

Stock Horse Weekend Brings Out Best in Horses and Owners



by Jade Currid

Horsemen and women arrived in droves for a weekend full of equine events on Garret Coliseum grounds in Montgomery January 21-23. Alabama Stock Horse Association (ASHA) hosted a Horsemanship Clinic on Friday, Alabama Horse Council (AHC) hosted its annual Alabama Horse Fair (AHF) on Saturday and Sunday, and ASHA hosted a show on Sunday.

The weekend of equine events opened with ASHA's Horsemanship Clinic conducted by Craig Cameron, an RFD-TV personality and well-respected horseman.

Horse people gleaned a wealth of information on how to better communicate with their horses at Cameron's clinic.

"Horsemanship, when done correctly, is an art form and, like any art form, time must be taken to learn patience," Cameron said. "Consistency and a desire to get better are important aspects, and something to keep working on."

Amanda Johnson, owner of AJ Performance Horses, a training facility for the Western performance horse in Newnan, GA, rode in Craig Cameron's clinic.

Johnson commended ASHA on hosting the clinic and said it was important the horse community was able to find someone of Cameron's stature to support the event.

"The clinic was a good opportunity to ride with a good horseman," Johnson said.

Craig Cameron also headlined the AHF, the state's largest equine trade show, with his demonstrations.



Craig Cameron offers a Horsemanship Clinic to the crowd. Cameron conducted an ASHA clinic on Friday, January 21, and headlined the Alabama Horse Fair on January 22-23.



Jason Wilds of "Wilds Horsemanship" is working with his Friesian at the Alabama Horse Fair. Wilds offered clinics on both days of the Fair.

On Saturday and Sunday, AHF offered a variety of clinicians, demonstrations, acts and vendors offering the latest equine products.

Jason Wilds, owner of "Wilds Horsemanship" based outside of Winfield offered clinics on both days.

Wilds said an imperative aspect of horsemanship is communicating with the horse in a patient and humane manner.

"It is important to become a partner with the horse instead of being a dictator," Wilds said.

Horsemanship Safety Association Certified Master Clinician Donna Maye West, who has over 40 years of experience working with horse and rider, also offered a clinic on Sunday.

AHF showcased a variety of acts and demonstrations.

Rider Kiesner, two-time World Champion Trick Roper, wowed the crowds with his rope and bullwhip tricks, and gun spinning skills.

The Coliseum was packed when Bama Bandits, a mounted shooting club headquartered in McCalla, took the spotlight in the arena with their demonstrations.

Mounted shooting is the fastest-growing equine sport in the country. Many family teams are members of Bama Bandits.

The 2010 Miss Southeastern Livestock Exposition (SLE) Rodeo Queen, Wesleigh Whittle, is a member of the Bama Bandits.



Miss 2010 Southeastern Live-stock Exposition Rodeo Queen, Wesleigh Whittle, represents the SLE and Alabama Cattlemen's Association at the Alabama Horse Fair.

Other acts included the River Run



Rider Kiesner, two-time World Champion Trick Roper, wowed the crowds with his skills at the Alabama Horse Fair.

Renegades, the River Run Rampage, River Run Drill Team Dressage, Walking Horse demonstrations and? a Friesen driving demonstration.

Arabian, At Liberty awarded scholarships, the SLE Queens were presented and stick horse races were available for children attending the event.

Dr. Betsy Wagner; Dr. Lew Strickland; Dr. Jenny Springfield and Mark Johnson; CJF; Dr. Marcia Thibeault; Johnny Nix and Donna Maye West gave lectures at AHF.

Auburn University promoted animal and equine sciences at the event.

Dr. Cindy McCall, a professor in Auburn University's Department of Animal Sciences and a coordinator of the Auburn University Horse Unit, is the president of AHC, the organization hosting AHF.

"People must know how to care for their horse well and economically," McCall said. "We all have to work together to decide what is best for our horses and industry."

Wagner, an Equine Nutrition professor at Auburn, has conducted research projects sponsored by AHC.

Wagner promoted Auburn's Department of Animal Sciences/Equine Science option at the event.

"There is a career available for anyone who desires to work with horses or livestock," Wagner said. "We need people who understand science to help producers take the best care of their animals."

Auburn University Horseman's Club helped promote the Animal Sciences Department and volunteered at the event.

"It's important for college students to see a variety of equine disciplines and activities, and network," said Hayley Ann Dickinson, president of the Horseman's Club.

Kate Marley, an Auburn student majoring in Animal Sciences, is a nationally-ranked mounted shooter who participated in the Bama Bandits mounted shooting demonstration.

Casey Eckert, a student studying in Auburn's College of Veterinary Medicine, attended the Horse Fair, and enjoyed Cameron's clinics and all of the vendors.

"It was good for Auburn to be there and show we have an Equine Science major and let everyone know what we are about," Eckert said. "There is always something there for everyone, either something new to learn, a new tip about training, many items to purchase, horse breeds to learn about or places to ride your horse."

On Sunday, Eckert competed in all four events at the ASHA show.



A Friesen driving demonstration was showcased at the Alabama Horse Fair.

"The Stock Horse Association is great, and allows anyone with any breed of horse to participate," Eckert added. "They have different divisions for each level of horse and rider, and then four events including trail, pleasure, reining and cow horse to compete in."

Eckert won the trail division class on her McCurdy Plantation Horse, Shadow.

"She has a lot of cow sense and lots of personality," Casey said. "We had a great time at the event with a lot of great horsemen and women from all over the Southeast. Today wasn't our best day in the arena, but we were able to pull out a win in the trail competition. It was a fantastic time."



The River Run Renegades, an equestrian drill team of River Run Farms, performed at the Alabama Horse Fair.

Ed Wilson, Wilson Performance Horses, placed second on his horse, Monkey, in the Open Reining division.

"It's fun to compete, and strive to bring out the best in yourself and your horse," Wilson said.

Kristan Hill, of Daniel Hill Performance Horses, said the show was one of the largest ASHA has held.

"Stock Horse shows are growing in Alabama. The competition is getting better, and it is fantastic," Hill said.

After a weekend of learning how to better care and communicate with their horses, connecting with other horse folks and showcasing their talents, attendees rode off into the sunset.

Jade Currid is an intern with *AFC Cooperative Farming News*.

[< Prev](#)

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