



EQUINE MEDIA AWARDS

2026 AWARDS WINNERS

for material published in 2025

EDITORIAL CONTENT

01-Breaking-News/Investigative Single Article (4 Entries)

FIRST

US Equestrian

It Was Like Turning Off A Light Switch

DEBBIE ELLIOT, AUTHOR

A gripping story with enough drama to make it so. At the same time, educational and informative, covering a wide range of related subjects. Good job of explaining medical jargon.

02-News Reporting Related Feature Single Article (print or online) (7 Entries)

FIRST

BloodHorse

Foreign Worker Policy Changes Figure to Impact Racing

JOE PEREZ, MANAGING EDITOR/DAILY EDITOR

This piece tackles one of the most important socio-economic/political issues of our time. The thoroughly-reported look at the issue's impact on racing wastes few words. The writer tidily explains how the administration's policies affect not just the racing business but the humans involved in it.

SECOND

Nina Fedrizzi

The Tangled Webs They Weave: ADHD, Amphetamines & Anti-Doping

NINA FEDRIZZI, WRITER

Another solid look at a complex issue facing the industry in the larger context of all sport. The piece is nuanced yet clear and the writing is tight. The chosen quotes move the story forward without favoring either side in the controversy.

03-Instructional Single Article (print or online) (12 Entries)

FIRST

USHJA In Stride

Course Walking: Taking It Step by Step

TRICIA BOOKER, EDITOR

This article is so insightful. It is brimming with expert advice that is offered up in plain language and is easy to understand. The package has wonderful visuals throughout and great examples of courses. It's a very complete, informative article.

SECOND

Practical Horseman

The Course Walk: Developing a Flexible Plan That Helps Your Horse

JOCELYN PIERCE, AUTHOR

What a great opening line! How can a reader not dive right in! This is such a complete package. It has great visuals, a nice sidebar and is easy to follow and understand. And to top it all off it has so much insight!

THIRD

Horse Illustrated

Better Leading

KAYLI HANLEY, WRITER

This is an engaging, well-written story on a topic that has broad interest. It is really well-organized and easy to follow with great visuals, nice quotes and simple, clear instructions. Great job!

04-Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Horse Care Single Article (print or online) (4 Entries)

FIRST

Appaloosa Journal

Finding Their Calm

KRISTIN PITZER, WRITER
HEIDI NYLAND MELOCCO, EDITOR

This story did the finest job of combining interest and information in the class. Very nice lede (thanks to Speaker). Good transitions. Logical organization and use of behavioral experts as sources, although I think you could have integrated some of your quotes better. Useful to readers.

05-Self-Supported Publication Equine Media Horse Care Single Article (print or online) (14 Entries)

FIRST

The Horse

Equine Metabolic Syndrome

LUCILE VIGOUROUX, AUTHOR
HAYLIE PFEFFER, DIGITAL MANAGING EDITOR
STEPHANIE CHURCH, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

This is an exceptionally complete and well written article from top to bottom. Everything you could want in an informative article, this one delivers. From listing the terminology of some of the more complex terms, to covering every aspect of this condition described throughout the article. The way the author was able to break down this condition in different sections rather than summarizing too many of the details was phenomenal. When writing informative articles such as this one, communicating the complex topics effectively is one of the main, if not the biggest, challenge. One of the ways this article does this that is very well appreciated, was the use of diagrams. Being able to pair up the diagrams used with the descriptive and robust informative text, gives the full scope of the article and topic of EMS. This was overall an amazing read with all the right qualities of an exceptional article.

SECOND

EQUUS Magazine

First Aid for Wounds

LUCILE VIGOUROUX, AUTHOR
CHRISTINE BARAKAT, AUTHOR

This article did a great job at describing some very essential ways to treat wounds. From every aspect, this article had a description as well as a step by step solution on how to solve these problems. Something that was absolutely clever was the inclusion of the QR code towards the end of the article. Because first aid is something a lot of people overlook until they need it, having something on demand like this QR code with videos about first aid is a great addition. Along with the QR code, the use of photos and simple breakdowns of the descriptions on how to treat wounds was phenomenal. This is a great article that should be in every barn for horse owners to read.

THIRD

Horse & Rider Magazine

Colic Surgery: Words from the Wise

BARB CRABBE, DVM, AUTHOR
NICHOLE CHIRICO, EDITOR

This article did a fantastic job at providing some success stories from a few horse owner's decisions to go forth with colic surgery, which can be a tough decision for anyone. It was a very effective choice to provide some stories instead of just facts. Doing this can help readers who may be in the same situations as the stories told, have a sense of optimism about this topic that can be scary for horse owners to face. Leading with some quick facts about this kind of procedure before the three stories was a great choice structurally as it gave the stories shared in the article some context, as well as add to the optimistic ending of these three success stories. This was overall a very well written, creative way to give readers some peace of mind about such a complex topic.

06-Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Service to the Consumer Single Article (print or online) (9 Entries)

FIRST

USDF Connection

Leasing a Dressage Horse

COLLEEN SCOTT, AUTHOR

Who knew legal matters could be so fun? The article has a lot of great anecdotes, wonderful quotes and pithy language. It is very thorough and well laid out. The writing is expressive and fun making a topic that could be dry into one that is lively and engaging.

SECOND

BloodHorse

State Incentives Help Sustain Thoroughbred Breeding

JAMES GAZZALE, CORRESPONDENT

This article has top-notch reporting with a number of sources from across the country. It nicely organizes all of those details providing succinct breakdowns from a number of states. And to top it all off it has tons of great, insightful quotes that make this a wonderful read.

07 - Self-Supported Publication Equine Media Service to the Consumer Single Article (print or online) (9 Entries)

FIRST

EQUUS Magazine

Hidden Impact

MERETE HAAHR, AUTHOR
LAUREL SCOTT, AUTHOR

Vivid lede lets the reader know that a serious issue is about to be tackled. Well organized story, good use of quotes from experts, especially Stanfill describing the difference between easily observable effects from ones that linger. Good flow despite the wealth of information being dispensed. Lots of voices. Good sidebar. You definitely drive home the importance of more studies.

SECOND

Driving Digest

Competitive Distance Driving: To Finish Is To Win

AMY BROADIE, AUTHOR
LINDA YUTZY, DESIGNER

Such a picturesque lede makes me want to grab the reins. With your key audience being drivers, this is an appealing and useful topic. Explanation of how competitive distance driving is judged. Lots of voices, well crafted tales of the joys and occasional hazards of life on the trails. Energy and interest sustained throughout. And a brief how to get started in a new discipline. Nice work.

08 - Service to the Horse Industry Single Article (print or online) (19 Entries)

FIRST

Canadian Horse Journal

Social License to Operate in Equestrian Sport

LI ROBBINS, AUTHOR

Well-written and clear. Uses several "voices." Lead does a good job drawing reader into the story. As a side note, layout and photo choices enhance the impact (although they did not factor into deciding this contest.) The sources cite mostly high-level (ie Olympic) competitions although for a good reason, since they are the most visible. Some mention of the effect of SLC on local, low-level shows might have punched it up even more. Story flirts with becoming an opinion piece but doesn't cross the line.

SECOND

US Equestrian Federation

Under Pressure: How Young Equestrians Balance Performance and Mental Health

ISABELLE WHITESIDE, AUTHOR

Well-written and clear. Lead draws reader into the story. Uses a variety of voices from a variety of disciplines. Needs sidebar(s) with specific examples to raise its impact.

THIRD

Anna Sochocky

Working to Keep Racehorses Safe

ANNA SOCHOCKY, AUTHOR

Provides very useful information on a fairly dense topic and thus provides a service to the industry. Needs anecdotes, such as a couple sidebars, with specific examples to liven it up and raise impact.

HONORABLE MENTION

American Farriers Journal

2025 Farrier Business Practices Survey

MACLAREN KRUEGER, ASSISTANT EDITOR
BREE GREENAWALT, DIRECTOR OF DATA, INSIGHTS AND CIRCULATION

Useful information. Straightforward writing. Sidebars help highlight important considerations. The topic is very info-dense, so with all this data it becomes dry and hard to follow. It's unlikely anyone could consume this in one sitting. Some sidebars could use a line clarifying what they are trying to compare/present. This topic is so complex, I could see an entire issue devoted to it, broken up into more article topics, so the material is easier to consume and to focus upon.

