

Bringing the Industry Together

Center for Equine Business Studies moving ahead.

HAVE YOU EVER WISHED as a retailer that you knew how many Western or English saddles were sold in a year? Have you ever wondered how many riders in the United States ride English and how many ride Western? Do you wonder what activities your customers engage in with their horses?

If you've had those or other questions about the equine industry that have gone unanswered, help may be on its way.

The Center for Equine Business Studies (CEBS) at Texas A&M has as its goal pulling together all of the disparate factions of the industry and providing a platform on which the industry can move forward.

A meeting was held in February in College Station, Texas, to discuss the CEBS. Representatives from the A&M faculty were joined by representatives of equine manufacturers, consumer publishing, veterinary interests and breed associations.

The value of the program is a proactive approach to the future.

"We can sit back and watch what

will happen to the horse industry, or we can be prepared to assist the industry by providing accurate information to ensure that we have input into legislation and other decisions that will affect the horse industry," said Pete Gibbs, PhD., who oversees the equine science division at Texas A&M. "But we also need to understand the customer better, even though almost all of us in the industry are customers ourselves."

The concept of the CEBS has been approved by the Texas A&M University System's board of regents. It is envisioned to become a valuable and constantly available resource for all aspects of the equine industry as it works to provide economic and market information.

"Something like this is badly needed," said Dr. Ernie Davis, director of the Center. "This (Center) would really bring the whole industry together and tell an accurate story of how much the equine industry contributes each year."

Two goals emerged from the February meeting. First, the group agreed to try to establish a partnership between the

Center and the horse industry."

"There's no standard marketing mechanism for the horse industry," said Davis. "We could get greater market exposure for the horse industry by providing some trend data that various associations and retailers could use in promotion."

The group also agreed that the Center should develop a membership structure, which would be all-inclusive and provide a funding mechanism for the Center.

A second meeting will be held in May in Fort Worth, Texas, to move the idea further along to fruition.

Organizers were quick to point out that the Center is not intended to replace or mimic the efforts of the now defunct Horse Industry Alliance.

"The concept of the Horse Industry Alliance to market the horse through a unified voice was a noble one; however, this Center is designed to be a consistent resource of data and information so companies and individuals can more effectively market themselves and, in turn, benefit the entire horse industry," Davis said. ☐

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