

**"Equine Career Opportunities/Insider Tips on How to Snag the Equine Career of Your Dreams" \*Written by: Catherine Girard \***

So, you think you'd like to work in the equine field? Great! With over 250

equine careers and jobs to choose from, education, training and

certification can help you get ahead of the competition, and stay there.

Here are some career opportunities and tips to help you get to the top!

**Equine Massage/Acupressure Therapy**

*"Massage is one of the fresh careers," says Denise Bean-Raymond, owner of Exclusive Equestrian Services in Massachusetts. A graduate of the Animal Acupressure Massage Training Center in Nevada City, California and DOGMA, INC. in Denver, Colorado, Denise is certified in both Equine Sports Massage Therapy and Equine Acupressure Therapy. She has also worked in barn management, riding instruction, training and alternative therapy. "It is tremendously rewarding to be able to help horses on a regular basis. I am fortunate to have a skill that comforts the animal and offers it assistance. It is also wonderful to hear from the owners about the results of your work. If you are passionate about horses, becoming a therapist allows you to spend the day with all kinds of horses, different owners and in various facilities, working and earning an income. It also allows you to travel a lot. You're not always in the same routine and area each week. "To be successful you will need to market yourself extremely well and consistently. You will find that you are always talking to people who have never heard of alternative therapies, or heard of them applied to animals. You have to educate people constantly. You also have to be responsible for your finances scheduling, cancellations, and overall business affairs. "If you want to take a one-week course to find out if you'd like to do this, then that is fine. But if you want to do this for a living, then take a thorough course and get yourself certified. That is the best way to do this."*

**Riding Instructor**

There are many paths students take to become good riding instructors. Studying under good instructors in private settings, participating in collegiate riding programs, and earning degrees in Equine Science or Equestrian Science are great ways to embark on a teaching career. *"I have been instructing for 15 years and am a nationally certified and licensed instructor," continues Denise. "You are passing on your information, your perspective, teaching and knowledge to someone else, and teaching a skill that you are passionate about to someone else who is passionate about it. You help people achieve their own personal accomplishments. It is marvelous to see smiles on their faces and know you have helped them achieve their goals! You get to meet a lot of people from all walks of life. "You have to be creative in your teaching, a problem solver, and keep educating yourself in new teaching techniques. It's a lot of work, takes a lot of scheduling, and you have to know how many lessons per week you have to teach for what you need for an income again, marketing, scheduling and being responsible for your finances."* The Equestrian Science (BS) degree, pioneered in 1972 at William Woods University, Fulton, Missouri, can help an aspiring instructor tie it all together. The program combines a heavy concentration in riding, showing

and applied instructional methods, with a wide range of equine science and theoretical courses. Riding in at least three of the four riding disciplines dressage, hunt, saddle seat and western and six semesters of applied teaching methods are required, along with caring for the 150 horses in the department. Showing is strongly encouraged, as it gives multiple opportunities for independent evaluations and lays the foundation for future employment opportunities. Beyond graduation, certification is a great credential to add to your resume. *"There are a lot of instructors out there,"* continues Denise, *"so you need to set yourself apart in any way that you can. Continue to educate yourself and get certification. You need documentation that certifies your teaching."* Some associations with instructor certification programs are the American Riding Instructors Association, British Horse Society, Certified Horsemanship Association, United States Dressage Federation and North American Riding for the Handicapped Association.

### **Farrier**

Many people like the idea of shoeing horses for a living. The independence of self-employment, physical exercise and hours spent outdoors with horses makes this an attractive career choice *"It takes a certain person to be a farrier,"* says Ralph Casey, former president and director of the Brotherhood of Working Farriers, and owner of Casey & Son Horseshoeing School in LaFayette, Georgia. *"If you look at where the money is, farriers in all states make twice the money a veterinarian makes, without the upfront investment. However, when they are first starting out, it is very difficult, and for that reason few really make it. It's a great trade, but it's a demanding trade. You have to be good at business, hard working and take on challenges. Some people who come here are well educated and some are not. It makes no difference. Once you leave here, you are faced with being by yourself out there and having to learn about business. That's what kills it. If you can stay in it for one year, you can stay in it as a profession."* Here at Casey we have added in business courses to help the new farriers out. Our six-week program is equal to the eight-week program elsewhere, and our 12-week course equals the 16-week diploma. We only take a small amount of students, and have the only farrier research center to study farriery in the country." In most schools, certification is awarded after an apprenticeship is completed beyond graduation. At Casey, apprentice certification by the Brotherhood of Working Farriers is awarded upon graduation.