HONORABLE MENTION

Stallion Showcase, Tri-State Livestock News

The Resurgence of the Ranch Horse Breeder

KAYCEE CORTNER, SPECIAL SECTIONS EDITOR

Fairly interesting information that provides a service to Quarter Horse Readers. Effective pacing from general information and history to specific examples. The examples mostly come from one farm, which thus blunts the article's overall impact.

09 - Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Personality Profile Single Article (print or online) (19 Entries)

FIRST

Chrome

The Unbreakable Tyler Peasley

JESSICA HEIN, AUTHOR

The descriptive, pulse-pounding introduction of this entry sets the standard for what's to come. With each paragraph, the reader is left in anticipation due to the writer's adept, thoughtful, eloquent craft. This entry takes the reader on a roller coaster of emotion with each new layer of the story. Ultimately, this phenomenon is what elevates the submission to highest accolades: sheer, perceptible engagement. Of particular note, the closing direct quote reverberates an unrivaled, lasting impact. This is a masterfully crafted story of true grit. Incredible work!

SECOND

InStride Magazine

A Passion to Excel

NANCY JAFFER, WRITER
ARND BRONKHORST, PHOTOGRAPHER
RACHEL MILEWSKI, PHOTOGRAPHER

This submission showcases the heaviest-hitting introduction among its contemporaries. There is so much unique insight into the subject within the first paragraph of the feature. Then, the jovial writing style in tandem with targeted, innate details about the subject throughout leaves the reader yearning for more content. This story provides a glimpse into the life and mind of the subject in a manner that is easily receptive. One word that appropriately describes this entry: meticulous. Incredible submission!

THIRD

BloodHorse

Family, Faith, Positivity, and Horses

KAREN JOHNSON, AUTHOR

This entry resonates an impact that echoes louder than just the equine industry. The writer adeptly conveys the unique story of Carmouche with an enjoyable, engaging tone. The articulation this writer employs in regards to building the subject's ethos is remarkable. By incorporating direct quotations from those closest to Carmouche, the reader is left with an intimate glimpse of how others see the accomplished jockey. Impressive writing of an incredible story. Well done!

HONORABLE MENTION

The American Quarter Horse Journal

Eight Decades in the Saddle

JIM JENNINGS, EDITOR EMERITUS

The introduction of this feature paints the image of a Western scene akin to those described by renowned authors Larry McMurtry and Louis L'Amour. The author's tone and writing style, established early on, effectively mirrors the expected personality of Wes O'Neil. The writer promptly asserts the reader's attention from the start, and with each paragraph further builds the anticipation for the next layer of the story. Excellent work!

HONORABLE MENTION

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Home Run

VINNIE PERRONE, AUTHOR

First and foremost- this entry is such an incredible testament to defying the unfair odds. The introduction of this story is distinctive and genuinely hooks the reader. Meticulously written, the writer's style is evident throughout and effectively sets a paced, ponderous tone within the feature. This profile is one the reader will remember long after the initial view. Simply put, this is a wonderful profile!

10 - Self-Supported Publication Equine Media Personality Profile Single Article (print or online) (13 Entries)

FIRST

Keeneland Magazine

To the Brink and Back

LENNY SHULMAN, AUTHOR

For any horse fan, this article is a memory lane walk that adds new nuance and depth to familiar stories. It uses the occasion of a memoir being published to revisit an old story and make it fresh and relevant today. The volume of historical and biographical material in this subject would bog down a less skilled writer. The Hancock history is deftly handled without becoming cumbersome, bringing the reader solidly into Arthur III's place in it. The subheads do good work in moving the story along. Well-chosen quotes and in-the-moment stories keep the biographical narrative rich. External sources and voices are well placed and add valuable perspective. One of the best used quotes is Paul Sullivan's, "He didn't put any English on it." One voice notably missing is his wife, Staci's.

SECOND

Sidelines Magazine

Kevin Kohmann: Living the Dream

BRITNEY GROVER, AUTHOR

The story has a great lead to hook the reader and maintains interest with engaging storytelling throughout. It's a great example of showing biographical details and personality through intentionally selected stories and facts, rather than simply telling them. It handled complex, potentially cumbersome details within the narrative, communicating the German horse trainer educational system within the biographical timeline, sticking to the facts while maintaining the storytelling.

THIRD

Sidelines Magazine

Timmy Dutta: Playing Polo and Giving Horses Wings

LAURA SCALETTI, AUTHOR

This article had an excellent opener to hook the reader and set the stage for this piece. The introduction does a great job of presenting a complete overview of its subject and a feel for the story - setting up the reader for what to expect and enticing them to continue. The subheads do a good job of creating narrative markers for the reader and keeping the biography on track. Overall, it did good work in showing this young trainer's life rather than telling about it. One of the strongest sections is the Netflix documentary. It showed a good balance of writing to push along the facts and storyline, and using short, punchy quotations to add the characters and emotions within it. This story maintained its writing quality throughout. It exhibited good control of the various elements of this trainer's life, keeping the reader organized and engaged with what could have been a confusing story to tell. Very nice work.

11 - Freelance Writer Personality Profile Single Article (print or online) (14 Entries)

FIRST

Sarah Susa

Move Over, Barn Rats, 'Barn Grandma' is Setting the Pace

SARAH SUSA, AUTHOR

I almost always feel the emotion and connection in first-person columns submitted in the divisions I judge, but it's really challenging for those columns, often not written by journalistic professionals, to stack up, especially in a big division. Your article is clearly the exception and one of the best-written first-person stories I've evaluated as a judge for AHP. Your writing is strong, crisp and conversational—all factors that help keep your readers engaged and your story moving. I also loved that you included quotes from the teens who work with Phyllis along with her personal quotes; they added depth to her character in the story.

SECOND

Sarah Susa

Riding Friends United by the Gift of Living Organ Donation

SARAH SUSA, AUTHOR

Just a wonderful piece that I am sure connects with many readers; everyone is touched by cancer in some way, and this feel-good story brought tears to my eyes. What better testament can there be in a personality profile division? Your writing is strong, crisp, clear, and accurate with great flow. I appreciate your simple, concise sentence and paragraph structure, and your conversational tone. I also really appreciate the way you integrate quotes throughout the story and let us hear firsthand from the folks involved.

THIRD

Sarah Susa

Emily Hamel and Corvett Have Completed Every Northern Hemisphere

SARAH SUSA, AUTHOR

You have a wonderfully crisp and concise writing style that makes your story a joy to read. I love the way you incorporate so many nice quotes into your story and bring them out as stand-alone paragraphs to draw your reader into and through it. You have an easy-to-read, conversational, and personable tone to your writing that helps draw your reader in with simple, concise paragraph and sentence structure.

12 - Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Feature Single Article (print or online) (14 Entries)

FIRST

The American Quarter Horse Journal

Freedom Riding

HOLLY CLANAHAN, AUTHOR

Few things are more impressive to a writing judge than an author who can take a mundane topic -- saddle making -- and turn it into something special. The lede seems so low key, but it packs an emotional wallop. Even though the saddlery creator had passed, he is brought back to life by the voices of his family. Randy Bird is still changing lives, as the kicker says. Excellent work.

SECOND

Paint Horse Journal

Broken Bones, Bright Spirit

ALLISON REHNBORG, AUTHOR
JESSICA HEIN, EDITOR

Dramatic story with lots of detail to illustrate what Lueth endured to not only return to the saddle but to show again. Vivid descriptions of her injuries and rehab help the reader understand how traumatic this was. The theme of help coming from many corners is carried throughout. Clear and concise writing conveys the severity of the accident without being overdramatic. Good use of additional voices.

THIRD

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Dark Knight

JOE CLANCY, AUTHOR

Beautiful scene-setting lede, so descriptive that the reader can practically feel the chill. Even though the writer can't get quotes from the horse's mouth, Snap Decision's personality comes through in observations and comments from his caretakers. Thorough reporting and the story flows logically with all the factual race info integrated smoothly.

