



Horse Council Courier

The Horsemen's Council of Illinois newsletter dedicated to promoting a healthy horse industry statewide through information and education.

Horsemen's Council Of Illinois awards two \$1,000 college scholarships

The 13th annual Ruby Holmquist Memorial Scholarship went to Lauren Wells of Bonfield, IL. Ashley Maul of Tolono, IL, won the 4th annual Dean Scoggins Memorial Scholarship. Both awards are to further the students' equine education.

Lauren Wells, daughter of Roger Wells and Kimberly Anderson, will graduate this



Lauren Wells with HCI President Frank Bowman

spring from Herscher High School and plans to enter Black Hawk College-East this fall. She intends to study Ag/Education and transfer to a four-year university to study equine science, with an emphasis on nutrition and reproduction.

Growing up with horses, Wells rose to top ranks in 4-H, FFA and the American Quarter Horse Youth Association. She currently works with Nikki Smith of Smith Horse Company in Kankakee.

"Working in FFA's National Horse Evaluation Career Development Event, I realized that by coaching, I was positively influencing lives and improving their (participants) judging abilities, just as my FFA advisor and judging coach did for me," Wells said. "My ultimate goal is to become an equine science professor."

Ashley Maul, daughter of William and Dr. Edith Fraley-Neal, grew up in Jacksonville, IL and graduated from Winchester High School, Winchester, IL and Illinois College

in Jacksonville, IL. She currently is a third-year veterinary student at the University of Illinois School of Veterinary Medicine where she is president of the American



(L-R) Past President Paul Briney, Ashley Maul, Connie Scoggins and Frank Bowman


Association of Equine Practitioners Student Club, as well as president of the Veterinary Business Management Student Club. She decided veterinary medicine was a good fit for her while growing up on the family's horse farm (Thoroughbreds, Trakeners, Irish Sport Horses, Dutch Warmbloods) south of Jacksonville.

Ashley and husband Errol currently have four horses on their Tolono farm. Ashley competed through the upper levels in Eventing with her horses prior to attending veterinary school. She plans to reside in the Midwest after graduation, looking forward to enjoying horses in her work every day.

The Holmquist scholarship is established and administered by HCI in memory of Ruby Holmquist, dedicated horsewoman, loyal HCI director and inspiration to all who knew her. It is restricted to an Illinois resident for assisting in the pursuit of or advancement in a horse-related career.

The Scoggins scholarship was initiated in 2007 by HCI to honor the memory of the late Dr. R. Dean Scoggins, DVM, a dedicated horseman in addition to being a

skilled veterinary practitioner and faculty member at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine. He spent a great deal of time promoting the strength and integrity of the horse industry through his educational efforts, teaching both on-campus and off-campus as an Illinois State Specialist with UI Extension. In addition, he promoted these ideals as a proactive HCI board member. This scholarship aims to help promote Dr. Scoggins' ideals through recognizing an outstanding Illinois resident veterinary student who has a demonstrated background and interest in the health and welfare of horses and in Illinois.

Applications for this year's scholarships are being accepted until December 1. Guidelines and application forms are available by writing to the Horsemen's Council of Illinois or on its web site www.HorsemensCouncil.org. HCI may be contacted at 3085 Stevenson Drive, Springfield, IL 62703. Phone (217) 585-1600. Fax (217) 585-1601 

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Equestrian Helmet Laws: Are You In or Out?

By Yvonne C. Ocrant, JD, HCI Director

The dangerous nature of equestrian activities and the need for increased safety measures has become an increasingly hot topic over the past several years with accidents including rotational flips at Rolex, crashes at the Derby, and, most recently, Courtney King-Dye's fall while schooling dressage in Wellington, Florida. Reviewing these and other equestrian related accidents proves that helmets can, and do, minimize injuries. As a result, state and local equestrian helmet legislation has been proposed to require helmets in equestrian events, some defining the type of helmet, the equestrian event, and/or the age of the participant. While the increased protection helmets provide is arguably undisputable, the need for legislation mandating helmets in equine activities is a continuing debate. This article introduces the development helmet laws, outlines the current state of legislation and debate, and provides considerations for the entire equine industry on this hotly contested issue.

