowing and internship opportunities through a network of our AU family and friends. Do you know of an equine professional or business that would be willing to host an Auburn student for one of our career exploration programs?

For job shadowing we are looking for individuals and businesses that are open to hosting a student for 1-2 days. The point of this activity is to give students a chance to learn more about a career within the equine industry, to observe the day-to-day doings of the industry professional, and see the skills and knowledge-base it takes to gain an entry-level position in that career field.

An internship would run 3-6 months depending on the host's and student's schedule and needs. The experience would provide a learning environment that allows the student to gain familiarity with decision-making, practical skills, interpersonal communications, and organizational management in that career path. Internships can be paid or unpaid depending on the situation, but at the very least we ask that hosts either provide housing or assist in finding housing and provide a housing allowance. For facilities close to campus we could also consider part-time experiences which allow the student to be concurrently enrolled in a few courses.

To begin the process of helping an Auburn student learn more about career opportunities in the horse industry contact Dr. Betsy Wagner at [elw0001@auburn.edu](mailto:elw0001@auburn.edu) or 334-844-7503.