13 - Self-Supported Publication Equine Feature Single Article (print or online) (15 Entries)

FIRST

Horse Illustrated

Hawaiian Cowboy Tradition

MICAELA MYERS, WRITER

This article goes far in presenting the little known but captivating story of Hawaiian cowboys, or paniolo, taking the reader on a deeply informative trip into their world, from the arrival of the first cattle to the huge but threatened culture of today. The contributions of Hispanic vaqueros to an eager and able island contingent are well described. Incredibly interesting details about island terrain and resourceful adaptation of a cattle drive to a sea drive make for a great tale. You can almost see the cattle floating out to the boats and being hoisted aboard. Amazing. The narrative never lets up. Saddle and rope craft derived from the canoe-building tradition, colorful fabrics and protective skirts for the riders -- there's so much related in a small space! Good details presented on the native wood and rawhide used for saddle trees, including a nod to the aweawe and stamps, plus the legacy of music and storytelling. Slack key power!

SECOND

Driving Digest

Harnessing Compassion: Caring for Cuba's Carriage Horses

LYDIA GRAY, AUTHOR
LINDA YUTZY, DESIGNER

Article describes a real need for assistance for Cuban horses and their drivers and the response from U.S. volunteers. The author combines the aid aspect with sprightly written travel information that captivates and illustrates the mission and its acceptance. The atmosphere of Havana comes through (balky key locks, vintage cars, filtering and freezing water for the next day; must try the ropa vieja) and the desperation is evident. The information on how to get there and what to bring (plastic bags!) is extremely helpful. The article homes in on horse health and how the volunteers are finding and improvising remedies, including innovative way to improve nutrition while educating the locals on better ways to operate.

THIRD

Horse Illustrated

Equestrian Nomads

MERRI MELDE, WRITER

Strong introduction on an interesting topic backed up with good quotes from the women out there on their own. The story threads an interesting tale with a good range of examples and outcomes. Good quotes help enliven the article and go far in illustrating the premise of the piece. French press coffee, Satrlink internet, "freedom overload." Especially interesting was the anecdote about the daughter who found a calling out on the road. Way to go, Mom! There's a lot packed in this story. It's good to touch on horse health, a possible problem when wandering the land, and the ways to feed and water them.

14 - Freelance Writer Feature Single Article (print or online) (6 Entries)

FIRST

L.A. Berry

Thorpedo Anna: This Grizzly Roars

L.A. BERRY, AUTHOR

An excellent, informative, entertaining article--extremely well done! For starters, you have a great lede. The use of "just" in "just Hip 20" at the sale teases readers with what's to come, plus the price differential of the two horses is eye-grabbing and sets the stage for what's hinted about. Your text is tight, conversational, and full of interesting detail dished up with panache. Particularly interesting is the bit about how the mare got her registered name and nickname. A delightful transition occurs where, after discussing the Olympic swimmer 'Thorpedo' Thorpe, your next graf starts: "But for her trainer, Kenny McPeck, Thorpedo Anna has never been one to tread water." Pow--perfect. Also, the "Fuggedaboutit" ending ties nicely back to the "roaring Grizzly" in the hed: "I've got to eat my Wheaties before I get on Thorpedo Anna in the morning." This piece is a good example of how you don't need 3,000 words to paint a full, fascinating, vivid portrait of a subject.

SECOND

Susan Friedland

Drill Team Dream

SUSAN FRIEDLAND, AUTHOR

This is a wonderful piece! The text is excellent—you had a terrific story to tell and you did it justice. I read it as an enthusiast and not just as a judge and was delighted to learn so much I didn't know about these ponies. Your article isn't over-long, yet you pack in a lot of fascinating detail. I especially loved the bucking anecdote and the note that the ponies had their own preferences in music. Your quotes are entertaining and don't simply restate the information in the text. Your photo captions are concise and yet amusing/entertaining as well as informational (e.g. the ponies "come in fun colors like pinto and palomino.") Snappy captions are always a nice bonus to a good piece, and yours shine. Overall, extremely well done! It was devilishly hard for me to choose between your piece and the ultimate first-place winner; both articles are outstanding, but the latter had an even more polished professionalism in writing style.

15 - Personal Column Single Article (print or online) (18 Entries)

FIRST

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Walk of Ages

JOE CLANCY, AUTHOR

This was an absolutely fantastic piece of descriptive writing. This is an article that should be in the racetracks archives for racing fans to read whenever they are missing the old racetrack this article describes. This type of descriptive and flowing writing was done tastefully and will be memorable for any reader. Being able to take readers on a journey while incorporating so many big moments is why this is the first place article in this class. From the first word to the last, this piece was an encapsulating experience that any horse lover will appreciate.

SECOND

Tri-State Livestock News

Horse Roundup Editorial

KAYCEE CORTNER, SPECIAL SECTIONS EDITOR

This was a surprisingly emotional article with all the right pieces. In the equine industry, there are so many lives that are touched and this article encapsulated just a few examples on how horses can change lives. I loved the ending statement because of how powerful it felt and encapsulated the entire article in a few words. The way the author was able to use not just one, but multiple examples about how horses impact lives was one of the reasons this article placed so high in a class full of phenomenal pieces.

THIRD

BloodHorse

Iron Man

BYRON KING, AUTHOR

This was a very well structured article with some well timed quotes throughout that added to the impact of the piece. One thing that always adds to an article of this sort are secondary quotes which the author used effectively, especially with the closing quote. These quotes did a good job of giving the reader some insight on what his peers thought of him and gave a well rounded view of Ouzts. Overall, this was a well rounded and very compelling article that used the tools of descriptive writing, and storytelling through quotes to its advantage.

HONORABLE MENTION

Chrome

The First Fall

JESSICA HEIN, AUTHOR

This was a very heartwarming story that most equestrian riders have experienced a time or two. The pace of the article was very easy to follow and is an article that will keep readers interested throughout the article. The opening was absolutely fantastic and was a great introduction to the kind of descriptive writing readers will encounter while enjoying this article.

HONORABLE MENTION

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Old Pimlico's Place

JOE CLANCY, AUTHOR

The descriptive writing in the opening is absolutely amazing. Being able to express the almost romantic essence of horse racing through putting the reader in the shoes of the patrons that watch and the jockeys that ride was incredible. This type of descriptive writing is what helped the competing articles place as high as they did. Another thing that stood out in this article was the flashbacks presented in the article. These moments gave the utmost validity to the place that was described throughout the article.

16 - Editorial Event Coverage Single Article (print or online) (15 Entries)

FIRST

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Big Fences; Big Moment

JOE CLANCY, AUTHOR

This deftly-written piece tells an engaging story. The reporter elicited meaty quotes that moved the story along at a readable pace and broke up the technical aspects of the event.

SECOND

Reined Cow Horse News

Mindset Makes a Winner

JENNIFER PAULSON, EDITOR

Highlighted a sport that isn't well covered in mainstream media. Got into the subject's motivations in a way that any competitor can relate to. Connected the event to an important social issue: women's sports.

THIRD

Jennifer Bryant

Where Will You Fit In?

JENNIFER BRYANT, WRITER

Good job of spotlighting a topic that moves the sport forward and focuses on young folks who have direction, passion and purpose.

17 - Editorial Series (print or online) (4 Entries)

FIRST

Nina Fedrizzi

Satire Series

NINA FEDRIZZI, WRITER

Obviously, this is the most fun series in the division; I enjoyed them immensely, and even sent links on some of them to friends and family. Quotes and details were fun and engaging. The writing style kept the stories moving and was fun and conversational. I know there may be criticism that this series has more freedom since it's satire and not necessarily tied to reality, but I really enjoyed the stories and found them entertaining. An argument could be made that these pieces are not as well researched as other stories in this division, but I would argue that they do provide adequate research to make them relevant

18 - Human-Animal Bond Article (print or online) (16 Entries)

FIRST

Paint Horse Journal

Massimo Bonini Takes on the Halter Million with His Italian Stallion

JESSICA HEIN, AUTHOR

When your writing is strong and fundamentally correct with good flow and structure, it's just going to rise into the top tier of the class. You set up the story well with a strong lead and preview, then move into the meat of the story. I really appreciate the way you incorporate your quotes early on and give them the emphasis they deserve by letting them stand alone as independent paragraphs, and they really add to the flow of your story.

