

Healthy Horses and a Healthier Chesapeake Bay Seminar
Thursday, January 28, 2010
9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
MARE Center, Middleburg, VA

The Inside Scoop...seminar topics and speakers

By Kate Norris

Prince William Soil & Water Conservation District

We offer seminars for horse owners on a fairly regular basis. If you've never attended one or even if you're familiar with some of the concepts we promote, let me share with you why I feel this seminar is going to be worth planning to attend.

The first topic "**Mud & Runoff Management Techniques,**" will be covered by guest speaker Alayne Blickle the creator and director of the Washington-state based Horses for Clean Water program. She promotes environmentally sensitive horsekeeping practices and educates horse owners throughout North America. Alayne publishes her own monthly on-line newsletter *The Green Horse* and contributes articles for *Equus*, *Horse & Rider*, and *John Lyons' The Perfect Horse*. I found an article Alayne wrote for *Equus* shortly after I started working for PWSWCD ten years ago and invited her to speak at a seminar we offered in 2000. We've invited her back every few years ever since that first wonderful program. On-the-road Alayne shares her concepts using great photos, stories of her own experiences and those of the many clients she's helped. Her presentations are informative, entertaining, and might just provide you with an "ah-ha" moment, whether you're new to the ideas or a mud-managing champ.

After Alayne covers her topic during the morning sessions and we enjoy a nice lunch (we're hoping to provide hot soups and crusty bread...mmm!) I'm going to give a brief update on what's going on at Oakwood our **Chesapeake Bay-Friendly model horse farm**. The farm is looking more and more like an "after" all the time but I've got the photos to remind you of its' muddy, mucky "before" status. It's going to be Extreme Makeover, Horse Farm Edition.

The next topic is one that is particularly near and dear to me "**Whys and ways to slowly feed hay.**" Part of my personal horse farm management includes keeping my large pony and my two boarders in our sacrifice area paddock anytime our 4 acres of pasture need a break. That means that they are left with a few flakes of hay from 5 a.m. until whenever I get home from work 12++ hours later. A couple of flakes of hay a piece keep these easy-keepers looking great but are they bored? Might they have ulcers? I know wild horses have thrived for centuries on large quantities of poor quality (high fiber) forage. If I let them forage through my pastures all day, every day I'll be left with a muddy mess and weeds. If I leave them with free choice hay they'll balloon to the size of elephants and suffer the ailments associated with obesity. RESTRICTED FREE FEEDING is a way to slowly feed hay over a longer period of time using feeders or nets with small openings. Dr. Shea Porr, Superintendent of the MARE Center and equine nutritionist will share information to help you decide if this option might benefit your horses and how to get started.

The grand finale "**Making Conservation Work**" is an opportunity for a few local horse owners from Fairfax, Fauquier, Loudoun, and Prince William to share their experiences with implementing conservation practices on their farm/horse property-- more real-world applications of conservation practices. What works and what doesn't? Ask them what specific products, equipment, and farm service providers they like to use. We're selecting speakers from a variety of types and sizes of relatable horse farms.

Great raffle prizes, opportunities to reconnect with horsey friends, and a lovely winter visit to scenic Middleburg add the final touches to our seminar. Something for everyone I hope! Make plans to attend and bring a friend. Registration forms and additional information are available on our newly re-published website www.pswcd.org or you can contact Nicole Ethier in our office at (703) 594-3621.

Giddy-up and get registered before January 21st!