

# CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

## THE BEGINNING

BY BOB FUNKHOUSER

For years, many have commented that the conventions and meetings are wonderful with lots of informative dialogue, both from the featured speakers and the individuals in the audience, however, once the majority of the attendees leave that gathering it's back to life and those conversations remain just that.

Dedicated volunteers that make up the UPHA and the breed associations give of their time and resources to serve and they are the small minority who stay with the ideas and with the conversations that came from their respective conventions.

Saddle Horse Report's Leeann Mione has attended and covered the UPHA Convention for years and with the above-mentioned problem in mind, brought back the idea this year that we should have a series of articles that keep the dialogue going on some of the hot topics of the convention. Continuing the conversation if you will!

The first in this series will deal with breeding; more specifically the work of the United Breeders' Committee, which was formed by Jenny and Jim Taylor and Todd Graham. Their work inspired a new Breeders' Committee at ASHBA, of which they are a part, to tackle the different factors affecting the trend of lower breeding and registration numbers in spite of a slight uptick in 2021.

"It was 2013. Jim was judging Louisville," said Jenny Taylor of her husband. "I was in the stands watching classes, which I never get to do. That year the young horses were light. Then in the other classes I started looking up the ages of the horses that were winning and most were teenagers. Glaringly, the older horses were our stars so I started wondering, 'Where are the next stars coming from?'"

"I was freaked out so I called Todd [Graham] and then I called the Registry and asked for breeding numbers for the past 10 years. I saw the decline that started in 2006 and most of us weren't aware of it. That's when I called UPHA

### 'WHERE ARE THE NEXT STARS COMING FROM?'

and said, 'We have a problem that we have to make people aware of. I'm sure most trainers had no idea. So, that's when we started the Stop The Drop campaign. We needed a group to specifically delve into the reasons and if possible, the solutions, for the continuing decline in registrations of the American Saddlebred.'

Made up of concerned people from the American Saddlebred, Hackney, and Morgan worlds, the United Breeders' Committee was formed to bring that awareness to the show horse public and work on solutions. Their first project was the Stallion Sweeps, a program where stallion owners donate a stud service and people buy raffle tickets for as many of the services as they desire. The monies raised from the ensuing raffles has gone back into already established in hand baby classes and State Futurities in the Saddlebred world and a two-year-old park harness class in the Morgan breed.

"We usually raise \$30-40,000, \$25 at a time," said Taylor. "We've raised the awareness, but there hasn't been any drastic change. The young horse classes have gotten better with the help of the added prize money. We looked at programs in the Quarter Horse breed and others and morphed those into this idea. We have to have something for mare owners to shoot for.

"The newest program is the \$100,000 Breeders' Challenge. We are excited

to hold this class at the 2022 World's Championship Horse Show."

In their committee's discussion at the convention many of the same challenges were rehashed: too expensive; you spend a lot of time and money and you don't get a baby; fewer stallions breeding; conception rates; need more divisions and classes like the Western and hunt divisions, our colts have to have another place to do what they're suited for, all other breeds do; the list goes on.

Where do we go from here?

The next article in this series we'll look at the options for breeders. Why do you choose live cover over artificial insemination? How does embryo transfer work? We'll talk to the people in the know.

Please join us again as we look to Continue the Conversation!



Jenny Taylor and Todd Graham were instrumental in organizing the United Breeders' Committee and set out to Stop The Drop. With the awareness they raised, Taylor and Graham are now part of a Breeders' Committee at ASHBA, also made up of Melissa Moore, Clif Paulsen, Anna Marie Knipp, Kristen Bagdasarian, Key Waller, Jen Cocoran, Chuck Herbert, Jackie Wahrmund, Dr. Owen Weaver, and John Scheidt.