SECOND

Jennifer Bryant

The Fountain of Youth

JENNIFER BRYANT, AUTHOR

Your writing experience and skill shine through in your story. It also stands out because it has a lighter, less emotional feel than most of the entries in the class. You have a wonderful, conversational voice throughout the story.

THIRD

Sarah Welk Baynum

The Heart-Horse Connection

SARAH WELK BAYNUM, CHROME MAGAZINE SENIOR EDITOR

This is a very well-written piece. I particularly like the personal heart-horse examples. They add personality and connection in the story; they are really what make this story shine. You do a great job incorporating many strong quotes into your story, which really adds to its personality and connection.

HONORABLE MENTION

Horse Illustrated

A Tevis Love Story

MERRI MELDE, WRITER/PHOTOGRAPHER

"Love" incorporates quotes early on and the way the quotes are handled throughout. "Love" the happy ending to the story. Could feel your joy/excitement and that of your subjects in your writing.

HONORABLE MENTION

Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred

Sadie's Magic

MAGGIE KIMMITT, AUTHOR

Overall, this is a very strong piece in this division, and you do a lot of wonderful things in your writing. You have a great writing style and voice. You have one of the strongest leads in this division, but I felt your story immediately got bogged down by incorporating too many details about Sadie's history into what felt like a checklist of stats immediately following the lead. When you have such a great hook in your lead, don't throw in those obstacles right after it for your reader to wade through.

19 - Public Awareness Journalism Article (print or online) (6 Entries)

FIRST

The Plaid Horse

We Are All Responsible for Making Our Sport More Accessible - The Future Is at Stake

RENNIE DYBALL, AUTHOR

My congratulations to the winner! This piece is practically a "poster child" for the category of public awareness journalism. Your lede pulls readers in with its lyrical evocation of a bygone time in the horse world when most barns welcomed curious guests. From there, using a succinct and professional writing style, you detail how things have changed in the modern world and what those changes will wreak if they can't be ameliorated. Then comes your call to action, followed by little "to do" lists packaged into sidebars so inviting—and with suggestions so doable—I found myself wondering if I couldn't take on some of them myself. The economy and uncluttered freshness of your writing makes it such a pleasure to read. Your piece is proof that less can definitely be more when the information is so well packaged and presented. My hat is off!

SECOND

Sidelines Magazine

Angel Heart Farm: Where Horses Wear Halos

ANNELISE KLEPPER, AUTHOR

This was such a pleasure to read. Your writing style is engaging and absorbing. Very professional. Your lede is terrific. It pinpoints what the reader will find most intriguing about this story—i.e. the incredible hardships the subject has faced. Then the second graf mentions what the bulk of the article will be about (her 501c3 farm) before transitioning beautifully to her background. Readers can't resist going along for this ride. The graf that begins on the lower left of page 22 with "For Tracy, Angel Heart Farm is not a job so much as a life-encompassing vocation" is a perfect example of the best use of quotes. You've directly quoted only material that's brief and impactful ("...so literally making no money.") Then you've nicely paraphrased the rest of her info so it's punchy and conversational, e.g. "There are no days off. There is no staff. She is up at 4:30 every morning to take care of the program's 12 horses." This technique is repeated in other places as well to excellent effect.

20 - Equestrian Lifestyle Journalism Article (print or online) (7 Entries)

FIRST

Susan Friedland

Pony Penning Week: The Biggest Wild West Show of the East

SUSAN FRIEDLAND, AUTHOR

This article has fascinating history, great imagery and language, and is organized well. Even though it jumps time in a few places, it flows really well. The "Rundown" section is fantastic to give readers tips for their own visit. Many people know the Chincoteague ponies due to "Misty of Chincoteague", and the author does a great job of acknowledging that, building off it, and providing a new perspective.

SECOND

Chrome

In Full Bloom

L.A. BERRY, AUTHOR

JESSICA HEIN, EDITOR

This article has a beautiful narrative. Nancy's personality comes through in a way the reader feels a personal connection. A great line that resonates with many horse folks: "[Saddles] that demonstrated the quiet pride of everyday riders doing everyday work". The "Art of the Cowgirl Hall of Fame" section is great to provide more info and accolades. The use of language with leather, rawhide and ranching references is done artfully. Additionally, the concluding sentence is a great way to wrap up the article.

21 - Freelance Writer Equine Journalism Article (print or online) (18 Entries)

FIRST

Julie June Stewart

Working with the Greats

JULIE JUNE STEWART, AUTHOR

This was an exceptional article that did a wonderful job of encapsulating not only the mind of an artist, but also the inspiration for Langton's art which are the horses we all know and love. The use of quotes not only from Langton himself, but from others who have seen his work and his processes. The way Langton's quotes weaved together the beauty of the horse with his inspiration was magnificent. The photos used were essential for this type of article and were placed in the right spots that won't distract from the story, but to add to the beauty of Langton's descriptions and art. Overall, this is a wonderful piece that gives an example of how horses can inspire us to do amazing things that can last generations.

SECOND

Susan Friedland

Empowering Youth with Horse Power

SUSAN FRIEDLAND, AUTHOR

This was a very well organized article from top to bottom. This piece was able to share and she light on so much good throughout the story without it feeling either rushed or drawn out. The use of photos is an important part of this article's structure as it gave faces to names and also showed directly the contents of the article which made the article very clear to read and understand. The use of secondary headers throughout the article helped keep the article very sectioned which for a piece as lengthy as this was, it can be very helpful for readers to stay interested.

THIRD

L.A. Berry

Along Comes Mary

L.A. BERRY, WRITER

I believe that this article encompassed all of Mary Hirsch's achievements very well. Being able to inspire readers while telling the story of someone as trailblazing as Mary Hirsch is something that I can truly appreciate about this article. A big positive of this article was the use of secondary headers. This resulted in the article feeling complete by the time a reader would get to the end. The use of quotes was impressive and was a great addition to such a compelling story.

HONORABLE MENTION

Sarah Susa

Raise Each Other Up

SARAH SUSA, AUTHOR

This was an article with a whole bunch of good qualities to it. One of which was the use of pictures throughout the story. Giving a face to a name that is the main topic of the article was a great addition, especially how the author included some straight forward captions. Along with these characteristics, the author did a great job of describing their thoughts in a way that was easy for readers to put themselves in the author's shoes which is a great quality to have with this style of writing.

HONORABLE MENTION

Kara Stewart

Meet the Brumby

KARA STEWART, AUTHOR

The closing paragraph of the article was a very strong characteristic as it tied in the potential hope for the topic, and some reasonings about why people should care. Including the historic aspect at the beginning of the article was very thought out, and did a great job on clearly establishing a backstory for the rest of the article. The subtext underneath the title was very strong and was a great opening that encapsulated the contents of the article effectively.

VIDEOGRAPHY

22 - Equine Media Video (12 Entries)

FIRST

US Equestrian Federation

The Open Road: Lillie Keenan

AVERY WALLACE, EDITOR

GENNA FOGELBERG, CREATOR

DEVYN TRETHERWEY, CREATOR

This is a very well done video. Professionally complete. Color, shots, and audio were done well. The areas to look at might be total time. Try to impact your audience with shorter times of video. Its so hard to keep them engaged sometimes. Could add some F/X sound bytes/effects to environment. Overall, amazing video.

SECOND

BloodHorse

3 Things You Might Not Know About: Ted Noffey

ANNA CURLIN, DIGITAL MEDIA COORDINATOR

Overall, the video is done professionally. The quality of the videos, audio & shot were great. Only a few items that might help the video is: 00:05 opening shot with text, although it looks flashy, it may be hard to read within the allotted time of opening. As news reporters have done for many decades using a hand held microphone, In this situation, I might would have both or at lease one person with a lapel mic. The reason is to create distraction when interviewing with a mic moving back and forth. You are on the right track and very little is need to make this video great. Its 98% ready.

THIRD

My Senior Horse

Feeding Horses That Can't Eat Long Fiber

ALEXANDRA BECKSTETT, AUTHOR

The visual of the this video is spot on! Love the shots. color. imagery and audio was great! The only thing I would have done is to add a light background music or environment audio. Great job!

45 - Business Equine-related Commercial Marketing Video (Short Form) (8 Entries)

FIRST

Straight Arrow Products, Inc.

