

Santa Ynez Valley horse industry may lead America

By Pat Murphy

words-1500

Data has been carefully gathered and documented about the horse industry in the Santa Ynez Valley. It not only provides incomes for thousands people, but also offers healthy recreation for people of all ages. Very importantly, it also supports the natural beauty and wide open spaces for which this valley is famous.

In California, the horse industry has a \$7 billion impact on our State's economy and contributes \$4.1 billion in goods and services. Importantly, it provides 54,200 full time jobs. This puts California at the top, in the entire United States. It is followed by Texas with a 5.2 billion impact on its state's economy and next comes Kentucky that has a 3.5 billion impact on local economy. These documented statistics come from the American Horse Council Foundation, in Washington D.C.

The Santa Ynez Valley is very likely the epicenter of California's multi-billion dollar horse industry. This valley is a relatively small area, approximately six miles from north to south and ten miles from east to west. While other vast areas in California have large numbers of horses, none of them have as many outstanding elements as does this small Valley. For several decades, it has been one of the most important horse locations in America. In addition to the numbers of our very high quality horses, it is also because of our prominent clinicians, veterinarians, showmen, and judges, that the Santa Ynez Valley is so well known. It has actually become recognized in multiple places all over the civilized world.

There has been no local governmental official data on the horse industry because, somehow, it has not been categorized as agriculture. The reason given is that they are not raised for food like cattle, sheep and swine. Therefore, they have not been included in County data as important commodities. However, now their true economic importance has been studied by the American Horse Council in our nation's capitol.

It is hoped that this information will be of help to Santa Barbara County Supervisors, the Department of Planning and Development, the Farm Bureau and the Board of Realtors, as well as, horse owners and others involved in the horse industry.

Presently, we have at least 50 different, privately owned, breeds, of horses here, some of which are quite rare. They range from large Belgian, Percheron, and Clydesdales draft horses to those

at the Valley's Miniature horse farm. Our breeds have come from different countries including Iceland, Peru, Canada, Ireland, Germany, England and elsewhere. The Kentucky Horse Park (which advertises that they have the most different breeds) tells us that we exceed them because many of their breeds are on loan from different locations. Since ours are all privately owned; and in permanent residence here, this very likely makes us the top location in America.

Since 1925, the Santa Ynez Valley has been very active in the horse world. It was then that Mr. Dwight Murphy, on his Rancho San Fernando Rey, began a Palomino breeding program that formed the roots of what this registered breed is today. When Murphy gave actor Leo Carrillo a beautiful stallion named Conquistador, this so impressed the Chrysler Automobile Corp. that they named the Conquistador car after him and gave Carrillo a golden Chrysler.

In the 1930s C.E. Perkins bought the 1925 Kentucky Derby winner-Flying Ebony and stood him at stud at his Alisal Ranch. Various Kentucky Derby winners have lived in the Valley since then and many contenders were trained here by D.Wayne Lukas. Kentucky Derby winner, Giacomo is presently standing at stud at a Magali Farms.

In Santa Ynez there is a famous Carriage Museum that holds national symposiums. Their annual Vaquero Show honors the early horsemen and draws large crowds of out-of-town visitors. At the main intersection of the town, there are cross walks imbedded with horseshoes that have been featured on television. The routes of the old horse-drawn stage coaches are marked through-out the Valley.

There is an Equestrian Center that holds competitions for adults and children most every weekend. They have western horse and mule shows, roping, and all kinds of cow horse events. The team penning contests actually started in this Valley. There are also hunter-jumper shows, gymkhanas and High School and Jr. Rodeo competitions for children. A wealth of information comes from well known clinicians, and the carriage driving club has expert advice and training from John Crockett, a local carriage authority. The three polo fields are used each year by world-class polo players from foreign countries. Local polo horse owner, Joel Baker, tells us that owners invest \$500-\$600 each month for their care; and there are at least 140 polo ponies here. Show horses of various breeds have sold for as much as \$100,000.00.

There are literally hundreds of World Champion horses and riders. Even foreign Olympians have been trained here. Although the economic crisis brought a drop in the prosperity of Thoroughbred racing, the remaining Santa Ynez Valley Thoroughbred racing farms are successful. Their Thoroughbreds have been sold internationally and River Edge Farm had one that brought 9.7 million dollars. A famous award winning jockey, Jerry Lambert trains here and not too long ago this Valley was considered the western branch of Kentucky Thoroughbred racing country.

Former President Ronald Reagan was one of our horsemen and a member of the gentlemen's riding club the Rancheros Visitadores. The famous Rancheros bring approximately 1000 riders, from six different countries, to the Valley for a week each May. Their ride to the Mission Santa Ines draws hundreds of spectators.

This Valley actually has a galaxy of stars: A long time resident, Monty Roberts, is a world famous clinician that travels to various countries. He is currently engaged in working with returning soldiers with PTSD. He also works with the Thoroughbred race horses belonging to the Queen of England and has recently received a royal medal from her because of his expertise. There are a number of noted trainers that regularly produce champion riders and horses. Another resident, Greg Simon, has bred Quarter horses that have attained seven world championships in just a few years and it was against thousands of contenders, during year-long competitions.

The Santa Ynez Valley has two women, Audrey Griffin and Sandy Collier, who have been inducted into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame. Another woman is an Olympic medalist in dressage and also a dressage judge on both national and international levels- Charlotte Bredahl Baker. Actress, Bo Derek has successfully fought the national battle to ban the slaughter of horses in America. Mr. Arthur Perry has had a National Morgan Horse Show dedicated to him.

There are riding clubs: the Sage Hens, the Fillies, Santa Barbara Trail Riders, Santa Ynez Valley Riders, Back Country Horsemen, and a hunt club. Children's riding activities include Pony Club, Jr. and High School Rodeo and private equestrian schools. A Therapeutic Riding organization is very active for people with physical or mental disabilities. There are also yearly round-ups on the cattle ranches.

It is evident that the Valley has an active horse business that employs thousands of people and greatly contributes to the financial well being of our County. They include ranch workers, ranch managers, feed distributors, hay growers, truckers, pasture seed distributors, horse fencing, horse housing, purveyors of straw and shavings for horse bedding, and horse trailer sales.

In addition there are 24 equine veterinarians and three clinics. One of our clinics is so skilled that their client roster is international. Over 40 farriers have been documented, and multiple trainers that either give riding lessons or train horses in various disciplines. There are dozens of exercise riders and Thoroughbred farms employ jockeys. There is even a horse taxi, a disposal service, and several feeding services. A quarantine service is here for horses in route to far off lands.

The Valley has two large stores that sell a multitude of ranch and horse supplies which also includes horse equipment (tack) and ranch supplies. There are three saddle makers and another store that sells veterinary medications plus rodeo and farrier equipment, and there is a

special horse blanket laundry. Horse ranches buy irrigation pipes, tractors and other farm machinery and are strong supporters of local hardware stores

It is evident that horses stimulate the economy in a wide number of ways. In addition: Equestrian visitors help support restaurants, motels, and shop in the clothing stores. Income also comes from stud fees and horse sales. Horse owners range from “backyard” variety to the large ranches with 600 or more horses in residence. Realtors tell us that horse properties have always been a hot item because horse zoning is alive and thriving. County zoning allows one adult horse per 20,000 sq. ft. (one acre equals 43,560 sq.ft.) on parcels up to 20 acres . Larger parcels have increased numbers. The present zoning in the Valley supports one of the most important equestrian locations in America.

<<>>