An Introduction to Helmets in Equine Activities

Equestrian helmet legislation began with the horseracing industry. In 1956, jockey LeRoy Nelson died from head injuries sustained at the Caliente Racetrack. The California Horse Racing Board made it mandatory for all riders to wear a helmet while exercising or racing horses on the track. The United States Pony Club (USPC) has always required helmets and has been credited with developing the first protective hat for non-racing equine activities. USPC even sent their helmets out for testing and requested the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM), which had developed headgear standards for other sports, to develop standards for equestrian helmets. In 1990, the ASTM published the specification, which is now recognized as the safety standard for helmets used in the majority of equestrian sports. The Safety Equipment Institute (SEI) is a separate non-profit organization, which certifies protective equipment, including the shock-absorbing capacity of helmets, the effectiveness of the harness

strap to hold the helmet in place during a fall, and the helmet's ability to handle extreme temperatures. In 1983, the USPC adopted the ASTM/SEI standard for helmets. The USPC safety study showed a 26% decrease in the number of reported head injuries and a 62% decrease in the number of facial injuries when comparing figures from before the 1983 standard and those from 1983 to 1990.

The Opposition to Helmets and Helmet Laws

Challenges to wearing helmets include the appearance and tradition of those on the market. Manufacturer's attempts to develop helmets which resemble Western cowboy hats have failed due to their large appearance and size. Opponents challenge the fit of helmets complaining they are uncomfortable, hot, and bulky. They say that helmets only protect a small part of the body and therefore do not offer "complete" protection and that the most risk is only in competition and therefore they are not needed in training. Some also say that helmets are only needed for beginners. Opposition to mandatory helmet legislation includes conflict between the law and competition rules, resistance to the government controlling whether an individual wears a helmet or not stating it should be left to a personal decision (like the motorcycle helmet debate), and the enforceability of helmet laws in remote public areas such as state parks or if the law is expanded to private lands.

Support for Wearing Helmets is there, but Support for Legislation is not


Helmet manufacturers, government legislatures, medical associations, and most equine associations support helmet safety. The manufacturers publish safety statistics and advocate that all riders wear a helmet meeting the well-recognized standards and have worked hard to improve the fit and design to meet customer demands for safety and style. Government legislatures cite injury statistics to encourage helmet wearing as in the public interest to reduce medical costs on the general public. Medical associations support wearing helmets in all disciplines of horseback riding. Equine associations actively educate members about helmet safety and encourage members' use through campaigns and rules allowing helmets without competition

penalties.

However, equine participants are not so unanimously supportive of mandatory helmet legislation. Most individuals recognize the safety risks of being on or around horses, however, many of these same people feel stronger about the freedom of choice when it comes to wearing a helmet.

While the Debate Continues, Consider These Precautions

If you are an individual who rides your own horse in Illinois and there are no local laws, barn rules, or boarding or liability contracts that require you to wear a helmet, you have the right to choose to ride with or without one. If you are a professional or facility providing horses, provide helmets to these riders and only provide ASTM/SEI certified helmets or helmets that otherwise meet the required standards for the intended activity. Chemicals, time, extreme temperatures, and involvement in a fall can affect the integrity of the helmet and therefore it is recommended that helmets be replaced every five years or after any type of fall. Finally, this author recommends professionals and facilities utilize separate Hard Hat Agreement, in addition to your liability release, to be signed by any adult who voluntarily elects to engage in an equine activity without a helmet. This Agreement should state that there are increased risks of riding without protective head gear and the participant agrees to release the professional and/or facility for any injuries, including death, that may result from not wearing a helmet and/or from any injuries, including death, that may have been prevented if proper head gear had been worn.

This article is intended for informational and educational purposes only. It is provided with the understanding that the author is not rendering legal advice to The Courier readers. If you have questions or concerns regarding this article's subject matter, you may contact the author, a licensed equine law attorney, at youcrant@hinshawlaw.com. 

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