Echoes of Tradition

ASHYN FLANAGAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR

MARIAH HAMMERSCHMIDT, EQUINE NETWORK PRODUCTIONS

SUPERVISING PRODUCER

Excellent videography and narration. The sound of a horse in the beginning adds a sweet touch to the video. The script tells the story, and the video brings it to life in a clear and beautiful way. The connection between the horses and the humans is felt throughout the spot. It is easy to understand the product, what it is for, and the history. I find no weakness in this. And no constructive suggestions. It is quality. You hit your target audience perfectly.

SECOND

Chewy

The Rhythm of Horse Life

CHEWY INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS AND BRAND CREATIVE TEAMS

The company name is known from the first shot. The closeup of the horse immediately draws the viewer in. Quick edits with easy graphic information make this an effective commercial, where you don't even have to hear it, to know what it's for. Demonstrating the uses of the products visually, as well as how they are delivered, was once again a very effective way to reach your audience. The phone graphic shows how easy it is to order and get fast shipping. Great spot.

46 - Business Equine-related Storytelling or Documentary Video (Long Form) (5 Entries)

FIRST

Platinum Performance

For the Love of the Horse

PLATINUM PERFORMANCE MARKETING TEAM

Wow, this video is put together correctly. Love the aerial shots, imagery is amazing. Maybe give a 1-2 second opening. Watch the voice audio and background audio. It was getting close to competing with each other. Awesome job!

SECOND

American Paint Horse Association

WCHA Hall of Fame Honors Jason Smith

DYLAN DAVIDSON, DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND CREATIVE DESIGN

Awesome video, Clean. great shots/ audio worked well. I would allow 1-2 second for the opening video shot. Other than that. I enjoyed it! Great Job!

47 - Nonprofit Equine-related Video (NONPROFIT MEMBERS ONLY) (7 Entries)

FIRST

The Foundation for the Horse

2025 AAEP Convention Video: Making CONNECTIONS That Transform the Lives of Horses

JAY BUCKNER, MARKETING MANAGER

Video capture and editing was excellent. Video had an ease that flowed through multiple different stories that was easy to track and follow. Voice over and graphics lead the viewer seamlessly through the story being told. Interviews further told the successes of The Foundation. Including an interview with a well known Olympic Gold Medalist. Educational and showing humanity of Owners, vets and their love of horses. This video does a great job of laying the ground work for what the Foundation does and showcasing how it has impacted riders and horses lives for the better.

SECOND

Colorado Horse Rescue

Forging a Future Where Hope Lives

MEGAN BERNER, VIDEOGRAPHER

Video capture was great and provided a sense of space and environment. Supporting video of horses playing further supported the story of horses in peril now safe and thriving. Educational and to the point although longer with emotional stories supporting the program's mission. Emotional Interviews showed how this program helps horses and those that need to forfeit their horses due to hardships.

MULTIMEDIA

23 - Equine-Related Podcast (15 Entries)

FIRST

American Quarter Horse Association

Katie Van Slyke: The Horses That Broke the Internet

MICHELLE BONDS, PRODUCER
MATT BOWEN, VIDEOGRAPHER
DOUG MCELREATH, VIDEOGRAPHER
BOBBI LORAN, HOST
BECKY NEWELL, HOST

This episode opens with a polished and professional intro that clearly communicates what the show is about, who the hosts are, and why the audience should subscribe. The host quickly introduces the guest, highlighting impressive stats that establish credibility and create immediate interest. The episode moves efficiently into the interview, which helps maintain momentum and respects the listener's time. The host brings strong energy and enthusiasm, contributing to an engaging and dynamic conversation. She listens attentively and builds on the guest's responses with her own insights, creating a natural flow rather than a rigid interview format. The episode concludes well, with a clear thank you to the guest and a strong call to action, supported by an additional audio segment that reinforces where to learn more and encourages continued engagement with the show.

SECOND

BloodHorse

BH at the Breeders' Cup: Analyzing Saturday's Races

SEAN COLLINS, CO-HOST, EDITOR
LOUIE RABAUT, CO-HOST

This episode delivers a strong and engaging listening experience, starting with a peppy and concise intro that sets an upbeat tone right away. The banter between the two hosts feels natural and enjoyable, contributing to a high-energy dynamic that carries throughout the episode. Audio quality is clear and consistent, making it easy to follow both the hosts and guest interviews without distraction. The hosts come across as knowledgeable and confident, which adds credibility and trust to the content. The transitions between guest interviews and host conversations are smooth, keeping the pacing tight and the content varied. The episode wraps up effectively with a clear closing and an invitation to return for the next show, leaving the listener with a sense of continuity and anticipation.

THIRD

Horse Radio Network

Jamie Goes One on One with Gold Medalist Tad Coffin

JAMIE JENNINGS, PODCASTER
GLENN HEBERT, PODCASTER

The host does an excellent job establishing credibility early by introducing the guest as an Olympian, which immediately builds interest and anticipation for the conversation. Her approach of sharing personal insights before formally introducing the guest adds a natural and engaging entry point into the discussion. The host brings strong enthusiasm and energy, which helps carry the episode and keeps the tone lively throughout. A clear strength is her ability to listen actively and respond with thoughtful follow-up insights, creating a conversation that feels dynamic rather than scripted.

24 - Freelance Equine-Related Podcast (MEDIA PRO ONLY) (4 Entries)

FIRST

Marilyn Swick

Between the Reins Episode 01: Ava Smedley

MARILYN SWICK, CINEMATOGRAPHER, DIRECTOR, WRITER, PRODUCER

I enjoyed the amount of cutaway shots that were included they really helped keep the attention of the viewer and added more to the storyline overall. I appreciated the individual conversation with Ava as it gave her an opportunity to say everything that was not mentioned in the interview and have her own voice shine through. There were a variety of interviewers which was pleasant to see as it created an all-around podcast with good journalistic intentions.

25 - Equine-Related Website (10 Entries)

FIRST

Susan DiFelice

The Pony Island

SUSAN DIFELICE, CREATOR/OWNER

The Pony Island website delivers an exceptional and highly cohesive brand experience that is clearly aligned with its mission to educate and engage young horse enthusiasts. From the first impression, the visual design, colour palette, and playful imagery immediately resonate with its target audience of children and their parents. The site successfully balances fun and functionality, creating an environment that feels both engaging and safe for younger users.

SECOND

Farnam

Farnam Rewards Webpage

FARNAM MARKETING TEAM

The Farnam Rewards website creates an immediate and confident first impression, with a clean, professional design and bright, welcoming colour palette that aligns well with the brand. The purpose of the page is instantly clear, supported by a strong hero section that includes a warm welcome message and clear calls to action to log in or create an account. The imagery reinforces relevance, with visuals that clearly connect to the equine audience and signal that the user is in the right place.

26 - Equine Media Single Issue or Multi-Issue Electronic Publication (2 Entries)

FIRST

BloodHorse

BloodHorse Daily

BLOODHORSE EDITORIAL STAFF

The content here is beautifully executed. The writing exhibits mastery of subject: fluid in its handling of it and yet showing individual voices and style. The race coverage speaks to the race savvy but does not lose a reader in jargon. Articles are tight, to the point, and engaging using well selected and timed quotes to liven up the text, delivering facts in a non-cumbersome manner. The quality photography provides a variety of images and enhances the storytelling.

VISUAL MEDIA

27 - Editorial Action Photograph (print or online) (16 Entries)

FIRST BloodHorse

Front Row Seat

SKIP DICKSTEIN, PHOTOGRAPHER

Excellent timing captures a decisive peak-action moment, placing the viewer directly inside the intensity of the race. Strong composition and framing create a clear visual hierarchy, guiding the eye naturally to the primary subject. Effective use of depth and motion conveys speed and competition, reinforcing both technical skill and editorial storytelling.

SECOND Driving Digest

Jacob Arnold

MELANIE GUILLAMOT, PHOTOGRAPHER
LINDA YUTZY, DESIGNER

Excellent capture of peak action, with strong motion conveyed through dust, body positioning, and directional movement. The viewer is placed directly inside the moment. Unique rear perspective adds a fresh editorial angle, offering a behind-the-scenes feel that differentiates it from more conventional action shots. Strong sense of energy and environment, with the dust trail and movement of the carriage reinforcing speed, intensity, and context.