### **Veterinary Medicine/Acupuncture/Chiropractics**

Veterinarians work in private practices, government positions, racetracks, and feed, supplement and pharmaceutical companies. With advanced studies many become specialists in hospitals and research facilities. Others study Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine, becoming certified to practice animal acupuncture, herbal medicine, and animal chiropractics. The financial investment is steep, but the return in salaries and employment opportunities is good. Successful veterinarians keep up with medical and technical advances, tolerate long hours, deal with emotional clients, and get along with horses and their owners. All bachelor degrees are welcome in veterinary degree programs. However, all applicants are required to have completed particular courses in biological sciences, mathematics, physics, English and 90 hours of baccalaureate course work from an accredited college or university. Many veterinary colleges will allow applicants who have completed the requirements by the end of their junior year to enroll directly into the veterinary program. Veterinary technicians may choose from two-and four-year programs, as well as distance learning. Those graduating from four-year programs often start off at a higher salary rate than those graduating from other programs, but salary rates vary widely

within the industry. Checking the salary rates where you will be residing before investing in a program is recommended.

### **Equine Science**

An Equine Science (BS) degree provides a good foundation for many careers. Equine dentists, university extension animal and horse specialists, nutritionists, feed managers and sales representatives, pharmaceutical sales representatives, genetic and reproduction specialists, equine journalists, high school and college agriculture teachers, team coaches, bloodstock agents, buyers and appraisers can all benefit from the coursework required to obtain this degree. Some post-graduate programs, such as equine dentistry and equine extension specialist require the degree for admission into their programs. Courses including equine anatomy, nutrition, genetics, reproduction, farrier science and riding disciplines are combined with science, mathematics, business and law courses, providing a solid foundation for further study or employment.

### **Event Management/Facility Management/Breed Associations**

Horse shows, equine expositions, horse parks, breed and racing associations all require knowledgeable, responsible people to keep business running smoothly. The Equine Administration (BS) degree program at William Woods University addresses this need. Established in 1992, this program is designed for students intending to pursue career opportunities in equine industries and business organizations functioning as professional leaders, facility managers and equine entrepreneurs. *"The equine administration degree incorporates many of our university departments into the curriculum, especially the business department,"* explains Professor Gary Mullen, Chair of the Equestrian department. *"Classes in legal studies, communications, web development, equine event management, equine business practices, entrepreneurship, etcetera, add to the depth of preparedness for jobs in the equine business. Many qualities determine if someone will be successful beyond a Degree...Self-discipline, ethics, character, industry (hard work), time management, quality written and oral communication skills, attention to detail, organizational skills, etcetera. Earning a degree represents a lot of these good qualities, and it is an indicator of a person's credibility. The degree can be the deciding factor on getting a job when many candidates are closely qualified. The big plus with the degree is that with the business emphasis, it can be used in other fields outside of the horse industry. It is always great to be highly marketable if a career change is ever needed. A person needs to strive for the above-mentioned qualities if he/she expects to succeed. A degree is just one part of the success package."*

### **Farm/Racing/Breeding/Business Management**

Morrisville State College is an industry standard for preparing students for successful careers in farm/ranch management, breeding and reproductive management, Standardbred and Thoroughbred racing, racing management, horse training and equine business management. *"The equine industry is basically a service industry to provide services to people. You have to provide services to clients who don't have the expertise you do. You need to provide them with a professional service,"* says Dr. Christopher Nyberg, Chair of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources. *"Our four-year degree is basically a Bachelor of Technology degree. A higher percentage of courses are in technical courses, and a larger number of the courses in the discipline are equine specific. It is very hands-on. The program, which is run academically by SUNY, is funded by the college's own foundation, meaning the students have to care for and feed the animals they work with each semester."*

We don't gloss over the work involved. The freshmen care for the Thoroughbred lesson horses, the more advanced students care for the horses used in their disciplines the training students care for the training horses, the students in the breeding program care for the horses in the reproduction program, etc. "Additionally, we have an auction each fall for the Standardbred foals coming from the reproduction program, and we receive a percentage of the income. We commercially stand stallions, we train outside horses and we have a competitive show hitch. We earn a percentage off of that. The horses and equine facilities are owned by the foundation so we have a living lab here on running a business. In addition to the technical courses, we have a lot of business courses built into the system if they want more of them. "The hours are long and there is a lot of physical labor involved. In the last semester an internship is required. Some people come here and find they don't like the amount of physical work involved. Many switch over into other things. We have a lot of students come in not academically enthused, become interested and motivated, and go on to veterinarian school and get their degree. A degree opens doors to opportunities in the horse industry that most people don't even think of."

Education gained in outside careers can be converted into equine careers as well, with wonderful results. Either way, with the right preparation, you can snag the equine career of your dreams!