

MASSACHUSETTS HORSE

Writer Guidelines

Massachusetts Horse is a bimonthly magazine for horse owners, professionals, enthusiasts, and businesses covering all breeds and disciplines. Each issue features farms, horse people, and horses in the Bay State. A comprehensive events calendar is prepared exclusively for Massachusetts. Right Lead and Horse Sense features give you advice and wisdom from experts in Massachusetts on a variety of equestrian topics. Lend a Hoof spotlights nonprofit organizations — therapeutic riding, horse rescue, humane societies, and more — that need your help. And you'll find a range of horse products and horse-related services in your area.

A few tips that will help you meet our expectations when writing features for *Massachusetts Horse*.

Our most common type of feature story is the profile. The subject is a rider, trainer, farm, nonprofit facility, or other person involved in the horse community, and the writer relates the subject's accomplishments, personality, and motivation in one coherent article. It's imperative to include other people's thoughts on the subject (parents, siblings, friends, students, clients, teachers). This enlivens the article.

Plan to spend several hours with the subject. Ask probing questions. Ask the subject to be specific in her comments — it makes a more interesting story.

A coherent article requires accurate notes and considerable thought. The writer must know the discipline covered and take time to digest what was said during the interview or during any previous interactions with the subject.

A smartphone recording isn't mandatory, but it provides a more complete record. Few subjects "clam up," and more "experienced" ones actually relax. Always take notes to back up the recording.

Arrange your notes according to subject, then make an outline. Don't just type the interview as it happened. Fill in gaps with further research/phone calls. If you write a great outline, an article writes itself — all you have to do is plug in the verbs and the transitions. That's it!

If asked for a rewrite, it almost always means calling the subject or other sources back for more information. Sometimes the information may be in your original notes but not included in the article submitted.

Photographs are a must. We want to be able to see what the subject looks like. We prefer a candid and an action shot. Writers should make arrangements — either by personally taking photos and/or borrowing photos from the subject. Occasionally, we have photos on file or can make other arrangements, but do not assume we can or will get photos.

All submissions are to be in Microsoft Word.

Writers are paid 7.5¢ per published word.

Massachusetts Horse follows the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

Keep yourself out of articles. It's implicit that you were present and that you asked questions. An article must focus on the person, the farm, the event, etc. that you are writing about.

We use first names when quoting someone, it's more personal.

All quotes must be attributed.

Only one space after each period, not two.

If town is in Massachusetts, no need to say so. If the town mentioned is in another state, include the state spelled out. Examples: The horse came from Easthampton. My trainer lives in Bethany, Connecticut.

Do not abbreviate words.

Do not put www. in front of website addresses.

Write out the full name of an organization and if it's going to be mentioned again, put the acronym in parenthesis following the first use and then use the acronym in later use. Example: United States Equestrian Federation (USEF).

To infuse color and flavor — to make the article come alive — try to incorporate all the senses, and, equally important, movement.

Sight. Set the scene. What's happening? Are people coming and going? Is a lesson in progress? Are there trophies? If you're talking with a kid, what does his/her room look like?

Quoted Material

Avoid "She begins . . ." and "he continues . . ." chances are that's not the order in which things were said during the interview.

When people are talking, render in the present tense whenever possible for immediacy, and use the word says — no other verb.

You can incorporate color with adverbs:

"I love it," she says enthusiastically (not she enthuses)

"I love it," she says, smiling (not she smiles)

"There are many reasons," she says thoughtfully.

"There are many reasons," she says. She pauses, then reels off a list. "Let's see," she says, "they're experienced, they're safe . . ."

"I love it," she says, then takes a deep breath.

Spell out numbers in quotes.

In informal writing, contractions are engaging and reader-friendly. In addition, people usually employ them when they talk. Use contractions in quoted material.

Miscellaneous

Seriously overused:

offers opportunity popular, growing in popularity provides
really (when someone you're quoting uses it seven times, delete six of them)

Don't use: truly (we believe you!)

Absolute terms:

unique: something is either unique or it's not, so don't modify it with very, quite, so, e.g.)

perfect: something is either perfect or it's not, so don't modify it

Redundant:

The words in parentheses make the information redundant.

\$45 million (dollars)

create (new)

launch (new)

includes . . . (and others)

Dr. Jones . . . (MD)

Leads

Begin with a compelling quote.

Set the scene with sounds, sights, motions.

Use a historical context.

Frequently Misspelled Words

14.3 hands but "fourteen-point-three hands" in quoted material

20-century (adj)

20th century (n)

13-year-old (adj, noun)

13 years old (age)

1990s

'90s (decade; note the direction of the apostrophe)

afterward

amid, among

canceling

Colonial (architecture)

colonial (period)

committing but commitment

daylong

east coast (generic)

East Coast (of the United States)

email

every day (occurring each day)

everyday (mundane; adj)

Facebook

fall (lowercase seasons)

fund-raising (n, adj)

fund-raise (v)

fund-raiser (n: person or event)

gait (movement)

gray

hayride
home in on (focus on)
hone (sharpen)
horseperson, horseman, horsewoman

internet, the
it's (it is)
its (possessive)

jodhpurs (hint: middle consonants are alphabetical)

led (past tense of to lead)
longe, longeing, long-lining (n, v)

monthlong

north (direction)
North (region)
Northeast (region)
North–South (from/to)

off (never “off of”)

percent (spell out)
proved (v) (I proved my point)
proven (adj) (a proven winner)

résumé

sleigh ride

than (comparison)
then (next)
totaling
toward
trail-ride (v)
trail ride (n)
traveling

web, the
website
West Coast (California, Oregon, Washington)
western hemisphere

yearlong
YouTube

Horse and Pony Breeds

All breeds are capitalized.
(Quarter Horse, Arabian, Miniature Horse, Shetland Pony, Morgan, Appaloosa, Thoroughbred (the breed, not pedigree) . . .

Paint is a breed and capitalized. Other colors are not capitalized. palomino, buckskin, roan, pinto . . .

Finally

Read your feature aloud before you submit it.

Is it repetitious?

Is it well organized?

You're not in it.

All proper names are spelled correctly.

You haven't been effusive.