THIRD The American Quarter Horse Journal

The Navajo Nation

IAN KASNOFF, PHOTOGRAPHER

Strong storytelling and cultural context, capturing a moment that feels authentic and grounded within the environment. Excellent timing and action, with clear subject interaction that communicates intensity and purpose. Rich visual layering, with background elements adding depth and reinforcing the narrative of the scene.

HONORABLE MENTION Driving Digest

A Weekend of Coaching – Allen Tucci

SARAH SEAMAN, PHOTOGRAPHER

This image captures a magnificent four-in-hand turnout of matched bay horses pulling a classic stage coach along a coastal path in Newport, with the water and a house visible in the background. The scale and grandeur of the four-horse hitch is impressive, and the warm summer light adds richness to the bay coats and burnished red wheels of the coach. The setting communicates the prestige and tradition of the coaching event with genuine visual authority.

HONORABLE MENTION Douglas Lees

Western Run Jump As A Team

DOUGLAS LEES, PHOTOGRAPHER

This low-angle timber racing image from the Western Run point-to-point captures two horses – a dark bay and a grey – clearing a fence simultaneously in a visually dynamic composition that places the viewer directly beneath the action. The contrasting colors of the two pairs create strong visual separation, and the low perspective gives the horses genuine scale and power against the sky. This is a bold compositional choice that demonstrates real photographic ambition and produces a result with genuine dramatic energy.

28 - Editorial Human-Animal Bond Photograph (print or online) (3 Entries)

FIRST Appaloosa Journal

The New Nemmers Family Trio

HEIDI NYLAND MELOCCO, PHOTOGRAPHER

The image is sharp and well-focused, especially on the faces, which helps draw attention to the main subjects. The composition is clean and easy to follow, with nothing distracting in the background. The lighting and color look natural and balanced, giving the photo a polished, professional feel.

29 - Editorial Photograph (print or online) (15 Entries)

FIRST Horse Illustrated

Parting Shot (Icelandic Horse under the Northern Lights)

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK, PHOTOGRAPHER

Exceptional use of silhouette and negative space creates a striking, instantly readable composition that communicates mood and scale without distraction. The integration of the northern lights elevates the image beyond documentation, creating a strong emotional and almost cinematic narrative. Strong editorial impact with a clear point of view—the image feels intentional and memorable, capable of anchoring a feature or serving as a cover-level visual.

SECOND Mid-Atlantic Thoroughbred Single Track

SCOTT SERIO, PHOTOGRAPHER, ECLIPSE SPORTSWIRE

Excellent use of tone, texture, and leading lines creates a strong sense of depth and direction, guiding the viewer naturally through the frame. The restrained black-and-white treatment enhances mood and reinforces the narrative, giving the image a timeless editorial quality. The composition effectively communicates isolation and focus, making it feel like a moment within a larger story rather than a standalone image.

THIRD **BloodHorse**

Calm After Storm

ANNE EBERHARDT, PHOTOGRAPHER

Bold and unconventional cropping creates a visually engaging and graphic composition that stands out immediately. The detail in the icicles and textures adds a strong tactile quality, enhancing visual interest and depth. The image integrates well with editorial layout, demonstrating an understanding of how photography interacts with text and design.

30 - Freelance Editorial Photograph (print or online) (7 Entries)

FIRST

Douglas Lees

Henry Wood and Topeador at Blue Ridge Pt. to Pt.

DOUGLAS LEES, PHOTOGRAPHER

Be still my heart. This image is just stunning with an abundance of youthful sweetness that is breathtaking. The photographer's use of natural illumination and perfect positioning of the subjects in that light and reflection couldn't be more perfect. The loving stance of the girl and young horse is so naturally expressive it keeps the scenario from feeling posed at all. This photograph is a true winner.

SECOND

Douglas Lees

Ohrstrom Memorial Remote

DOUGLAS LEES, PHOTOGRAPHER

Excellent use of a remote camera angle provides a unique and immersive perspective, enhancing viewer engagement. Strong composition with diagonal lines from the fence adds energy and guides the eye through the frame. Clean execution with well-timed action captures peak motion while maintaining clarity and detail.

32 - Editorial Illustration (7 Entries)

FIRST

The Florida Horse

Horse of the Year Mystic Lake

REMI BELLOCO, ILLUSTRATOR

Highly Distinctive and Memorable Style: The hand-drawn, colorful illustration immediately stands out with a unique voice. It breaks away from more traditional or expected equestrian visuals, making it highly recognizable and engaging. Strong Conceptual Storytelling: The scene communicates a clear and clever narrative, using humor and symbolism (fishing for money/success) to add depth. It invites the viewer to spend time exploring the details, increasing engagement. Love the playful energy. Clear Sense of Place and Personality: The environment, characters, and visual cues strongly establish location and tone. The piece feels lively, specific, and full of character, which enhances its overall impact.

SECOND

The Florida Horse

Count To Three

REMI BELLOCO, ILLUSTRATOR

Confident Use of Negative Space. The large open composition demonstrates restraint and control, allowing the small illustrated moment to stand out and creating a strong editorial presence. Clear and Clever Concept. The humor is subtle but effective, encouraging viewer interpretation and engagement. The simplicity makes the idea feel intentional and thoughtful. Consistent and Cohesive Style. The monochromatic, sketch-based approach is well executed and maintains a unified tone throughout.

DESIGN

33/44 - Equine-related Single Advertisement Design (print or electronic) (13 Entries)

FIRST

Platinum Performance

It Starts Within - Emily Beisel

PLATINUM PERFORMANCE PRODUCERS

Powerful, Immediate Visual Impact. The dynamic action shot instantly captures attention and communicates intensity, precision, and athleticism. The headline "IT STARTS WITHIN" is bold, memorable, and easy to read from a distance. The supporting line "Unleashing the true grit of a champion..." adds context without competing visually, creating a strong and effective hierarchy that guides the viewer naturally. The product placement, brand colors, and messaging are consistent and professional without overpowering the main visual. The product has space and room to breath and it is clear what this ad is about.

SECOND

Straight Arrow Products, Inc.

Exhibitor's and Tami Smith

FAITH HAINSWORTH, DESIGNER

ASHYN FLANAGAN, VICE PRESIDENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND DESIGNER

SHANNON BRINKMAN, PHOTOGRAPHER

Strong, Authentic Action Photography. This creates credibility and appeals directly to the equestrian audience by reflecting a true competition environment. Clear Product Relevance to Subject Matter. The visual of a well-groomed, high-performing horse directly supports the product benefit (coat enhancement). The connection between outcome (appearance/performance) and product use is logical and easy to understand. Straightforward and Informative Messaging. The copy clearly communicates what the product does, enhancing coat tones for specific horse types. This clarity makes the ad accessible and functional, especially for a target audience looking for practical solutions.

THIRD

United States Hunter Jumper Association

Young Jumpers, Big Dreams

JEFF RUTH, FREELANCE DESIGNER

SUZANNE DORMAN, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF DESIGN

Clean and Focused Visual Composition; the central image is strong and well-isolated, allowing the viewer to immediately focus on the horse and rider. The muted background helps maintain clarity and avoids visual clutter. Strong, Aspirational Headline. "YOUNG JUMPERS, BIG DREAMS" is clear, bold, and emotionally resonant, aligning well with the target audience of developing riders and the broader equestrian community. Loud and clear.

34 - Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Cover Page Design (print or electronic publication) (14 Entries)

FIRST

The American Quarter Horse Journal

July-August Cover: A Mane In Motion

BEE SILVA, PHOTOGRAPHER

TIM ARCHER, DIRECTOR OF ART, PRODUCTION AND DESIGN

Such a classy cover. An exquisite photo to depict a healthy mane. The art director cropped the image perfectly and the photographer lit it in such a way that captures the mane's focus and grabs the attention of the reader. Beautiful logo with a perfect choice of colors keeps it simple, clean and oh, so elegant.

SECOND

Paint Horse Journal

Superior, All Around

JODY JOHNSON, CREATIVE DIRECTOR & DESIGNER

This entry is visually such an appealing cover—the lovely muted colors are so calming, the scene is breathtaking, and the art director's attention to detail makes this cover special. The slight gradation of color in the nameplate adds to the ethereal feeling of the cover. By matching the same color on the cover lines, the text is very readable but the lines don't detract from the stunning horse and rider.

THIRD

The American Quarter Horse Journal

September-October Cover: R.W. Hampton

JAYMIE DUNLAP, PHOTOGRAPHER

TIM ARCHER, DIRECTOR OF ART, PRODUCTION AND DESIGN

Such an impactful image that focuses on the person, R.W. Hampton. Love the fact that the door becomes a frame of the cover so your eye is drawn to the light area. The lighting and composition of the photo, including the tipped guitar, is first class. Clean, elegant and simple. The lack of a color gives the cover a mysterious aura that is inviting to "find out more."

35 - Self-Supported Publication Equine Media Cover Page Design (print or electronic publication) (7 Entries)

FIRST

Horse Illustrated

Horse Illustrated May/June 2025

CHRISTIANE SLAWIK, PHOTOGRAPHER

KENNY BOYER, DESIGNER

Art director did a great job of fitting all the cover lines and still having the emphasis on the horse. Beautifully lit photography and well cropped. Keeping a limited palette of colors in the type simplifies what could have been a very busy cover. Chunky serif type plays well with the condensed san serif counterpart. Strong, nicely designed nameplate.

SECOND

Western Horseman

Western Horseman September 2025

JENNIFER CHRISTIAN, DESIGNER

Unique look to nameplate. The condensed font works well to fit so many letters across the top without infringing on the photo area. The cowboy hat breaking into the nameplate area adds interest to the cover. Good composition of cover image allows for perfect placement of cover lines. Handsome cowboy draws you to the cover lines.

36 - Association/Organization Publication Equine Media Editorial Design (print or electronic publication) (20 Entries)

FIRST

The American Quarter Horse Journal

A Life With Leather

DAVID BROWN, DESIGNER

Exceptional art Direction and Visual storytelling. The imagery is cohesive, intentional, and deeply immersive. From the environmental portrait to the macro detail shots, the visuals work together to tell a complete and compelling story of craftsmanship, process, and identity. Sophisticated Editorial Layout and Hierarchy. The typography, spacing, and image placement are highly refined. The layout guides the reader seamlessly from opener to interior spreads, balancing large visuals with readable text blocks in a way that feels elevated and editorially strong. Strong Cohesion Between Content and Design. Every design decision supports the narrative. The warm tones, textures, and image selection reflect the subject matter (leather, craftsmanship, heritage), creating a unified and thoughtful visual language throughout. High production value and attention to detail. The quality of photography, composition, and finishing details (margins, type styling, image cropping) demonstrates a high level of professionalism and polish.

SECOND

The American Quarter Horse Journal

Backbone and Bloodlines

CLINT SWEARINGEN, DESIGNER

Striking and Engaging Opening Image: The full-bleed opener is visually compelling and immediately draws the viewer in. The perspective and grouping of horses create a strong sense of presence and energy, effectively setting the tone for the story. Strong Use of Photography to Support Narrative: The mix of environmental and detail imagery helps build a clear story around heritage, family, and lifestyle. The visuals feel authentic and relevant to the subject matter. Clean and Readable Editorial Structure: The layout is organized and easy to follow, with clear text columns, consistent spacing, and logical flow from images to copy. It maintains a professional and accessible reading experience.

THIRD

The American Quarter Horse Journal

Shaping Chaps

DAVID BROWN, DESIGNER

Strong environmental photography. The opening image effectively establishes place and character, giving a sense of authenticity and grounding the story in a real-world setting. Relevant and supportive imagery. The photography throughout aligns well with the subject matter, showcasing materials, process, and environment in a way that supports the narrative. Clear and functional layout structure. The editorial layout is easy to follow, with consistent text columns and logical image placement that maintains readability. Beautiful storytelling.

HONORABLE MENTION

The American Quarter Horse Journal

Art in Any Form

DAVID BROWN, DESIGNER

This is a beautifully crafted layout. A great combination of photography, pull quotes and white space create great balance. This layout breathes and keeps the eye moving from page to page. Simple layout always shows great thought and execution.

HONORABLE MENTION

The American Quarter Horse Journal

Eight Decades in the Saddle

CLINT SWEARINGEN, DESIGNER

I want to see more of this magazine. The features have great presentation and presence. Not many layouts can get away with full pages of text, but this entry does it three times with great photo selections creating great balance between word and image(s). And kudos to the publisher of this magazine for allowing a 12 page feature. It makes all the difference in the world and this wouldn't be as strong a contender as an 8 page feature.

37 - Self-Supported Publication Equine Media Editorial Design (print or electronic publication) (11 Entries)

FIRST

Keeneland

Baby Steps

CATHERINE NICHOLS, ART DIRECTOR

JACKIE DUKE, EDITOR

Beautifully designed opening spread. Great cropping of full bleed photo. The emphasis is on the foal who is pointing straight ahead. The creative cropping makes sure the foal misses the gutter crease but also allows the negative space of the mother to be the perfect location for the headline type. Great placement of all type, including the caption which sits nicely in the negative space of the background. Love the idea of using lower case letters to reinforce the idea of "baby" versus initial caps. The opener is the splash, yet the other pages are just as nicely designed. They all hold together well with the gray headline type and textured rule. Good sizing and grouping of all photos.

SECOND

Western Horseman

Pioneering Rodeo Pageantry

JENNIFER CHRISTIAN, DESIGNER

Dramatically lit photo with great cropping and placement of type invites the reader into this article. Creatively designed headline using textured type and see-through letters. What follows is beautiful pacing of each spread after the opener. Attractive sidebar in red is easy to read with solid typography skills. All spreads are held together with typography, color, torn paper edge and pull quotes. Love the attention to detail like the drop shadow on the torn edge and the end slug horse.

THIRD

Barrel Horse News

Managing the Mud

SUSAN SAMPSON, DESIGNER

What a great closeup photo to depict "Managing the Mud". Lovely attention to detail such as the white outline around the letter "M" to define the letter from the dark background in that area. Love the curvy initial cap "I" that kind of mimics the adjacent hoofs. Nice headline typography that emphasizes the word "Mud" by using a bold sans serif with a lighter complimentary italic font.

SPECIALTY PUBLISHING

38 - Equine Media Single Issue Custom Print Publication (4 Entries)

FIRST

New Bridge Polo

New Bridge Polo & Country Club Magazine 2025-2026

KATIE ROTH, EDITOR & PUBLISHER

PAIGE WIDENER, PHOTOGRAPHER

ASHLEY TOYE, DESIGNER

Just a beautiful publication; the editorial content was crisp & concise and the graphic design and photography were beautiful. From the moment you pick this one out of the stack of entries, you just know it's going to be one of the top contenders in the class. One of my favorite parts was the meet the horses section in the back.

48 - Business Equine-related Single Issue or Multi-Issue Print Publication (7 Entries)

FIRST

Platinum Performance, Inc.

Platinum Magazine

PLATINUM PERFORMANCE TEAM

This issue hits all the marks as a top-notch print publication, in photography, writing, layout, graphics, and paper feel. The excellent, high-value content uses solid sources and information is presented clearly. It delivers as informative product promotion as well as a quality equine lifestyle and performance publication. An effective marketing effort, it weaves product information into the content, yet also greatly serves the audience with solid reference information that goes well beyond its product. As an overall business piece, this entry is hard to fault and hard to beat.

SECOND

Retired Racehorse Project

2025 Thoroughbred Makeover Event Program

KRISTEN BENTLEY MANAGING DIRECTOR

The content clearly communicates what the RRP is and the purpose of the Thoroughbred Makeover, and does it in an engaging, authoritative manner. This event knows what it is, who it serves, and how to present that information. The program has a lively, fresh design that maintains consistency without stifling variety. It comes from setting format "rules" for each section of material that can offer layout flexibility. For example, the choice of a single column/two-column width text in the articles allows for varied design but also keeps the layouts organized visually for the reader and set apart from the event informational material. Adding the "2025 Thoroughbred Makeover" title bar at the top, beginning on page 32, is an excellent way to continually orient the reader when they are in the event information section. The ad pages also fit the content style.

39 - Equine-related Nonfiction Book (7 Entries)

FIRST

Christina Keim

Unwanted: The Causes and Effects of America's Horse Population Crisis

CHRISTINA KEIM, AUTHOR

An examination of an important subject for horse-lovers of reasons for reasons why so many horses are labeled unsuitable (except as pet and often human food) and treated or mistreated as unworthy of human attention and assistance. Realistic and comprehensive discussion of individuals and national and regional organizations that advocate and practice animal rescue programs. Many heart-breaking yet inspiring anecdotes of successful and failed efforts in that regard. Many discussions of such organizations' strengths and weaknesses. The author's presentation of her extensive examination of the subject focuses on thoughtful and articulate interviews with people involved in the subject. Equally inspiring accounts of efforts to use formerly unwanted horses to give humans with emotional and physical problems a chance to heal through caring for and using horses (prisoners learning useful trades such as blacksmithy, and riding for the handicapped programs).

SECOND

Cheryl Eriksen

Greyhound: The Remarkable Story of the Legendary Racehorse Who Inspired a Nation

CHERYL ERIKSEN, AUTHOR

Well researched and professionally written narrative of the life and times of Standardbred racing's legendary trotter. A judicious (that is, not overpoweringly distracting) use of photos and other illustrations. Complete footnotes and bibliography. A very impressive effort that ranks with Bill Nack's biography of Secretariat, Laura Hildenberg's "Seabiscuit," and Elizabeth Letts' "The Eighty-Dollar Champion" book about Harry DeLeyer's champion show jumper Snowman. The only reason I placed this book second and not first is that Standardbreds are a smaller market, and one of the factors I took into ranking entries in this category is their marketability (as book publishers routinely do). Otherwise, this book would have finished as equal first place.

40 - Equine-related Fiction Book (4 Entries)

FIRST

Julianne Neal

Congaree: The Little Black Mustang From Arapaho Creek

JULIANNE NEAL, AUTHOR

This is an absolutely delightful book. It has a great storyline, is educational and the illustrations are gorgeous. How lovely to include the information on Wellness Through Mustangs and The Marley Project; it seems that could be an entire additional book. The way the informational text is set off from the general text is helpful. Although it seems to be aimed at younger readers with the accompanying coloring and activity books, grownups will enjoy reading it as well.

GENERAL EXCELLENCE

General Excellence Print Publication circulation under 10,000 (6 Entries)

FIRST

BloodHorse

BloodHorse Magazine

FRANK ANGST, EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

It's not every day that a reader is left stunned and eager to consume every element of a story's written and visual content. However, that is the case with this entry. From the start, this submission was arguably the most memorable. And what precipitated this? Simply put- it is the phenomenal usage of imagery, in strategic sections of the entry, that contributed to the long-lasting impact. From cover to close, the reader is left captivated. The writing in this publication is top-notch. What is so impressive about this entry is the sheer volume of written information presented to the viewer, in tandem with an effective application of white space, strategic layout, and variations in terms of content presentation. This impeccable balancing act is notable throughout this submission in its entirety. It's dynamic. There's a noticeable pace that is set with every turn of the page. While each page is different, the cohesive thematics of this submission drastically strengthens its subliminal branding. Simply put- this is a masterpiece deserving coffee-table-display. Incredible work!

HONORABLE MENTION

Tri-State Livestock News

Tri-State Livestock News

KAYCEE CORTNER, SPECIAL SECTIONS EDITOR

RUTH WIECHMANN, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

CHRISTA VANDYKE, DESIGNER

Among its contemporaries, this submission stands out from the start with such impactful images on the covers. The covers set the tone for what's to come. With every turn of the page, the reader is left to view a visual masterpiece. This is what a truly engaging layout exudes! The uniqueness throughout is evident, leading the reader to the next page with anticipation. And to further elevate this entry, the writing style implemented is phenomenal. With a timeless serif font integrated throughout, matched with an appropriate balance of white space and color theory, the layout of this submission urges the reader to turn the page each time. There are so many fascinating testimonies featured throughout this submission, as well. The team beautifully incorporates sentence structure, paragraph length, and tone variations to facilitate the foundation of the reader's experience. Incredible work!

General Excellence Print Publication circulation 10,000 to 20,000 (5 Entries)

FIRST

Horse Illustrated

Horse Illustrated

HOLLY CACCAMISE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

KENNY BOYER, DESIGNER

RIMA DORSEY, PUBLISHER

I believe it is safe to say these issues contain something for everyone who owns a horse and they fully meet the magazine's stated mission of promoting the best in horse care, riding and training. It also fulfills the promise of being all-breed and all-discipline oriented. Not only does the content address care, health and training of the horse, but of the owner as well - for example, "Strength Training for

Seniors" and "Riding the Brainwaves." A surprising but useful feature was "Better Barn Dogs." The subheads are well chosen and helpful in setting expectations for the feature. The writing is easily understood. The covers are consistent and include many entry points, The Contents pages are well organized and easy to navigate. They include varied and appropriate photos. Layouts are clean, with many sizes and types of photos. Text is broken up by boldfaced topics and sidebars.

HONORABLE MENTION

Barrel Horse News

Barrel Horse News

KAILEY SULLINS, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

SUSAN SAMPSON, ART DIRECTOR

MADDY ROHR, ASSOCIATE EDITOR

This would be THE magazine for Barrel Horse enthusiasts. True to its wide-ranging mission, the content does include many aspects of the sport. Many of the articles provide practical advice and information. Profiles give readers insights into what I assume are well-recognized personalities. The writing is clear and easy to read. The photos on the cover are what a reader would expect; one stands out for the well-lit, expressive face. I like the flying clods at the top of "Arena Dirt." The design also makes good use of sidebars. The illustrations outside of the usual barrel pics are well chosen and very much support the content. All in all, a publication enthusiasts would enjoy reading.

General Excellence Print Publication circulation over 20,000 (8 Entries)

FIRST

Western Horseman

Western Horseman

KRISTEN SCHURR, EDITOR

JENNIFER CHRISTIAN, ART DIRECTOR

LAUREL WITT MCGREGOR, COPY EDITOR

Western Horseman is not only a beautiful, expertly produced publication, it provides a wealth of horse lessons and lore with great writing, great photography and great selection of offerings across the spectrum. The smart but not overly splashy design grabs reader interest from the get-go and holds it throughout. The mix of subject matter is simply dazzling. Breeding and arena success stories, riders fighting through adversity, practical features on day-to-day barn issues to mule economics – it never gets boring. "Where the Trail Leads" is a really well-done package. Impressive (but reverse type). The features focusing on ranching families are fantastic, in prose and photos. Really liked the little on the web feature at the front of the mag. Subtle things like that can be effective.

HONORABLE MENTION

The American Quarter Horse Journal

The American Quarter Horse Journal

BECKY NEWELL, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

JOURNAL STAFF

The articles for this magazine are almost always the best around and the photography is consistently stunning and on point. All aspects of Quarter Horses and their owners, breeders, trainers and riders get their due. Throughout each issue, the long history and influence of these horses and their humans permeates each page. The glamor and the grit share space thanks to the writers, editors and photographers, and their subjects. There's so much going on in the AQHA world that it takes a lot of work and awareness to put together such a sensible, cohesive collection.

OVERALL EXCELLENCE

FIRST

Horse Illustrated

Horse Illustrated

HOLLY CACCAMISE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

KENNY BOYER, DESIGNER

RIMA DORSEY, PUBLISHER

Horse Illustrated is a publication dedicated to all breeds. It has an eclectic readership that includes every level of horse lover from first time riders and owners to the professionals in the industry. With articles and features on multiple breeds, equine lifestyle, training, horse health, current news and tack/equipment this magazine offers something for everyone in its targeted audience.

The overall design has a visually inclusive flair. It complements this magazine's content that was created to appeal, inform and attract all-discipline horse enthusiasts, while covering all breeds of horses. . . no easy task. The editorial designs have their own flavor, deliberate where serious subject matter is at hand and more fanciful for lighter topics. The designer did a good job of holding things together by incorporating the same quirky headline treatments in many of the layouts. The slight, contrasting running heads a-top the pages create good direction for the reader. The covers are exciting with their bold colorful masthead and cover lines which are skillfully arranged around the horses in the cover images.

This publication is an all-around winner. It adheres to the message of its properly written mission statement.